Education, Disability and Inclusion

A Family Struggle against an Excluding School

Ignacio Calderón-Almendros and
Sabina Habegger-Lardoeyt

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Ignacio Calderón-Almendros
University of Malaga, Spain

and

Sabina Habegger-Lardoeyt
CIMAS Observatory, Spain

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To Rafael, for his will power and his capacity to dismantle the most entrenched schemas with just his life experience.

To Rafael's mother and father, for proving that, without love, pedagogical efforts lose their purpose.

To Rafael's brothers and sisters, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, nephews and friends, for being living arguments for inclusion.

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FOREWORD

Ignacio Calderón and Sabina Habegger have given us all a gift with this much-needed book on education, disability and inclusion from the vital and powerful counter-hegemonic discourses of insiders and participants. As we accompany Rafael, his family and allies through their experiences in school, we learn first hand the ways in which schools as social institutions reconstruct culture and identity all too often to the detriment of students like Rafael. The layered discourses throughout the book, coupled with an analytical framework and empirical evidence, leave us with no doubt that our approaches to teaching and learning need to change.

This book begins with the premise that Rafael, and all children and youth have the ability to learn and grow, and are born with the potential to be educated. Part one of the book devotes considerable attention to issues that have long plagued our classrooms and society: issues of equality, fairness, opportunities to learn, attitudinal barriers, and the ways in which our current policies and practices compromise and impede progress. This section provides ample evidence that disability and intellectual aptitude are not characteristics of the student as much as they are a characteristic of the situation. Schools seem to be more about categorization, sorting, labeling, and testing students rather than they are about preparing students for a life of active citizenship and community and family involvement—in short, life after school. After all, students are ultimately tested in the experiences of life, not on math or reading scores. Rafael's experience in particular puts a spotlight on the effect schooling has on a sense of cultural belonging and positive self-identity—the essential tools for community living.

Throughout the book, the depth and breadth of this portrait of action research is impressive in and of itself. Covering over a decade of experiences, the internal and external researchers use multiple sources of data: standardized tests, student and family narrations, observations, informal interviews, and extensive written documentation of reports and letters. The authors exhort the reader to engage with the text actively and critically, to undertake a self-examination of his/her own attitudes and practices. They ask us to consider: what responsibility is assumed by the school as an institution? What is the purpose of assessment and diagnosis? What should be taught? When should it be taught? How should it be taught? Is it ever considered that the cause of a problem could be found outside of the student being evaluated?

Answering these questions with a critical reading and response requires a different frame of reference and analysis than the scientific positivism of biology and psychology that has permeated and driven special education thinking and practice. The authors challenge this thinking and practice with an alternative analytical framework that draws from discourses, theories and interpretation systems which take into account issues of social justice, culture and resistance. Specifically, the

authors begin by noting that the starting point for a biological framework focuses on individual biological limitations and personal characteristics. This framework ignores the broader socio-cultural cultural forces and contexts under which schools operate. A socio-cultural framework takes into account the powerful influence of culture and society on individual ability, growth and potential in the context of the environment. It also recognizes the inequality and complex power relations inherent in school practices—particularly those of diagnosis and exclusion. Notably, Rafael's experiences in school and his responses to it, reflect Paulo Freire's theory of resistance as well as his concept of banking education (students as empty vessels to be filled with factual knowledge by teachers), and critical pedagogy (students and teachers as co-constructors of knowledge writ large through critical thinking and experiential learning). This paradigm shift—from scientific positivism to socio-cultural and resistance theories—is perhaps the most important contribution this book makes to provoke needed change in the current school system. This shift pertains especially to teachers who are the frontline of school practices. It forces a change in the teachers' role as mere technical practitioners to critical intellectuals who can resist school practices of banking education. It means that students like Rafael as well as his allies and family members—those at the grassroots level—have the tools to take on the role of resisting and denouncing institutional vices that perpetuate inequality and prevent social justice.

The book concludes with a description of Rafael's experiences post mandatory schooling. A counterpoint experience in a musical ensemble and the music conservatory reveals a very different approach to learning that is motivational, student-centered, and experiential. One has to ask why the formative years in schooling could not emulate these practices. In the conclusion, Rafael's successes in post-secondary education, and as an accomplished musician inspire us with hope for the future—not just for Rafael, but for all people who have been labeled with disabilities and subjected to exclusion and low expectations. When we value every student's talents and abilities and look beyond labels to the student underneath who is waiting to be discovered, then our world opens to infinite possibilities. The book makes a significant contribution to advancing inclusive education and challenges all of us to actively engage in the work of social-justice in our daily practice as teachers, education professionals, administrators, family members, and individuals with disabilities. We are all part of an interconnected world and need to play our part, if we are to be truly inclusive.

Susan Peters
Associate Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> In place of hope, there'd be the employment of trickery designed to hide truths that could propel the oppressed into fighting, should they only guess or intuit those truths.
>
> Paulo Freire (2015:101)

In this book we seek to understand how cognitive difference is addressed in Spanish schools. In order to do this, we have analysed the specific experience of a person with Down's syndrome, Rafael Calderón-Almendros. The analysis includes his family's dealings and conflicts with the school he used to attend. This is part of an action research process that they were involved in for several years. It does not arise from the discourse of teachers or other intellectuals, but from the life experiences of one of the groups most oppressed, not only by society in general, but also by schools as institutions, and in particular by teachers as their agents. These three agents have an unequal share of the power to construct the meanings that should be legitimately taught and learnt, and how they should be implemented.

This book focuses on the third stage of the action research project,[1] which studied the struggle of Rafael's family against the discriminatory practices that, in their view, were being used by the school. Through the use of various methods, but mainly by analysing documents from the case and others subsequently prepared, we aim to shed light on the process from a perspective of education that is inclusive, radical and committed. This serves to reflect upon the role that both schools and professionals play in the education of their students, bearing in mind that instruction is not the same as education.

The study is structured into two major areas: a theoretical one and an empirical one. The former, entitled 'Analytical Framework', provides the theoretical grounding to understand the conceptions developed by the student's family over the years which were fundamentally based on an affectionate home life. However, these concepts and representations were in stark contrast to a school culture excessively based on the academicism, qualifications and competitiveness demanded by the labour market. This is why basic, simple, family discourses must be re-written and adapted to scientific/pedagogical language, in order to resist the administrative and scientism-based arguments prevailing in schools, which serve various underlying interests. Three levels of discourse production can be identified here. The first one is the family's everyday discourse in their relationship with Rafael, with the school and with the internal researcher—Rafael's brother and co-author of this book. The second one is an attempt to organise, systematically arrange and give coherence

to the actions taken with respect to the school. The internal researcher played a fundamental role in this stage of discourse production. It consisted in a rigorous preliminary pedagogical analysis which originated from the need to resist the unfair conduct engaged in by the school. This is recorded in the various documents prepared by the family, advised by the internal researcher.[2] The third level of discourse is the one outlined in these pages, where a theory is developed by treating the texts produced in the second level as elaborate discourses. To do so, the work of Paulo Freire and subsequent theories of resistance, specifically, those developed by Paul Willis, Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren, are relied upon. It is worth noting that the (elaborate) contributions of Rafael's three other brothers who were living with him at the time of the conflict can also be found throughout the book. These contributions were made from different perspectives: two of them, from the world of art (photography and literature, respectively), by showing a vision focused on feelings and aesthetics; the other relied on Mathematics to make a provocative analysis of the measurement of intelligence. In addition, the experiences of Rafael's best friend and of the internal researcher have been included. The internal researcher had a twofold role (as an educationalist and also Rafael's brother), which placed different demands placed on him as a result.

This third level of discourse is found throughout the entire book, but is particularly profound in the chapter being introduced here. It is a thought-provoking theoretical debate about dominant social representations of 'disability', the part played by the school in the legitimation of those representations, and the role of educationalists, with their use of diagnoses and grades. The discussion also extends to the conceptions underlying these diagnoses and school practices, in order to develop an inclusive concept of education, and to encourage reflection on the scientific and ethical validity of tests and their applications, including their function in the construction of social policies. Following the steps of Rafael's family in their opposition to the injustices occurred at the school, we reflect on how resistance to elements that oppress certain groups—in our case, people with disability—can be articulated. Three contexts, namely individual, professional and institutional, are considered with the aim of extending resistance beyond the school walls.

The following chapter, 'The Experience', discusses the steps taken by the family to confront the situation. Relying on the concepts mentioned earlier, it describes how resistance was constructed in the sphere of education in this particular case. Due to the illustrative value and outstanding results of the family's experience, the case has been contextualised through a narration of the facts. This can be useful for other families to detect discrimination in schools, as it is often difficult to identify, and for them to engage in acts of resistance. It can also be analysed by the education community, in particular, by teachers and by schools as institutions. Discrimination is often practiced without those involved being fully aware of it, and families can be a valuable source of information and analysis to help schools design truly educational tasks.

After the narration of the events, a detailed analysis of the action research process is provided. It describes the various stages involved and the way in which the authors (internal and external researcher, respectively) approached the case, with special emphasis on the conflict between the school and the family.

The case study is used to critique the role currently played by diagnoses, and provides reflections on the lines of action usually taken on the basis of such diagnoses. The purpose is to address the need to restructure schools as institutions and promote equal conditions and comprehensiveness in the compulsory levels. Special attention is given to the adaptations of the individual curriculum and the development of specific itineraries, such as Social Guarantee Programmes (*Programas de Garantía Social,* known as *PGS* in their abbreviated form in Spanish), aimed at those students who fail to obtain their Secondary School Certificate, later renamed as Initial Professional Qualification Programmes' (*Programas de Cualificación Profesional Inicial,* known as *PCPI* in their abbreviated form in Spanish). Finally, we consider one of the most efficient measures used by Rafael's family to question and delegitimise the school's actions concerning Rafael. After the psychological and pedagogical assessment made by the school, a counter-report was prepared and submitted by two external researchers and the internal researcher. This counter-report challenged (both theoretically and empirically) the school's decisions about student's abilities and his future, not only within the school system but also in terms of his work prospects.

From this point onwards, the experience discussed takes a positive turn. An analysis of every individual's educational potential, and in particular, of Rafael's potential is provided, under the title: 'The same student, different experiences of the role of education'. This section further pursues the arguments detailed above in terms of challenging the unfair treatment of some students by schools. However, on this occasion an analysis is made of Rafael's experience in a different context, which turned out to be highly successful in educational terms. This exploration is particularly thought-provoking due to its potential to reflect upon new ways of facing educational practices after they have been put into question. The following two sections show Rafael's current situation, a few years after the conflict took place. We look back to further challenge the actions taken by the school and consolidate resistant views on educational work, teachers' efforts and families' attitudes.

The final concluding chapter brings together the theoretical and the empirical frameworks in order to make some overall reflections to guide the pursuit of better schools.

It must be noted that the strength of the research lies in Rafael's family. Our work as authors was simply a process of deliberation about the issues that were negotiated with them over time. It is a theoretical and practical development of the family's ideas throughout Rafael's school years. This is why the chief merit should be attributed to the true actors and promoters of the research from the very beginning, when there were no significant discrepancies with the school's agenda. The study has a relevant 'counter-hegemonic' potential, in that it highlights the ability of the

discourses of oppressed groups to delegitimise dominant arguments. The solidity of these arguments is usually grounded on unfair relationships and imbalances that disadvantaged groups can expose and substantiate. The counter-hegemonic potential of the study, both in terms of its critical approach and of the social group where it originates, provides a different type analysis of this phenomenon; however, it does not arrive at comfortable conclusions for education practitioners. This study questions customary school practices, and suggests a change of approach in view of the problems that schools can cause to certain groups and individuals. The aim is for practitioners to become true educators who facilitate the involvement of the school community in its day-to-day events, encourage people to be autonomous and recognise the human and social rights of others.

We apologise in advance to any education practitioners from the school in question if they feel uncomfortable when they read these pages. The majority of the teachers that Rafael had in his school years were true companions along his path for both him and his family. Many of them have proven to be not only good teachers, but also individuals who try to lead and help build meaningful lives day by day, maintaining coherence between their ideas and their actions. However, the main purpose of this book is to denounce certain practices and raise a debate about the roles attributed to education professionals. These practices too often bring the teaching profession into disrepute and annul one of the most basic rights of the most vulnerable students: their right to equal opportunities in education.

NOTES

[1] The entire study was conducted in collaboration with educationalists/researchers. The research was led by Ignacio Calderón-Almendros, an educationalist who acted as an internal researcher (since he is Rafael's brother). In stages 3 and 4, the work was carried out in collaboration with an educational psychologist (co-author of this book), who played the role of external researcher. For an overview of the different stages of the research process, as well as the plans, actors, concerns and assessments, see Figure 5.

[2] In the third stage, the external researcher and some sporadic contributors also played an important role. These produced a slightly more elaborate series of reflections from a scientific point of view.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

> And day after day I am learning new things that gradually add a third chromosome to the twenty-first pair of the cells located in the innermost part of my body. And now and then—increasingly often—some of my skin cells undergo changes, and some people around me change their attitude.
>
> Ignacio Calderón-Almendros
> (Internal researcher and Rafael's brother, 1999)

2.1. BIOLOGY AND CULTURE: THE HUMAN BEING AS A PROCESS[1]

The processes of hominisation and humanisation undergone by our species have created possibilities for human beings that go beyond biological determination. Morphological changes developed into a general-purpose body more able to adapt to any environment, and operative intelligence emerged. This capacity to operate rationally, as well as the origins of human conduct, turned the species (in general) and human beings (in particular) into the protagonists of their lives and their own history.

From a biological point of view, human beings are born defenceless, and from a cultural point of view they are open-ended, thanks to their ability to be educated. On the one hand, the cultural phenomenon (non-existent in biology) emerges, and on the other hand, a symbiosis between biology and culture occurs.[2] Social strategies become radically important here, since sociability is an essential characteristic of our species. Natural determinism then gives way to social constructivism, and individuals are recognised as unfinished beings in an uncompleted reality (Freire, 1970).

Natural (biological) barriers cannot be fully destroyed; however, the nature of cultural barriers is not governed by laws that are external to us. These barriers are created by human beings, and therefore it is always possible to achieve a better state of affairs (culturally speaking).

The move from a biological state of affairs (what things are) to a cultural state of affairs (what things could or should be, including intention and purpose), together with the un-concluded nature of human beings, is the move from heteronomy to autonomy in the search for freedom through education. The hominisation process resulted in the humanisation process, the construction of human cultural behaviour (Carbonell & Mosquera, 2000:13). This involved the passage from a given (imposed) biological environment to a created cultural environment; from determination to construction. The humanising process is no other than the ability of human beings as

a species to act politically, on the basis of an ethics which incorporates this cultural heritage.

This passage from the biological terrain to the cultural terrain can be illustrated by numerous examples. One of the most interesting ones may be that whereby a dysfunction becomes an option, as in the case being studied here: a *disabled* individual is, from a biological point of view, a waste of nature, an imperfection of the species, and therefore will have very few chances to survive in the struggle for life, and even less so, to transmit their genes to future generations. From a cultural perspective, this is an *able* individual, capable of growing and improving, and of enhancing both the species and the individuals who are close to them (the others). A defect results in a valuable contribution, and difference in diversity. Hence that which is biological in nature becomes cultural. But culture does not mean that there are no strings attached, as it is imbued with inequality but disguised by notions of nature; and with power relationships codified in genetic arguments. It is culture explained as biology. The act of becoming cultural beings initially involves a step towards choice, autonomy and freedom. Nonetheless, the history of our species continues to have an impact today, despite having moved from a solely nature-based reality to a cultural one. In many cases the perspective adopted is biological, albeit culture-based. Here education plays a key role in the attempt to not cling to biological limitations, but to hold on to culture as a means to achieve new levels of freedom.

> For biologically imposed limits on human functioning are also challenges to cultural invention. The tool kit of any culture can be described as a set of prosthetic devices by which human beings can exceed or even redefine the 'natural limits' of human functioning. … Biology constrains, but not forevermore. (Bruner, 1990:21)

However, autonomy is not sufficient for our development. The world is made up of multiple subjectivities, and this recognition, as well as the concern about other people, becomes another fundamental milestone in our development as a species. This entails a shift from engaging in each of our actions as an *investment* (for example, as a sick animal is less likely to survive, the others do not use any efforts in ensuring that it manages to do so) to *spending without expecting to obtain any benefit* (human beings help other sick members of the species so that they can survive).[3] This is an altruistic action, the origin of ethics. It is in this social encounter of one human being with others that the greatest ethical manifestation occurs: the breaking of the economic relationship that binds one individual to the other, who then becomes a subject rather than just an object (the acknowledgement of the other).

The radical difference between these kinds of behaviour lies in their sense of usefulness. Whereas in the first case, the initiative is a response to an instinctive need; the care for sick people involves a costly action (in economic or biological terms, or in energy terms) which is no longer an investment, but merely an expense in the natural sense. Something emerges in human beings that leads them to carry out unprofitable (moral) tasks and something in the environment undoubtedly

changed to enable this conduct to take place (culture). This 'altruistic' action only happens when the individual is able to break away from the natural leash by creating a cultural nature. Additionally, once human beings have the ability to act without receiving anything in return, thanks to their relationship with the environment, the individuals of our species start to give value to the other. This is clearly a conscious action, where individuals are capable of separating themselves from the object by putting themselves in the other person's place. This marks the beginning of ethics in our species, or rather, in the world.

When we recognise others as subjects who construct and deconstruct their meanings, we understand the unconcluded nature of reality. Each individual develops different concepts of reality, of a reality that is cultural and therefore, undefined. Consequently, the knowledge of others' realities can only come from them. This situation calls for the use of consensus as a responsible action.

This entire process marks the passage from a biological to a cultural state of affairs; from a neutral to an ethical stance. In biology there is no difference between good and evil, since biology is not governed by the rules of morality, but by conditioned actions. A clear example can be used to identify that which is biological: instincts are very efficient and necessary mechanisms that help animals stay alive and maintain their species. Without them, an animal would not be able to survive in its environment, as confirmed by Charles Darwin. Animals had to develop a way to adapt to their environment, to be able to find food, reproduce, etc. These patterns allow them to stay alive as organisms, but fundamentally, as a species. Human beings, however, evolved (humanisation process), without resorting to instinctive mechanisms. This was mainly due to the fact that humans did not adapt to the environment, but adapted the environment to them by using their symbolic capacity, thus replacing instincts with reason. This makes us much more vulnerable in the first stages of our lives, whereas later in life it is a great advantage. Animals have clearly defined specific behaviour patterns, which are activated when they receive the appropriate stimulus. Nevertheless, when facing the same situation as any other animal, human beings are capable of discerning which response is the most relevant and on that basis they opt for one action or another. This issue, which is only succinctly argued here, is a basic explanation of the passage from the biological state of affairs (neutral, given the lack of any other options) to the ethical state of affairs, which emerges from having a choice assisted by both culture and by other human beings.

Culture therefore becomes the new context or habitat in which we develop, beyond the natural environment. This has strong implications, not only for the characteristics of human beings, but for the relationships they establish with their surroundings. Whereas in the natural context animals try to adapt in order to be able to survive, in these new surroundings, adaptation is merely one of the features in order to function effectively in the world. Culture is both something imposed on the individual (by means of socialisation) and something that may be changed by the individual (by means of education, related to autonomy and critical thinking). In this way, the biological and cultural contexts interact with each other. In J. Bruner's

words, '[it is]… biology that is the constraint, and that…culture even has it in its power to loosen that constraint.' (1990:23). Human beings are notably capable of modifying contexts, and turning them into their new organs. Their hands, for example, were replaced by tools with the ability to cut, handle things with great accuracy, and hold enormous weights.

The same happens with intelligence and the mind. In contrast with individual conceptions of intelligence, delimited by one's physical and morphological characteristics (and consequently, by one's psychological characteristics), J. Bruner (1990:33) advised that 'culture is also constitutive of mind', and meanings are 'public and communal rather than private and autistic' depending on their actualisation in culture. For him, culture, rather than biology, shapes human life and mind by the use of patterns inherent to the symbolic systems of culture (language, discourses, logics, forms of communal life, etc.).

This is why we agree with J. Bruner (1990:23–24) that 'to invoke biological devils… is to dodge responsibility for what we ourselves have created… We do better in questioning our ingenuity in constructing and reconstructing communal ways of life than to invoke the failure of the human genome. Which is not to say that communal ways of life are easy to change, even in the absence of biological constraints, but only to focus attention where it belongs, not upon our biological limitations, but upon our cultural inventiveness.' From this perspective the aim is not to identify natural limitations and remain fixated on them (the determination of the biological world), but to seek the potential provided by culture to overcome such determination. When this simple idea is translated into the school, it means that students can stop being blamed for 'their' failures, as so often happens with people with disabilities. The learning difficulties experienced by students considered to be normal are usually interpreted differently, and appropriate educational responses are often sought to overcome these difficulties. However, people with disabilities typically see how the expectations placed on them are dropped when, as other students, they encounter difficulties in their learning process. In these cases, there is a tendency to assume that they are due to limitations related to their 'disability', about which hardly anything can be done. Nevertheless, the arguments outlined up to this point should serve as an incentive to rethink cultural forms, to improve the quality of our lives and our relationships. All students can and should learn, as ignoring this would be tantamount to negating one of the main characteristics of individuals: their ability to learn, their very educability. The ultimate educational task is to break learners' limitations and help them to become a little freer. In order to eliminate existing boundaries, methodological, curriculum-based and organisational strategies need to be used.

Educability as an anthropological category is the *raison d'être* of pedagogy. According to Luis Navarro (quoted by López & Tedesco, 2002), the philosophy of education states that 'every person, as a "being", has the potential to be perfected, and therefore, is educable'. However, this educability, as existentialists proposed, is dependent upon the circumstances. An individual's potential will become actualised

when the necessary conditions are met for education to take place. This is why we share N. López and J.C. Tedesco's view that 'every child is born with the potential to be educated, but the social context often operates as an obstacle that prevents the development of this potential' (2002). This is why 'the traditions that appeal to hereditary, biological or genetic factors independent of the social or cultural context' should be explicitly rejected. This does not mean that conditions determine educability and the formation of the individual's identity, but they do have a strong impact on both of these aspects. The difference between them is qualitative in nature. Quoting Bello, López and Tedesco (2002) defined the concept of resilience by as 'the universal human ability for individuals to face life's adversities, overcome them and even be transformed by them'. This ability to transcend social conditions related to the processes of construction of reality (called 'interpretive identity') was articulated further elsewhere (Román, Calderón, & Torres, 2011). 'Interpretive identity' alludes to the capacity that subjects have to decipher the codes of the contexts in which they operate, while constructing their self-projection in a relatively autonomous manner based on their reading of reality. This way of constructing identity also encompasses a number of systematic identities, depending on the degree of awareness of each subject and the influence they have on their context. All of this leads to the statement that individuals can, and in fact do, transcend the structural frameworks in which they are placed, although these have a considerable impact on their identities.

Following P. Freire (2015:99), if we were simply the product of genetic, cultural, class or race determination, we would not be responsible for what we do, and therefore one would not be able to talk of ethics or hope; everything would be pre-established and there would be nothing to be done other than resign ourselves to it. This is closely related to certain deterministic conceptions that consider disability as a fault which is hardly likely to be transcended. In certain cases, these conceptions are so strongly based on biology that they do not recognise the freedom of choice that people with disabilities have. They are denied the ability to use their own judgment and take responsibility for their actions (as in the statement: 'they do not know what they are doing'). This is one of the main characteristics of freedom in connection with ethics. For Freire, human beings are *projects* and can have projects for the world. This gives meaning to education and bases hope on the educability of human beings, 'the unfinishedness of their being, of which they have become aware.' Freire described education as the permanent process of hopeful search that addresses human, conscious non-determination. Pursuing this line of thought, we believe that this search is shaped by the process of cultural construction that enables subjects to analyse reality in a relatively autonomous way, and promote the development of abilities, knowledge, feelings and values, as well as transformational actions of their own reality. Consequently, it is a projection of the individual and their environment that brings together what reality is (subject and context) and what it should ideally be.

This chapter has provided an overview of some of the ideas about disability that are largely shared by society (and by schools, as they are merely a subsystem of the broader social system). An anthropological conception of these ideas has also been

analysed from more inclusive perspectives. Given the socially prevailing values about the nature of human beings it is logical to conclude that socialisation processes continue to reproduce unfair models. A reflection and a concept of education have also been developed which are consistent with this cultural perspective. But, what happens in schools? What is the role they actually play in socialisation? What is the role schools should play, given that society is rooted in such biology-based, determinist conceptions?

It seems clear that the function of schools should involve taking a stance on the prevailing social coordinates. The education system—following Ángel I. Pérez Gómez (1999:137)—'loses its specificity and its true autonomy as a space for resistance, reflection and intellectual criticism, and becomes a mere instrument at the service of the demands of the social and economic system. The concept of education is becoming dissolved in the omnipotent process of socialisation', a 'polymorphic, changing and omnipresent influence of the dominant anonymous culture that is exerted through "spontaneous and natural exchanges" in the most diverse social institutions and bodies, both classic and modern … which have a strong impact on the development of the new generations and the way they think, feel, behave and express themselves' (Pérez Gómez, 1999:256). In this scenario, the role of schools should be to ensure that future generations are able to question the anthropological validity of socialisation processes, develop different alternatives and make relatively autonomous decisions. Thus, a school's work will be truly educational when the academic culture 'serves to ensure that each individual can consciously reconstruct their way of thinking and acting, through a long process of de-centring and critical reflection on one's own experience and other people's communication' (Pérez Gómez, 1999:275).

The awareness of the factors which condition our experience should be one of the foundations of school education since, in line with P. Freire (1996:186), 'it would be horrible if we could feel the oppression but could not imagine a different world. It would be horrible if we could dream about a different world as a project but not commit ourselves to the fight for its construction.' This constitutes the starting point of the study presented here, since it is our understanding that schools cannot be accomplices in perpetuating unfair schemas according to which people and groups should be classified. School classifications have strong repercussions both for the future life of students and for the construction of societies. This is due to the fact that schools as institutions are among the main social agents responsible for promoting, blocking and demoting people; and for positioning them in respect of the legitimised knowledge, standard skills and desirable conducts. This has strong implications for the labour market and wealth distribution,[4] among other aspects. It is a responsibility of schools to fight such injustices through reflection and intellectual criticism by both students and teachers. This will enable them to transform the situations in which they had initially been socialised, and denaturalise the prejudices conceived in day-to-day life.

> When teachers classify students into those who are 'intelligent' and 'non-intelligent ' (generally using dual schemas)… they make a distinction of which they are not always fully aware… These distinctions, which teachers seem to think are 'natural', evident, obvious, are related to the schemas perceived and incorporated by them—both individually and as a group—throughout their history and in a specific social environment. The 'naturalisation' of acts of distinction conceals their social and historical origin. (Kaplan, 1997:53–55)

Social reality then becomes the object of educational work, and it should be our main tool to achieve our purpose. We need to use social reality to be able to question it. But it should not be forgotten that the prevailing relationships between the various agents coming together in schools are assisted (most often unconsciously) by the schemas referred to above. This is why defending new schemas involves resisting the hegemonic systems used to interpret reality, while generating new ways of transforming it. This is the field of action of educational processes, in which new spaces are created to reconstruct culture and identities, while also transforming the scenarios in which they occur. In this sense, schools are eminently sociocultural institutions.

> School as such ceases to have a global meaning, and acts as an undetermined space which is a driving force of, and collaborator in, injustice. This is why it is necessary to give meaning to the school as a *community* institution, and to seek actual spaces of resistance for disadvantaged groups that promote a more democratic social construction. (Calderón, Contreras, & Habegger, 2002:27)

In order to continue to develop these ideas, further analysis is undertaken in the next section about the relationship between education and resistance. Following the parameters provided so far, we believe it is necessary to carry out a more in-depth review of the concepts underlying school practices, to reformulate what 'educating' means and reflect on the role of education practitioners as sociocultural agents.

2.2. RESISTANCE AS EDUCATIONAL ACTION

Once the concept of educability has been discussed, and the relevance and boundaries of the biological and cultural spheres, respectively, have been identified, it is now time to describe the repercussions that all of these arguments have both within and outside schools. It must be noted that these social representations[5]—particularly those related to 'disability', which are not too far removed from those that discriminate success from failure in schools—constitute the breeding ground for students to socialise with each other.

> In any event, if teachers have prejudices, to a certain extent this is due to the fact that their discourses and practices—considering that discourses also constitute practices—tend to reproduce ideas that are present in the society where they carry out their teaching. 'Breaking away' from these involves

> making an objective assessment of the ideas that they have internalised throughout their individual, social and school lives; not to discard them, but to analyse them and understand their impact on children's interaction and school results. (Kaplan, 1997, 43)

In this regard, 'an individual's social representations reflect social practices, while also determining the emergence of new practices' (Kaplan, 1997:43). This is how those students who are in the same class as students with a disability learn, almost without noticing it, the rules about what is valued and what is not valued, as an unconscious moral rule. This questions the actual morality of those norms, since they do not result from a clear personal choice, but from an unconscious appropriation of the prevailing moral rules. Stating that a person with a disability is unable to perform certain tasks may be a moral issue, but at the same time may be included within social schemas of interpretation which have been transferred from the social context to the individual realm, without necessarily involving prior reflection.

> Individuals are not fully aware of social representations; these operate implicitly, since they are internalised in the contexts in which individuals act and interact. (Kaplan, 1997:41)

Students construct their thoughts, feelings and behaviour largely bearing in mind the observations made by teachers in the classroom day after day. In this way—as well as through the media, their family environment, their neighbours, their peer groups, among others—they gradually acquire 'useful'[6] schemas to know who is good and who is bad; who is clever and who is stupid; who is a winner and who is a loser; who is successful and who is a failure.[7] In this way, not only is classroom culture being maintained, but students (either by adapting or by opposing) end up becoming agents of that culture.

Students who are affected by those representations are bombarded by a shared culture for which the school as an institution is particularly responsible. These students must develop despite being constantly questioned and delegitimised, and having their constructions despised. They realise that they are bound to fail in school, and this has serious consequences for them in the future from a social, emotional and employment point of view. Schools nowadays are subject to the production system; they anticipate the hierarchies established by the market and lay the groundwork for the next stage in the labour market through differentiated roles, discipline rules, acceptance of marks, competitiveness, etc. So school socialisation is closely related to the acquisition of the rules established by the neoliberal production system.

Our starting point for reflection and analysis is the oppression exercised by schools as institutions, and the various ways of legitimising and justifying the exclusion actions taken within them. Educability, as we argued in the previous section, is an anthropological condition, as well as being conditioned by the context in which

the individual operates. This is why depriving certain groups and/or individuals of the necessary conditions for them to learn in school is a way of denying their self-projections, denying their right to feel that they are human beings. Human beings are constant projects, since we are unfinished, conscious beings. Education is precisely this search process. Therefore, determinist arguments are direct attacks on education and human rights.

> Teachers' social representations about children's intelligence—that is, their visions, assessments and practical schemas—constitute a fabric that education research has not yet sufficiently unravelled. The challenge is to identify what ideas about intelligence teachers actually implement in their day-to-day practice in the classroom. An 'ideology of intelligence' includes cognitive and assessment issues, general ideas, myths and beliefs about the human nature of children, and more specifically, about the nature and potential for development of the student's intelligence. (Kaplan, 1997:41)

Resistance is the first step towards releasing the ties that reject and exclude certain oppressed groups and individuals. They constitute patterns that somehow oppose the continuous internalisation and acceptance of school socialisation. Disruptive acts in the classroom, such as negating the teacher's authority, devaluating school marks, infringing basic rules (timetables, spaces, prohibitions, etc.) may constitute manifestations of resistance to the hegemonic cultural system of the school as an institution. These are moral positions—many of them defensive, some others probably reprehensible—[8] that reveal some deficiencies in a context which often denies them the possibility of growing and progressing, while obliging them to sit at their school desks. Most of them are acts of protest and denouncement, as they unveil a latent conflict which is silenced by schools, mainly due to the vast differences in the options of real involvement in school decision making (either referred to the structure of scholastic tasks or to that of social relations). However, although the majority of these are purely produced for denouncement purposes, not all of them can be called acts of resistance.

P. Willis (1977) in his brilliant ethnographic study introduced the concept of resistance as a means to create counterculture.[9] This study showed that the counter-culture developed by students to resist the school system ultimately follows the implicit domination messages in the work that they perform outside the school, and therefore they continue to be controlled by the education system. As stated by H. Giroux (1983), resistance theorists have attempted to demonstrate how students who actively reject school culture often participate in a logic and a worldview that confirms, rather than criticises, the existing capitalist social relations. In addition to the fact that many of their positions are often contrary to the interests of students, they usually serve to reaffirm and reproduce the schemas of schools themselves. After all, exerting symbolic oppression by acting as a mouthpiece for the hegemonic culture is similar to exerting forceful oppression, when one is physically stronger or has more elaborate fighting strategies. This has been extensively analysed by

H. Giroux (1983), and it is pertinent at this stage to provide a few extracts that explain this interpretation further:

> What is missing in this perspective are analyses of those historically and culturally mediated factors that produce a range of oppositional behaviors, some of which constitute resistance and some of which do not. Put simply, not all oppositional behavior has "radical significance," nor is all oppositional behavior a clear-cut response to domination […]. Oppositional behavior may not be simply a reaction to powerlessness, but might be an expression of power that is fueled by and reproduces the most powerful grammar of domination.
>
> Thus, on one level, resistance may be the simple appropriation and display of power, and may manifest itself through the interests and discourse of the worst aspects of capitalist rationality. For example, students may violate school rules, but the logic that informs such behavior may be rooted in forms of ideological hegemony such as racism and sexism. Moreover, the source of such hegemony often originates outside of the school. Under such circumstances, schools become social sites where oppositional behavior is simply played out, emerging less as a critique of schooling than as an expression of dominant ideology. (Giroux, 1983:285–286)

As a result of this argument, Giroux concluded:

> In the most general sense, resistance must be grounded in a theoretical rationale that provides a new framework for examining schools as social sites which structure the experiences of subordinate groups. The concept of resistance, in other words, represents more than a new heuristic catchword in the language of radical pedagogy; *it depicts a mode of discourse that rejects traditional explanations of school failure and oppositional behavior and shifts the analysis of oppositional behavior from the theoretical terrains of functionalism and mainstream educational psychology to those of political science and sociology.* (Giroux, 1983:289; emphasis added)

These are the reasons why this kind of report has been prepared (guided by the feelings of the main actors involved) by analysing the discourses of those affected at the second level of elaboration, which are discussed further in the third analytical level. This is also why an introduction has been provided as a theoretical reflection on a new 'logic and worldview', which is recreated on a day-to-day basis by the relatives of those with a disability by taking distance from the prevailing social arguments. In this regard, we agree with the position held by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Moffe (quoted by Apple, 2000:195) that 'judicial institutions, the education system, labour relations, resistance discourses by marginal populations… construct original, irreducible forms of social protest and therefore, contribute to all the discursive richness and complexity on which the programme of a radical democracy should be based'. Likewise, H. Giroux (2000:133–134) highlighted the importance

of the desire to ensure that learning becomes part of social change. This involves 'listening to and working with the poor and other subordinate groups so that they might speak and act in order to alter oppressive relations of power.'

Through these counter-hegemonic discourses, the horizon opens up beyond the specific situation in a given classroom or school, and explanations and solutions can be found further, in the cultural platforms on which we are grounded. As H. Giroux (2000) stated, it is necessary to analyse the functioning of cultural texts in the material and institutional contexts that structure our daily life. We agree with M. Apple (2000:195) that our task should be to construct *transferable discourses*, to connect our educational actions with similar ones in other areas, and to collaborate with the movement so that people's rights prevail over ownership rights.

This is the framework in which we placed ourselves: considering schools as institutions to fight for democracy and justice, and teachers, as transforming intellectuals (Giroux, 1988, 1998, 2002; McLaren, 1995, 2002). We adopted a critical approach to the twofold role played by schools, which entailed a stark contradiction: while it reproduces the existing social relations (class relations linked to capitalist society, obviously ruled by inequality), it also conducts its educational action in a more or less democratic and egalitarian manner (Apple, 1997).[10] Teachers should take a stance in the endeavour to turn schools into democratic forums through which social, cultural and economic links imposed by hegemony can be dismantled. This is to be effected through participation, and ideally driven by oppressed groups, individuals and ideas.

This is the purpose of this book. We seek to share and build other ways of structuring the role of education practitioners, of schools themselves and of students in the practice of resistance, and we suggest that the text be read actively and critically. Despite any difficulties that may arise, whether they be structural, bureaucratic, cultural educational, attitudinal, or political, this challenging process of reflection needs to be undertaken, to show that educational elements rarely prevail in the governing institutions.

The aim is no other than to transcend reflection with the purpose of 'galvanizing the collective political struggle among parents, teachers and students around the issues of power and social determination' (Giroux, 1983:291).

However, can we become involved in the institutions and point to the existing options to change the dominant relations? (Apple, 1997:186) How can we illustrate the specific ways in which the curriculum, didactics and school organisation rely on interests of technical control of human activity, eliminating diversity and leading to a homogenising model?

> The pull of this counter-logic must be critically engaged and built into the framework of a radical pedagogy. […] But as an object of pedagogical analysis, this counter-logic must be seen as an important theoretical terrain in which one finds fleeting images of freedom that point to fundamentally new structures in the public organization of experience. […] Thus, it represents an important terrain in the ideological battle for the appropriation of meaning and

> experience. For this reason, it provides educators with an opportunity to link the political with the personal in order to understand how power is mediated, resisted, and reproduced in daily life. Furthermore, it situates the relationship between schools and the larger society within a theoretical framework informed by a fundamentally political question, How do we develop a radical pedagogy that makes schools meaningful so as to make them critical, and how do we make them critical so as to make them emancipatory? (Giroux, 1983:293)

The following sections will succinctly outline a number of issues. We will seek to understand and make visible some of the main problems generated from within schools regarding the way in which interpersonal relationships are created and recreated (Section 2.2.1); and how these often become hegemonic relationships of dependence and assistance which, in our view, are far removed from the educational field. In addition, we will analyse which curriculum, didactic and organisational resources schools use (particularly emphasising diagnostic resources) to determine unfair situations that should be removed from our repertory of ideas about education (Section 2.2.2). By identifying the problems, making available the means to denounce instances of pedagogical negligence, and ensuring that those who are oppressed are aware of their situation, some alternatives can be produced to construct a new model. The aim would be to provide students with a sense of autonomy, encouraging their ability for critical thought and transforming them. A continuous commitment and some critical training would be required on the part of education practitioners, as well as the active, dedicated involvement of families. Enabling these groups to act as a driving force has great potential (particularly for those who have been most severely harmed); not only because of what may be gained through their criticism, but also due to the difficulty in understanding the complex relations in schools, including those between the school as an institution, our market-oriented society, the socially-accepted diagnostic measures, and the daily practices of teachers and counsellors among others. These connections would probably become more visible and therefore, easier to oppose, if those relationships were analysed from the perspective of real cases of disadvantaged groups.

We will be satisfied if the example provided in the following chapters can serve to encourage some serious pedagogical reflection about schools and their relations with disabled people. The following section presents a theoretical approach to the grammar of schooling. Finding other cases to illustrate additional ways in which neoliberalism is introduced in teaching practices and the education system would be interesting and of great use for teachers.

2.2.1. Unequal Relationships and School Legitimisation

In order to analyse how many of the 'educational' actions implemented in schools have been legitimised according to a particular way of conceiving relationships, we will examine how the current hegemonic interaction model has been shaped. This model tends to leave to one side those whose chance to prove their abilities has been taken

away by science and history.[11] We believe it is necessary to further study the relationship between teachers and students, which often generates dependence. This makes it impossible for students to develop self-confidence, and recover their responsibility for decision-making and creating and re-creating their shared space, both in terms of human relationships and relationships with nature (Silva Virginio, 2004).

Numerous studies that have analysed in detail the intricacies of the explicit and concealed curriculum in schools could be reviewed here. However, only the work carried out by P. Freire will be drawn on at this point, due to its synthetic and enlightening nature, which is highly relevant to the current situation. He established a radical difference between two conceptions of education, primarily based on the way they approach the educator/educatee equation. On the one hand, the bank-clerk approach, which serves domination, as it considers people as passive beings and regards those who best adapt to the world as well 'educated'; and on the other hand, the problematising approach, which involves action and reflection by learners in order to change the world by addressing the *intentionality of consciousness*, and therefore serves as a liberating effort (Freire, 1970). Since the purpose of this section is to analyse the unequal relations existing in schools, the concept of bank-clerk education is described below in order to contextualise the subsequent discussion:

The banking conception does not overcome the teacher-student contradiction; on the contrary, by exacerbating it, it cannot serve any other purpose but domestication. As the contradiction is not overcome:

- teachers teach and students are taught;
- teachers discipline and students are disciplined;
- teachers talk and students listen;
- teachers choose and enforce their choice, and students comply;
- teachers choose the programme content, and students receive it as a 'deposit';
- teachers know everything and students know nothing;
- teachers are the subjects of the learning process, while students are mere objects.

Such a concept of education makes students passive and adaptive subjects. And what is more grievous still, it totally distorts students' human condition (Freire, 1974).

The concept of banking education by Freire continues to have a strong presence in schools. This is why resistance should involve visualising how, through these power relations, many subordinated groups have been and continue to be silenced;[12] undoubtedly, students are one of these groups, and even more so, disabled students. What should the role of schools and teachers in developing education actions be? Resistance in education could be driven by some of the following key actions:

- Working on the structure, which involves redesigning time/space aspects (Giroux & McLaren, 1998:87–88), and creating spaces for reflection to be shared by both teachers and students about their own practice through dialogue and participation. Seminars, workshops, assemblies, discussion groups, small self-reflection research projects, etc. could be some options to be considered.

- Initiating and causing participatory action research processes among the school community, in which the different groups could study further and provide solutions to certain problems. This would promote innovative experiences that could be disseminated to colleagues and to the university community (Sepúlveda et al., 2008, 2012).
- Developing critical awareness and recognising hegemonic practices—in all of their forms and interpretations—which are reproduced in schools. Strategies such as participant observation, class diary, self-assessment and discussions could be subsequently analysed by the education community.
- Recognising certain injustices within and outside schools, as well as the way in which they have been perpetrated in the name of education (Giroux, 1988). Engaging in a critical analysis of current social situations between students and teachers and involving the entire education community would be helpful in this endeavour.
- Undertaking a shared, collective struggle in and about the world using critical language. This would lead to the understanding of education as cultural politics, and to proposing a way of seriously considering racial, class, sex and power relations from a pedagogical perspective (Giroux, 1988). The relations established by personal differences would be added to the above, thus contextualising our proposal. In order to make changes in real life situations, it is necessary to go beyond the institution walls and become involved in the wider social environment (neighbourhood, district communities, etc.), moving from the immediate surroundings towards other boundaries of the community, and gradually incorporating other institutions and civic movements that work along the same lines (other schools, community social services, associations, NGOs, etc.).
- Constructing a pedagogy of possibility: if the world has been socially constructed, it can be critically rebuilt and constructed (P. Freire, P. McLaren). Small changes taking place should be socialised by publishing the results of research, studies, experiences and innovations, as well as through involvement in conferences, collaborations in specialist journals, etc.
- Considering the teaching profession as a continuous political deliberation, and teachers as critical intellectuals, who should go beyond the technical task currently assigned to them.
- Understanding that students, family and teachers form part of the same group, in search of a key objective: causing the emancipation of the school community to build a better world. This is why shared, cooperative spaces should be created to encourage meetings, events, projects, etc.

All of these proposals seek to have an impact on the educational role of teachers, from a perspective whereby teaching is a practice-based, continuous, systematic reflection process. These tools can be useful to develop the educational function in schools, by encouraging teachers to go beyond their immediate scope for action in the socialising and instructive functions of schools.

If teachers merely limit their work to their socialisation and instruction roles, their students will learn to develop within the framework determined by their social origin, personal characteristics, culture, etc. However, greater emphasis could be placed on the social functions that help students to challenge the current social system (which leads them in a specific direction in the future), and on giving them tools to question and investigate that system, as well as building useful learning resources that they can manage, understand and design themselves. Education would then become oriented towards the active construction of society (citizenship) and the individual and social realisation of freedom.

But this option makes the teaching role more difficult, as it involves a change from considering teachers as mere technical practitioners, to regarding them as critical intellectuals. As technical practitioners, they are simply required to apply what others design, always following a top-down plan in which the theoretical framework is given by other experts. This means that the profession is deprived of its critical element and research-oriented attitude. Some of the most important components in the teaching profession are thus disqualified, simplified and eliminated, particularly those related to the ability to develop rigorous scientific knowledge, resulting from the hands-on conditions of teaching practices. The ethical component is also removed, as the teacher's work tends to be seen as neutral and aseptic, focused on tasks in which the individual seems to have no involvement, and therefore becomes radically deprived of moral reflections and key questions for educational practice. What is education? What is the purpose of education? If teachers attempt to answer these questions, they may be able to construct a professional identity based on their actual experience that they will find rewarding from an emotional and intellectual point of view.

2.2.2. Institutional Resources and Social Reproduction: Resisting Diagnoses

Many injustices are perpetuated by using various institutional resources (teacher training, curriculum, evaluation, etc.). Not in vain has pedagogy had the unconditional support of, and been grounded on, quantitative conceptions and positivist science. It has also been subordinated to disciplines such as psychology, sociology and medicine throughout history. Here we have the opportunity to challenge these conceptions and develop resistance to the policies they generate, fundamentally by adopting an ethical and pedagogical position. Unfortunately, educational practice continues to be based on those reductionist approaches to validate school decisions, as will be illustrated in later sections by the case of Rafael and his family.

Racism, intolerance, xenophobia and the old idea that inequalities between human beings are natural, are conceptions that have been apparently grounded on scientific arguments and theories, which justify them as biology-based differences. Biological determinism has led to the belief that inequalities are to be found in genes. The case at stake (the diagnosis of a student with Down's syndrome and the reports arising from that diagnosis) may encourage education practitioners to revisit the errors of the past that have had a crucial impact on the present.

Different approaches to, and definitions of, intelligence have been provided throughout history, and various attempts have also been made to measure it. Going back in history, Francis Galton—a cousin of Charles Darwin—was convinced that genetics played a role in terms of intelligence. He argued that a test should be applied to measure intelligence and eugenic programmes and social reforms should be put in place under the auspices of those programmes, as he strongly believed that intelligence was inherited, just as land or money were (Gazzaniga, 1998). He was of the belief that individual differences—which included moral, intellectual and character differences—were not acquired. Later, Paul Broca attempted to find a relationship between the anatomy of the brain and intelligence levels by measuring the cranium. In 1890 James Cattell devised 'mental tests' (focused mainly on the physiological nature of the brain) in order to turn psychology into an applied science. Subsequently, in 1905, Alfredo Binet in France developed the first intelligence measuring scale for children to be used in schools with an educational purpose, which would be useful for students experiencing difficulties. This scale was introduced into the United States a few years later by Henry Goddard in a very different way to the original approach taken by Binet, and amended further by Lewis Terman. This last version, which applied principles totally opposed to the original one, included the concept of intellectual quotient by William Stern, and would be taken as a baseline to be correlated with all the other tests.

The purpose of some of these scientific fields was to legitimise the idea that intellectual nature differs based on biological criteria. This resulted in social stratification: whites versus blacks, rich versus poor, men versus women, western people versus the rest of the world and so on (Burt, 1909; Goddard, 1920; Yerkes & Pearson, 1925; Jensen, 1969; Murray & Herrnstein, 1994).

Scores in intelligence tests have been long used in psychology as the main tool to obtain various 'scientific' conclusions. These scores, based on the intellectual quotient (I.Q.) figure, are distributed on a line along which the general population are located. Differences are established between the so-called Gauss curve or normal distribution curve and those who are different (Figure 1). According to this model, intelligence is calculated by dividing the mental age by the chronological age, and then multiplying it by 100. Hans Jurgen Eysenck (1981) defined it as follows: 'Bright children have an I.Q. above 100, slow children below 100, and average children have an I.Q. of approximately 100.' These considerations are widely used in political, educational, employment and judicial environments nowadays.

W. Stern (1914), L. Terman (1916), C. Burt (1922) and others suggested that an I.Q. score below 70 qualified as mental retardation. The very process of the construction of intelligence tests has been widely criticised by the scientific community and by those people who have suffered their consequences. We continue to wonder, alongside with one of Rafael's brothers, how the different dimensions that assess the items in the batches of questions are finally reduced to a single, linear dimension that reflects the classification… This critique of the how the tests are developed seems relevant to us, and the following pages deal with these reflections.

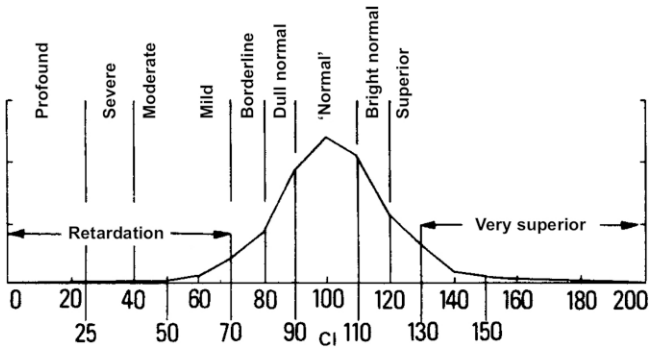


Figure 1. Distribution of the I.Q., indicating the meaning of each of the categories/scores (Eysenck, 2009:58)

People placed on a measuring tape

Some time ago my brother Rafael took some intelligence tests. My mother thought—thanks to the early care centre that he attended in his earlier years—that my brother was quite intelligent. But the latest tests have placed him well below those initial projections, and she didn't know what to do. However, I don't understand anything. I think what they said in that initial centre was much more scientific and logical: 'This boy is exceptional, he is very intelligent', without needing to use graph papers which placed him along a measuring tape.

I deliberately said 'measuring tape', because it is a classic measuring device. In general, we have all learnt about the different types of numbers: we were told that there are natural numbers (1, 2, 3, 4…); whole numbers (…, −3, −2, −1, 0, 1, 2, 3…); and nearly in the last place we were taught that there are rational numbers: between a higher and a lower rational number, there is always another rational number, for example, in the exact half (arithmetic mean). The last body of numbers we all know are real numbers. It was typical to be told that $\sqrt{2}$ is not rational (Pythagoras used to say that it was not a number). When looking at all of the above sets, there is an absolute order. This means that, if any two numbers are taken from one of the sets, either it is the same number, or one is higher than the other. The advantage of these sets of numbers not only lies in that there is total order, but in that it is compatible with addition and multiplication. If two positive numbers are added up, a higher positive number is obtained. If two numbers higher than 1 are multiplied, a higher number is obtained. This order is therefore extended to operations. Hence the entrenched representation we have of numbers on a line, which is even called the 'Real Line' for real numbers: the measuring tape.

But the total order ends right there, in the Real Line. Let us imagine that we have two lines, because what we need to do now is to position different points on a piece of paper. One of the lines would be the width and the other one the length. Any two points of that plane have an x-coordinate and a y-coordinate (two real lines) which determine them perfectly. This is what is usually referred to as a 2-dimensional vector space. The Real Line would only be a particular case in which the vector space has a single dimension. However, when the space has two or more dimensions, there is no order compatible with the operations, which is precisely what confers on real numbers their privileged character for measurement.

Let us turn now to complex numbers, for example. These numbers are not known to all students. I have a brother who is studying at university. One day he asked me: 'What is a complex number?' I showed him the diagram of complex numbers as points of a plane and real numbers as points of a line. His answer was: 'Why didn't you ever say that before?' But that problem should be dealt with elsewhere.

In our four diagrams (Figure 2), three of the points have the same coordinates, but they have been exchanged. The first question to ask to order the points is: Which coordinate has highest priority, which is second and which is third in terms of priority? For example, we could impose the following order (point 1): the point with the highest x-coordinate will be the highest. If two have the same x-coordinate, the one with higher y-coordinate will be higher. Finally, if both their x-coordinate and their y-coordinate are the same, the higher number will be that with a higher z-coordinate. If all three coordinates are the same, it will be the same point. Clearly there is total order: any point may be compared with any other, and one is higher and the other one, lower.

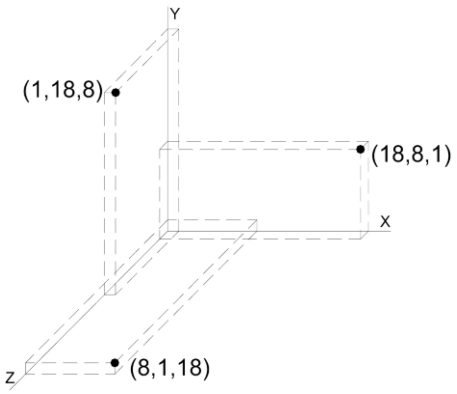


Figure 2. Graphic representation of points 1, 2 and 3

The next question is: What would happen if the order were: first y, then z and last, x (point 2)? And if the order were: first z, then y and last, x (point 3)? There would obviously be two different ways of ordering the entire space. Which of these three forms that perfectly organise space is the correct one? The only possible answer is that point 1 is the highest in the first ordering system, point 2 is the highest in the second system and point 3 is the highest in the third system.

But one may think of other ways of creating order. The first one may be by joining the point of origin (0,0,0)[13] with point 1 and measuring the distance between them, thus obtaining measurement 1. Next we could do the same with point 2, and obtain measurement 2, and we would do the same with point 3, resulting in measurement 3. This manner of measuring—by distance—is a classic metric way to do so. These distances are called modules (d_2).[14] Let us now see the measurements of 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1. Average of the points drawn in Figure 2 through the module, as detailed in Figure 3

Point	*Measurement*
Measurement 1	$\sqrt{18^2 + 8^2 + 1^2} = 19.7$
Measurement 2	$\sqrt{8^2 + 1^2 + 18^2} = 19.7$
Measurement 3	$\sqrt{1^2 + 18^2 + 8^2} = 19.7$
Measurement 4	$\sqrt{9^2 + 9^2 + 9^2} = 15.6$

As can be seen, if each number were somehow represented by its module, points 1, 2, and 3 would obviously be the same. Point 4 would be different, although the addition of its coordinates is the same as the addition of the coordinates of points 1, 2, and 3 (compare with the results in Tables 1 and 2).

It is clear that, if different coordinates represent different aptitudes, this way of measuring is fairly crude. Moving the aptitudes around makes no difference, as the measurement is exactly the same. This means that some information has been lost. Even the addition of the coordinates for point 4 is the same as that for the other three points.

This would be another measurement of the module, the metrics associated to d_1, in vector spaces on real numbers. In simple terms, the field of Mathematics which studies proximity and distance is Topology, and shows that the two formulas provided above to measure the module lead to the same structure of space. That is, they are two equivalent measurements. There is also another form that could be useful: the highest coordinate (d). These other measurement models, as well as the countless number of measurements that will not be discussed here, again come to show that some information is missing.

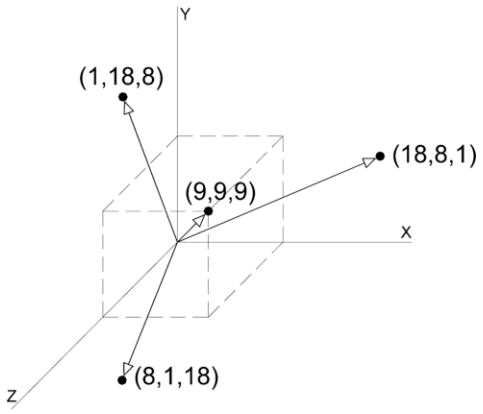


Figure 3. Graphical representation of points 1, 2, 3 and their respective modules

So let us go back to our three points. Some might think that I am making things complicated, as it would be very easy to calculate an arithmetic mean. By merely inspecting it, the arithmetic means of all four points are identical.

Table 2. Measurement of the points through the first metrics in vector spaces drawn in Figure 2

Point	*Measurement*
(18, 8, 1)	18 + 8 + 1 = 27
(1, 18, 8)	1 + 18 + 8 = 27
(8, 1, 18)	8 + 1 + 18 = 27
(9, 9, 9)	9 + 9 + 9 = 27

Table 3. Arithmetic mean of the points drawn in Figure 2

Point	*Measurement*
(18, 8, 1)	$\frac{18 + 8 + 1}{3} = 9$
(1, 18, 8)	$\frac{1+ 18 + 8}{3} = 9$
(8, 1, 18)	$\frac{8 + 1 + 18}{3} = 9$
(9, 9, 9)	$\frac{9+ 9 + 9}{3} = 9$

> As can be seen, some information is still lost. The same would have been the case with the geometric mean.
>
> Others, however, would say that I have erred on the side of caution, and that space can be totally ordered by adding a couple of angles to the module (regardless of the metrics used). But there would again be three coordinates with which to identify any point on the plane. Any order can be established, prioritising the module, the first angle or the second angle.
>
> As can be seen, the issues of order and metrics cannot be easily solved in a space of two or more dimensions. In any case, unless a total order is obtained by imposing a given weight for each of the coordinates (giving more value to some coordinates than to others) some information is simply lost. When the coordinates of the population are included in the normal bell distribution curve, people who are very different from each other are made equal, since to make the curve normal the first thing to do is to place scores on the real line, for example, making arithmetic means.
>
> In other areas of science (for example, in Biology), when there is no ordering system, there is no attempt to establish order. If there are several bodies of data in different dimensions, they are studied by analysing the similarities and differences between them to reach conclusions that lead to a model to understand them better.
>
> There is one last point to be discussed. In all of the above statements about metrics, it is clear that the greater the number of dimensions, the more variety; therefore, when an order is imposed more data are lost. In addition, the greater the number of dimensions, the higher the number of coordinates, and the greater the number of priorities imposed on some coordinates than on others. This implies that there is more arbitrariness.
>
> Now, let us return to my brother. I have been told that in the Baccalaureate there are at least 200 different skills (orthogonals, as we would say in Mathematics), and all of them have to be included within a single one, or within a new one where I do not really know the weight that has been given to each of the coordinates. Incidentally, if there is no clear definition to date as to the multiple forms of intelligence that exist, or even as to the number of them, how can metrics such as the one described be implemented? How many dimensions does my brother lose when he is subjected to an intelligence test? (Julián, Rafael's brother, Engineer and Mathematician, 2004)

Many sciences (including psychology, sociology and pedagogy) have promoted the classification of, and distinction between, human skills based on the conception explained above. Many of the classifications have resulted in tremendous social injustices, in racist or sexist political programmes, and in segregating educational policies. An example of this were the 'national origin quotas', which allowed or

refused immigrants depending on their origin on the basis of existing proportions of the population at the beginning of the 20th century (Lewontin, Kamin, & Rose, 1984). Other examples of the social and political use given to tests are: the statement of the American Declaration of Independence in which '"all men are created equal," they meant quite literally "men," since women certainly did not enjoy these rights… they did not mean literally "all men"' (Lewontin, Kamin, & Rose, 1984:65); boys and girls have been deprived of the right to receive specialist care from public officers according to their I.Q.; subsidy policies were subject to these measurements (Benedet, 1991:78), etc.

These issues have not gone unnoticed in schools. The practice of applying these tests to students in schools and interpreting their results in this way was intended to decide whether they were to be admitted to ordinary classrooms or not. This practice persists in a considerable number of educational institutions. Besides, the very concept of intelligence underlying the tests is highly doubtful, which is why numerous criticisms have been made, such as the one made by Rafael's brother, and many others. As explained by C. Kaplan (1997:55), this critique is generally based on the fact that the boundaries between 'intelligent' and 'non-intelligent' children are arbitrary, and they persist because they are reinforced by the entire social order (assessments, beliefs, social representations, rules, institutions). As a result, teachers ultimately appropriate the idea of intelligence that prevails in society.

In numerous cases, these tests constitute the perfect argument to 'lawfully' relocate disabled students and move them away from private schools (and even from *escuelas concertadas*, that is, publicly funded private schools), or at least, outside of ordinary classrooms. This is the case for the programmes set forth in the various Spanish education acts (*LOGSE, LOE, LOCE*) implemented over the years: the so-called *Programas de Diversificación curricular* (curriculum diversification programmes) established by the *LOGSE* and *LOE*, the *itinerarios* (pathways) regulated by the *LOCE*, and the *Programas De Garantía Social* contemplated by the *LOGSE*, later renamed as *Programas de Cualificación Profesional Inicial* (initial professional qualification programmes) as put in place by the *LOE*. These were different ways of seeking homogeneous groupings in ordinary classrooms, which would continue to follow the general curriculum (with greater value in social and therefore, in employment and economic terms). In parallel, new schooling models were developed that were based on 'catch-all' standards. These were intended to cover any students who, due to their social or personal features, failed to meet the requirements of the general curriculum, without needing to question the curriculum itself, the organisation or the teaching actions. This is why the results of these tests, together with school marks obtained, continue to be one of the most commonly used selective criteria for students to access certain schools and classrooms.

This means that too many education practitioners take for granted that the schools where some students are placed can be scientifically determined by applying these tests. Some others use them despite not being fully convinced, as intelligence tests have a strong legitimising power. However, some of us believe that the educational

task lies precisely in preventing the exclusion they generate. In our view, the role of psychological and pedagogical evaluation, as well as of diagnoses, is to choose an evaluation system that is inclusive of all students and to take responsibility for the consequences. This is a hard, complicated task, especially considering that the conception first described has gained scientific and institutional legitimation, despite being flawed.

What is the view underlying these quantitative tests?

> The I.Q. test in America, and the way in which we think about it, has been fostered by men committed to a particular social view. That view includes the belief that those on the bottom are genetically inferior victims of their own immutable defects. The consequence has been that the I.Q. test has served as an instrument of oppression against the poor—dressed in the trappings of science, rather than politics. The message of science is heard respectfully, particularly when the tidings it carries are soothing to the public conscience. There are few more soothing messages than those historically delivered by the I.Q. testers. The poor, the foreign-born, and racial minorities were shown to be stupid. They were shown to have been born that way. The underprivileged are today demonstrated to be ineducable, a message as soothing to the public purse as to the public conscience. (Kamin, 2009:1–2)

These ideas implicitly assume that not all people can be educated and that it is not worth spending money on educational initiatives for those with a low I.Q., contrary to what we have argued here.

These sciences are based on weakly-grounded studies, which have been revealed to be fallacious. Authors such as R. Lewontin, Stephen Rose and L. Kamin (1984) and Stephen Jay Gould (1997) have exposed and denounced this kind of scientific research. These authors have de-mythified and disproved some of the arguments proposed by biological determinism, as they led to serious scientific mistakes being committed that have influenced the history of racist and xenophobic policies, and benefited certain social groups to the detriment of many others (who were supposedly predetermined by their genetic make-up). Biological determinism has promoted social and political judgements that have had a significant impact and given rise to great injustices, resulting from the promotion of values such as discrimination and segregation.[15]

> Students marginalised by class, race and gender were never invited to participate in the educational discourses, pedagogical practices and institutional relations that shaped their daily lives. Even worse, they were often marginalised and oppressed within those discourses and social formations. (Giroux, 2002:17)

We all know individuals and groups who, as a result of their schooling, have been placed in marginalised roles, which have therefore been harmful to their lives. These people not only failed to benefit from school as they should, but they were also at the receiving end of a classification tool that put them in the worst places. In this regard what is the educationalist's role, from a critical, transformative perspective? Keeping

their distance and remaining outside of the situation does not mean that they should adopt a neutral stance. By doing so, injustices would simply be allowed to happen, for which education practitioners would be partly responsible. When faced with these unbalanced situations, counter-hegemonic discourses are generated which teachers often refuse to hear, as they are usually stigmatised by the institution. These include protests from students (to a large extent fairly basic), which are largely counter-productive; events where lack of respect for teachers is shown, or their authority is questioned; and violent actions by students. These are unelaborated protests which are more the outcome of impotence than carefully thought-through interventions. In these scenarios educational practitioners have the ability to generate resistance to unfair orders and undertake educational action in a number of ways:

- By making any unfair impact visible, denouncing it, and encouraging a critical response from the education community as a whole.
- By questioning the 'truth regimes' which have been legitimised by neutral scientific approaches, and developing new approaches to understand, interpret and transform reality.
- By conducting scientific research which moves away from the idea of neutrality; by making a commitment as public intellectuals; ceasing to be subservient to power and attached to personal success; and detaching themselves from being granted a certain status, and being recognised within the history of the particular subject they teach.
- By re-thinking and restructuring the nature of teaching, both from a practical viewpoint and from the theoretical perspective that arises from it.
- By supporting those who are disadvantaged and promoting knowledge and skills among students for the sake of their learning; by encouraging their role as *subjects who are the makers of their own history,* as this helps transform the oppression working against them and against other individuals and groups.

> From this perspective, the conditions to teach and learn cannot be separated from how and what students learn. Public schools do not need standard tests and curricula. On the contrary, they need curriculum justice, ways of teaching that are inclusive, tender, respectful, financially equitable and which are partly intended to undermine or decrease the repressive means of education that produce hierarchies and legitimise inequality, while at the same time providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to become full critical actors and social agents. (Giroux, 2002)

Having covered the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of the current state of affairs, and the role to be played by schools, it is now time to analyse experience. The next chapter illustrates these issues by disclosing the unfair situations generated by a given school. These concerned Rafael, a student with Down's syndrome, and the resistance exerted by him, his family, and the group of education practitioners who supported him.

NOTES

[1] This section has been extensively developed in Calderón-Almendros (2014).

[2] The concept of culture adopted here is that proposed by Clifford Geertz (1973:5). This concept is 'essentially […] a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Webber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.'

[3] A difference must be established between these actions and those which at first sight might seem altruistic in animals, such as mothers protecting their progeny. The intention involved in each of these situations is radically different, as instinctive conditioning underlies mothers' protection of their progeny, as opposed to a cultural option chosen in the case of human beings supporting sick members of their species.

[4] Ultimately, the 'naturalisation' of unbalanced social relationships is closely related to the above issues. An example of this would be to make the future career of certain social groups dependent on the low school marks they obtained. It is a way of 'naturalising' that the poor will always be poor, and schools play an important legitimising role in doing so. Social relations (governed by conflicts of power, ideology and vested interests, among others) are then based on biological arguments.

In a previous publication we discussed this issue at greater length (Calderón, Contreras, & Habegger, 2002:25–28). We argued that schools, instead of contributing to compensate for inequality, 'play the opposite role, as they give a negative status to poor groups, working classes, people with disabilities, immigrants, indigenous population and, in general, those who are excluded; they are not recognised as being legitimately entitled to participate in the community because pedagogical arguments are used that treat social problems as psychological, and therefore they are removed from the democratic values referred to before.'

[5] Beatriz Celada et al. (2000) presented an interesting conceptual journey about the social representations of disability. This covered other relevant concepts, such as opinions, images, implicit theories and relationship between significance and meaning. In the piece of research entitled 'Representations on disability by university students of education' (*Las representaciones sobre discapacidad de alumnos universitarios de carreras docentes*), the concept of social representations was placed half way between the social and the psychological, and basically relied on the contributions of the pioneer in the use of the term, Serge Moscovici (1961). He defined social representations as almost tangible entities that 'incessantly circulate, cross and materialise in our day-to-day life by means of a word, a gesture, an encounter'. These researchers highlighted that most of our close relationships are steeped in social representations. These representations are dynamic sets that are mainly characterised by the production of behaviour and relations with the environment, and modify both of them.

[6] The term 'useful' is employed here to refer to students' way of operating within the coordinates of the school. In some way, being in agreement with these reference points makes it easier for them to operate within that context. However, the fact that they are useful does not make them morally acceptable.

[7] The acquisition of contextual schemas is not passive. In fact, there is a continuous participative—often unbalanced—dialogue between the individual and the environment, which is not always accepted. These unbalanced interventions may be simply thoughts and concerns full of feelings of impotence, since these individuals do not have (or believe that they do not have) the necessary power to change reality. Resistance is one of the means for students to oppose the schemas within which they are placed.

[8] For further discussion of this idea, see Pilar Sepúlveda and I. Calderón (2002).

[9] According to the Oxford Dictionary, counter-culture means a way of life and set of attitudes opposed to, or at variance with, the prevailing social norm.

[10] H. Giroux (1983:260) also stressed this idea: 'Schools often exist in a contradictory relation with the dominant society, alternately supporting and challenging its basic often exist in a contradictory relation to the dominant society, alternately supporting and challenging its basic assumptions. For instance, schools sometimes support a notion of liberal education that is in sharp contradiction to the dominant society's demand for forms of education that are specialized, instrumental, and geared to

the logic of the marketplace. In addition, schools still strongly define their role via their function as agencies for social mobility even though they currently turn out graduates at a faster pace than the economy's capacity to employ them.'

[11] Despite that, we never deny the capacity and persistence that these agents have to defend their rights. This report is clearly evidence of this ability.

[12] We do not want to ignore the fact that other more complex perspectives tend to analyse the institutional and social circumstances that, to a certain extent, explain the distance between both groups. While on some occasions our arguments might seem to be only addressed to teachers, we understand that they are also victims of a wider social system. From the beginning we have placed the discussion in the political arena, and therefore we approach the issue from a broader perspective, which basically means that the education system is subject to economic and production-related interests. However, since we understand that this is a political discussion, and that teachers cannot be mere tools of the education system, but critical intellectuals who should continue to reshape that system, we emphasise the role of teachers. The purpose of this document is no other than to reopen the debate by denouncing the situation.

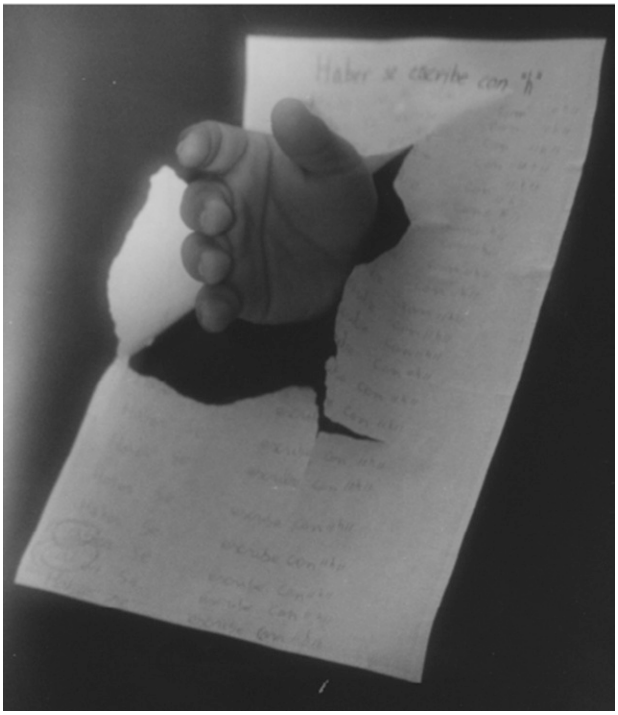
[13] In the case of the tests, the point of origin would be the population's average. However, it is intriguing that this is a recurrent problem: the average is obtained based on the same tool.

[14] The formula for module (r) is $r = \sqrt{x^2 + y^2 + z^2}$.

[15] The historical analysis discussed in this chapter is based on the study by S. Habegger (2002).

CHAPTER 3

THE EXPERIENCE



Breaking through barriers. Photograph by José Francisco Calderón, Rafael's brother, 2004

My dove brother

He is whiter than one could possibly imagine,
his whiteness, pure and beautiful,
his swaying, his walk and manner could charm the whole world,
but he is so pure that the world would also need to be beautiful.
This dove I talk about
does not need to beat his wings to fly,
his life is flight and glide,
the warmest flight and glide one could possibly imagine.

He doesn't need to speak to say I love you.
His words would be 'That's what I like, I love you.'
He doesn't need to kiss to give you a kiss,
as his glide is a pure kiss.
But people don't see him gliding, flying, swaying.
They don't hear him say 'That's what I like, I love you.'
They don't see him gliding, kissing.
They only see a strange thing, different from them.
They don't see that pure whiteness,
that walk and swaying.
Because this world is not pure
and if it is not pure
he cannot charm them.

Isidro Calderón, Rafael's brother, 2004

3.1. THE STUDENT, HIS FAMILY AND THE SCHOOL: HOW THE CONFLICT AROSE[1]

Rafael, a trisomic student who was aged 20 at the time that the events described here occurred, always had the support of his family. They were fully involved in his education process from the very beginning. His schooling was also supported by the work and help of professionals from three main different contexts of formal and non-formal education: early care, school support at home (speech therapists, teachers, psychologists and educationalists) and school. Rafael was a student at the school nearest to his home (which all his brothers and sisters also attended) for approximately 16 years. He completed his pre-school, primary and compulsory secondary education in this school, which is a social economy based, publicly-funded private school (*escuela concertada*).

During Rafael's pre-schooling and primary education years, there was full understanding among all actors involved. It was a source of happiness for the family to see how Rafael learnt to enjoy the time he spent with his fellow students and doing his school work. It was in the last years of his secondary schooling that some obstacles and difficulties emerged in his education. These years were marked by a change in the family's feelings, and complications started at the beginning of his secondary education. It was at that stage that the school (the same where he had completed his primary education), through its counsellor, 'revealed' to the family that Rafael had Down's syndrome, and suggested that a different school should be found to provide him with better resources to meet his needs. This was identified by the family as mere pressure to move Rafael to a different school, and triggered the deterioration of the relationships between the school and the family. As Rafael's mother clearly stated: 'We said no, and everything changed' (Basilisa Almendros, Rafael's mother, 2003).[2]

Rafael's tutor disagreed with this view and seemed to prevent the move to exclude him from the school's activities. As a result, in the first stage of secondary

school Rafael was able to enjoy not only his classroom work but also the academic recognition he received for completing his daily tasks. Teachers up to that point had understood that it was necessary to appreciate not only students' skills and knowledge, but also their attitudes, behaviour and values, both within and outside the classroom, as established by law. Without doubt, Rafael—the only person with Down's syndrome to have ever studied at the school—had made an impact that was both desirable and wonderful. The growth of all of those children and their respective teachers had been enhanced by being in the same class with a trisomic person, and this contributed to a more humane, diverse and caring society. These were in fact the objectives sought by the educational policies that brought integration into the classrooms. However, the teaching team changed when Rafael moved on to the third year of compulsory secondary education and this again had a strong effect on the relationship between the family and the school. This time it was accompanied by a significant drop in the student's performance and marks. In fact, in most of the documents produced by the family to describe the events that took place, they stressed that the change in the team of teachers had been highly significant, particularly because the school's counsellor was part of it. 'From the third year of secondary education the expectations that teachers placed on Rafael decreased, clearly influenced by the counsellor's views.'

It was at that time that certain comments started to be made, including: 'He cannot do any better because his I.Q. is very low'[3] or 'he has to fail by law' (Basilisa Almendros, Rafael's mother, 2003). The family had long ceased to give any consideration to views such as the above. However, the counsellor insisted that, according to the applicable law—which she never actually showed to the internal researcher—the student could not pass. From the first to the second term a substantial change took place. In the first term Rafael's marks included seven passes, two fails and a positive observation made by his tutor: 'Very enthusiastic and dynamic. Keep up the good work in the next term. Merry Christmas!' These sort of marks had been customary until then. In the second term, however, his marks included five fails and five passes, which became the general trend from then onwards. In fact, his final marks in the third year of secondary education were passes in 5 subjects and fails in another 5 subjects. The student moved to the following year because he had exhausted his school year retakes in primary, and in the fourth year, the marks tilted the balance: seven fails, one pass and one subject with fail/pass. No observations were made to the family. As a result, Rafael had to retake that year.

All of this meant that the family, through the internal researcher, requested that all necessary actions be taken to ensure that Rafael might have a chance to 'graduate' from secondary school, as he himself explicitly stated and wanted, including an adaptation of the curriculum, which had not been considered to be necessary until then by any of the teams that had taught the student. 'On several occasions the family offered their assistance to various different tutors to find classroom strategies to help them deal with the diverse range of students they had. The family always understood that students learn together, and Rafael was not

the only one who should receive different care. What cannot be accepted is that a student who has been consistently working hard—and proved his great effort and determination—will not have a chance to pass his exams, not even when didactic and curriculum-related measures are taken to adapt the teaching methodologies and contents to his needs.' The family had made a strong effort for Rafael to learn that his marks were not the most important thing, and the school had caused him to 'unlearn' this:

> His marks dropped and the kid really felt it… From then on we were really upset on his behalf, but despite everything, he could not believe that it was true (B. Almendros, Rafael's mother, 2003).

This is how Rafael explained it:

> At the school there's a party at the end of the fourth year of secondary and they gave diplomas to everyone in that year and plaques to those who passed (awards). They didn't give me the plaque because I had failed, and my body felt bad (my face was white, I was weak and felt like crying). When I got my marks I didn't cry because I'm a man; I made an effort not to cry, but when I got home I cried. I was going to put the tele on and have some fun, but in the end I decided not to; I turned the tele off because I felt bad.
>
> The teachers have failed me because they don't think it's important that I work hard, the hours of private lessons, that I'm very busy with my other studies (music). They don't care about me, because until the third year of secondary I had passed, but in the fourth year they failed me. They didn't value my work. The teachers explained things to all the… students and I couldn't keep them in my head, so they taught me a little bit, but that's something. Sometimes they teach me well and sometimes they teach me badly. I always paid attention because I like paying attention and working hard to pass to the next year.
>
> The effort wasn't worth it, it didn't show in the marks… What I did was worth something, for example 'he shows maturity in his work and is keen'.
>
> Teachers should give me a hand, should really help me, whatever it takes, however tiring it is. I only want to finish next year. (Calderón, 2002)

That was when the family started to find solutions—some only defensive, some more education-related—to the problems that were arising, as 'from then on…the school decided to focus on creating obstacles for the student instead of using their efforts to improve his education.' The family knocked on many doors, spent a long time obtaining information and training, and were determined to resist the injustices and discrimination imposed by the school. Signatures were obtained from neighbours, professionals, associations and institutions; interviews were held with different social and education agents; numerous letters were sent to education officers and

political representatives; the case was denounced to the Ombudsman and in the press and specialist journals. These were some of the measures taken by the family and by Rafael himself to fight unequal practices taking place in secondary education, which is compulsory in Spain. The family's objective was always to *combat the unfair situations and discrimination suffered by people with Down's syndrome in schools,* of which Rafael had been a victim. This aim was highlighted in several documents produced by them:

> Compulsory education, which is highly important in the fight for equality, continues to have segregating, classist and unfair connotations, as experienced by Rafael. We cannot allow the most defenceless groups to be marginalised with total impunity by schools that defend the principle of equal opportunities (defined not only by equality in access, but by equality in success). (Email expressing the disagreement on the part of Rafael's family's, prepared to ask neighbours for their support, 11 July, 2002)

> Let us hope that the Year of Disability will be more than an empty name, and that real actions will be taken to improve the quality of life of disabled people. (Letter from the family to the Director of the Provincial Education Authority, 26 March, 2003)

> This has been a crucial step in the development of our son's autonomy and self-esteem, and at the same time a step further for him (and by extension, for all persons with Down's syndrome) to be part of a democratic society. (Letter from the family to the Ombudsman, 23 June, 2003)

Two issues seem to account for the family's continuous effort to seek fair educational actions. The first one was the fact that they believed in Rafael, in his chances to learn and develop as a full human being.

> Educationalists should understand that everyone is intelligent and capable of learning, as Rafael has shown since he was a child, and was never questioned by his teachers. But the conditions need to be in place for learning to occur. (Letter from the family to the Ombudsman, 23 December, 2002)

The second one was their belief that schools also have some obligations in terms of preventing exclusion and negative views about their students, rather than generating them:

> The family wonder why the school neglected the case. They wanted to make us see that it was the law that make the student's life difficult, and that it was out of the school's hands to be able to do anything for him. (B. Almendros, Rafael's mother)

Many doors were closed on the family, numerous letters and replies denied this possibility and many people in positions of power failed to position themselves with respect to the issue (the headteacher, the counselling team for the area, the Director

of the Provincial Education Authority, etc.), as will be detailed below. Rafael retook the fourth year of secondary education. In his own words: 'They say they love me, but in the end they fail me.'[4] The family described their feelings as follows:

> In the same way that we acknowledge every human being's capacity to learn, we also want to make clear that every person—including Rafael—is equally aware of what is going on with them and around them, and seek to survive the discrimination and marginalisation inflicted on them by institutions such as schools, which should ensure that fairer human relationships are in place. If anyone might think that this school is engaged in providing education, they should talk to Rafael. New concealed models of segregation are being developed in schools to deal only with those people who are least problematic, while those who face additional difficulties to break away from the school's history and from their own history are left to their own devices.

All of this led the family to disagree with and reject the proposal made by the school, although they were not very hopeful.

> The family talked to the headteacher the following day, and he said that the situation was out of his hands. The counselling team for the area would analyse it and decide what would happen with Rafael, but it seemed that he would almost definitely need to leave his school and go to a state school with a diversified curriculum. The family has nothing against state schools—much to the contrary—but they want to denounce that this publicly-funded private school has given up on its responsibility and Rafael was covertly being forced to leave the school that all of this siblings attended; that the school has used as an excuse their lack of sufficient resources to meet his needs[5] (despite the fact that much more support had been given to Rafael at home than any—ordinary—school could offer); and that the school had attempted to send Rafael to a diversified curriculum school without having adapted their curriculum there, as established by law… The school have washed their hands and left Rafael and his family unprotected. They have tried to get rid of the problem, but after the family contacted the media and the Director of the Provincial Education Authorities, Rafael was admitted in the school again and offered the opportunity to retake the last year. But he was neglected that year. In addition, over that last year the school decided to seek the support of the Education Counselling Team (known by its initials in Spanish as 'EOE'), after realising the school's counsellor's incompetence.

But the advice received from the School's Counselling Department and the Education Counselling Team was the same: Rafael was to be quietly[6] referred to a diversified curriculum school.

As the family was aware that the tense relationship between them and the school was affecting Rafael, they contacted his tutor and the headteacher at the beginning of the school year (retake of the 4th year of secondary school) to attempt to resume

their relationship so that the student could successfully complete his school year, and 'would be able to learn and obtain the certificate of secondary education *as his schoolmates did*.'

> We are contacting you to request a meeting and agree on the necessary measures to ensure that the relationship between Rafael's family and his teachers (and between Rafael and his schoolmates) during the new year is such that it fosters successful learning, and that it proves to be a productive period in academic terms. We, as a family, would like you to know that we are fully available to the teachers and the school in general and would be pleased to work together with the school, so that all of us can learn—above and beyond the roles that we have had to play in this process to date. (Letter from the family to the school headteacher, 10 October, 2002)[7]

However, the meeting was again unproductive. The tutor and teachers expressed the very low expectations they had of Rafael and urged his parents to speak to the head of the Education Counselling Team, who would make a diagnosis a few days later. The family detailed their reflections in their letter to the Ombudsman after the meeting held with the Area Education Counsellor as follows:

> It must be remembered that diagnosis is an educational assessment measure intended to improve the teaching/learning process, not to label people and use that label as a segregating argument. The diagnosis is clearly biased in this case, as it has been carried out when the student is 18 years old, during his last year of schooling (4th year of secondary school)… The head of the Education Counselling Team …stated that he did not understand the issue, the apathy on the part of the school, the uselessness of the diagnosis, and said that he was unable to intervene considering the little time left. He also recognised that the student is an intelligent person, something that his school's teachers had forgotten about. The counsellor insisted that the situation was outside his remit and that it was to be resolved via an administrative procedure.

The administrative procedure was even more devastating for the family than the previous one, and new channels and action strategies had to be put in place. In the interview they arranged with the inspector, the family were able to see the documents that had been circulated behind their backs: the evaluation report on Rafael, which advised that he should be sent to a school with *Programas de Garantía Social.* The family was not prepared to accept this: 'The negligence and incapability of the management team and the counsellor finally had an impact on the student, and he has suffered the consequences.' Following this, the Inspector suggested that the family should ask the school to provide them with the evaluation report for the previous year, as it should include the measures intended to be implemented for the following year, and the report from the head of the Area Education Counselling Team. However, the school refused to provide the family with a copy of these documents, arguing that it was confidential information. The family could not understand why:

> The mother requested ([that information]…, which is supposed to be positive for the student, since it was produced to support his education; even the health service provides patients who request it with a copy of their medical history)… We are convinced that the evaluations never contained any plans to enhance the student's education, as non-significant curriculum adaptation measures were never adopted.

At that point, the family made the following demands:

1. That the student be treated with respect and that he be given an opportunity to pass the fourth year of secondary education. This is not a gift, but the right of a student born in a democratic society, earned by him through his constant effort, which was disregarded by the school's management team, the counsellor and the then current teaching team.
2. That those who clearly engaged in negligent pedagogical conduct (school's management team and counsellor, and the Area Inspector) be held accountable for having caused psychological damage to the student, which affected his self-esteem, self-confidence and level of expectations.
3. That appropriate measures be adopted to reinstate the rights lost by the student, taking into account that sending him to a separate school with diversified curriculums and so-called *Programas de Garantía Social* would involve segregating him based on his condition as a person with Down's syndrome; that this option cannot be imposed without having exhausted all available measures previously; and that the family is not prepared to accept a significant curriculum adaptation half-way through his last secondary school year, since this measure should be taken for the whole of the secondary education cycle, and non-significant curriculum adaptation measures (changes in didactic, methodological and organisational components) were never exhausted. This is why, taking into account that the student has been schooled within the ordinary curriculum throughout his entire education, our family demands that non-significant curriculum adaptation be carried out, as established by the applicable law (LOGSE).

The process undergone by the family, as well as the final outcome of the conflict, make this case a good object of analysis, both for education professionals and for parents who are committed to their children's education. After several years of struggle and determination, it was recognised—albeit on the quiet—that the school had acted unfairly and inappropriately and that Rafael was entitled to have a pass thanks to his effort. At the end of the year 2003 he got home visibly excited, screaming that he had passed the 4th year of secondary like his schoolmates had done. The law and the pedagogical interpretations provided by the family and both the internal and external researchers had been successful in their struggle against commonly accepted impositions. This would enable him to make major achievements such as those he has now attained, and to prove his worth, his ability to learn and his competency.

What can be done in situations like this—certainly detestable but, at the same time, a common occurrence in our schools—and how to convey that certain types of

conduct by professionals and interpretations of the law have negative consequences for students' development were some of the objectives of this section, which have resulted from analysing the family's response. The work conducted by a team of educationalists, together with Rafael's and his family's determination, showed that it was necessary to create fairer educational discourses, in line with respect for diversity and human rights.

This piece of work records the sequence of events and some of the pedagogical resources used. Through critical analysis, it was possible to throw light on the model still applied by many schools and educational institutions. Our intention is to create a window of hope by devising new actions in the face of institutional oppression in education.

3.2. METHODOLOGIES USED

3.2.1. The Action Research Process

The research presented here follows the Spiral Model by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000): problem identification, systematic data collection, personal and professional reflection, analysis of data collected, actions based on data and revision of the original problem. These authors defined action research as a form of collective self-reflective enquiry (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1985), characterised as being:

- critical, since in addition to improving their practice, participants must be agents of personal and social change;
- reflective, as participants analyse and develop concepts and theories about their experiences;
- accountable, as progress is aimed to improve that which is public;
- self-evaluated;
- participative, since those involved participate equally in the study;
- collaborative, as the researcher works for and with those affected by the problem.

Action research emphasises inquiry oriented towards a positive transformation of the participants' reality, through the systematic and reflective intervention of those involved (López & Lacueva, 2007:582). This methodological type perfectly matches the work performed by a family and conducted over time, such as in Rafael's case.

The object of study was part of the action research process that the family, together with some professionals, including the authors of this publication (internal researcher and external researcher in the third stage of the action research) conducted over the period from 1998 until the present day. The intensity, awareness of the process and outcomes obtained have changed substantially over the years. In general, these variables defined the five stages of the research experience, and some of them were more beneficial than others from an educational viewpoint (an overview of all the stages can be seen in Figure 4). The first stage (Figure 5) was an attempt by Rafael's family to improve his education by means of extra-curricular work. In this stage,

very valuable outcomes were obtained in terms of the skills and knowledge gained by the student. The second stage (Figure 6) sought to deal with the deficiencies identified in the first, together with focusing on making some changes in the school, but the difficulty for external influences to permeate their organisation hindered the objectives of the research, and therefore the efforts became diluted. The third stage (Figure 7) resulted from the inability (both by the school and the family) to develop new ways of addressing diversity in the school. The plan was carried out as a response to the discrimination suffered by Rafael. Between the second and third

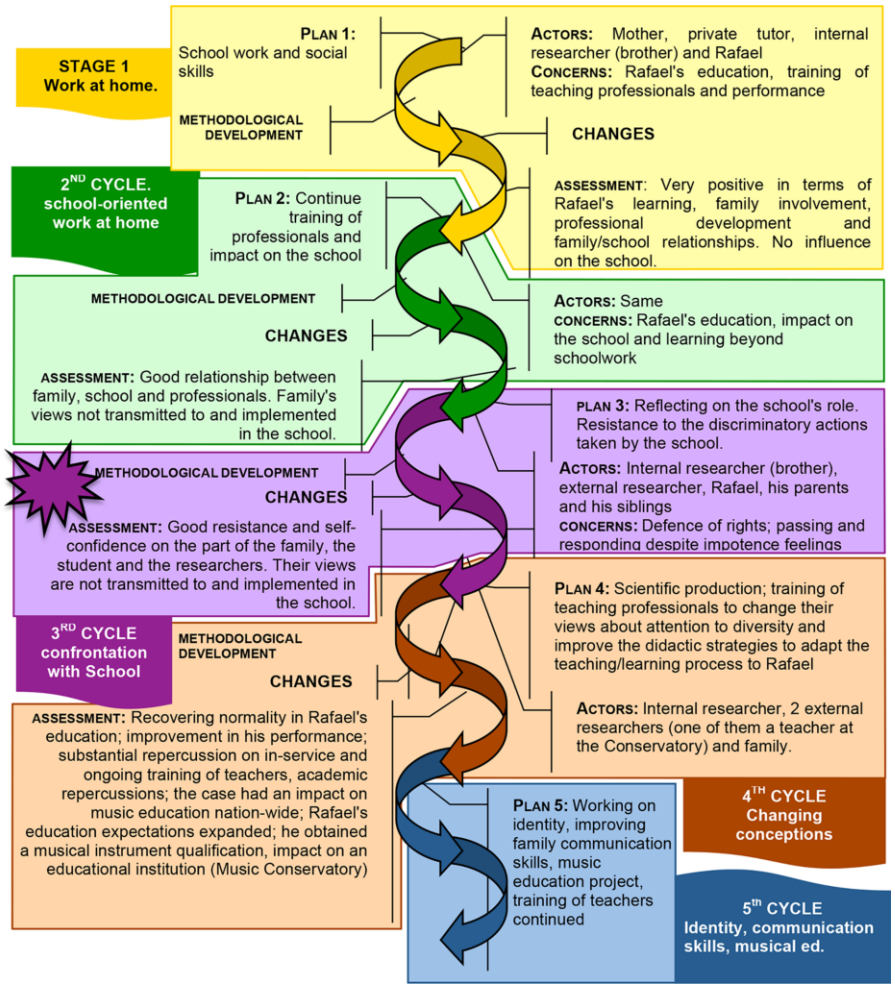


Figure 4. General structure of the different stages of action research conducted. The period that is covered extensively in these pages is Stage 3, and this book is part of stage 4. Stage 5 is currently being planned

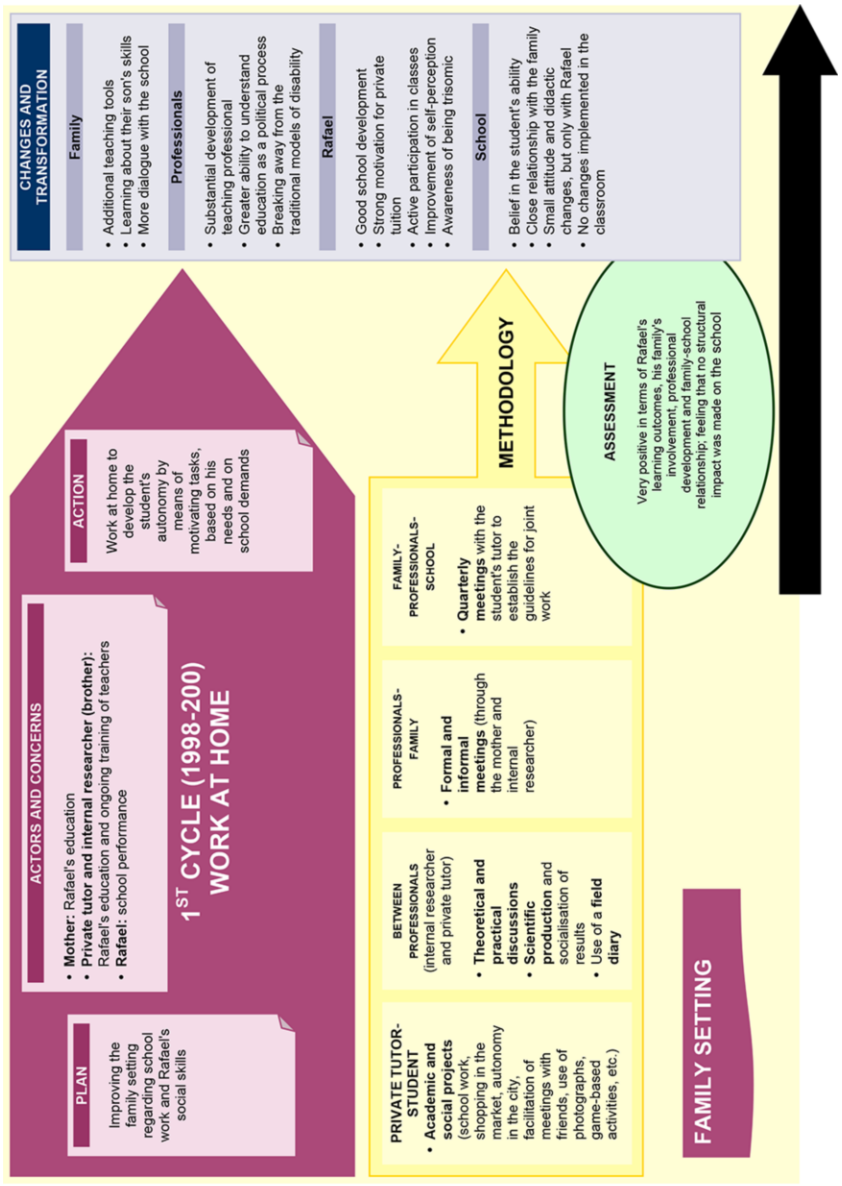


Figure 5. Stage 1 of action research

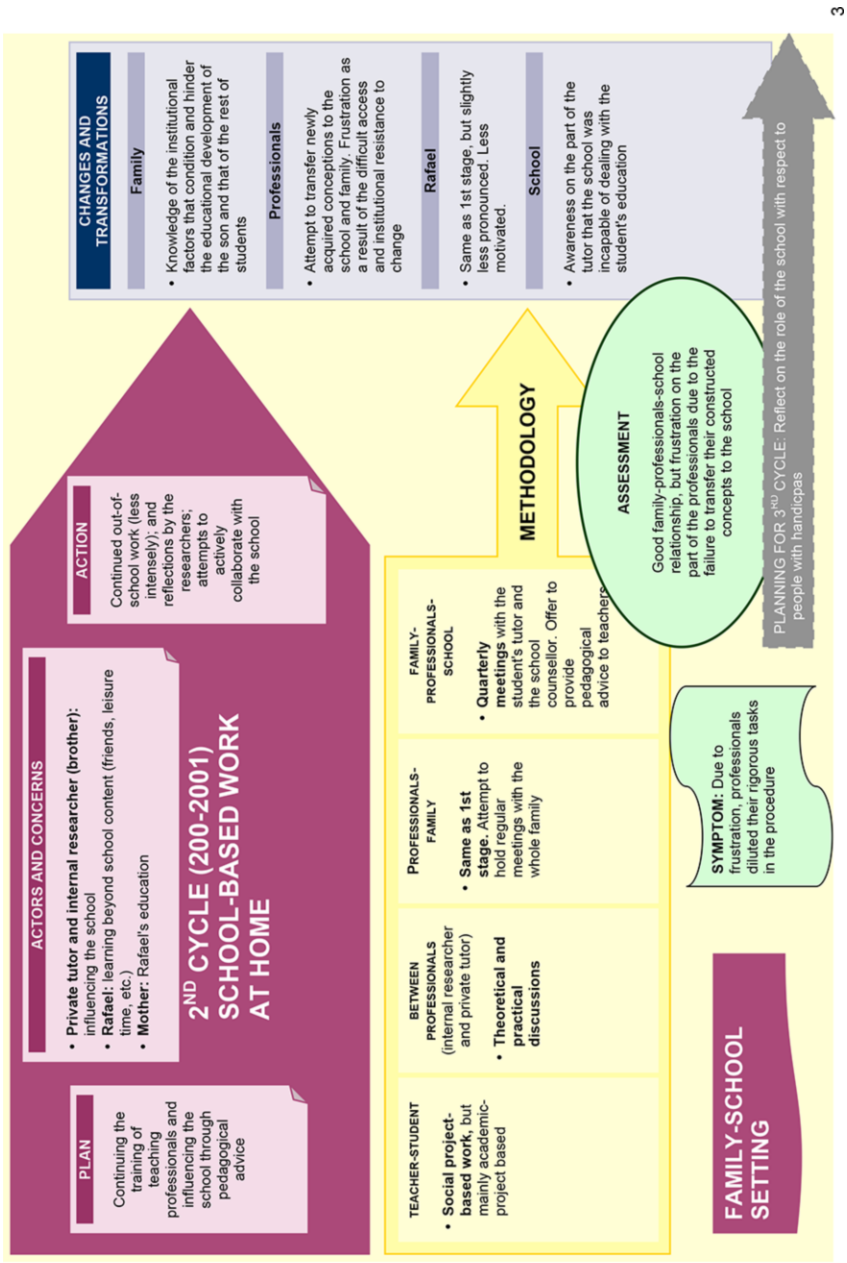


Figure 6. Stage 2 of action research

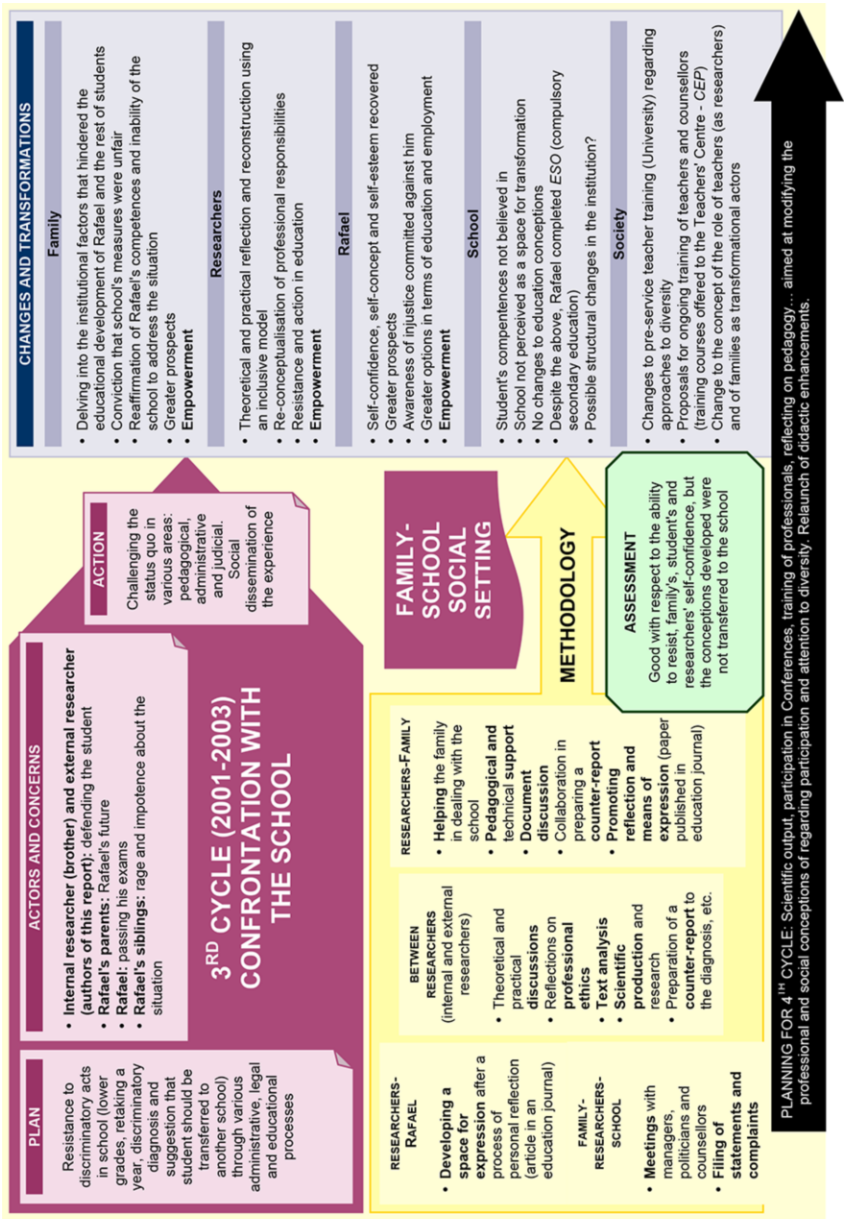


Figure 7. Stage 3 of action research

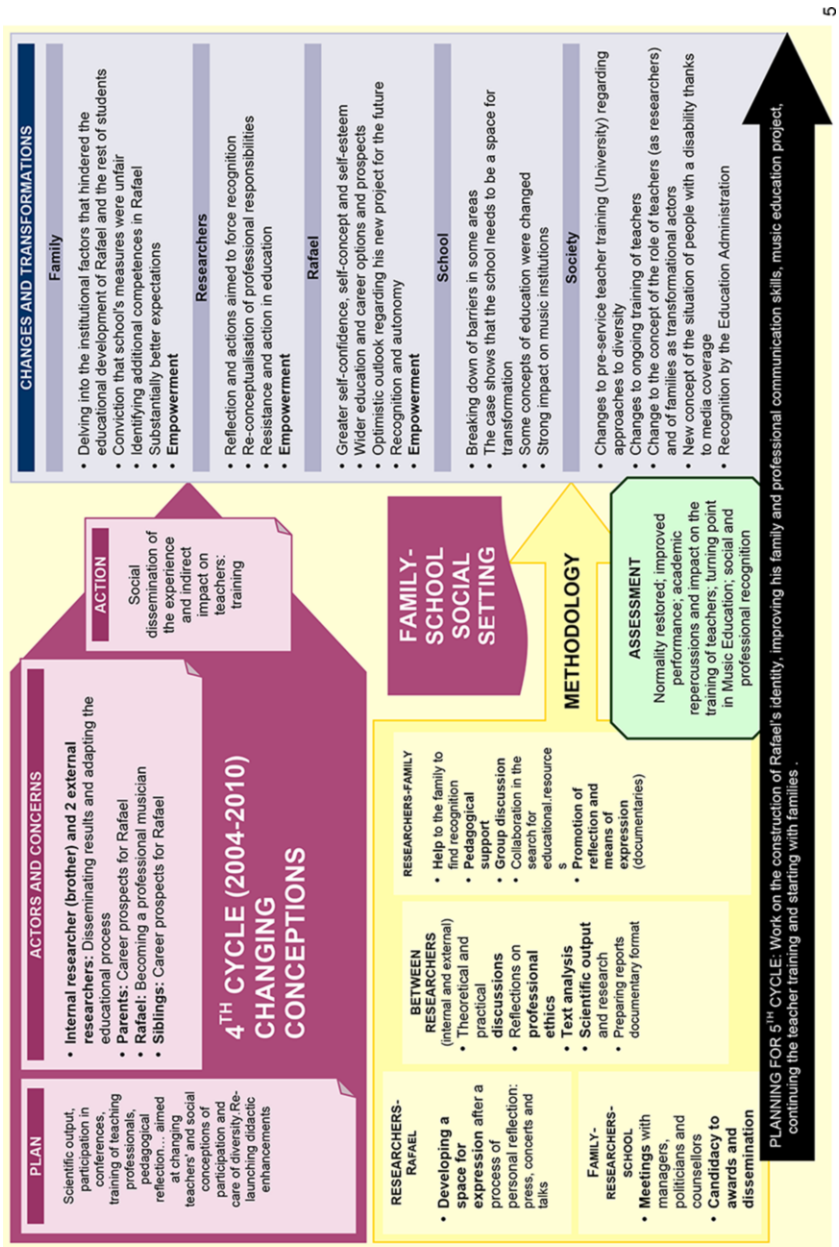


Figure 8. Stage 4 of action research

stages there was no specific sense of continuity, although this was implicit, as the various developments caused the action research process to be re-launched. The fourth stage was based on the previous one (Figure 4). It was recently completed and includes the preparation of this report and a documentary entitled 'Education, disability and exclusion: a family's struggle against an excluding school'. These materials seek to disseminate and narrate the resistance on the part of this family and some education practitioners to the diagnosis provided and the actions taken by a school that excluded disabled students; they also intend to obtain social recognition, as well as initial and continuous training for teachers.

The structure of each of these stages, except for Stage 5, which is under development, can be clearly seen in Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Two characteristics of action research that we considered particularly relevant are highlighted below:

- The contexts of action have grown over the years. Stage 1 was devoted to didactic work at home, fundamentally engaging with Rafael. Stage 2 attempted to cover school work as well, although the family continued to be subject to the school's guidelines. This thwarted the expectations of the researchers, whose work became somewhat weakened. Stage 3 was part of a much larger action framework, as it involved the community, the family, the school (despite the confrontation) and other institutions. All of this gradually shifted the emphasis away from the didactic work organised with the student, both at home (particularly focused on his resistance to discrimination) and at school (where efforts were made to exclude him instead of believing in his chances and teaching him). Stage 4 became wider in scope, as didactic work with the student was combined with context transformation. In fact, some achievements have been made that seemed unimaginable only a few years ago. Everything suggests that reflection resulted in the focus moving away from the initial problem. From the student's educational difficulties, it gradually shifted to the school and to society as a whole. This is how the family members were finally able to detach themselves from existing social representations of students with disabilities—who are blamed for 'their' failures—and question the processes and institutions that regard them as being doomed to fail. This is therefore an increasingly political perspective on educational practices.
- In line with this progression in terms of the focus of study, the initial concentration of power has moved from some groups to others. The fact that the measures adopted (or desired) by the school can be questioned provided the family with new tools to address the school's guidelines on a more equal footing. This resulted in the family becoming increasingly empowered. They were enabled thanks to their openness to new possibilities of transforming the exclusion contexts that had emerged through the school's judgements and confrontation.

The next section is focused on the family's struggle, which is covered in Stage 3 of action research. It seeks to shed light on the process followed by the family to fight for Rafael's lost scholastic and social rights.

3.2.2. The Family's Struggle

As indicated above, Rafael's family had been working together with the school ever since Rafael started his education there. Initially, this was a joint effort that involved the family and the private tutors who worked with Rafael (see the reconstruction of the case in Figure 5: Stage 5 of action research). The internal researcher,[8] Rafael's mother and the various teachers used to meet at least on a quarterly basis. These meetings entailed discussions about how the family and teachers felt about the work, and were intended to establish criteria for action, in order to choose the most appropriate contents for the different stages and levels and to voice and assess any concerns that might arise. There was some reflection on the work carried out at home by a private support teacher and the internal researcher, which resulted in some scientific production[9] based on the experience (see Figure 6: Stage 2 of action research). However, the relationship never moved forward in terms of a substantial change in the school teachers' practices, class methodology and curriculum content.

When the problems started between the family and the school, the attempts made by the family to recover a fluent, friendly relationship were consistently thwarted by the actions taken by the school. No consideration was given to the discrepancies expressed by the family, their reflections about the role of the school, justice and the effects of the teachers' actions.

This conciliatory approach was already mentioned in the description of the facts. It was shown both in the interviews that took place, and in the letter sent by the family to the school headteacher (10 October, 2002), which started as follows: 'After the start of the new academic year, and once the problems that had occurred last year regarding our son Rafael have been overcome, we would like to resume the close relationship we have had in connection with our son's education ever since he has been enrolled in your school. This is why we would like to thank the school for its decision to re-admit Rafael into the school to continue to engage in the educational task that had been performed with such enthusiasm until last year.' However, as the family had refused to accept the decision made by the school and they had obtained some support for their position, in the course of the following meeting with the class tutor and the deputy head, Rafael's parents and the internal researcher were informed that the letter had not been interpreted as a sign of a reconciliation (as it had been intended), but as a threat. This could lead to the conclusion that the school as an institution was willing to accept collaboration, but not dissidence. The collaboration of the family was welcomed provided that they did not dispute the interests and diagnosis of the institution.

Apart from the statements issued by the school, the main means used to show immunity to the family's influence was obviously school marks. It must be highlighted that the school did not require any external specific mechanisms to implement discriminatory actions, as they had the resources to do so without much effort; students' families, on the contrary, are often compelled to use tools that are not

easily available to them to ensure that justice is done, and to counteract arguments as solidly legitimised as school results.

The family's resistance was built up in four stages which would eventually become interrelated:

- Meetings held by the family with the school management and counsellor and with Rafael's tutor. These meetings gradually lost their educational purpose and efficiency, since the positions were consistently confronted and became increasingly entrenched, as the family became more dissident and rebelled against the school's impositions.
- Search for community and institutional support. A brief framework letter was prepared to explain the unfair treatment given to Rafael in the school, which was circulated both in paper and by e-mail. Access to the media was also used at this stage, although their response did not have much impact. This was probably due to the fact that people are perceived as being 'inevitably' doomed to fail and to complete their studies through second-rate pathways and retakes.
- Statements were distributed to the various education officers on a cascading basis. These statements included the family's refusal to accept the school marks and the measures they deemed discriminatory. The first one was the opposition to the marks expressed in the statement sent by the family to the headteacher (24 December, 2002, Christmas Eve), which read as follows:

  > It is our understanding that our son's marks… in the third and fourth years of *ESO* (compulsory secondary school) (academic years 2000–2001 and 2001–2002), and in the current term of the fourth year of *ESO* (academic year 2002–2003) merely reflect a clear discrimination against a person with Down's syndrome. No appropriate measures have been taken—despite the family's requests. Therefore,
  >
  > WE INFORM YOU THAT:
  >
  > The … family DOES NOT ACCEPT the marks shown in the school report for the first term of the fourth year of *ESO* (academic year 2002–2003), and hence we refuse to sign said report.

The addressees of these statements of opposition were: the school's headteacher, the Counselling Department, the Area Education Counselling Team, the Area Inspector, the local head of Inspection, the head of the Provincial Education Authority; and the head of the Regional Education Authority. These statements not only dealt with school marks; the psychological and pedagogical reports were also challenged by the family. In several statements sent to the Inspection Service, to the head of the Provincial Education Authority and to the school's headteacher (20 February, 2003), Rafael's parents stated as follows:

> Having received the school's psychological and pedagogical reports about our son…prepared by the counsellors… in the last meeting held with the

management team and the counsellor…, since we believe that the criteria applied are useless and lead to segregation, we wish to express our disagreement and

WE STATE:

That the family… DOES NOT ACCEPT the referred report, and therefore has requested an evaluation from four education practitioners. They indicated that the assessment was discriminatory and considered it inappropriate as a basis to develop psychological and pedagogical actions to improve our son's learning process… We also DEMAND that appropriate measures be adopted to ensure that our son will be able to complete his Secondary Education successfully in this academic year. This is his second successive period in the last year of Secondary Education (*ESO*), which he was unfairly obliged to retake that year, following systematic fails for the last 3 years. In our view, he was marginalised by the school, which engaged in pedagogical negligence. We request that those responsible be held accountable.

- Searching for active support from other officers and practitioners, notably the Ombudsman, to build resistance through the legislation governing the public sector, and a psychologist /education expert and two educationalists, who prepared the counter-report (see Figure 7: Stage 3 of action research) to the psychological and pedagogical assessment provided by the Counselling Department at the school. It was supported by the Area Education Counselling Team and used to bolster resistance from the perspective of scientific research.[10]
- Both Rafael and his mother also wrote two articles in which they explained their experience.

Family member and professional at the same time. My role as internal researcher[11]

I remember the day, 12 years ago, when a school teacher and I started to discuss the idea of conducting the research described here. At the time it did not occur to me how difficult and also beautiful this whole process might turn out to be. This study has taught me most of what I know about being an educationalist (and a person). It has helped me to restructure the knowledge that I had previously acquired and to build the theory and my own way of thinking on these issues. Rafael has taught me how complex educational processes are. He has constantly brought me back so that I would not miss the right path (I often got lost by going down dead ends). Fundamentally, he has also helped me to build a concept of education based on the views of those who are usually forgotten. After all, what is useful for those who are forgotten is also useful for those who are remembered.

But it was not easy. Very often I found myself doing things I did not want to do, attempting to get out of situations that did not depend on me or on Rafael. I frequently realised that the strategies we were using did not fully meet his needs. Sometimes this was due to our mistakes in designing a particular intervention; others, to the restrictions in the steps set forth by the school. Radically breaking away from them meant separating Rafael from the activities he shared with his classmates, and doing this would harm the relationship they had forged.

If we decided to confront the school and its agents, this would be a risky step, mainly because it might have repercussions for Rafael. We were always aware that the situation might have negative results, as Rafael might be 'sentenced' to second-rate education pathways or might be denied the qualification that everyone else would obtain. In addition, we feared that reprisals might be taken against him.

There was also another issue that greatly concerned me. I was torn between my determination to unconditionally defend Rafael's rights (despite harming our communication with his school, as I was aware that this path would not lead to attitude changes in his teachers) and my intention to be linked to the professional areas of the education system to which he belonged. Therefore, I was always attempting to develop education actions that maintained this connection (both from the point of view of students and of teachers). This issue was almost resolved by itself, as the situation changed. I will never forget a heated argument I had with the school's counsellor. I had to choose between admitting that Rafael—my brother, my friend—was incapable of learning, and radically dismantling the schemas that supported such a statement. She was a colleague but she attacked Rafael with impunity, and also sought to convince other colleagues, while attempting to persuade me of something that was not true. She gave me advice by arguing that if she were Rafael's mother, she would willingly accept the proposal that was made (which in my view was simply an aberration). Finally, I refused to accept their position, and this was the point of no return in my relationship with the school. For several weeks I regretted having done it, because I knew from then on it would be very difficult to re-establish contact with the school from the point of view of Rafael's education. I shared my concerns with my family, and I even apologised to the counsellor for the tone of voice I had used with her in our discussion. But it was all in vain: the relationship was already broken. Later I realised that we had not clashed because of what happened in that particular meeting, but because the views she held were incompatible with those of my family's. I was always supported by my family and they agreed with my position that we should not bow to the school's demands.

From that point on I assumed a defensive role of resistance in the family. I helped to draft any documents necessary to challenge the school's views and

actions. Rafael and I had discussions with our parents, talked to our siblings and investigated the events as they unfolded. Then, together with some members of the family—mostly with our mother—I wrote the documents that described the facts, the requests for information, complaints, collaboration documents, etc. Although I was convinced that I was on the right track—Rafael continuously reaffirmed this belief—I could not stop thinking that all of it was useless, as the relationship between my family and the school would never be an educational one ever again. Somehow, this was inconsistent with one part of me.

Looking back at all the work done, as I re-read the documents, I see the repercussion they are having (and they might still have); I also see Rafael's and my family's new life; and I cannot help but think that the relationship with the school was also somehow educational. Because all of us who wanted to have been educated in a much more democratic culture, and have rebelled against oppressive solutions, carving up areas of power that were banned for us before. I am an education practitioner, but above all, I am a human being.

Those of us who have twofold roles as educationalists and family members of disadvantaged children need to create a new role in the education scenario by denouncing institutional vices at a grassroots level. We all have the tools to do it. It is the least we can do, and we owe it to those children who have taught us so much.

3.2.3. Research Process for the Case Study

This section details the research process conducted by the authors in their attempts to counter the interests of the school. The internal researcher and the external researcher used the following sources of information:

- *In-depth, informal interviews with the family* to discuss their experiences of the events that took place in the school. In some cases, these interviews were conducted sequentially, and were not only used as data, but were also employed in the writing of the first-person texts produced by those involved (Rafael, 2002; Rafael's mother, 2003) in order to develop tools for the analysis and defence of Rafael's rights. The researchers' contributions were aimed at organising ideas in order to construct a clear narrative, and they were produced in meetings held over several days. Some initial questions were designed to encourage the family to elaborate on the stories and problematise the situation. Then the stories were followed up, and the family members were asked to explain the most interesting aspects (from a pedagogical and a resistance perspective) in further detail.
- *Participant observation and interviews* conducted in the school by the internal researcher, together with Rafael's parents. Several meetings were held with the teaching team, the management team and the Counselling Department. This

enabled us to collect highly relevant information and to become acquainted with the situation being faced by the student; to understand the ideologies on which the various arguments used were based; the social representations held about people with a disability; the expectations generated about the student; and the methodologies employed, among others.

- *Psychological and pedagogical counter-report* (Section 3.6), which was prepared to oppose the psychological and pedagogical theories about diagnosis and the activities conducted by the Counselling Department. This section, as well as the work carried out with those involved to prepare academic papers on their experiences, was focused on resisting the unequal power relationships implemented by the school. The documents confronted the school's view from an institutional perspective, whereas the counter-report challenged the widespread notion of the scientific nature and neutrality of the decisions made by teachers and counsellors. The difference between them lies in the family's role, which was much more significant in the former than in the latter, as diagnoses were one of the clearest examples of the imposed views and the way in which the parents were side-lined through the language used, the schematic content, the use of unexplained abbreviations and numbers, the fact that the diagnosis was confidential, etc.
- *Analysis of the documents.* All these actions and resistance were organised into more than fifty documents that were sent to various bodies, as shown in Figure 9.

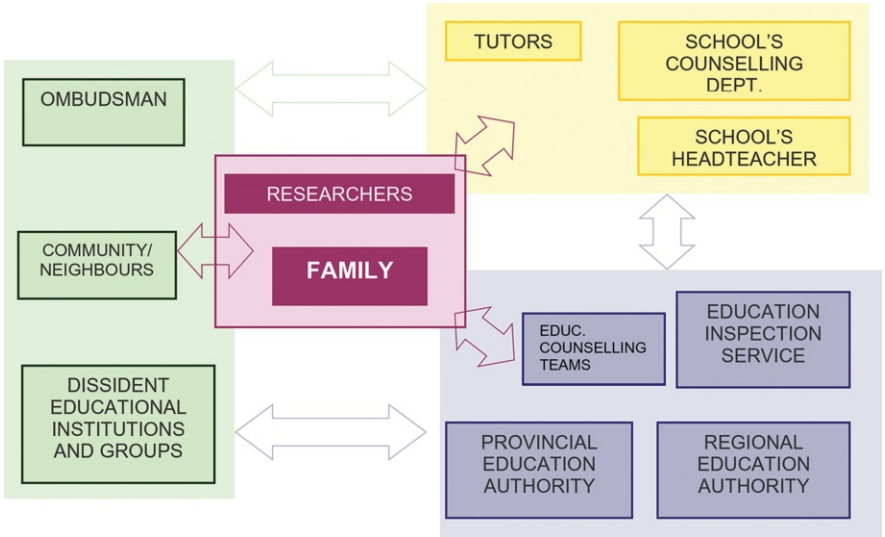


Figure 9. Actors from the different contexts involved in the 3rd stage of action research (as shown in the referred documents), grouped by position. The arrows represent the interactions between them

- *Documents prepared by members of the family.* Some of Rafael's brothers have made contributions from different disciplines (photography, mathematics and literature) which were analysed in the third stage and served to illustrate the fourth stage. These include two texts and an illustration. They are part of the second (photograph, 'My dove brother' and 'Seats for everyone') and third ('People placed on a measuring tape') levels of elaboration of discourse mentioned in the introduction, respectively. Other contributions have been more experience-based, such as those generated by the internal researcher, by Rafael's mother and by Rafael's best friend.

A strong participant approach was adopted when conducting the research, particularly by the internal researcher, although the influence of both researchers on the process was crucial in generating changes to the attitudes and the decisions made in the different contexts (family, social, academic, school and political contexts). The first phase of this 3rd stage of the action research mainly involved direct action work and supporting the family's resistance; in the second phase, once the most serious problem had been solved, the aim was to provide a detailed analysis of the problem in light of the data and critical pedagogical theories, as well as some proposals and further actions for a more egalitarian, democratic and efficient school.

3.2.4. Basis for the 3rd Stage of Action Research

This stage saw gradually increased awareness about the process involved, due to the gathering of information in various contexts, and a reflection on the events. This resulted in actions being taken to understand and transform the situation.

> To begin to question the relationship between the actual and the possible in education or social life is already to have embarked on a critical project. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1985)

The *actors* of this action research project were the family (mainly Rafael's mother and the internal researcher in all the stages; his father and siblings were involved more tangentially, although his father was particularly active in the third stage), the external researchers and Rafael himself. The teachers (in the third stage) did not participate in the process in a constructive, transformative manner; instead they doubted Rafael's 'educability' and did not believe that they could make any improvements to the 'oppression' he was experiencing. Some of the teachers did not even perceive the situation as being unfair, probably due to the general characteristics of the education and social system, the professional culture among teachers and in institutions and the lack of interest in becoming involved in actions that could entail confrontation or additional workload. This is why the teachers—with a few exceptions—reproduced the school's role and attempted to stop the family's resistance, by taking actions that were exclusionary and discriminatory. Their lack of involvement in resistance was not neutral or aseptic. Teachers who do not rebel

against unfair situations end up being agents of discrimination, either by act or by omission. Consequently, they legitimise the idea that certain people cannot learn and that responsibility in education action consists in, or is reduced to, denying the opportunities of transformation and critique of the setting involved.

Two points must be stressed in this respect:

- Not all the teachers agreed to the prescriptions of the Counselling Department and the school. Several teachers showed their strong determination and resistance and opposed the arguments made by the agents mentioned above. They provided constant support to the family by encouraging Rafael and valuing his knowledge, effort and dedication when he was given his marks each term. They undoubtedly increased the credibility of the family's demands, as a result of their role and of the relevance of challenging the school's position. They also brought a light of hope to the family and helped them to believe that all was not lost. Some teachers even had discussions with the family to express their rejection of the plan to transfer Rafael to another school. They gave the family more arguments to continue to believe that it was possible to fight for an inclusive, egalitarian education.
- Discussing these matters without taking into account the material and symbolic circumstances in which teachers develop professionally would clearly be an incomplete representation of the situation. This is not the time or the place to expand on this issue, since this document is a retrospective account of a family's fight for justice in an institution that should be based precisely on this concept. However, we do not want to overlook the difficulties faced by teachers in terms of their professional development. Poor resources, high student-teacher ratios, the gap between their initial training and the demands of their practice, micro-politics in schools and unbalanced power relations among the various actors,[12] lack of responsiveness to their demands (seldom used to implement educational reforms), the poor appreciation of their work by the general public and the political spheres, the almost non-existent in-service training, and the institutional requirements, are only a few of the obstacles that teachers are faced with every day. In Section 2.2 we argued that schools are in a strange situation, as they defend participation while also perpetuating existing power relations. Democracy in schools is combined with social reproduction through subtle mechanisms that suggest that school relations and results, and their repercussions on the social and employment context, are merely logical. There is a broad spectrum of theories which deal with the problems encountered by teachers throughout their professional life. They are concerned with the role that teachers are forced to take, in which they merely reproduce, rather than produce, knowledge; these theories also argue that teachers are compelled and pressured to implement reforms designed by third parties; and schools as institutions place strong demands on them. However, here the focus is only on a particular case. We seek to question the school's legitimisation and disclose the difficulties encountered by teachers to step out of their prescribed

order. In an interview with the internal researcher, one of Rafael's teachers said, in a sad tone: 'This [referring to the school] is not made for Rafael.' In a democratic society, what should the school's role be? Who should the school *serve*?

The action research described here enabled us to reflect on the entire process and our responsibility as education professionals. We were in an ideal position to implement actions that we considered to be educational. Our pedagogical knowledge meant that we were up to date on the intricacies of the institution itself and of the education system, as well as on teaching and learning theories. The family's involvement and the persistence in their endeavour informed our position with respect to the school. We were then able decide that those actions by the school which resulted in discrimination and/or exclusion were not to be accepted, and what our aspirations should be: recovering the humanising and educational function of the school, based on human dignity and respect for diversity.

The third stage of the action research project (Figure 7) was focused on the use of diagnosis practices in the school, which can be summarised as follows:

- The *theme/study focus* was the diagnosis practices employed: a collective analysis of the approach traditionally used and its consequences. The focus was then broadened as resistance actions took place and led to the school's educational role with respect to people with disabilities being questioned.
- The *criticism*: The family presented the school's diagnostic report to the internal and external researchers as an unfair one.
- The *search for, and the planning and production of, a joint response.* A counter-report was prepared that was critical of the one issued by the school and proved the opposite position, as argued by the family. The counter-report was narrated from a different theoretical and pedagogical perspective (with the support of other scientific postulates), and from a practical viewpoint. The latter included the collection of data about the discussions between the family and the school and the school's counsellor; the statements sent; the actions taken; as well as other data on Rafael which provided qualitative information about his competencies.
- The *initiators of the action research* project were the members of Rafael's family, and not an educationalist related to a particular institution. They instigated, guided and coordinated the pedagogical actions together with the educationalists and researchers involved.
- *Action*: The counter-report was submitted and a space was developed to publicly denounce the situation. The experience was narrated and published in the first person in a specialist journal (Calderón, 2002; Almendros, Rafael's mother, 2003). This publication was intended to denounce the unfair situation created by the school from a critical perspective.
- *Changes and transformations*: these were particularly important for the family, the researchers and Rafael himself. The family became more aware of the institutional factors that compromise or even prevent the educational development

of students. They also became more sensitive to the interpretations made by the education practitioners in the school and had increasing confidence in their chances to argue their case successfully and in Rafael's capacity and potential. The researchers, for their part, explored how to use their knowledge to denounce unfair situations in schools and propose alternatives to some education premises that were exclusionary. Through the experience, Rafael recovered his rights (from an educational, administrative and future employment viewpoint), as well as his self-esteem and his belief in his true potential.

In addition, some changes had taken place in the population in general, particularly among the neighbours who became involved in the protests to support Rafael and some Education students from several universities. A number of university lecturers used the publication written by Rafael and his mother as coursework material. In fact, the first edition of this report has been used as a textbook or as support material in several subjects and Education degrees. Some of the actors in the action research process were also invited to share their experience in workshops, master classes, talks, conferences and concerts.

- *Negotiation for the publication of this experience* in the form of this book, in order to disseminate and promote further social and professional changes. The family initially reserved the right to anonymity for fear of potential institutional reprisals against Rafael. They were also concerned about any potential repercussions their collection of signatures to support their opposition might have on the student's schooling. Rafael's parents were also afraid of any effects the process might have on his future. The final section of a letter from one of the family's supporters who rejected the actions carried out by the school is fairly illustrative of these concerns:

  > I hope that the rejection [expressed by supporters of the family] of the actions taken by the school will not result in any animosity against this student and his family (and environment), as they only seek to defend their rights and help to create a better school where everyone has a right to education that helps ensure a fitting feature for Rafael and all of his schoolmates. (Ricardo, sociologist and supporter of the family's initiatives)

This book is inspired by the intentions and aspirations that continue to underlie our work. We fully trust them, as we are committed to furthering our contribution to the betterment of schools. The following section is focused on the current role of diagnoses in the educational setting. Two levels will be analysed: the one existing in schools, and the desirable one, which should inform and guide our teaching actions. Over time, Rafael has undoubtedly become closer to the second level. His family is no longer afraid, and they are proud of how their experience disproved the school's postulates. In this edition of the book, Rafael is able to show himself as a subject in his own right, and not only as an object. This is a clear sign of empowerment.

3.3. A CRITIQUE OF THE CURRENT ROLE OF DIAGNOSIS: LEGITIMISING EXCLUSION OR PROMOTING INCLUSION?

Despite the need to use diagnoses to provide appropriate responses in educational contexts, and the importance they should have from a didactic point of view, in practice they are used for completely different purposes. Diagnosis in education is one of the main evaluation strategies employed by education practitioners to get to know their students and be able to assess the relevance of the teaching and learning processes implemented. Nevertheless, they often become tools used by school counsellors to focus on a limited analysis of particular conflicts occurring in the classroom to which pertinent advice and specific responses are given. However, applying diagnostic techniques does not ensure that suitable responses are provided. What constitutes *educational* advice?

To start with, diagnosis in education should be considered a tool for gaining knowledge, a means to support students, teachers and the classroom community, the school and the social environment. Instead, it is often only centred on the student, and on many occasions hinders the individual's academic, personal, social and even professional development. Many times diagnoses are intended—or at least result in—different lines of action, such as external support, curriculum adaptations and so-called *Programas de Garantía Social* (currently referred to as *PCPI*). Counsellors too often restrict their role to these aims, and their work is then focused on redistributing students who are classified as having special needs. By doing so, these students are differentiated from the rest and an artificial distance is created—legitimised by diagnoses and the school as an institution—to minimise the effects that the segregation of some 'discarded' students might cause. This complex mechanism persuades students (and their families) that they are incapable of completing their schooling successfully, and therefore they resign themselves to a dismal professional future. These students somehow internalise that they are bad students and they will not obtain the qualification required in the labour market. However, is this a truly pedagogical response? What educational responsibility is assumed by the school as an institution?

This assimilation of the representations produced in schools about good and bad students is not as direct or implacable as sociological theories of reproduction have argued.[13] This internalisation does not happen passively, and does not succeed in fully forsaking the concepts that students themselves and their immediate environment constructed before their school years. All of them significantly affect the construction of students' identity, but do not determine it. The meanings that students themselves construct on their own also play a role in this process, as well as the way in which they transform the situations and cultural contents that are conveyed to them.

In line with the above, violent episodes in the classroom, maladaptive behaviour or forced 'choices' made by some students not to continue their schooling are some easily identifiable manifestations of how those students who are excluded in school resist certain attacks. Rafael experienced an episode that clearly illustrates this

rebellious attitude to the imposed exclusion. It was explained by a teacher to the internal researcher in the course of a meeting with his tutor (2001):

> The boy was working with a group of fellow students completing some marquetry tasks. In one of the last sessions, Rafael broke the product of the group's work, and his family told him off and emphasised that it is important to look after the work jointly produced by a group. When he was asked to explain why he had broken it, he said: 'they would only let me do sanding work…' (Internal researcher, 2004)

It is obvious that Rafael felt and expressed that he was being excluded, although his conduct cannot be justified. His fellow students had been able to choose the kind of work they wanted to do, learn different skills, have a good time, etc. but he was only allowed to engage in an unskilled role in a supposedly educational activity. What values were learnt through that activity? Who was relegated to the tasks of the unskilled worker, and for whom were the skilled tasks reserved?[14]

School assessments should be framed in terms of equality. Very often the students themselves are not involved in constructing the representations of good and bad students (after all, the concept of 'good' and 'bad' students is a construction, not a quality they are born with). Once they have been classified under a particular description, they can continue to reaffirm their identity according to the role ascribed to them. This is why the responses provided by students to get rid of the labels assigned to them (expressed by using the most varied of codes) can and should be used to engage them in the construction of classroom culture and roles. A context should be built in which a relatively independent identity and a desirable future can be developed.

In our view, the experience presented here and some brief reflections on the notion of justice provide reasoned arguments against the segregating practices identified in compulsory education and in favour of a potential new education. Beyond the technical exercise involved in diagnosis practices (which is sometimes taken lightly), they can and should be grounded in responsibility. These practices can become tools to promote the autonomy and transformational capacity of individuals and groups. To do so, some premises need to be taken into account:

- Educational responses should be inclusive (Stainback & Stainback, 1996), and ensure that students are not separated on the basis of physical, cultural or social criteria. Educational responses resulting from diagnosis should be accompanied by a qualification of the classroom setting. Specialist professionals could support teachers in developing general action plans for the academic tasks to be performed by the whole group. This concept is far removed from the widespread identification of support personnel as private teachers for disabled children (within or outside the classroom).
- An inclusive diagnosis would go beyond providing answers to problems faced by individuals with disabilities, and would open up to all the different situations

found in the classroom, including all of its members, both students and teachers. The context would be enriched through human diversity.

- A sense of professional ethics should be applied. The purpose of assessment needs to be questioned. This requires analysing what it involves (description, explanation, understanding) and what its results are (reproduction or transformation and enhancement). Diagnosis practices may entail simply technical/reproduction procedures or, on the contrary, they may have an interpretive or empowering purpose (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1985; Barton, 1998).

These premises will be taken as a starting point to analyse and critique the results of some practices and techniques—psychometric tests, among others—and the interpretations and decisions made from traditional diagnoses, which often promote discriminatory practices and ways of thinking. It is urgent and necessary for schools to use diagnostic alternatives that are fairer and take a more humane and holistic approach, ensuring that they are used for educational purposes.

But before analysing diagnoses further, it is important to review their academic repercussions, as they are used to refer students to the different schooling models. These are constructed to 'appropriately address' the special educational needs of some of the students. They are fundamentally curriculum adaptations (whether significant or not), curriculum diversification, and the so-called '*Programas de Garantía Social*' (*PGS*) or '*Programas De Cualificación Profesional Inicial*' (*PCPI*). The basis for this review will be the analysis made by the actors in the action research project. Their arguments explain the difficulties experienced by Rafael's family.

3.4. CURRICULUM ADAPTATIONS AND OTHER CONSOLATION PRIZES IN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS[15]

In the description of the case (Section 3.1) we explained that neither Rafael's tutors nor his family believed that any curriculum adaptations[16] were necessary until the third year of compulsory secondary education. This section will discuss the various reasons for this. It was—forcefully—considered as a means to prevent the student from being constantly faced with failure. The institutional responses were clear: as a result of the psychological and pedagogical evaluation conducted (Figure 10), 'it seems appropriate for Rafael to access a *PGS* for special educational needs (known as 'NEE' in its abbreviated form in Spanish) (Counselling Department, 13 June, 2002). The case was particularly striking because the various steps stipulated by the law to address student diversity were not followed. These were: changing the class organisation (including the class curriculum and methodology), non-significant curriculum adaptation, significant adaptation and curriculum diversification. This was all very clearly explained in the communication sent by the headteacher to Rafael's family (7 February, 2003), and in the reply from the student's parents:

> *HEADTEACHER*: Despite your claims in the communication sent to the representative, you [Rafael's father] did not ask Rafael's counsellor or his

tutors to implement a significant curriculum adaptation until the last school year. This is evidenced by your own words at the meeting held with the family by the management team and the counsellor on 28 January, 2003: 'I did not want Rafael to be forever marked by this'. This obviously showed your dismissive opinion about students who engage in curriculum diversification programmes.

It was in June last year, when the family knew that Rafael had not been proposed to graduate from secondary school, that the issue was brought up. You know, or should know, that it was no longer possible to carry out the significant curricular adaptation[17] that Rafael needed at that stage (and such adaptation is no guarantee that he would graduate from secondary school).

One of Rafael's relatives works in the school.[18] She has never opposed the actions that were taken. Therefore, defencelessness or lack of awareness cannot be adduced, as one of the members of the family was a teacher at the school and another one is an educationalist.

REPLY FROM THE PARENTS: At no point did we write what you claim ('Despite your claims in the communication sent to the representative, you [Rafael's father] did not ask Rafael's counsellor or his tutors to implement a significant curriculum adaptation until the last school year'). On the contrary, in year 3 of Rafael's secondary education (*ESO*) the family requested that appropriate measures be adopted to ensure that Rafael had the opportunity to learn and to pass (like everyone else). It is important to remember that his school is a publicly funded institution and should address the needs of all the students, in order to learn and not just be there. The problem seems to be that, for many people, the only measures available to address the educational needs of students with a disability are curriculum adaptations. They do not think about other changes that could be made, such as those related to time and space, the methodologies used, the structure and presentation of contents included in textbooks, classroom organisation, distribution of work and tasks in the various activities, etc.

Although you failed to understand the message, we reiterate that we clearly expressed the need perceived by our family that opportunities should be given to the student. Following a series of very poor results, [the internal researcher] asked the school's counsellor to take the appropriate measures which, at the time, included significant curriculum adaptations.

We do not understand what the family is being accused of; perhaps that they failed to ask for this measure in writing and to make detailed specific requests for the counsellor to put it in place. It is curious that in your letter our family is blamed for the fact that those responsible for a publicly funded school, including a psychologist, were incapable of addressing the needs of a student

> with Down's syndrome as required, so that he would be able to learn and have the chance to pass his compulsory education tests. Everyone is entitled to this, regardless of the qualifications of the student's parents and the rest of his family (who were held responsible for the school's failure to fulfil its duties). From this perspective, the students who live in a disadvantaged social sphere are not properly accepted in the school, or at least, have very little chance of succeeding in their academic life. It seems ironic that the school managers choose to take distance from the main statutory role of compulsory education: to compensate for inequality and achieve social justice.
>
> Moreover, it seems hardly believable that we, as parents of an individual with Down's syndrome, might disparage students who engage in curriculum diversification programmes. It seems ever stranger that [the internal researcher] would do so, as he is involved in Rafael's education and conducts research on socially and culturally disadvantaged students. These education pathways are precisely developed to provide alternatives for this type of students. In fact, several scientific papers published by him support his defence of students who are part of these programmes.

Leaving aside the fact that the school's managers paradoxically held the family responsible for duties that are within the school's remit (such as school counselling), we now turn to the interpretation provided by action research about measures to deal with diversity. Transcending the specific implications of the change of school type, the measures provided for by current legislation to deal with diversity include some pedagogical, psychological, philosophical, ideological, sociological and epistemological views that deserve questioning. This position is not solely held by the student's family, but also by other research groups who have shared their concerns about these measures, as the previous steps are usually not exhausted:

> We hereby wish to express our strong disagreement with the action taken by the school regarding Rafael, and request that appropriate measures be adopted to reach the best solution. It is unfair that he has received fails after making such a tremendous effort. The school did not take into account his family's opinion, and failed to make all the curriculum changes required, and to organise time and space differently. In addition, the learning and assessment systems were not adapted to ensure that he would have the chance to meet the objectives of compulsory education *as his fellow students had.* This is why we believe that curriculum diversification *should not be implemented without having previously exhausted the options indicated above.* (Statement from a group of educational researchers specialised in people with disabilities, 2002; emphasis added)

One of the major features of the Spanish education system is the need to address diversity among students in compulsory education, which ends at 16. However, the measures established by the Education Authorities to do so—providing options,

curriculum adaptation and curriculum diversification—lead to a peculiar situation. Curriculum adaptation and curriculum diversification[19] are intended to develop parallel curricula that differentiate between first-class and second-class students, mainly due to the fact that the role of schools continues to be transmitting academic knowledge; therefore, students who store less knowledge are undervalued.

It is therefore worth questioning the true intention of the Education Authorities as regards the openness of schools to all members of society. We do not know whether the measures adopted are aimed to develop a different type of relationship among the people who are under the umbrella of education, which would undoubtedly be the ultimate goal in a comprehensive approach such as this.[20] What type of learning is implemented by the use of these measures in order to meet the needs of the diversity of the population? An analysis of the Spanish system will be made below to answer this question.

It is worth noting the importance that curriculum content had in the last three general education acts in Spain (1970 General Act, *LOGSE*[21] and *LOCE*). The second one of these acts will be focused on, as it had a key impact on the student in question. While it is true that the *LOGSE* attempted to move closer to the affective and social aspects of children within the cognitive evolutionary approach, as César Coll (1987) argued, constructivism fails considering that children inevitably go through various stages of development, and therefore it is not necessary to promote development so insistently. It would be better to focus more on the acquisition of the knowledge required to immerse themselves in their culture.

Moreover, Coll (1987) explained that to design and develop the curriculum, four questions must be answered: What should be taught? When should it be taught? How should it be taught? What, how and when should it be assessed?

The first question must be answered by following the content prescribed by the Education Authorities. It can be assumed that the most important task of education nowadays is to transmit the specific cultural contents that have been selected by the Authorities—and by the epistemological sources of each area of knowledge—without teachers and students having been involved in choosing what they consider to be the most useful content. The curriculum is understood as a finished—rather than as an interactive—object (Angulo & Blanco, 1994); it is certainly not seen as a construction brought together by both teachers and students or as the result of an active creation process by all the participants in education (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992).

This is how education is gradually becoming independent of teachers' professional development. They are treated as mere technical experts who apply a curriculum designed by third parties. It has also moved away from the aspiration of bringing students closer to happiness, seeking expression and understanding. Ultimately, schools have ended up becoming powerful exclusion tools which, through competitiveness among children from an early age, determine the future—and present—roles of the members of a group in a way that is socially legitimised. This education—or rather, instruction—proceeds differently depending on socioeconomic and cognitive characteristics (Bernstein, 1971; Bourdieu &

Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Barton, 1998), often linked by a cause-effect relationship. It is informed by efficiency criteria (Gimeno, 1986) that consider human beings as instruments and establishes a clear definition of the features of the group that it is addressed to. The idea of the norm, which is promoted because it (arguably) covers the majority of the population, is nothing but an artifice used to legitimise the unequal treatment of students in public schools.

The role of education has now shifted towards control and segregation;[22] towards the separation of society into groups based on personal and cultural characteristics, and it uses content to do so (Calderón, 1999). Content has become the key issue. Those students who manage to cover the minimum content are promoted—following the arguments outlined in Section 2.1—and transmit their 'genes' within decision-making and power spheres. This is how they will be more independent and influential in the future, and will obtain greater recognition (a better paid, more highly valued job); whereas those who fail to cover the prescribed content are relegated to less complex social networks, with less decision-making power, independence and socioeconomic recognition. This way their 'genes' follow a 'biological line' that usually does not have any influence on the policies that govern the future of society. As can be seen, biological schemas continue to be at the core of sociocultural relationships.

> I think that refusing to let Rafael graduate from secondary school is as deplorable as racism. He has been systematically refused the opportunity to pass his exams despite having worked very hard. This means that the school (not all the teachers, as some of them were highly concerned about his development) closed its doors on him, while also denying him access to social and employment networks with equal opportunities. This is also the case for all persons with Down's syndrome. If compulsory education classifies individuals in this way, what leeway is there to compensate for inequality? I do not want schools to be like this. (I. Calderón, letter sent to Spanish newspaper *El País* on 4 July, 2007, unpublished)

The measures put in place by the Authorities to tackle diverse needs will only result in second-rate learning for students participating in such programmes. If what prevails in schools is the volume of contents, those students who retain less content cannot have first-rate learning levels. This is what Rafael's family has heard so many times: 'Rafael does not have the level required.'

> SCHOOLS FOR LEARNING, NOT FOR FAILING!
>
> The curtain opens and you can see a child with Down's syndrome who starts infant school. The curtain closes and when it opens again you can see the child again at the school door at the end of the last year of compulsory education, saying goodbye to his fellow students who graduated. He did not graduate and is being sent to another school, to save his school's teachers, counsellor

> and managers some incomprehensible moral and legal problems: 'He does not have the level required.' What level are they talking about? They should be ashamed that they have thrown in the bin the student's work, the work of those teachers who were so dedicated to help and also his family's efforts.
>
> They are still not aware that it is not only knowledge that needs to be evaluated in schools, but also the behaviour, attitudes and values that students develop both within and outside the classroom. And the child in the play got a distinction in all of these. It must be remembered that compulsory education is intended to compensate for inequality, not to increase it. There is no greater inequality than treating unequal people in the same way as everyone else. This is like placing stairs where ramps were once built; like depriving blind people of their guide dogs; and speaking to deaf people without letting them lip-read. This is what Rafael had to endure at school. (I. Calderón, letter to the editor published in the newspaper La Opinión de Málaga on 6 July, 2002)

Differences are not understood as such, since we are immersed in a culture of inequality and competition. The film 'The Eighth Day' (*Le Huitième Jour*) shows this perfectly. Daniel Auteuil, in his role as a sales executive, explained at a conference,

> Make an effort to look like your customer. Watch him, copy his gestures, his posture, his intonation. Two individuals who are similar make contact more easily than two individuals who are different. The person you are speaking to will never realise that you are imitating them, I assure you. Things that are the same are never noted, only that which is different is striking.[23]

The education that is inculcated in school, the same as in society, not only does not help to understand the value of differences, but also ensures that those who are different are doomed through segregation and marginalisation. It is contents (and how they are measured by school marks) that make our education competitive and individualistic. This type of education does not help learners as subjects, as they are not encouraged to seek their own happiness, but to fit the purposes that have been set for them by someone else. But there are more reasons why those aspects learnt by students through an adapted or a diversified curriculum are scarcely valued. These reasons can be summarised as follows:

- The contents are reduced in many cases.
- As Rafael was the only one who would have been outside of the common curriculum, he would have been the only different person in the group.[24] This would have had two consequences, equally important:
  - He would have been discriminated against, as he would have been the only one in the class who needed special treatment. This would have decreased Rafael's self-esteem (as would happen to any child, whether disabled or not). This

would have been accompanied by a commensurate reduction in expectations, both of which would have been decisive in causing failure at school and early dropping out.
    - Schoolmates marginalise those who are treated differently by the school. Schools have not created the culture of diversity necessary for democratic relations. Therefore, students learn in a homogenising environment that tends to promote segregation and marginalises those who stand out as being different.
- Rather than the group activities that the rest of the class would have experienced, the educational activities would have become individual, which would have meant that the social development of the student would have become skewed, he would have missed the connection that the school establishes among classmates (being seated in pairs, group activities, correction of exercises, etc.).
- Entering into the labour market is difficult for these students, given their different, lower-level education. One of the current main functions of the school is to separate, select and segregate certain groups in society by taking into account certain variables that are not necessarily directly related to their ability to carry out a particular job. In this regard, M. Apple (1995) says that 'society' requires docile workers, and claims that schools, through their social relationships and covert teaching, clearly guarantee such docility. The obedient workers in the labour market are reflected in the 'marketplace of ideas' in schools. Moreover, Bowles and Gintis (1976) referred to a differentiated hidden agenda, which produces different types of learning according to social class (and obviously cognitive differences). This leads to the training of skilled and unskilled workers. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) spoke of cultural reproduction in schools that perpetuate capitalist society at the service of habitus and cultural capital to conduct its business, showing symbolic violence by eliminating the ideology of talent. All these visions have been clearly demonstrated in the example related to the marquetry group work, where Rafael was only allowed to sand.

There are numerous other characteristics of this little-understood way of learning, but they can be summarised as:

- Depriving students labelled as 'special' of entering into the same culture as the rest, considering that this culture is currently based on content.
- Depriving students of a good education, understood as enabling them to develop fully—in emotional, cognitive, behavioural and social terms—. This is necessarily linked to the ideas of freedom (concerning the individual) and justice (in relation to the others).

All of this breaks with a constructivist philosophical tenet that suggests that schools are not based on comprehensiveness and diversity. Comprehensive education is based on the assumption that all people are equal, and therefore should have the same rights. Education is the key to entering the cultural society that we have invented, so everyone needs to acquire the cultural basis to become integrated into society

and be autonomous within it. This idea is one of the central pillars of democracy. If the available settings—and more specifically, the educational setting—hinders these principles, the network of meanings sustaining them needs to be changed without further delay. The school culture must be transformed to ensure the development of all students.

The problem remains the same, that is, educating the whole population does not mean that comprehensive education fulfils its purpose. In order to ensure that all members of society of school age have the right to enter 'adult society' on an equal footing, their completion of compulsory education needs to be guaranteed. This education should also be owned by them, relying on their own previous experiences and ensuring a type of learning that is useful in their lives.

If we think of compulsory education as a race (which is not difficult to do, given the influence of the competitive market system on it), comprehensiveness will not be determined by everyone being included in it, but by everyone reaching the finish line. The problem is that the education system continues to be governed by pre-defined contents and evaluated using restricted and arbitrary criteria, thus littering the track with obstacles. These obstacles are not difficult to overcome for those whose personal characteristics fit the norm, or who have life experiences in line with that of the school culture. But they are insurmountable for those who lie outside of the norm, or whose social and family experiences are far removed from the codes that rule our classrooms. This leads back to the same problem: the content of the curriculum and how it is evaluated (curriculum design and implementation) is far removed from the idea of comprehensiveness and diversity.

The comprehensive ideals in our schools mean that all students are placed on the starting line, and care for diversity means that those who do not follow the dominant pace end up following a different route. This does not ensure that they receive the education they need, and will lead them to a place yet unknown, possibly somewhere different that is subordinate to that of the normal order. It is not difficult to eliminate diversity if it is reduced to options or to choosing alternative ways for the 'less valid' (from the Spanish word *minusválido,* literally 'less-valid', a term sometimes used to describe disabled people).

If we are clear that comprehensive ideals are only achieved if all students have a common—although not necessarily equal—basis, we can devise ways to move forward. However, political will and determination are essential, as the individual pieces of the economic and educational systems would need to be defined. All this should be accompanied by a change in the strategies used to deal with the most disadvantaged groups, who have so far been silenced. They could create road maps (which they do, but without being heard) in order to achieve these objectives.

For education to be truly focused on what the theoretical discourse says (the great values that are incessantly repeated in the political spheres), the curriculum itself should be open and flexible, and based on sufficiently generic aims so as not to prescribe the act of teaching and learning. Openness is defined by the notion of the unfinished; it needs to be built by students and teachers, because

they are the only ones who really know what is needed at a certain time and in a particular context. This involves the responsibility of knowing when and how to teach and evaluate. Flexibility is defined as the degree of adaptability of the curriculum to the individual within the context of a class. The curriculum then serves the individual, and not the reverse; this flexibility is therefore determined by the degree of openness.

All the above would achieve a common curriculum for all. It would be open and flexible, as it would be based on general goals that would be barely prescribed, although it would lay the necessary foundations for education. The comprehensive ideals would then survive provided that the education system is open to the needs of groups and individuals. It is imperative that the full group of people who make up the school community, and more specifically, the class, have their needs met. This type of curriculum offers the possibility of dealing with diversity in the classroom as different, but not unequal, people by offering the autonomy required to define their needs and manage the educational process accordingly. A new culture needs to be established that is based on diversity, cooperation, participation and democracy. This culture, which constitutes the mind, as stated by J. Bruner, projects the intelligence of the people participating in it.

Finally, and most critically, it seems incomprehensible that constructivist thought can be standardised and corseted by curriculum specifications to such an extent that teachers can only order their students to do what they have been ordered to do. This is particularly difficult to understand when considering that constructivist thought is innovative and revolutionary, and it has gone beyond what has been called ‘psychological theory’. It provides a political conception of the very act of educating, based on enabling learners to construct moral thought and action, with learners being conceived as both intelligent and autonomous.

Schools need to take a new step forward in achieving autonomy for their community, linking their activities to the characteristics and peculiarities of their immediate context. To do so, they need to become detached from the impositions of the market. The market-bound way of thinking urges schools to search for efficiency at any cost and classify stusdents. In this regard, the measures to care for diversity are clearly insufficient from the very onset. The new discourse of competencies could become an incentive to adapt the school system to the needs of students. But there is too much evidence that leads to the conclusion that today’s competencies are hardly different from yesterday’s objectives.

3.5. THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL: THE SCHOOL’S AGENTS AND THE DIAGNOSIS

Many professionals and educationalists assume that the educational future of some students can be scientifically determined by applying a series of tests. Some of us, however, think that the task of education is specifically to prevent the exclusion that is usually generated through the interpretation of the results of such tests. According

to this view, the role of educational psychology evaluations and diagnoses involves taking responsibility for the consequences of diagnoses and opting for an evaluation method that enables all students to be included. However, this task is extremely difficult when it is based on scientific and institutional legitimacy (despite its flaws). In addition, people with disabilities become objects of continuous tests that they are forced to live with throughout their lives, often without asking the students' or their parents' permission (and often being implicitly denied the chance to reply). Rafael's mother (2003) described this situation in the following terms:

> During this time, we also had to endure what the various tests said about our son.
>
> In Primary school he took a test. I went to talk to the psychologist and I asked him if he thought there was a problem with the child's orientation (the results said he had poor spatial awareness). I thought the psychologist was wrong. I emphasised two or three things so that he would pay attention to them, and he said he would correct them, which he did. I didn't like the result anyway, so I left it. *I could not express myself sufficiently well and didn't know the importance these things would have at a later stage'.*
>
> I have also kept another test, because a good friend… advised us: 'Let us see how we can help him more.' I took him to a psychologist. *I knew what was going to happen,* and when my husband, Rafael's brother and I went to pick up the result, on the way there we told our son not to meddle in anything, to be quiet, not to challenge what the psychologist would say to us, because *we knew what was going to happen.* This was a diagnosis that identified the problems he had…, but it only saw his difficulties… According to the test, Rafael was unable to do anything. This really put me down. My friend was horrified. Her intention was the opposite: to find out how to help him. We had a terrible time, and we tried to stop him from finding the results out.
>
> I have even kept the result, just in case one day I can go to the psychologist's office and prove them wrong. (Emphasis added)

Both the scientific and institutional contexts came together to legitimise Rafael's exclusion. We must emphasise the important role played by bureaucracy, which imposes a major socialising force on students and families to be submissive as a way of dealing with any disagreement with the school's responses. Thirty-six different reports were submitted between 13 June, 2002 and 21 August, 2003 to the Provincial Education Officer, the Counsellor for Education, inspectors, the school's headteacher and the Ombudsman, all of which sought to obtain an inclusive response for Rafael. This was in addition to the various initiatives carried out by the family (collecting signatures, writing to the media, holding personal interviews and meetings, producing journal articles, searching for institutional and scientific support, etc.) to be used in the political and administrative struggle. Thus bureaucracy played a key role in

the legitimisation of the traditional concept of evaluation, and required great effort and resources that are often beyond the reach of the general public. The education authorities acted as a buffer to complaints from parents and students, muffling their power and preventing them from defending their rights. This scientific and institutional legitimisation means that students with disabilities are—by default—considered to be unable to do things and guilty until proven otherwise. And this demonstration is also hindered by the way the school expresses its version of 'democracy':

> The family verbally requested… an 'evaluation report' from both the tutor and the secretary. When the inspector consulted with the Legal Services of the Provincial Education Authority, he was told that, under current regulations, personal assessment reports could not be delivered to the family … As for the copies of the final reports and yearly curriculum plans requested, according to the Order of 9 September, 1997, which regulates certain aspects of the organisation and operation of publicly-funded private schools, these cannot be made available. (Written by the school's headteacher to the family, 7 February, 2003)

> Regarding the required documentation… having read the orders concerning ESO assessment and the order governing organisational and operational aspects of publicly-funded private schools, it does not follow that the personal assessment reports and annual curriculum plans of the school, or the final yearly reports have to be released to parents of students, regardless of whether some of these documents are made with suggestions and contributions of parents' associations, through the channels set forth by law. Therefore, it is not appropriate to deliver them. (Written by the school's headteacher to the family, 17 June, 2003)

Two comments need to be made in this regard:

- The order mentioned above is contrary to the constitutional right that guarantees access to those archives and public records that are not legally confidential. These can therefore be demanded, as they are personal documents about the student.
- The school's annual plan and the academic year's final report are described in the School's Internal Regulations as documents that parents and students, as well as parents' associations, can comment on and make suggestions about. In order to do so, they need access to these documents. How can suggestions be made about something that they cannot see? How can a family know the pedagogical measures being taken about their child and form an opinion about them?

It is clear that the role taken by the school regarding its treatment of diversity and its commitment to justice and real democracy involved acting as a buffer rather than as a platform to identify conflicts, raise participatory processes and generate

social change and transformation. We continue to wonder what role the school and its professionals should play. Are there other ways of assessing students which offer a more comprehensive view? Far from trying to provide formulas to create perfect strategies, we will share the measures that we took when we assumed that it was our professional responsibility to oppose what was (in our opinion) the segregating treatment given to the student (see the psychological assessment made by the school in Figure 10). Initially, this response involved preparing the counter-report, which was only a measure of resistance and denunciation. But in the subsequent follow-up to the entire process, we started to reconceptualise educational processes (in addition to the practical results obtained), which enabled us to produce what we considered to be an educational response. In the counter-report, data from standardised tests used by the school's Counselling Department did not stand up when verified with the data and opinions provided by the families, the narration of the student's experiences, the observations of his actions and skills, and informal interviews, which provided much more information than the numbers and figures reflected in the first diagnosis. A research project that included participatory and qualitative tools enabled us to provide a more comprehensive and humane overview.

The role of the school and its professionals must be based on collective reflections and the analysis of the consequences of their decision making and actions. These should be reflected in the creation of innovative spaces and tools in terms of justice and inclusion. To deny this means, especially in secondary schools where the staff have had little pedagogical training, following the psycho-pedagogic parameters already established by other professionals who are higher up in the hierarchy (counsellors and managers).

Part of the answers should be provided by the school itself. This is necessary to understand the situation and try to improve every aspect of it. In this context, participatory research can and should be one of the keys to improving school action.

> Sociology cannot be a neutral intellectual endeavour, indifferent to the practical consequences of its analysis for those whose conduct forms its object of study. (Giddens, 1982:7)

However, reality is far from these interpretations. Participation, rigour and the educational perspective of diagnoses are usually visibly lacking in the daily work of counselling departments in schools. They serve to hide prejudices and carelessness that take for granted students' referrals to other types of schools to prevent complications. An example of this is the document prepared by the school and how this purpose is made apparent (Figure 10).

The family understood this type of evaluation to be a 'psycho-educational analysis intended to meet Rafael's educational needs'. However, the document prepared by the school 'sentenced the student to a *Programa de Garantía Social* instead of providing him with mechanisms to complete his Compulsory Secondary Education alongside his schoolmates following the common pathway. This is why we believe that Rafael is being discriminated against because he has Down's syndrome.' For

SUMMARY – ASPECTS INVOLVED IN THE STUDENT'S DEVELOPMENT

Psychological aspects
Down's syndrome

Intellectual aspects

SCORE SUMMARY WISC-R III (7TH ED., 2000)	DS	SS
VERBAL SCALE		
Information	5	1
Similarities	5	1
Arithmetic	7	1
Vocabulary	6	1
Comprehension	5	1
(Digits)	7	4
PERFORMANCE SCALE		
Picture completion	6	1
Picture arrangement	4	1
Block design	3	1
Object assembly	2	1
Symbol search	25	1
(Maze)	14	3
VERBAL SCORE	9	Less than 44
PERFORMANCE SCORE	8	44

Motor aspects
Not applicable

Language aspects
Stutter

Learning style
He prefers working on his own. He is not capable of generalising his learning. He does not respond favourably to the use of learning reinforcers. He is unable to evaluate himself.

Motivation for learning
His favourite subject is ethics. He is motivated by tasks that allow him to shine in class.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE FAMILY AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Family setting
Rafael is the youngest of 9 brothers and sisters. At present he lives in the family home together with 4 other siblings. He has private tuition at home (two hours a day, Monday to Friday). During these sessions he carries out tasks proposed by the school.

School setting
He took his first year of primary school three times. He has never taken any year in secondary school more than once. Rafael has been at his current school for his entire primary and secondary education, without any significant curriculum adaptation being applied. No maladaptive social relationships have been identified. He prefers playing with younger children in the playground. When he was asked what optional subject he is taking, he said: 'I don't know' (his optional subject is Classics Culture). He does not know if he takes geography or history.

Level of curriculum competence
The Education Team evaluated the degree of achievement of objectives as follows:

AREAS	% of OBJECTIVES MET	
Biology and Geology	3 out of 9	33%
Social Sciences	4 out of 21	19%
Physical Education	2 out of 6	33%
Spanish Language	5 out of 27	18%
English language	Not evaluated	
Classics Culture	0 out of 9	0%
Mathematics	6 out of 22	27%
Technology	1 out of 10	10%
IT	0 out of 7	0%
Ethics	5 out of 11	25%

The Education Team's assessment is as follows:

	PRIMARY					
Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Education Team	0%	0%	0%	22%	0%	22%

	SECONDARY			
Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Education Team	33%	22%	0%	0%

COUNSELLING TEAM
Having analysed the collected data, it seems appropriate for Rafael to access a *PGS* for special educational needs.

Figure 10. Literal transcription of the psycho-educational report carried out by the school's counsellors (13 June, 2002)

Rafael's family, '*completing compulsory education through standard courses was a right* conquered by democracy to provide equal opportunities and ensure everyone can be part of society and enter into the labour market, including those people with some kind of disability' (document sent by the family to the Ombudsman, 13 March, 2003).

Rafael's mother (2003) very clearly summarised the family's thoughts about the school's psycho-educational report. This was the basis for the later study conducted by the researchers:

> What it says is that he has Down's syndrome, that he stutters, works alone, that he is unable to evaluate himself… But he is at his happiest when he manages to do something difficult, when he greets and is greeted by all, both the children and adults. He was devastated when they didn't give him the graduation certificate; he came home from school (all of his schoolmates were there), so that they wouldn't see him cry.

The Order of September 19, 2002 (BOJA (Official Gazette of Andalusia) no. 125)), which regulates psycho-educational evaluations and special needs reports, states that the school report must contain at least the following sections (Article 6.4):

- 'Personal details' (included in the document but omitted here).
- 'Reason for the psycho-educational evaluation carried out and school history.'
- 'Overall assessment of the case. Types of special education needs.'
- 'Guidance for teachers to provide an educational response in the teaching and learning process, both in the classroom and in the school'.
- 'Guidance for advice to be given to the legal representatives on the pertinent aspects of the family and social settings that affect the student's development and learning process. Suggestions are to be included here about the possibilities for cooperation between the guardians and the school.'

These sections clearly do not appear in the report shown in Figure 10. It is also noticeable that, as set out in Article 6.2 of the Order, 'the psycho-educational evaluation report will be part of the student's record.' This means that any educational team working with the student at a later stage will have been influenced by this dubious document. Similarly, Article 6.3 of the Order stipulates that the student's legal representatives should have access to the contents. However, the report was produced on 13 June, 2002 but was not made available to Rafael's representatives until a meeting was held on 28 June, 2003. What was the reason for this delay? Why was the family not informed of this evaluation, if it was carried out with the sole purpose of improving educational provision made for Rafael? The only answer we can think of is that information was being hidden to prevent parental involvement in the actions planned by the school.

All the arguments outlined so far are sufficient to think that traditional diagnoses are a disguised form of legitimising socio-cultural inequalities. But there are other

more general and obvious arguments to support this thesis, notably the two indicated below:

- Human history shows that there has always been a covert purpose to encourage the submission and subordination of disadvantaged people and groups.
- Daily life events belie reports such as these: women who assume roles which were always denied to them, trisomic children who successfully complete university education, blind people who climb high mountains, etc. All of these have managed to break the limitations that society, through certain agents such as schools, inflict on them, socialising them in disability rather than enhancing their abilities.

These day-to-day events are so overwhelmingly logical that they are probably the main means of resistance, as citizens have the opportunity to see, understand and even experience it. The presence in the media of actions of resistance to homogenising tendencies is very important. In the region of Andalusia, the main television programme that questions this socialisation is that presented by Jesus Quintero on Canal Sur, entitled 'Red mice,' among others. A relevant case was an interview with a guitarist, Tomas García, who lacked the fingers of his right hand and performed an excellent concert. He explained how his teacher, Manolo Cómitre, always taught him in a very natural way, without any conflicts or difficulties. His teacher would bandage his right hand to teach him the different chords. There is a clear difference between the professionalism of some teachers and others, and between their educational projects too. Faith in the individual and confidence in their potential are fundamental values for the education process.

The next section provides an outline of the counter-report prepared by the external researcher, the internal researcher and another contributor to challenge the destructive power of the evaluation undertaken by the school's Counselling Department (Figure 10). As stated by the family in their letter to the Ombudsman (dated 13 March, 2003), 'this document shows that the report written by the school's counsellors is laden with prejudices, follows obsolete techniques and psycho-educational theories and is not oriented towards improving educational interventions to meet the student's needs, but only to apply a label in order to avoid taking responsibility for him. It is based on a deficient paradigm that lowers his learning expectations, describes him as being incapable and, therefore, decreases his development.' The counter-report is therefore used here to question the scientific legitimacy of the diagnosis and open up some avenues to redirect assessment practices and educational activities.

3.6. THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE FAMILY AND THE EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS: THE PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL COUNTER-REPORT[25]

We now turn to a discussion of the purpose of the psycho-educational evaluation, as in our view it is based on a paradigm that runs contrary to education itself. All

school activities should be focused on improving students' life situation through learning, on the understanding that, as argued by David Trend (1995), the main purpose of pedagogy is to provide the means for oppressed social groups to become aware of their situation and to give them tools with which to transform their reality.

The report under discussion belongs to a positivist paradigm that has been challenged in a large number of scientific forums and publications, especially from critical pedagogy and the interpretative paradigm of the social sciences. Not only did it enable compulsory schooling to become an instrument of ideological control—especially through evaluation processes—(Méndez, 1995), but it also legitimised the unfair treatment that occurred within the school. Through this type of approach, student evaluation is used as a 'neutral' measuring mechanism, presumably free from bias and subjectivity, with a partial focus regarding intelligence and a fixed, immutable effect. This does not allow for any changes, improvements and qualifications, some essential elements from a truly pedagogical and professional perspective. Was it being suggested that there are people—in our case, Rafael—who are uneducable?

In this sense, the professional who carries out an evaluation has the power to *decide what is to be learned, what must be valued, and the terms on which this happens*.[26] Clear examples of this are the contents and consequences of the report for Rafael. An instrument intended for improvement, namely the psycho-educational evaluation, was turned into a legitimising argument to place responsibility for failure at school on the student, thus exempting the didactic, organisational and curriculum measures, the teaching team and the school as a whole from any responsibility. Was it ever considered that the cause of the problem could be found outside of the student being evaluated? Much to the contrary, this type of evaluation attributes failure to students for being slow or lazy; lacking background knowledge; spending too much time on other activities such as football, music or television; not knowing how to study; being unmotivated; not understanding what is being said to them; the family not being involved, etc. (Guerra, 1998). Although it was only stated orally in several meetings held between the family and the school's management team and the counsellor, the problem found at school was framed as being the responsibility of the family. How could the school hold the family responsible for the numerous, long-standing problems that the institution shelved regarding the student, which had been repeatedly raised by the student's relatives?

By using some objective techniques, such as psychometric tests, and tests and grades that are numerical or quote the results as percentages, the professional who uses them is divested of responsibility and puts the 'blame' solely on the shoulders of the person. If history had continued to be marked by this type of numerical results, certain groups, such as women, immigrants, black people, Hispanic people, the poor, etc., would never have had the opportunity to leave their oppression behind (including segregation and even slavery). In these cases, 'infallible' tests were used to legitimise the fact that these groups were placed below normal levels on distribution curves such as the Gaussian bell-curve.[27] In addition, decisions

Table 4. Contextual comparison of the main characteristics of traditional and inclusive diagnoses, respectively,[29] according to Habegger (2002)

Traditional Diagnosis	*Inclusive diagnosis*
Technical, based on results and labels, condemning the person for a certain period (months) or indefinitely (years). Some examples: • Linguistic aspects: 'He stutters.' • Biological aspects: 'Down's syndrome.' The educational 'solution' was to refer him to diversified curriculum and apprenticeship programmes (so-called *Programas de Garantía Social*). This is a way to 'sentence' him, according to the researchers.	*Interpretative* (case study) and emancipatory, based on process assessments. It suggests means of improvement and qualification. This type of study seeks solutions to make the contents accessible to all of the students in the class. This involves analysing how learning occurs; what type of interactions happen in the classroom; what type of problems are encountered (not only by Rafael, but by all of the students); and what is the potential in order to plan the subsequent teaching/learning processes for the improvement of both students and teachers.
Techniques (quantitative): Standardised tests, scales etc. Examples: 'Areas: Biology and Geology: 33% of the objectives met'; 'Level: Year 3 and 4 Secondary School: 0%.	*Strategies (qualitative):* Observation, interviews with students/family/teaching staff, review of school material (notebooks, exercises…). The information shown in the report based on the interviews carried out with the family every three months throughout the entire student's period of compulsory schooling only indicated: the number of siblings he has, his place of residence and the fact that he had private tuition. What other information did the family provide over the years? To what extent could it be helpful to formulate a more humane and understanding diagnosis?
Dimensions: Cognitive-linguistic. Example: Intellectual aspects evaluated by WISC-R III and linguistic tests = stutter. No other aspects of his development were evaluated.	*Dimensions:* Cognitive, linguistic, affective, autonomy, values. Rafael has the self-autonomy to get himself up, go to the cinema, travel by bus, organise his school and social life. He is friendly, communicative, hard-working, sociable (he has many more friends in the area than his siblings), he is not resentful, he values others, etc. On the subject of his linguistic abilities, he is able to communicate and maintain long conversations, to express his ideas and feelings, to understand films and complex real-life situations, etc. What needs emphasising is not his stutter, but his ability to communicate.

Table 4. (Continued)

Traditional Diagnosis	*Inclusive diagnosis*
Solutions: Segregation, exclusion (external help, special classrooms, specific schools). Example: 'It seems best for Rafael to follow a *Programa de Garantía Social (or PGS*) for students with special educational needs.	*Educational solutions:* Inclusion (classroom support). When a student is not offered genuine opportunities to follow the ordinary curriculum, the academic links with their fellow students start to break. Despite this, Rafael participated voluntarily in class, wrote answers on the board, did exercises, carried out group work, etc.
Advice: Only provided to people with some kind of disability. How many other classmates have undergone this type of diagnosis? What type of advice have the teaching body been given for them to know how to assess the teaching process? What did the report prepared by the counsellors contribute to teachers' improvement?	*Advice:* Provided to the teaching staff. No organisational, attitudinal or didactic changes were made in the way the teaching staff worked. What use was the report for teaching purposes? Could teachers learn something from this in order to improve their practice? Or was it just written to prove that they could not work with Rafael?
Person responsible: Counsellor or Psychologist and educationalist. The counsellors.	*Team responsible:* The full teaching staff. The family was forced to start a discussion process with the counsellor and the management team, which was detrimental to the work that had been carried out with teachers from Year 1 in Primary. Did the teachers really know what was happening and what the likely repercussions would be? Were they aware of the family's position and the educational options available?
Reports: Technical officers Summary of WISC scores, table related to curricular competency level, table related to levels and education team	*Reports:* Narratives and assessment. Reports could go beyond mere—certainly questionable—negative descriptions: 'He is not capable of…' 'He does not answer…', etc. Some of the redeemable information should be analysed, such as 'He prefers to work alone. ' Why? 'Is he enabled to do work group?' 'Does he have access to the ordinary curriculum?' 'Does he have anything to contribute to the class?'

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Traditional Diagnosis	*Inclusive diagnosis*
Values developed: The person with the disability feels guilty and inferior, feels that they are rejected and pitied by others. Rafael felt that he was not valued (see Calderón, 2002), that he was not given the opportunity to succeed, and he often said that he did not want to go to school.	*Values developed:* Feelings of pride, sense of being positively valued on the part of the person with the disability, and companionship on the part of everybody else. Rafael gained recognition in other activities that took place outside of school. School work done at home was often treated in a way that the student felt that he was learning, and expressed he was happy with it. In the same way, while performing other extra-curricular activities he felt continuously appreciated and valued, especially in those in which there were strong emotional bonds and group links, as opposed to the individualism fostered by the reports covered here and individual marks allocated. What value is really given to group work if it is never evaluated as such?

made on the basis of these techniques exempt the evaluator from making any interpretation taking into account the context, the specific situation, time and other surrounding factors. As a result, responsibility is placed on the legitimising power of quantitative tests, thus reproducing injustices, causing educational negligence and unequivocally departing from an overall understanding of human beings. When reading the report on Rafael,[28] what do we *learn* about him? These tests do not provide profound and ethical scientific and pedagogical knowledge, as they attempt to disguise their bias. They are obsessively intended for classification and exclusion purposes.

This evaluation model also fulfils the functions of control, selection and verification, and is used to rank students, as noted by Guerra (1998). Along the same lines, Lawrence Stenhouse (1981) stated that evaluation requires prior understanding, and objective conventional assessments are not intended to help understand the educational process. They deal with it in terms of failure and success, as the teacher has to be a critic and not merely an evaluator. This is one of the most extreme characteristics that we identified in the report prepared on the student: he was stigmatised by the use of a catalogue of alleged defects ('he is not capable of…'; 'he does not respond to…'; 'he is not able to…'; 'he does not know…'; 'Down's syndrome'; 'stutter').

An explanatory table is shown below of how traditional diagnostic processes are approached and how they could be carried out from a truly educational perspective (Habegger, 2002:148). This will allow us to contextualise the diagnosis made in Rafael's case.

This was a student-centred evaluation conducted by using medical and psychometric models, based on positivist conceptions and drawn from a deficient paradigm. We suggest that, if the counsellors who drew up the report did not wish to concentrate on pedagogical aspects, they should become familiar with the competence paradigm, and engage in readings from within the psychological model. The contributions of cognitive psychology and constructivist theories of learning by Semiónovic Lev Vygotsky, J. Bruner, Alexander Luria and David Ausubel—to mention just the most prominent—might be useful to assimilate the idea that intelligence is dynamic and changeable over time, and not an implacable judgement to which subjects must submit, as discovered by S.J. Gould in *The Mismeasure of Man*, and R. Lewontin, L. Kamin and S. Rose in *Not in Our Genes: Biology, Ideology and Human Nature*. The concepts of the 'zone of proximal development', by Vygotsky, and of 'instructional scaffolding' by Bruner, may also provide new diagnostic approaches based on an educational perspective in order to enable teaching, and not merely justifications to stop doing so.

These concepts show how learning takes place and focuses on the stage that the individual is at to promote their development. All of us can always learn something, and we also have the right to have this capacity recognised, since it is one of the most important characteristics of human beings: the plasticity of learning. To deny this is to deny the possibility of feeling that one is a person.

The above is what happens when judgements such as these are made: 'He is not capable of generalising his learning' or 'He does not respond favourably to the use of learning reinforcers.' Firstly, generalising is not the same as universalising, and Rafael does both. Secondly, even animals are able to generalise learning: anyone who has a dog knows that it has learned that when we move the keys it means we are going out and maybe take it for a walk, or may have taught the dog to sit using a certain word, or not to bite, regardless of the situation. All of these are examples of learning that has been generalised by the dog to other situations, and one would hope that some additional values should be recognised in students. This again emphasises the behavioural nature of the report, but fails to understand Skinner and Watson's theories, which have also been strongly refuted. There is an anecdote that can be representative of this. When Rafael was a small child and was learning to read, he once read: NO-CI-LLA,[30] and was surprised to realise what it meant.[31] He obviously does not currently have the same age, knowledge and competence he had when he was a child. Regarding the statement mentioned above ('He does not respond favourably to the use of learning reinforcers.'), the school counsellors should be questioned about the type of reinforcers they were talking about, because at home and in other settings Rafael did respond to them. As for anyone, some reinforcers were meaningful for him and others were not, but if we maintained this argument of giving additional reinforcers, such as a chocolate bar or a carrot, some loud applause or a pat on the back, we would be in agreement with the behaviourists.[32] The greatest and most important learning reinforcer is being involved in what is being learnt, in its meaning and relevance, as this provides impetus for wanting to learn more. When

this does not happen—as seemed to be the case—marks are used as reinforcers for a type of learning that is perceived to be useless; additionally, school marks could not reinforce Rafael's current work, since these had been very low for the previous three years.

We would also like to refer to those issues that the report's authors raised in the section called 'The school setting', as it did not actually analyse the setting in any shape or form: everything was focused on the student. It mentioned that 'no social maladaptive relationships were observed', as the student is particularly sociable, but this was however qualified by emphasising that 'he prefers to play with children younger than himself at playtime', which in itself could be understood as maladaptation, a pathology or a problem. From our perspective, the fact that someone is capable of forming relationships with people younger than themselves is valuable, as this is what teachers, psychologists and educationalists themselves do (and they have managed to adapt to the characteristics of different people to a larger extent, as is the case with Rafael). It would be interesting to see a special effort made in teaching to eliminate these types of complexes and prejudices among other students, since they create barriers for people such as Rafael. If we were to teach, and students were to learn, to develop relationships with others, regardless of their age, of whether their I.Q. is over 100, or they dress in a particular way, Rafael would probably have formed more relationships with people of his own age.[33]

The last two points of the report[34] seem to us to be simply derogatory, out of place, and with no pedagogical merit, which is why we will not discuss them any further.

To sum up, we understand that, as education professionals, we need to be allies for our students—especially with those more exposed to the indecencies of our society—, and not their enemies. Acts such as those carried out by these two counsellors turn the school's role as an opportunity equaliser into a battleground for those students who were stigmatised as having failed, and into a trap for those crushed by the stigma of disability, as their characteristics make adaptation impossible. In this regard, we encourage teachers to reject reports of this kind, and to ethically rethink practices that affect people such as Rafael, which make their school progress, their subsequent entry into the labour market and, ultimately, their development as people, even more difficult.

As educationalists, therefore, do we think that what was done to Rafael is ethical? Do we have some responsibility for all this? If so, what can we do to break this vicious circle? We hope that this document will be a starting point to generate new reflections and ways of acting with students require to be understood and included.

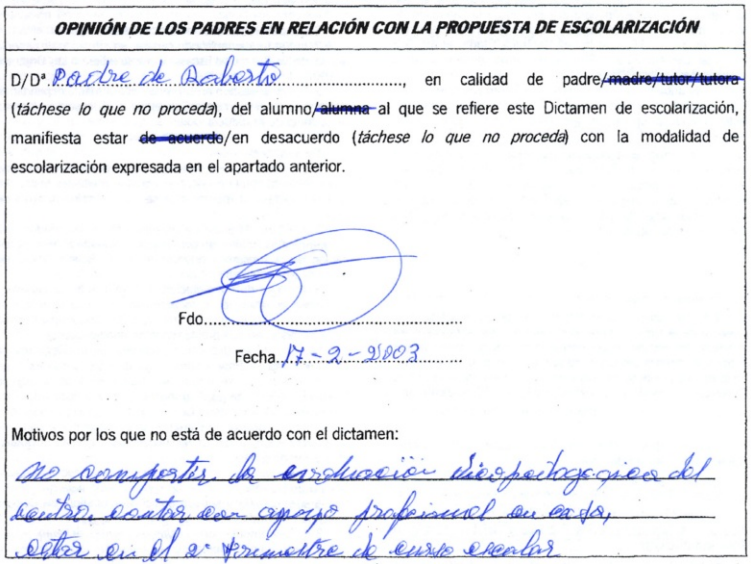
3.6.1. Repercussions of the Psycho-Educational Counter-Report

We agree with H. Giroux (2003:9) that 'theories of resistance become useful when they provide concrete ways in which to articulate knowledge to practical effects,

mediated by the imperatives of social justice, and uphold forms of education capable of expanding the meaning of critical citizenship and the relations of democratic public life.' This is the reason that drives us not only to show the paths chosen by the family in their struggle, and the ideas that grounded their actions, but also to look further at the impact that these actions have had.

The counter-report has had many consequences that for the most part have been very positive. The result is mainly due to the significant dissemination of the report by the family, as it was distributed (20 February, 2003) to all of the institutions and agents who were (actively or passively) involved in the matter (indicating in each copy that the document had also been sent to the other entities). This ensured that the entire document was read carefully, since it was also in the hands of others. They were sent to each institution with different purposes in mind, namely:

- to the school's headteacher, to reject and challenge the document prepared by the institution;
- to the Area's Education Counselling Team, to explain why the Special Needs Proposal[35] was not accepted by the family (Figure 11);



OPINIÓN DE LOS PADRES EN RELACIÓN CON LA PROPUESTA DE ESCOLARIZACIÓN

D/Dª. Padre de Roberto, en calidad de padre/~~madre/tutor/tutora~~ (*táchese lo que no proceda*), del alumno/~~alumna~~ al que se refiere este Dictamen de escolarización, manifiesta estar ~~de acuerdo~~/en desacuerdo (*táchese lo que no proceda*) con la modalidad de escolarización expresada en el apartado anterior.

Fdo.....

Fecha. 17-2-2003

Motivos por los que no está de acuerdo con el dictamen:

no comparte la evaluación psicopedagógica del centro, estar con apoyo profesional en casa, estar en el 2º trimestre de curso escolar

Figure 11. Reproduction of a document to challenge the Special Needs Report submitted to the Education Counselling Team (known by its initials in Spanish as 'EOE') (BOJA[36] No. 125 of October 26, 2002, p. 20,762; signed on 17 February, 2003). The reasons for disagreeing with the opinion are noted as: I do not agree with the school's psycho-educational evaluation; professional support is available at home, and it is now the 2nd term of the school year'

- to the Area Inspector, to complain about the attempted exclusion by the school;
- to the Head of the Provincial Education Authority, to request that he took responsibility for monitoring the inspectors regarding the case;
- to the Ombudsman, as an additional argument to defend the student against aggression and demonstrate his potential, and to facilitate the process of requesting any relevant explanation from everyone involved.

In addition to providing information about the initiatives taken by the family, their actions and the ideas on which they were based, the relevant repercussions of all this will be discussed in some detail. This will show that not only were achievements and outcomes important, but the process was also enriching.

However, the counter-report was not the only effective action. Although it was one of the action research measures taken to confront the school's judgements, it was not the only one that proved to be useful. The family had played a driving role in previous years and was able to redirect the decisions made by school and the education institutions. In fact, the support sought by the family meant that the school could not refer the student in the previous year. However, the counter-report was probably the touchstone that changed the special needs report and subsequently, the way in which the school mark issue was addressed.

The use of pedagogical discourse was the main strength of the counter-report. If the same comments had been made by the mother and father of the student in plain language, even if the content had been similar, they probably would not have been sufficiently strong to halt the attempts by the school and the education authorities to change the model of Rafael's schooling in the second term of his final school year. Rafael's mother (2003) expressed this idea very well when she referred to a previous test taken by the student: 'I didn't like the result anyway, so I left it. I could not express myself sufficiently well and didn't know the importance these things would have at a later stage.' With this in mind, we relied on the judgment of the Supreme Court of 15 October, 1959, which maintained that the 'report[37] issued by a civil servant in the performance of their official duties deserves being credited with being truthful, but is susceptible of being annulled by proof to the contrary, without which it would be arbitrary to reject or belie it, as it would be deprived of its natural effects'. By means of the counter-report, we managed to prove the opposite of what was being argued in the psycho-educational assessment.

The counter-report had numerous consequences. The student managed to obtain recognition for his efforts, as well as for the knowledge, attitudes and values that he had developed throughout his schooling. Despite years of agony and hopelessness, Rafael successfully completed his compulsory secondary education, and therefore gained the social recognition that having this qualification brought with it. This would allow him to continue his studies in whatever direction he chose, without having a barrier placed in front of him as he was about to start post-compulsory—optional—education. Do some groups have the right to decide what they want to do with their lives, whereas others do not? Rafael finally made some decisions. In 2004

he started to study for his baccalaureate and the discussions with his tutor and with the counsellor were encouraging.

> Year 4 of ESO at school was painful, especially for my father and my mother, because they have been worrying about how I've been doing in school for many years, ever since I was little. So if I'm told I'm doing well, I'm glad, and if I'm told I'm doing badly, I go blank and I'm left without words. I was studying (hitting it hard) and they failed me in every subject except Ethics and Spanish. I didn't understand. I understood that teachers were demanding, but not in that way, failing me. I didn't like the fight between my family and the teachers. I was on the side of my family, who were demanding, but I didn't agree with the marks I was getting. (well, only with those for Ethics and Spanish)
>
> I wanted to obtain the qualification so I could do something. I would like to be a trumpet teacher. If possible, I would give lessons to young children at school, but if it could be in the conservatory, much better.
>
> Now I'm in my first year of Music Baccalaureate, and I'm doing well. I get on very well with the students from the school and with the ones from outside, and with the teachers as well. I'm encouraged by results in some subjects I'm doing well at, but I have to study hard to pass. But I am a bit calmer now. This year I'm more relaxed than in year 4 of ESO, and happier. (Narrated by Rafael, 12 November, 2004)

The family could see how their struggle had borne fruit. The parents of children with disabilities live in fear of what will happen to their children when they are no longer there, because society fails to understand them and refuses to accept their children's dreams, restricting their freedom. Events such as those discussed in these pages make them lose hope, but success stories such as this are a breath of fresh air that raises their expectations again. In this way they can rethink the requirements of different settings, and encourages their belief in the abilities of their children, all of which leads to the improvement of the teaching and learning processes.

> What schools must do is teach. The opposite of what some teachers have done, who always said what he doesn't know, never what he does know. That is what the counter-report made by another team of psychologists and educationalists from the university, and the teachers who have helped our son denounced, and ensured that he didn't sink completely. This enabled us to defend ourselves against the school's counsellor, and gave us the satisfaction, as parents, that there are always people who will go against the current and also teach the weakest ones. (B. Almendros, Rafael's mother, 2003)

Moreover, when facing exclusion, family bonds are not only a form of literacy[38] in today's society; they also reaffirm the need to break the chains that some institutions put people with disabilities in, while at the same time strengthening family

relationships, and building a new family culture in which the defence of human rights is a reality.

> These bonds are best formed within the family. If the family is not together in these situations, how can we expect outsiders to care? The family has to be an example for the school, through its interest and hard work, because the grace of God is in it. If the family engages in undoing that which has been done (the person) using dynamics such as 'what he doesn't know', 'he is sick', or 'he's worth less', and forgets that, as a person, he is worth the same as everyone else, the family would destroy what they have created. (As explained by Rafael's mother, 12 November, 2004)

Certainly, the ideas built within the family and the circles of affection of which Rafael is part highlight the changes and transformations generated by the family's approach. The relationship with people with a disability is educational, as it provides new settings that vie for building schemas where everyone belongs. This is described by Rafael's best friend in this somewhat long but interesting quote:

> The mentality we have is that people with Down's syndrome have to be at home watching TV and going out for a walk with their parents in the evenings. And on top of that, these same people say that if you don't do that, it means that you don't care about him. Who is being discriminated against?
>
> But Rafael is very complex, he is not easy to describe. People limit him, but you see him in the street and he's more than just another person. More people say hello to him than to me, and they really want to do it. For this to happen there must be something he conveys to others, it must be something he does, but only he knows.
>
> Teachers don't see this, that's why they did that aberration in school. In my school they had isolated, marginalised, all of the difficult children and put them in my class (group C). The teachers had given the marks in advance. The same happens to people with a disability, are we going to have classes just for them? If Rafael needed more help, why didn't they put him with a fellow student who knew more? If you put him with others like him, you know what will happen. If all those who misbehave are put together, what can happen? Exactly what happened in my class.[39]
>
> He realised all this, even if others thought that he didn't. He often told me about the problems his parents were having. He recently came to my house and he was very concerned about my mother's health, because she was ill. He asked me if we could sit on my bed to talk and he took my hand. He told me not to worry, but it's not what he said, but what he conveyed, that really touched me. He never used formulaic language, like everyone else did to ask me about my mother; he was always genuinely concerned. This means that we

> don't want to change him to our ways, but to learn from his, changing the way we greet each other, playing on the floor…
>
> For me the key is how his family have treated him: they've never limited him, very much the opposite. The whole family acted as one (they don't contradict each other) and they never said 'poor thing'. This way of speaking not only would limit him, but would be humiliating for him. Studying is harder for him than for others, but if what he wants to do is to be a musician, he has to do it even if it is harder. It is hard for all of us to achieve what we want.
>
> I saw Rafael and spent time with him every day for ten years, and I never noticed the difference. Later I started to notice it, but I didn't give it the importance that others did. With him I am able to throw myself on the floor and play there for two hours… I've been his friend for 21 years and I think that he is as normal as me. He is my best friend because he has always given me something that others have not given me. He is my best friend because I've simply treated him as a person.
>
> He says I'm his best friend; I think this is because I've treated him like his family (I have learned from them), and I've been angry with him when necessary. And I guess nobody would get down on the floor to play with him. It gives me great satisfaction that he considers me his best friend. In life you are with another person (in terms of a partner relationship or moved by affection for that person) because you care and they somewhat contribute to who you are. Even though I sometimes don't get to see Rafael for a while (I used to live a long way from his house), he still says it, and I love it, because it means I still have something to give him as a person. I love it because I see that there is a mutual feeling. I also consider him my best friend because he is the person that I most like to be with. With him I don't have to pretend as I do with others. He will often adapt to you rather than you adapting to him. It is a bond where we there is no room for shame at all. (As told by Domingo, Rafael's friend, 12 November, 2004)

This had a palpable impact on the researchers. In addition to the repercussions described by the internal researcher as part of the family (Section 3.2.2), for us it was a particularly enriching experience. Usually families are domesticated by the institution, which robs them of all initiative and of their ability to build and offer a different vision from that imposed by standards. Sometimes the answers offered are so very logical that it is difficult to understand how professionals can be incapable of taking them into account. Rafael's mother told us in one of the last sessions during the preparation of the report: 'I don't understand the point of this school diagnosis.' Sadly, professionals are the ones performing this kind of diagnosis without realising that it serves no educational purpose.

> All these tests were for nothing, they just upset us. However, a test must be intended to maximise the individual's potential, not to bring them down. (Raphael's mother, 2003)

But this is not the only example that we witnessed and highlighted an incongruent and often convoluted role adopted by education professionals. At the International Conference of Collaborative Action Research Network (2004), the coordinator of an English research project on gifted children asked, 'Why did the family want the boy to attend that particular school?' The answer was simple: His 8 brothers and sisters had been there, why should the school not want to have him? Would this question have even occurred to us if it had been any other of Rafael's siblings? All this led both the internal and the external researchers to take an interest in continuing to defend the rights of students with a disability by using arguments developed by their families, as well as our pedagogical knowledge. The potential is vast.

Being involved in this study has been very rewarding due to its atypical nature, and its significance in terms of defending a different approach to education: a political perspective in which the main voices are those involved in the process, who were the least likely to be heard. Given the socially conscious content of this research, we sought to have it published as a book, without giving much thought to the difficulty in finding publishers willing to do it.

The community and others who had worked with us and helped us also learned that there were underlying injustices that could be combated. The feeling of involvement in rejecting the school's actions led them, in many cases, to express their satisfaction to the family when they were informed of the final outcomes of the resistance process:

> CONGRATULATIONS! … What joy it is to see that the struggle has at last borne fruit. Rafael deserves it and so do you, his family, who have endured and persisted in your efforts…
>
> This should be taken as another victory for someone's desire for self-improvement and for educational justice. So again congratulations to all of you and to Rafael… I hope that he will continue fighting for his dream. (Ana, psychologist and collaborator, 4 July, 2003)
>
> Thanks for letting me share in your joy. It has also been satisfying and delightful for me. My support arose from the conviction that it was possible to make this progress. A big hug for him, my congratulations and gratitude to you for involving me in this joy. (Manuel, Professor of Pedagogy and contributor, 4 July, 2003)

The institutions that worked with us were also involved in the achievements. This resulted in an increased interest in solving the problems caused by segregating people with disability. Families were able to pass on their belief in the abilities of

their children through their experiences and perseverance, something that other bodies would not do.

> In light of your comments, it is clear that the problem you approached us about… has been solved, for which we are deeply satisfied, given the special circumstances of Rafael's case. We send him warm greetings *and wish him the best for his personal and professional future.* (Written by the Ombudsman to the family, 21 August, 2003; emphasis added)

The reactions from the school were not the same at all, as the only news received was through Rafael's report cards. However, informal sources reported that many teachers (both secondary and primary) were pleased with the final outcome, since they had been opposed to the role played by the school's management and the counsellor. The family would have been grateful if that opposition had been shown throughout the period when Rafael was studying there, although they were encouraged by the supporting comments received. Finally, it needs to be noted that after many years the school management changed, although we are not aware of the reasoning behind it.

Once the process had been completed, the family emphasised the social character of their struggle—rather than its individual nature, as is the case with most claims heard in Parents' Association meetings. Personified in Rafael's case, all of them made great efforts to improve the situation of people with a disability in a society that negates them by turning deaf ears to their arguments and requests. Their last letter written to the Ombudsman (23/06/2003) expressed it as follows:

> We are… happy to continue fighting to make the lives of people with a disability closer to those of the rest of the population… We contacted you with questions about our son, but also… we wanted to see this issue not only as a problem that pertained to him, but as an example of what people with a disability have to face and endure. Therefore, we understand that this has been a triumph not only for Rafael (the protagonist of this whole ordeal), but for everyone with Down's syndrome and, especially, for all those of us who do not have trisomy 21, as we have managed to be somewhat better people.

This outcome allowed Rafael to enter into new social, educational and employment spheres. Within these Rafael has been able to perform in a different way, without having to bear the burden of the years spent in the middle of a battle between the family and school. One of his brothers, in the story 'Seat for all' that follows, tells of how the world changes when we change our attitudes. What can be seen clearly through this story is how his brother transformed his way of thinking and ways of being thanks to Rafael's company, as already expressed by his friend Domingo above. But during that period, Rafael was also a student at another institution, and his development was completely different from that discussed so far. After his brother's story we will briefly analyse Rafael's prolific development in that new setting, which contains elements relevant to our educational proposal.

Seats for All

I worked on the bus lines in Madrid, to be precise, on line ten. I will not describe the route because I actually get dizzy just thinking about it. I started work every day at half past five in the morning.

The driver was really punctual, and when he started the bus engine—located as I was in the last row of seats—it seemed that all the bad fumes from the exhaust headed for me. That was how my ordeal began every day, although, to be honest, my ordeal did not really start there, but it was inside of me. I could not stand being anyone's seat, much less a seat for heavy, overweight people who threw their weight on me. It made me sick to see how they sat and began to talk, to laugh, to sing … They were there as if nothing had happened, some quiet, others happy, others sad. But I did not think about that, I only thought about how comfortable people were: That freaking one is here again!

A long time went by like that. Every time someone sat, I began rattling to try and make them get up, and pinched their bottoms and calves; I did not do this timidly, but on the contrary, I did it strongly, and with excitement. I loved it when they screamed and abruptly lifted their heavy bottom from my upholstered body. I didn't mean anything bad by it, I just wanted to breathe better. Just to look after myself. I thought that those sitting down just looked out for themselves, so why shouldn't I do the same.

But one Monday the bus was packed with people. They were packed together like sardines and a young, skinny, bony boy was sitting on me. I preferred it to be him than a heavier person. At the next stop a middle-aged woman, who looked a bit unkempt and plump—fairly overweight—, got on, and standing was tiring for her. And do you know what happened next? The young weakling got up and gave his seat to the woman straight away. I was impressed, my ideas were in disarray: He was not looking out just for himself, but for the lady! The lady was very grateful, sat down and thanked the boy, 'good job there are still people like you'!

I spent a long time mulling over these words, which at first glance did not mean much, but they were full of meaning, overflowing with gratitude and love. It took me one week to react—my legs were shaking—and the first thing I did the following Monday was to stretch my body so well that the first person to board saw a good chair to sit on. I put the inside cushions to the sides so that passengers would be comfortable and that the rattles of the bus would not bother them, cushioning them with my springs and screws from all the bumps in the road.

I realised I could give a bit of support to travellers who were immersed in their own problems and were not aware that they could help others. We keep our heads down, thinking about our hard day and the long journey ahead of us. I

> say ‘we’ because it also happened to me, until I realised that I was making a big mistake. I thought I could do my best to try to make the journey, the route, peaceful and reassuring.
>
> Every day, this lady (called Mercedes) boarded the bus at the same stop, at calle Real (Royal street), and got off at the last stop in calle Estanque (Pond street). She looked tired, but had a spark of hope, of joy. One day I don’t know what happened, but when reaching calle Real, just before the bus came to a halt, I felt the need to do something for her. When the bus doors opened, almost without realising what was happening, I was in the street, at the stop, with Mercedes standing in front of me. I picked her up in my arms and made her sit on my ironed leather suit. I went straight to the last row of the bus and put my screws back in. During the journey not a word was said, but something happened that changed our routine: rather than getting off in Pond street, she got off at the stop before, Ocean street and continued on her way swimming.
>
> You young public seat apprentices may say that ‘It is normal, it is our job’. But I would go further and say it is our duty as human beings. (Isidro, Theology student, Rafael’s brother, 2004)

3.7. THE SAME STUDENT, DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES OF THE ROLE OF EDUCATION[40]

The case studied here is highly relevant for the topic under discussion, as it provides examples of negative school actions, together with ways of teaching and learning in extracurricular settings with radically different results. Unfortunately, it is paradigmatic because in many other cases people with disabilities suffer harassment at the hands of educational institutions and their agents, resulting in demotivation. This spreads even to family environments, where parents become socialised into the idea that their children are incapacitated. In these cases, the children cannot find spaces to defend their abilities and self-worth.

Rafael has enjoyed and earned the respect of other people in the field of music. As we will see, there were numerous aspects that contributed to his learning being effective, meaningful and relevant: the organisation of the activity, the methodology used, the student’s motivation, the type of learning encouraged, the interpersonal relationships formed, the type of knowledge promoted and its usefulness, the differentiation it provides to people who possess it, etc.

Rafael had been involved in musical activities for a long time. At the age of 11 he joined the Gibraljaire Miraflores Youth Band (Málaga), a musical ensemble directed by José María Puyana and Manuel Aragú Pérez. His first period in this band (which has a strong reputation both nationally and internationally[41]), was described by the musical director as a time when children should become familiar with the sound of music, listen to their peers and observe their work, to encourage them to develop a

taste and passion for music. In these first steps, Rafael did not play an instrument, but he attended general rehearsals, in which the band played different pieces of music.

Later, he decided to start learning music theory and playing an instrument: percussion. With the help of two teachers from the band and of his family, he participated in the band sessions with great enjoyment and enthusiasm. He was constantly keen to play and study there, often much more frequently than the official schedule laid down. As a result of his music learning and the development of his sense of self in this area, he decided to apply to the Conservatory of Music and pursue his studies there, as his peers and friends were doing.

However, the Education Authorities hindered his plan. They argued that Rafael's advanced age (he was 14 years old at that time) and the criteria for the selection of students meant that he could not access the Conservatory. After some protracted negotiations and interviews with different education inspectors, the family resorted to the Ombudsman for the first time in order to defend the rights of the student, since they believed that the age rule was covertly harmful for people with disabilities. Finally, he was allowed to take the admission test for the elementary level and after he passed it, on the advice of Band teachers, it was decided that he would specialise in playing the trumpet.

From then on Rafael completed the four academic years that made up the basic Music qualification, and became the first person with Down's syndrome in Spain to successfully complete the admission tests for the higher degree in Music. Some approaches were sought at that point to adapt his conservatory classes to the band. His band sessions were not merely intended to reinforce his formal lessons, but were the main source of his learning. While all this was happening, the school experiences detailed earlier were taking place. In contrast to the developments occurring in the school context, at the time the family had no doubt about Rafael's ability and performance and had great hopes for his future in the musical field (from cultural, work and social perspectives). He remained increasingly excited about his music learning. He devoted much of his free time to playing the trumpet at home and had no doubt that music was his life, as he himself stated at the time.

What were the key factors that explain the differences in the student's development in each of these settings? We believe that the answer to this question can suggest alternatives to existing school education, which is often too limited by its own structures, traditions and rigidity. A number of features are described below which, in our opinion, had a very important impact on these two different approaches:

- *Organisation.* The band had numerous members (around 160 musicians), solely taught by two volunteer teachers who devoted their free time to the students. The students were divided into ten different instrument groups, which covered a broad spectrum of ages, levels of knowledge, skills and years of musical experience (new students were continuously joining and leaving the band). All this provides a good insight into the difficulties involved in the heterogeneity of the group and its structure. The children came and went freely on a daily basis, as the space

was open for them. There were also specifically scheduled sectional and general rehearsals. Band members could be seen playing in the rehearsal room, as well as in the different practice rooms, in the courtyard or in the hallways; some alone, others together. Diverse sounds were heard, ranging from *pasodobles* to jazz, current soundtracks, etc. Although there were certain ages that tended to group themselves together (especially adolescents), inter-personal relationships were not restricted to age or levels, as happened in the school. All this diversity and its importance for a music ensemble—in which each instrument has a role within the group and no one is dispensable—was widely accepted, and freedom and respect for one's peers was encouraged, totally the opposite of what commonly occurs in schools. In the words of Tracy Kidder, the way organisation is addressed in school is quite simply contrary to all logic:

> Put twenty or more children of roughly the same age in a little room, confine them to desks, make them wait in lines, make them behave. It is as if a secret committee, now lost to history, had made a study of children and, having figured out what the greatest number were least disposed to do, declared that all of them should do it. (Kidder, 1989:115)

The rigidity of schools in structuring knowledge (in disconnected levels), and in their academic activity (by academic years, terms, and assessments), the delimitation of the spaces (closed classes without a common project) and time (one hour per subject, each without permeating the others), the differentiation of an independent and disintegrated teaching body (separated by disciplines and areas of expertise, as well as levels) and the emphasis on discipline, which thwarts the students' learning curiosity (remaining seated, sitting as the teacher says they should…) are some of the most striking aspects of the organisation of school activity. This obsession with classifying, delimiting and structuring, almost inevitably places people with disabilities in the spotlight, as they are not within the patterns of 'normality'. The present case breaks down some prejudices that often characterise school actions and the negative attitude towards change, based on the assumption that heterogeneous groups cause the general level to go down. These arguments are often used to legitimise dealing with classroom diversity in separate spaces (diversification classrooms, support classes, etc.).
In the band setting there was a mix that would be unthinkable in a classroom (of levels, experience, age, instruments, skills, etc., all in a group of 160 students from a working-class neighbourhood). And yet, not only did it manage to successfully create a space that promoted relevant learning for all, but the level of music produced was very high. Proof of this was the first place awarded to the band in the 5th International Band Competition 'Villa de Aranda' (Burgos) in 2004 and the gold medal granted by the provincial authority of Málaga for 'bringing together 160 young musicians from primary, secondary, higher and university backgrounds, providing an endless breeding ground of professionals

who are now members of bands, orchestras, and music conservatories throughout the country' (Provincial Authority of Málaga, 2 March, 2010).

- *Motivation for learning*
  Earlier in this chapter we noted how the band's teachers placed special emphasis on instilling the students with a love of music. This simple fact already represents a departure from the usual practice within the school, where the promotion of love for the different subjects was relegated to a few teachers. The lack of motivation for learning is largely due to the compulsory nature of ESO, although this cannot be regarded as the only reason for it. The tradition of schools as institutions, the professional culture of teachers, and students' attitudes—built up through years and years of sitting in front of teachers who speak of abstract concepts, often without the sufficient degree of maturity or the right environment for meaningful learning—is a great impediment to school teachers and their teaching. All this separates learning from the interests of their students, who are socialised in the need to temporarily acquire learning in exchange for qualifications, so that their motivation moves from being intrinsic to extrinsic.
  In the band, the situation was quite different. The activities were all extracurricular, which means that students chose to engage in them, and were therefore motivated to do so. Other issues also supported students' motivation:
  - The *very nature of the discipline*, highly dependent on the senses, although acquiring a love of music, as a love of mathematics, can be encouraged and learned.
  - The interest of teachers in training musicians who feel strongly about the subject itself, and feel the learning process, and the group as their own. In other words, fostering *autonomy* and *responsibility* in learning.
  - The *extraordinary nature* of many of the activities. Throughout the year, many concerts are held, which involve travel, events, band parades, etc. In addition, a longer annual trip (with or without music performances) is organised, which the students go on free of charge thanks to the profits from the contracts made. Parents can also go on both types of trips, and some often accompany the students, despite having to pay their own expenses.
  - The *social relationships* established both within and outside of the rehearsals, which are not separate from the educational character of the activities. The students can be seen with their instruments talking to each other, exchanging opinions, corrections and discussions about music, engaging in chats typical of their age and interests. In schools it would be desirable to have that shared culture where teachers and students could naturally talk about the different concerns related to the various subjects.
  - *The productivity* of educational activities in terms of students' interests. In schools the production has been often too limited to qualifications, which lead to good jobs when they are adults. However, in the band students see their efforts in terms of personal improvements, musical productions (recordings, concerts, etc.), leisure activities (travel, etc.) and the social recognition of their

work. All this means that they are not studying for a meaningless qualification, but to produce and perform music of a high standard. We are talking, therefore, of placing the students in the context of production, not reproduction.

- The *practical nature* of the activity. The students learn music by listening to and producing it. The closest analogy to this discipline we could find in schools is language learning. However, second languages tend to be taught without encouraging communication, so learning is not usually immediately relevant.

All this means that the group becomes a *learning community*, in which everyone is able to contribute something to the rest, encouraged by the love of the activities carried out and committed to both the common good and individual growth. The students gather there to share their experiences, their lives and to construct what is real for them day after day.

- *The discipline: music.* We have already noted some of the features specific to music that differentiate it from other school subjects, such as its practical nature, its communicative application and its significant dependence on the senses, while we have also relativised these differences with respect to subjects in the school culture. Not surprisingly, music is also part of the official compulsory education curriculum, but often it is relegated to a secondary place, as is the case for ethics and physical education.

  This is due to the fact that the school's conception of intelligence lies within very defined parameters, limited to the linguistic and the mathematical. In fact, intelligence tests and the various tools often used by counselling departments to assess students' knowledge, skills and abilities ignore other forms of intelligence. H. Gardner (1991) spoke of spatial, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, all of which are poorly valued and promoted in schools. This obviously neglects some of the dimensions of the intellectual development of children. This means that those students who could efficiently develop in these areas are discriminated against based on cultural selection and hegemonic parameters, as everything that lies outside what is considered important is undervalued. Reconceptualising and resuming educational actions in all these types of environments is urgent for any school to offer high standards, both educationally and socially.
- *The learning model and how to construct target meanings*

  The learning model prioritised in this case is especially relevant (Gómez, 1999). It is in stark opposition to widespread rote learning or, at best, the significant learning sought in schools. The fundamental differences are found in the motivations in each of the two settings. This discrepancy has, of course, a commensurate impact on how students construct meanings and the control they have on them, together with their values and strengths (duration, extrapolation to other cases, usefulness, ability to theorise, etc.). In our case, this issue is remarkable: in the band meanings are constructed in many different ways: obviously individuals learn through reproduction (by means of observation and

imitation) and conditioning. These are very likely to produce types of learning that are only socialising, although they are influenced by other types of learning. But fundamentally they are promoted through experimentation, communication and conscious mobilisation (reflection). The high degree of participation that is given to learners in these latter ways of constructing meanings ensures that they own what they learn. This is in opposition to what students find in school, with cumulative rote learning, and being placed at the mercy of academic requirements and marks. This is equivalent to the contrast P. Freire made between banking education and problem-posing education. He was seriously involved in ways of situating oppressed individuals and groups with respect to their situation: oppression versus liberation.

- *The role that students play in learning, and how it relocates them in the world.*
  The use of a liberating education, focused on student learning and founded on autonomy, serves to ensure that students confront their individual situations (for Rafael this involved, disadvantage and oppression). The band offered Rafael a new setting in which he had control of his learning (it was his responsibility). In addition, music provides the opportunity to build, store and manage knowledge not usually accessible to ordinary people. The exclusivity of these sessions meant that he stood out from his friends and family, as well as in the band itself to peers less experienced than him. This helped him raise his self-esteem, improve his social image, and break down the stereotypes and stigmas that he usually had to confront, as well as increasing both his personal and social expectations. The importance of this point is clearly shown in the role played by the educational experience described in this book to discredit the arguments of those who believed in the segregation that prevails in school culture. It also provides a picture of the capabilities people who have been labelled as 'disabled' have, thus helping increase expectations, and imagining new powerful and genuine pedagogies aligned with these principles.
  Feeling valued, being aware of one's knowledge (metacognition) and noticing that others value positively about what one does and knows, are fundamental questions to how we feel as human beings, especially when one of the socialising agencies with the highest impact (school) regularly refuses to acknowledge what students know and are able to learn.
- *Teachers' beliefs in the student and his abilities.*
  Believing in the student's potential modified the learning context, the role played by the student in it, and the quantity and quality of his learning. This is what has been called a self-fulfilling prophecy (Becker, 1963): if we believe that students will not be able to do something, they will not do it. On the contrary, if we think they can, they will be more likely to be able to do it. In other words: when an individual is stigmatised, their social participation decreases, either through isolation or by fulfilling the mandate imposed; in this way they devalue themselves and negatively reconceptualise their identity. The above is due to the different stimuli employed, to the way the setting is organised, and to how students face their learning, influenced by the above two factors.

This also extends to other settings. In fact, the expectations that teachers had of Rafael, not only in educational terms but also concerning work, were expressed in conversations with his parents. The family therefore were not only reassured in Rafael's abilities, but also in the confidence that these professionals had in his abilities. In this way they were able to find encouraging answers, as opposed to those that had undermined the student's dignity and abilities.

Moreover, and this is one of the great qualities of the band, it was not only the teachers who believed in Rafael's abilities, but also the rest of his fellow musicians, who reinforced his situation. This was not constructed by the teachers, but mainly designed and implemented by all music students who learned there and became a family.

- *The connection between the family and musical education.*

  The close ties Rafael's family established within each of those settings, with real involvement (including the creation of a cultural society with a governing board, involvement in events, participation in travel, ongoing tutorials, etc.) was far removed from the social participation structures that governed the relationships with the school. As has been proven in this case, the school was on the same page as the family as long as the family limited their involvement to arranging extra-curricular work that had to be done with the tutors following the instructions of the school. However, there seemed to be very little influence in the opposite direction (the structure of the academic tasks was barely modified during Rafael's school years), and the relationship came into conflict when the family opposed the school's selection criteria. The situation became particularly critical when their opposition was strong and based on sound pedagogical arguments and assertive education professionals. Therefore, there was an instrumentalisation of the family, rather than collaborative work with the school.

3.8. 'THEY THOUGHT THAT I COULDN'T DO IT, BUT I AM GETTING THERE:' RAPHAEL'S SITUATION A FEW YEARS LATER

Tellingly, Rafael's experience has highlighted the errors of the school's ideas, the prejudices that dominated many of its common practices, and the impact that these can have on people's lives. If the family had accepted the school's guidelines, none of the following would have taken place. This should give rise to an intellectual and moral reflection about our practices as teachers and as family members.

After completing compulsory schooling, Rafael enrolled for, and obtained, a Baccalaureate qualification. This did not require any significant curriculum adaptation. In fact, after the first year he obtained the 'Distinguished Student' diploma, having been nominated by his teachers. This was a distinction offered by the institution where he completed his Baccalaureate studies.

In 2010, Rafael finished the ten academic years required to obtain the Professional Degree in Music (4 years of foundation studies followed by 6 years of professional studies). By doing so, he became the first person with Down's syndrome in Spain to

News items about Rafael published in *ABC*, *el Diario Sur*, *la Revista de Música y Danza 12 notas,* and Yamaha Europe's webpage:

- 12 Notas: Rafael Calderón, first Spaniard with Down's syndrome to pass the Professional Music Degree
- Sur: Rafael is the first one in Spain
- ABC: Playing the trumpet as a road to self-improvement
- Yamaha: 'Music is my life': Rafael Calderón, first Spanish trumpet player with Down's Syndrome to obtain Professional Music Degree.
- SUR.es: Rafael Calderón, from Málaga, Gold Medal for Merit in Education.

Superación a toque de trompeta

Rafael Calderón será el primer español con Síndrome de Down en obtener el grado profesional de música

Rafael Calderón toca la trompeta en el Manuel Carra. ::
PEPE ORTEGA

REGINA SOTORRÍO
rsotorrio@diariosur.es

MÁLAGA. Tartamudea al hablar, pero con la trompeta no hay pausas. Es un medio de expresión que domina, en el que se le nota cómodo y con el que se siente uno más. Sin barreras ni límites. En la música da igual que sus rasgos físicos le delaten como una persona con Síndrome de Down. Lo único que vale es que suene bien. Y lo hace. «Al Síndrome de Down no le doy más importancia. Unos aprenden más rápido, y otros más despacio; pero se consigue igual poco a poco», asegura Rafael Calderón, que en junio se convertirá en la primera persona en España con este trastorno genético en concluir el grado profesional de música. Sólo le queda una asignatura y sus profesores dan por hecho que la superará. Está preparado. La clave: «Esfuerzo y valentía».

Dice una y otra vez que la música es su vida. «Me persigue, y yo a ella», afirma. De pequeño escuchaba tocar junto a su casa a la Banda Juvenil Miraflores-Gibraljaire, veía a los niños con su instrumento a cuestas... y él quería estar allí. Lo consiguió. Pero todos sus compañeros cursaban los estudios oficiales de música, y él no podía ser menos. «Para mí no hay barreras», defiende Rafa, de 25 años.

No fue fácil. La familia tuvo que recurrir al Defensor del Pueblo para solicitar su ingreso en los estudios elementales porque superaba la edad reglamentaria. Un obstáculo más que resolvió con éxito. De eso hace ya 12 años, el tiempo que lleva formándose en el Conservatorio Manuel Carra de Málaga. Un periodo en el que ha sacado adelante el colegio primero y el instituto después, compaginándolos con las clases particulares, el conservatorio y la banda de música. «A veces estaba agobiado, pero con paciencia se consigue», cuenta.

Valores y simpatía

Paciencia, «constancia y ganas de aprender», remarca José Antonio Aragón, profesor de Trompeta y tutor de Rafael, que buscó estrategias metodológicas para llegar al joven y sacar el máximo partido de su capacidad musical. Esos valores y su simpatía le han valido «el respeto» de todos en el Conservatorio, como apunta la profesora Nuria Aragú. «Sus habilidades sociales son admirables, tiene amigos por todos lados», añade.

Cada vez que tiene la oportunidad agradece el apoyo que recibe de los que le rodean. Por eso, no está dispuesto a que pase esta conversación sin interpretar el himno del Colegio Gibraljaire, cuya banda le dio su primera trompeta. «En Miraflores-Gibraljaire ha conocido la amistad y el compañerismo; allí se le ha tratado como a otro cualquiera», apunta el subdirector de la agrupación, Manuel Aragú. A cambio, «con él hemos aprendido una lección extraordinaria: no se puede despreciar a nadie. Nos ha dado cariño y alegrías».

A la familia tiene una manera especial de darle las gracias: «Nos reúne a todos y nos ofrece un concierto», cuenta Ignacio Calderón, uno de sus nueve hermanos y pedagogo de la Universidad de Málaga, que realiza una investigación sobre Rafael. Juntos hacen un tándem perfecto: se entienden con la mirada. «En la música ha encontrado un sitio en el que es correspondido, una especie de refugio», reflexiona.

Rafa sabe lo que es enfrentarse a pruebas complicadas, y ahora le esperan nuevos retos. El más próximo, la audición de mañana para entrar en la Banda Municipal de Música de Málaga. El siguiente, aprobar las pruebas de acceso al grado superior. No le quita el sueño. «Si no lo logro este año, las haré de nuevo el año que viene... Nunca hay que tirar la toalla».

Escuche el himno del Colegio Gibraljaire interpretado por Rafael Calderón en **www.sur.es**

QUÉ OPINAN DE RAFAEL

Manuel Aragú
Banda Miraflores-Gibraljaire

«Hemos aprendido con él una lección extraordinaria; nos ha dado cariño y alegrías»

Nuria Aragú
Profesora del Conservatorio

«Sus habilidades sociales son admirables, tiene amigos por todos lados y se ha ganado su respeto»

José Antonio Aragón
Profesor del Conservatorio

«Tiene constancia en el trabajo y ganas de aprender, aunque le lleve más tiempo que a otros»

Ignacio Calderón
Pedagogo y hermano de Rafael

«En la música ha encontrado una especie de refugio, un medio de expresión»

'Masterclass' con Benjamín Moreno

«Rafa hace cosas impresionantes e inauditas». Quien lo dice, sabe de lo que habla. Benjamín Moreno, trompeta solista de la Orquesta de RTVE, ha trabajado de cerca con Rafael Calderón. Comparten instrumento y sus orígenes: ambos se enamoraron de la música en la Banda Juvenil Miraflores-Gibraljaire. La semana pasada, Moreno viajó de Madrid a Málaga para darle una exclusiva 'masterclass' al joven malagueño. Le asombró su seguridad. «No tiene miedo escénico». Y le fascinó su «tremenda» capacidad de imitación. «Repetía cualquier sonido que hacía, algo que me cuesta con algunos de mis alumnos», asegura el profesor del Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid. Está convencido de las posibilidades de Rafa –«puede llegar a tocar sorprendentemente bien»–, pero necesitará de ayudas y de un equipo de profesionales que refuercen su educación musical. Él está dispuesto a comprometerse.

Article on Rafael in *el Diario Sur* 17 March, 2010

Self-improvement through trumpet playing. First Spanish trumpet player with Down's syndrome to obtain Professional Music Degree.

Articles about Rafael published in El Diario La Opinión de Málaga, and web portals Educación en Málaga and Yamaha Ibérica (2010).

El Diario La Opinión de Málaga: Rafael Calderón: allegro andante

Rionegro.com.ar: History repeats itself, but it will not be in vain.

Rafael Calderón from Málaga, Gold Medal for Merit in Education

Yamaha: Rafael Calderón-Almendros, Gold Medal for Merit in Education 2010

gain the qualification. He did so without any need for the curriculum to be adapted. His academic record contains no subtle footnotes that would suggest he knows less than any other student. He gained the recognition that he had been denied before, as shown in the pictures that follow.

He began to explore his potential as a soloist, offering concerts at public events and giving autobiographical lectures at the University of Malaga and music schools. He was awarded the Gold Medal for Merit in Education in Andalusia, Spain, the highest distinction in the field of education bestowed by the regional authorities. He was the first student to win the award, as it was traditionally given to prestigious scholars and teachers with long careers behind them. The Education Councillor recognised his work in education as follows:

> Rafael Calderón-Almendros, for his efforts and determination to show that being a person with Down's syndrome is not in itself an impediment to scholastic success and a normal life, and for obtaining a professional qualification. Rafael Calderón is the first person with Down's syndrome in Spain to successfully complete the Professional Degree in Music, and is now in a position to access the higher Degree. He has been devoted to music for a long time…
>
> Rafael's achievement has great value. With great effort on his part, and the determination of his family and the support of some teachers who were committed to his cause, he has completed his secondary education, the Baccalaureate and the first ten academic years of the foundation and professional music degree. His next challenge is to become a member of the Málaga Municipal Band. Rafael is therefore an example that can be held up to society in general, an example for people with disabilities, an example of a musician able to move audiences with his music, and an example for teachers, because history shows that when educational contexts are enriched and limits are not set, people can fully develop their skills and become active citizens and fully trained professionals. (BOJA (Official Gazette of Andalusia) No. 133, July 2010, pp. 25–26)

He was admitted to the prestigious Barenboim-Said Academy of Orchestral Studies and moved to Madrid to attend classes both to study with prestigious trumpeters and to start the higher Music Degree. His teacher saw in him a musician with a lot of potential to be discovered.

> Rafa did two courses with me in the Manuel Carra Conservatory, and then a master class on 9 March, 2010. In the first two courses I continued to think that as a disabled musician he could not play at a high level. And it was in this last master class where I fully realised what his potential was… He showed me where he can get to… For me Rafa has not got anywhere, as the press said. For me Rafa is now at the starting line, and needs to be given the starting shot for him to start running. (Trumpet Teacher, Higher Degree in Music, 3 April, 2010)

Rafael has managed to become socially considered to be a professional trumpet player, in spite of the different barriers that social culture and especially the school, academic and much of the critical (scientific) cultures had built up. These barriers stubbornly reiterated that people with Trisomy 21 cannot, and should not, expect access to higher education or to be considered to be professionally qualified people. However, as we have argued in these pages, the future of all individuals—including those with Down's syndrome—depends directly on the sociocultural environment in which they are immersed, the social stimulus that they are provided with, and the prospects that their settings provide them with (Vygotsky, 1979; Leontiev, 2009; Luria, 1980; Bruner, 1990; Erikson, 1968, among others). Rafael's musical environment has allowed him to develop, to have high expectations, to enjoy what he does, to expand his horizons, to have future prospects: that is what education means; the opposite of segregation.

> Rafa is now destined to be a musician all his life. (Teacher at Professional Music Conservatory Manuel Carra, 24 March, 2010)

3.9. MUSIC EDUCATION AS A LIFE PROJECT

Music is one of the main pillars of Rafael's identity. Firstly, because much of his life has been spent among musicians, who consider him to be one of them. Secondly, because he considers himself to be a musician, and is aware of the path he has taken because of his interest and effort in the field of music: he has been able to touch his dream, and knows that he still has some way to go. And thirdly, because music has become an essential activity in his life. He can truthfully say to those around him: 'Music is my life.' It has helped him reconceptualise himself as a person and give more meaning to his life. As explained by Deutschmann, during adolescence music acts as a 'mirror to look at yourself, to do introspection, to channel emotions: "I am not alone" (Vílchez, 2009:73). Therefore, emotions and self-concept are developed in group work and also in the intimacy of playing. But no less importantly, according to Benet Casablancas, the key interpretive features of music serve to understand life, as they combine the cognitive, emotional and social aspects of music (Vílchez, 2009:72). Music then plays a strong role for the emotional and cognitive development of the individual, as well as serving to improve socialisation. In this case, we have seen that Rafael successfully completed his Music Baccalaureate and has shown to have a high degree of social integration. So much so that today there is a research project at the University of Malaga analysing the relationship between Rafael's emotional intelligence and his musical aptitude (Aragú, 2010).

It is therefore not surprising that for Rafael, emotion is the first step for everything else that music brings to him, which he has expressed in the following terms: 'When I play I feel a love for music, because I like it. When I hear music I feel beauty and art.' This is aesthetic enjoyment, which contributes to improved self-

esteem and self-realisation. This is a way for Rafael to express his emotions, and he is able to connect it with life situations:

> I am happy when my sister comes to my house, because she helps me in both the good and the bad, depending on the situation I am in. When I play, the same happens, it just depends on the day, if I am feeling well, so-so or not that well … music makes me happier, less … (Rafael Calderón, January, 2010)

Music, therefore, has become a mainstay in his life, a shelter, a source of security, an important form of emotional expression and communication that most people are willing to listen to: 'It helps me make my family happy.' In addition, music allows him 'to have a play', as he puts it. It is the fun and playful nature of music that contributes to physical and emotional well-being, helping to cope with everyday problems and improve our mood. This playfulness of musical activity provides the conditions for significant and relevant learning: it is a source of intrinsic motivation.

Rafael Calderón at a concert with the Miraflores-Gibraljaire Youth Band in Málaga (May 2010). Photograph: Toni Molero, Rafael's cousin

These ideas have an impact both on the present and on the future. Rafael says that music serves to 'make my future come true', that music for him is a springboard from which to approach a desired future. Music has been a companion on his journey between his situation and his desires. It has helped him to break down the barriers that impeded his self-development as an able person. It has opened his eyes to a broader horizon, one of the main functions of education, and has made his dreams achievable. In his own words: 'Music brings me closer to a goal'; as well as being an objective, it is a means to an end: 'to work as a musician', an aspiration to work in what he likes most (something that is very limited socially for people with disabilities), emancipation, autonomy, because, as he says, 'I want to live alone or with someone (girlfriend, friend…).'

The main educational functions of music can be drawn from Rafael's experience (Vílchez, 2009:89–92): emotional expression and communication, symbolic representation, socialisation, aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment. But above all, music has helped Rafael develop his potential: (music) education as a practice of freedom (Freire, 1974), as a tool to move away from stigmatising social representations (Goffman, 2009), as an instrument for emancipation (Freire, 1970, 2015) and as a means to construct himself as a subject (Pérez de Lara, 1998).

3.10. SOME REFLECTIONS WITH THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT

In the brilliant video 'Álvaro wants to play the trombone' (2007), Conservatory teacher R. Polanco used a metaphor related to his experience teaching Álvaro, a boy with Down's syndrome: 'touching the moon.' When this video was shown to Rafael's family, it evoked many memories and triggered some thoughts, notably a comment by Basilisa (Rafael's mother): 'You can touch the moon.' Rafael's case has made her see the same as Rafael did, 'My future came true.' When asked, 'What would you say to those who thought you could not study?', Rafael provided several answers:

- 'That they come to my concerts'. He uses the best argument that he has: his ability to demonstrate his skills.
- 'They won't stop me.' He takes a resistant attitude, as he knows he needs to fight those who try to stigmatise him. This is a profound resistance, and involves opposing his personal project to other projects; this is line with Freire's oppressor-oppressed dialectic. He clearly stated: 'Here or outside of Spain, I'll get there'. Nothing can come between him and his dream, and he knows that it depends on the options offered to him by the setting.
- 'There is no need for talking. It's about doing things.' We often allow ourselves to be influenced by stereotypes, prejudices and labels that are paralysing. Rafael has seen this repeatedly throughout his life, and he asserts the importance of having a practical character and the need for action. He initially sees this as an emotional drive infused with optimism: you have to work to make things happen. But then

he rationalises it: 'I have some abilities and some difficulties. It does not matter; you just have to learn to correct what is not working.' This is certainly a resilient attitude. Resilience is the ability to resurface after adversity, to adapt, recover and have a significant and productive life (ICCB, Resilience Institute on Child and Family, 1994). However, as we have seen, it is not a simple adaptation. It is what we call interpretive identity, 'an individual's ability to decipher the codes of the contexts in which they operate, as well as a way of seeking their future themselves relatively autonomously, based on their reading of reality' (Ruiz, Calderón & Torres, 2011).

It is clear to Rafael that 'everyone has an ability. It is not just that we have to realise that we have Down's syndrome, but we have to see the errors that we make.' And this is the result of mutual support, commitment and trust: Rafael knows that his family was always there to break some of the barriers that were generated by the social representations of disability. He knows his responsibility was to do specific things: to organise his studies, to be committed, to work hard, and to be dedicated. And of course, to enjoy it.

We cannot end this section without enquiring again about the object of our analysis in these pages. What purpose did the school's proposals serve? What will those who said Rafael could not learn more think now? What would have happened if the family had bowed to the dictates of the school? What would society have lost if their instructions had been followed? Who would Rafael be now? Ken Robinson (2009) sees schools as institutions that kill creativity and talent. And this case is certainly revealing. A school cannot only kill creativity, but it can eliminate much of the richness that human beings have by trying to homogenise, assess and distribute the population. This brings us to a new way of interpreting diversity. Education should not involve classification. To educate is always to set free.

NOTES

[1] The majority of the quotes in this descriptive section have been extracted from one of the letters written by the family (with the assistance of the internal researcher) to the Ombudsman, which included full details of the situation (dated 23 December, 2002). In order to avoid multiple references to the same document, these will be omitted on the understanding that, unless stated otherwise, all of them have been extracted from that letter.

[2] In the letter written by the family to the Ombudsman, Rafael's parents described the reasons why they did not accept the proposal to transfer Rafael to a different school: 'The family never had a problem with the school's lack of a specialist teacher in class or of remedial classes, since Rafael was lucky enough to have that kind of support at home, and his social and affective relationships at school were very good. This is why we believe strongly that he should stay in the same school. Rafael is an independent highly sociable and intelligent person, and we felt there was no need for him to be transferred to a different school, least of all taking into account that he had the support of a team of teachers who worked on his education at the time, who were not consulted when the school's management and the counsellor made their decision.'

[3] This expression was used in numerous documents prepared by the family, as for them it epitomised the ideology and representations underlying the entire conflict. The documents which include this sentence are: Statement of disagreement with the action taken by the school with respect to the

student, for collection of signatures (25 June, 2002); Letter to the Director of the Provincial Education Authority (4 July, 2002); Letter to the Ombudsman (23 December, 2002); and Letter to the Counsellor of the Education and Science Authority (24 December, 2002).

[4] Rafael spoke in these terms at home several times throughout the school year.

[5] The Report on the Education and Training in the Strategic Plan for the Province (José I. Rivas and Ignacio Calderón, 2002) clearly reflects this subtle means of segregation taking place in schools:

> A large part of state schools have seen the social and educational expectations of their students reduced and have experienced continuous discipline problems, which have caused their gradual marginalisation. One relevant aspect in this context, for example, is the different degree of integration of children with special education needs or serious social problems. Most of these students are in state schools. There is one piece of data that clearly illustrates our points regarding the provision made for children with special education needs in ordinary schools. In particular, in 1999–2000 there were 2685 students 'in integration' in the state education system, whereas private schools only had 311.

[6] The family was informed later, in the course of an interview held by the parents and the internal researcher with the Area Education Inspector (6 November, 2002).

[7] This letter was submitted together with a dossier of signatures which showed the support of the community to the family's claim: signatures from neighbours, university professors and the most important Down's syndrome related organisation in the province (Down's Syndrome Association, Early Care Centre of the Provincial Authority and a university research group).

[8] The internal researcher in the action research was the author of this book, an education lecturer and researcher who is one of Rafael's brothers. His role consisted in mediating between the family, the various support teachers and the school. Fundamentally, it involved continued pedagogical advice that helped the family to move away from some social representations they had about people with Down's syndrome, and to act accordingly; it also required liaising with support teachers, and helping them design didactic measures aimed to meet certain goals set at the start of each stage (which were revised throughout the various stages); additionally, it entailed coordinating the school's actions and analysing whether or not they had been successful, as well as informing on the family's impressions at the different stages. Finally, the role of the internal researcher was decisive in preparing the documents sent by the family to the different agents involved, by transferring the ideas developed by them to pedagogical language.

[9] The most relevant scientific production is listed in the references section.

[10] Both documents, the psychological and pedagogical assessment provided by the Counselling Department at the school and the counter-report drafted by the researchers are presented in Sections 3.5 and 3.6 of this book, respectively.

[11] This section has been written by the internal researcher.

[12] When the decision was made to tell the family to move the student to another school, his tutor (who was against the decision) was not consulted. This is clearly an example of the existing unbalanced power relations.

[13] This does not mean that these theories lacked meaning or solid argumentation. The research on the influence of structures on school children has been equally prolific and illustrative, in contrast with functional theories, which supported the internal logic imposed by schools to select the students that would then be part of the labour market. Reproduction theories are revealing even today, as the characteristics derived from the origin of students serve to predict success or failure at school. Nevertheless, 'micro' studies in the classroom show how school children build trenches to confront those impositions (in one way or another).

[14] It must be remembered that this is an educational context, not the labour market, where the distribution of roles is directly related to productivity and financial profit. However, the school anticipates the guiding principles of production and the market in an activity that ends up being more related to training than to education. If it were an educational activity, it would be related to the idea of democracy. However, if differentiated curriculums are implicitly established (often unconsciously),

this is in stark contrast to the democratic concept of schools. What is the social role played by these schools?

[15] This section has been dealt with in detail before, although in more general terms, rather than making special reference to this case.

[16] According to Article 2 of Order of 13 July, 1994 (Official Gazette of the Government of Andalusia no. 126), which regulates the procedures involved in the design, development and implementation of curriculum adaptations in infant, primary and secondary schools in the Region of Andalusia, Spain, curriculum adaptation 'is a decision-making process concerning the curriculum elements required to address the educational needs of students, by changing some elements to access the curriculum and its constituting components.' Article 3.1 also established (Article 3.1) three types of curriculum adaptations: 'those devised for a specific school (school-based curriculum project); those designed for a given class (class programme); and those developed for an individual (individualised curriculum adaptation).' However, curriculum adaptation is normally used only to refer to the latter, ignoring the previous two. This fails to take into account the provisions in Article 3.2 of the Order: 'Schools will employ any technical and pedagogical principles and resources available in the current curricular model… to address the diverse educational needs of students, based on the assumption that if an appropriate curriculum is developed, which is adapted to the characteristics of the students and of the context (school-based curriculum project and class programme), such needs will be suitably met, without needing to resort to specific strategies such as significant curriculum adaptations.' It must be said, however, that despite these provisions being clearly established by the law, they are ignored by schools, and this is tolerated by the education authorities.

[17] Curiously, the report prepared by the education counselling team of 17 February, 2003 (10 days after the letter sent by the headteacher to the family) 'identified the need of conducting an individual curriculum adaptation, as well as providing assistance in an integration support unit.' The schooling model proposed was 'an ordinary group with support on a variable basis' (letter sent by the General Education Inspector to the student's parents on 9 May, 2003). This report was not accepted by Rafael's parents because they did not agree with the psycho-educational evaluation carried out by the school, and also because the student had out-of-school support at home and he was in the second term of his last school year (Figure 11).

[18] This relative is a teacher in the first stage of primary school who was not involved in this research.

[19] As mentioned above, curriculum adaptations have become individual curriculum adaptations.

[20] The *LOCE* had unequivocally unveiled this intention by introducing 'educational' pathways. While it is necessary to consider the differences between the approaches taken in the *LOGSE* and the current *LOE,* and that adopted in the LOCE (Quality of Education Act), the latter can be regarded as a blatant expansion of the ideology used before and after. The content that was concealed in the curriculum in the *LOGSE* and the *LOE* was made explicit in the *LOCE*.

[21] The LOCE was approved in December, 2002 and entered into force at the beginning of 2003. Rafael's family had been concerned about this legal change.

[22] We do not argue that this is the educational role of schools, as can be inferred from the description provided in the theoretical framework section. This is merely intended to explain that these ideas are gradually becoming linked to the role of education.

[23] Extract from the film 'The Eighth Day', directed by Jaco Van Dormael and produced by Pan-Européenne Production in 1996. In this film Harry is a banking executive who has been professionally successful but his marriage has failed, and he is tormented by this. While driving one night, he runs into Georges (Pascal Duquenne) a boy with Down's syndrome wandering around disoriented after having escaped from the centre he lived in. The relationship that develops between them makes Harry reconsider his life and face it in a completely different way.

[24] Here we do not talk of difference as a problem, among other reasons because the population is diverse and each individual is unique. The problem arises when the general assumption is that we are all normal and the others—the most different ones—are abnormal. The dilemma, therefore, lies in the structure that we give to the group and the value the group gives to difference.

[25] This section is a reproduction of the counter-report prepared by I. Calderón, S. Habegger and Cristóbal Ruiz Román (2003), although some names of places, institutions and people have been omitted or

disguised in order to ensure their anonymity. All the footnotes (unless stated otherwise) are also reproduced here as they appeared in the original counter-report. It needs to be borne in mind that this document was intended to respond to the psycho-educational evaluation of the school, and therefore is aimed at the different actors in the school, especially at the counsellors (the original title of the document was: 'An assessment of the school counsellors' psycho-educational report'.

[26] The report failed to mention what Rafael thought was important to learn and improve, or what the student should be taught from the perspective of the education professional. The report did not take into account all of the dimensions of human development, as motor aspects were not important for the evaluation, and subjects such as ethics—due to the negative context in which they are framed—were labelled as unimportant. What happened between the student and the counsellor/teacher in class, which the latter recounted to the internal researcher, is an example of this. The student took a test and when he received his mark (1 out of 10), he went to the teacher and said, 'Miss, this has to be wrong.' She replied that it was not and that it had been correctly marked. He replied, 'It has to be wrong because I worked really hard, and this is a fail'. The counsellor concluded that the exercises in the test were incorrect. It was clear that the decision-making power over what has to be learned and the assessment criteria are in the hands of the teacher, even when the student made more congruent and solid arguments than she did. In fact, this is what P. Bourdieu and J. C. Passeron (1977) called 'symbolic violence', which referred to the imposition of meanings—a partial and arbitrary cultural selection—made through pedagogical authority. It is not surprising that the report denounced a supposed incapacity of the student to evaluate his own work, and regarded any argument that differed from that of the counsellor as incorrect. Also, the terms imposed on the learning process (meeting objectives and obsessing about efficiency) are considered to be essential (J. Gimeno Sacristán, 1986), rather than the individual's development.

[27] Figure 1 (added note).

[28] Figure 10 (added note).

[29] The footnote related to the table was added at a later stage to be included in the right order within the study's report.

[30] Translator's note: This is the Spanish name of the brand of chocolate spread also known as 'Nutella' (NU-TE-LLA).

[31] This and other similar examples were repeatedly used by Rafael's mother to show her son's capacity for learning. (B. Almendros, Rafael's mother, 2003), as they represented Rafael's first comprehensive reading experiences: reading individual syllables resulted in understanding the meaning of the word (Note added).

[32] However, the following sentence in the report contradicts what had been stated earlier: 'He is motivated by tasks that allow him to shine in class.' Therefore, it should have been recognised that he did respond to external reinforcers. Everyone feels acknowledged when they can show their abilities and good disposition to other people.

[33] When a person has to retake a year, as Rafael had to do for three years, they have to develop relationships with younger people. However, the student in question formed relationships with both adults and younger people, in the same way as he did with children close to the school culture, as well as with those somehow distant from it, both students who were retaking years and those who were not.

[34] When asked about the optional subject that he took, Rafael's answer was: 'I don't know' (the optional subject was Classical Culture). He did not know if he was studying Geography or History.

[35] The special needs report was a document prepared by the *Area Education Counselling Team* as a result of the psycho-educational evaluation with the aim 'to determine the type of schooling considered to be suitable in order to meet the special needs of the student' (Article 7 of Order of 19 September, 2002, which regulates the conduct of the psycho-educational evaluation and the special needs report).

[36] Official Gazette of the regional government of Andalusia, Spain.

[37] Even though the school was a publicly funded semi-private school (therefore the employees were not public servants), the psycho-educational report was validated and signed by a civil servant—the educational counsellor for the area—, as reflected in the Education Counselling Team's Report (21 October, 2002):

> Therefore, at this time, Rafael is exhausting his possibilities for retaking school years and, in view of his academic records, *which we can obviously in no way question*, following the recommendations of his school's Counselling Department, he should continue his studies in a *Programa de Garantía Social* next year. (Emphasis added)

[38] The concept of literacy used here is that put forward by P. Freire.

[39] Xavier Martinez Celorrio (1998:51) noted that in students' narratives 'flexible grouping and segregation by performance level, far from being subtle, is very clear and laden with stigma, so the prophecy is fulfilled at the cost of changing and internalising one's self-image. ' In the example he used, a boy recounted: 'Last year we were in the 'thick' group. The teacher said so and he was right. Of a total of 40 students split between the two groups, only six managed to obtain their primary school qualification. From the other class, only four did.'

[40] The data in this section were obtained through observations made by the internal researcher, Rafael's parents and Rafael himself, and verified with the directors of the Música Miraflores-Gibraljaire Youth Band.

[41] A brief background of the band is provided below, as described by the official organisation of the International Band Competition in Valencia (2000):

> This music ensemble, founded in 1975, currently consists of about 160 young musicians from primary and secondary schools and university education, and is an inexhaustible source of professionals who are today members of bands, orchestras and conservatories around the country.
>
> The band has performed throughout Spain to great acclaim from both critics and audiences. In 1990, it did concert tours in Germany, where critics said that it was an 'exceptional musical ensemble of excellent artistic quality.' It has represented Spain twice in Morocco's National Day memorial parade in Tangier, which attracted numerous representatives from many other European countries.
>
> The band was invited by the Pavilion of the Holy See to close the cultural events organised on the occasion of the 1992 Universal Exhibition in Seville, where it had great success.

'The official organisation of the VI Inter-provincial Band Music Festival held in Níjar (2003) also mentioned, among other things, that the Band obtained the second prize in the National School Radio Contest organised by TVE (Spanish public television), RNE (Spanish public radio) and the Spanish Ministry of Culture; the first prize in the Regional Easter Music competition, organised by RNE; and the first prize in the Regional Band contest in 1998 and 1999. Moreover, the Band has made more than fifteen recordings, participated in several programmes and concerts for different Spanish television channels and radio stations, including TVE, Canal Sur, Antena 3, Local TV, RNE, SER, COPE, Canal Sur Radio, etc., and has been the official band for the Bull Ring in Málaga for many years, all of which makes it one of the most representative cultural resources in the city.'

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

We agree with X. Martínez-Celorrio (1998:49), that 'students' stories that reflect on and narrate their experiences of failure at school provide empirical materials of great value to education professionals; not only because they allow us to appreciate the account of their experiences, but because they articulate *counter-discourses* that demand a new way of learning and experiencing schooling'. This book has been written precisely for that reason, and as a reflection of a belief that it could be of use to professionals.

However, we believe that we have transcended this rich vision generated from educational ethnography. Action research is a tool with some undiscovered potential when combined with a radical critical pedagogy. Throughout these pages, not only have we seen the experiences and ideals built by a family about people with a disability, with 'the intersection of two separate worlds, two antagonistic logics of life and discourse: students and schools, adolescents and teachers, life and institution' as noted by X. Martínez (1998:49). We have also been able to accompany them in challenging the stigmatising and segregating rules imposed by the school. Throughout this text, discourses have been combined with different levels of elaboration: the level built by the family and Rafael in day-to-day life (as shown in the family culture and the family's publications in specialised journals and press); the systematisation of practices with the collaboration of the internal researcher to resist the segregating arguments of the school, the Education Authority and the political agenda (as reflected in the documents used by the family to assert their views); and the theorising carried out in this study on the basis of both discourses and in light of specialised literature, with special emphasis on theories of resistance.

All these have provided different narratives to confront the widespread representations about people with disabilities. This book has thus become a space to produce various counter-discourses, all arising from the family's structures. This is the most substantial difference between the two approaches (ethnography and action research): commitment to action. The clearest example contained in these pages of a useful *counter-discourse* is the submission of the *psycho-educational counter-report*, created by the family and 'translated' by the internal and external researchers into scientific language. Through these and other actions, the family members were able to defend themselves from hegemonic attacks and to some extent transform their implications. In this way, the discourses of some oppressed groups have succeeded in delegitimising the dominant arguments, by disclosing the imbalances and injustices that underlie them.

The analysis undertaken throughout this book started from the dilemma of the relationship between biology and culture. The evolution and development of our species have left behind biological determinism and moved towards social constructivism. The combination of our two natures—biological and cultural—has made us very special beings. The fact that we have been created by culture and are not completely determined by genetics has constructed a new reality. In this sense, humans are unfinished beings in an uncompleted reality, as stated by P. Freire. Rafael's development as an individual has not been completed, nor has the world ceased to evolve.

Education is the main process through which we are constructed as individuals within these parameters. It helps provide answers to the inherent incompleteness of the individual and is one of the ways through which the subject can transform reality. At the same time, it is necessary to loosen the ties that used to bind us to a biologically-determined nature in order to move closer to freedom. The shift from heteronomy to autonomy in education could be a driving force for that move.

From this perspective, seeing people with a disability as being less-able or 'invalid' becomes meaningless, since biological constraints can, and should, turn into challenges to cultural intervention. Who would have thought that humans could outrun cheetahs or even fly. However, we are able to reach other planets, manufacture vaccines for illnesses that used to be incurable, and transform locations that were once inhospitable into hospitable places. But the response to the indeterminacy of our nature by the promotion of autonomy is insufficient. Cultural advances would be worthless if our use of them is not ethically informed: we can destroy forests, build cities characterised by a lack of solidarity, develop vaccines that are not available to the people who need them. It is necessary to establish ethical standards, acknowledge our nature as social beings, and so recognise that *others* are equal to *me*. The development of individual morality and the transformation of the environment through culture has allowed (and still allows) the construction of a new reality in which limitations have nothing to do with natural barriers. The community that has been analysed in these pages (siblings, parents, friends, researchers and neighbours) have provided an example of how these environments can become tangible realities that dismantle pre-established psychological limits, so that we can all grow. This is how the move from the neutral natural state of affairs to the ethical state of affairs can be effected, since we are not determined biologically, culturally or socially. But this inconclusive nature prescribes the use of consensus—the involvement of others—as a free action to create a new, all-inclusive reality. This was the choice made by the family: to see things from Rafael's perspective, accept it as their own and so rebuild a new reality together.

In this way, concepts such as intelligence change radically: from being based solely on personal characteristics and natural limitations, they move towards considering culture as constitutive of the mind, as held by J. Bruner. The new family setting constructed in the case study made both Rafael and the other actors

involved in it smarter. What is necessary from an educational perspective is not to passively contemplate personal biological barriers, but to focus on how they can be transcended. Thus the strategies needed to expand individual prospects will be created, at the same time as studying the existing contexts to transform them into suitable environments for those prospects to occur.

To do otherwise would be to continue to maintain the biology-based arguments in a completely different reality, naturalising and psychologising problems that are in fact social. It is what happens when learning difficulties of the 'normal' population are differentiated from those identified as 'inherently characteristic difficulties of disabled people.' These arguments typically separate one social group from another based on their characteristics, by using these cultural constructions to justify the right to channel people with disabilities along different pathways. All of us can and should learn, and to think otherwise is to deny some people one of the qualities that defines us as human beings: educability. There are no uneducable individuals; rather, the setting may be an obstacle to developing the potential to be educated. This has been demonstrated by the student's different progress in the school setting and the music setting: the first led to a stalemate, while the second was conducive to continued progress and a significant development in personal identity. Placing the debate in the psychological field would be inappropriate from an educational perspective.

From this premise, we have developed a concept of education substantially distanced from the consideration of socialisation as a learning process. The purpose of socialisation and of schools should be denaturalising the content disseminated through socialisation. Education is therefore a constant process of hopeful search to respond to human indeterminacy (P. Freire). It comes into fruition in the process of cultural construction that enables subjects to make a relatively autonomous analysis of reality, promoting the development of skills, knowledge, feelings, and values, as well as transforming reality. It is a conception of the individual and their environment that combines what reality is (both as regards the subject and context) with what we want it to be. From this perspective, the role of the school should be to question those socialisation processes that perpetuate social representations that are mainly unconsciously naturalised through reflection and communication (Á. Pérez Gómez).

However, we are not starting from scratch, hence the importance of questioning the validity of socialisation. Defending new schemas is to resist the hegemonic systems of interpretation. Children with disabilities are regularly harassed by these schemas—as seen in the social representations of 'disability'. They cause them to fail and place them on the last steps of the productive, social and economic pyramid, as happened to Rafael when they attempted to refer him to a PGS. Depriving them of the necessary conditions for learning that occur in the school is to deny them individual future prospects (such as being a musician) and those of their own environment, and the right to feel fully constituted as individuals. Deterministic arguments are frontal attacks on education and human rights.

Disruptive acts in the classroom, such as the denial of teachers' authority, the devaluation of school marks and the infringement of basic rules are the first step to rebel against a hostile type of socialisation, refusing to accept exclusory impositions. They are moral positions that denounce the shortcomings of the setting, by unveiling latent conflicts that institutions are able to keep silenced due to the imbalances of power that they promote. Still, most of these actions cannot be considered resistant, as they are still installed in implicit domination discourses, controlled by the education system. They are still an impotent reaction.

In these pages we have used a concept of resistance related to a discourse that contests and challenges the classic explanations of failure at school and oppositional behaviour. The study is located within the political and sociological domain, rather than within the parameters of traditional psychology and functionalism (H. Giroux). We have tried to offer a different 'logical worldview' built by the family of a person with a disability, but not relying on the grammars prevailing in the social and education systems. This action research project has illustrated how subordinate groups can become empowered with the ability to be heard and take action, and in so doing, they can challenge the relationships of oppressive power and break them. New visions emanating from the empowerment of oppressed groups help to unravel the twofold and contradictory purpose of schools: anticipating market and production inequalities while at the same time encouraging participation and social justice.

The school continues to use schemas in which students are seen as empty vessels to be filled by teachers, and students learn passively. It is still anchored in a vision in which the well-educated person is the one who best adapts to questionable socialisation processes (which is why the school did not accept the educational perspective provided by the family's action research project), rather than thinking critically, which involves reflection and the transformation of reality. It continues to be mired in maintaining its logic of domination, denying the ability of the students and families to produce knowledge, and imposing meanings, content, evaluations, etc.

The two main resources used by the institution for social reproduction and, therefore, to keep people with disabilities on the margin are marking schemes and diagnoses, which are usually based on tests. The brief analysis of intelligence tests is sufficient to assess their starting point and development over time, and the social function they fulfil in terms of classifying the population according to their construction of normality. In this way people are categorised into three different groups, where the power to participate and make decisions, marks, jobs, salaries, and social relationships are unequally distributed.

This eagerness to place the population along a tape measure, as well as the process of developing the tools that place us on it, has been the subject of much criticism. In these pages we have accompanied one of Rafael's brothers on an analysis of the mathematical formulas that convert our multidimensional intelligence into

a single dimension, a number, to distribute us linearly on the normal bell-curve. Two possibilities exist to address this dilemma: the more dimensions, the more information is lost; the more variables, the more arbitrariness, in which case the numerous dimensions that students have of contributing to society are somehow missed.

Many sciences such as psychology, sociology and pedagogy have used the distinctions between different people's skills, the results of which have strong social and political repercussions. These tools do not take a literal reading of reality, but generate a type of questionable society that quantified Rafael as a bad student, unable to learn at school. This was palpably not true, and is a way of unevenly generating social divisions.

In schools, these criteria are often used to decide whether certain students are accepted into regular classrooms. Arbitrary boundaries that qualify some as 'intelligent' and others as 'unintelligent' are driven and reinforced by the existing social order and persist to date. Teachers, understood as technical workers who apply the rules and follow the regulations established by the education authority, appropriate these representations through a process of professional socialisation.

Tests become the perfect argument to 'legally' re-locate students with disabilities out of private schools, classrooms or standard school pathways. Currently in Spain, so-called programmes of social guarantee (PSG) and curriculum diversification programmes are mechanisms to promote homogeneous classrooms (with a curriculum that provides greater social, work and economic value), and create second-class itineraries for students who do not fit in with school standards. This means that it is not necessary to question the curriculum, school organisation or teaching performance. However, in the case presented here a different methodology, content and objectives were necessary for the student in the music setting. The diversity of the group meant that all these children had their own individual peculiarities and needs, and the methodology used accommodated everyone. The model discussed in these last pages dismantles the usual organisational conceptions of educational institutions and the arguments of schools that defend specialisation and segregation as an ideal way for students to achieve high standards in terms of skills and knowledge; all this combined with a high dose of values education, joint effort and democratic environment. Division is a harmful strategy for all.

The purported 'scientific' nature of the tests means that teachers do not believe they are in a position to move away from the results. Whether this is because they have a blind faith in their accuracy, or because they feel helpless and out of place, or it is just due to laziness or convenience, the classifications based on these tools become dogma. This is why teachers need to be daring and take a critical stance towards them, demanding professional responsibility for the consequences of these diagnoses, and opting for evaluations that facilitate the inclusion of all students in compulsory education. Some necessary premises for these diagnoses are: their responses must be inclusive and focused on the classroom setting; they should go

beyond providing answers to the problems of disabled people; and they should be based on a professional ethic that always questions the purpose of the evaluation, what it entails and what its consequences are.

However, the social representations of people with disabilities are so ingrained in society in general and in the school system in particular, that they have not changed despite evidence to the contrary. This evidence can be classified into two types: the everyday reality that proves the ability these people have to perform tasks that are continuously denied to them; and the scientific theories that refute again and again the erroneous axioms that still are used as a basis for prevailing educational practices. Both types of representations remain intact despite the continuous effort made by people with disabilities and their families to dismantle them, by using attitudes, reasons and behaviour that are consistent with their counterhegemonic arguments. These arguments are rejected daily through representations reproduced by the media, tradition and in general, society. Scientists also struggle to change the tendency of institutions and professionals who have the power to define the very concept of cognitive difference as 'disability'. A particular reason for concern is the theoretical imperviousness of schools, as it ends up replicating conceptions that were banished in academia several decades ago. And in this process of de-legitimisation of new emerging representations that disadvantaged groups try to defend, teachers, and especially school counsellors, play an important role, although in many cases they may not be fully aware of it. People with disabilities find themselves having to build their identities (individual and collective) outside the pre-conceptions that are transmitted in society and tacitly enforced in our schools. Sooner rather than later, education professionals need to take a stance about their prejudice, not only in terms of enhancing these students' schooling, but also of ensuring that their human rights are respected.[1]

In order to promote a critical discussion within the education community and create new alternatives, the unfair effects of school actions need to be exposed and denounced. To this end, the existing 'truth regimes' (legitimised by presumably neutral scientific approaches that have a strong anti-educational impact on the curriculum) need to be questioned. New perspectives can be adopted to understand, interpret and transform reality. Social research needs to move away from a concept of neutrality that endorses adherence to dominant social ideology; and in schools, teachers should play the role of public intellectuals who work together with students and their families to transform reality through reflection and communication. Ultimately, the nature of teaching work needs to be restructured and reconstructed on the perspectives of those who are most disadvantaged. They need to be believed in, and their abilities should be encouraged, so as to promote their role as agents in their own history. This would help them transform the oppressive behaviour used against them and against other groups or individuals. But above all, we need to learn from them.

Most of this book has been aimed at showing the path Rafael and his family took in order to avoid the alienating route chosen for him by the school. Denouncing,

recording and defending his rights has required years of work from the whole family and much effort from Rafael. Throughout the school life of a child with trisomy there are too many difficulties and obstacles that hinder their development; but it is remarkable that the school (the body responsible for educating and providing opportunities, compensating for inequalities and exercising social justice) reproduced them and accentuated them. Perhaps in other areas and/or institutions such as justice or health it would be easier to find records of complaints from users; this could be due to the fact that, besides it being socially accepted and having channels put in place specifically for this purpose, the issues involved can be subject to objective criteria more clearly than issues that harm the psychological development and identity of many silenced groups. The General Education Inspector (7 May, 2003) concluded that 'the attribution of "pedagogical negligence" and the imputation of "psychological damage" to the student, which were made to various professionals in the family's statement… has not been supported (in such terms and intensity) by the evidence provided, once the facts have been analysed.' However, Erving Goffman (2009:128) stated that maintaining norms that unevenly regulate divergences 'has a very direct effect on the psychological integrity of the individual.'

The stigmatized individual thus finds himself in an arena of detailed argument and discussion concerning what he ought to think of himself, that is, his ego identity. To his other troubles he must add that of being simultaneously pushed in several directions by professionals who tell him what he should do and feel about what he is and isn't, and all this purportedly in his (Goffman, 2009:124).

Schools should listen to the voices of support of students in the classroom, through codes that are still to be discovered. The voices in the classroom, neglect, absenteeism, 'deviant' behaviour and the codes of brute force (Sepulveda & Calderón, 2002) may be some of these unheard calls that certain students use to ask for understanding and cooperation. They may be intended either to meet their forgotten cultures in schools or to reclaim spaces for the real participation of specific individuals or groups.

Many professionals and policy makers have failed to make available some appropriate methods (or change those currently in place), and this has caused more injustice and discrimination. The exhausting effort that Rafael's whole family made by repeatedly denouncing the meagre options offered by the institution, was eventually successful. However, it should be noted that the support of an education expert (the internal researcher) increased the ability to resist. What opportunities do other families and other children have when faced with problems at school? The little information available to families who trust their children and see unjust cases like this is certainly one of the areas for improvement. Schools as institutions are not only intended to educate, but also to increase the quantity and quality of civic participation for social improvement in the direction that people's lives should take. Undoubtedly this is the true role of the school, beyond learning quadratic equations or the date of birth of a given writer.

Finally, the odyssey recounted in these pages was just one of the problems that the family had to undergo. They were a family of seven (four children had already left home) living in a working class neighbourhood, with economic and work problems, illness, etc., like so many others in their class. These are problems added to the list that we all have in our daily lives. Schools should be supporting the quest for freedom and justice, but what are they doing instead? Rethinking schools is, obviously, necessary; transforming them is our duty.

NOTE

[1] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that 'no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' (Article 5), that 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits'(27.1), and 'everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author' (27.2) and that 'everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible'. (29.1). Also the Declaration of the Rights of the Child proclaims that 'the child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity' (Principle 2) and that 'the child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men' (Principle 10).

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