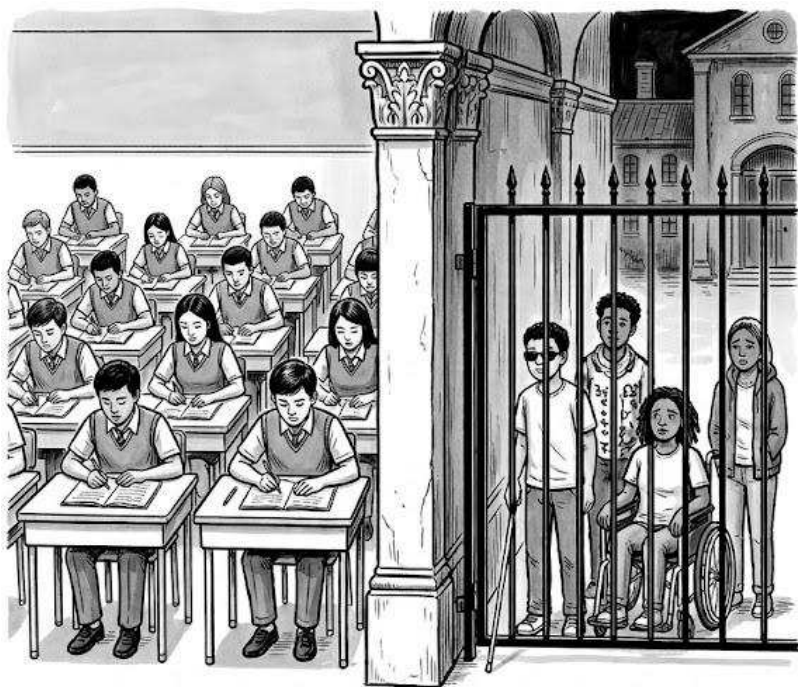


Educational Inclusion: A Catalyst for Human Potential

From Excluding Differences to Nurturing Talents



Educational Inclusion: A Catalyst for Human Potential

From Excluding Differences to Nurturing Talents

Author: Ivan Escö

© 2026 Ivan Escö
All rights reserved.
ISBN: 9789403912325.
First edition.
Independent academic publication.
Design and layout: Ivan Escö
Ivanesco.personal@gmail.com

Independent academic
publication, produced with
self-funded resources and free
from institutional constraints.

No part of this publication
may be reproduced, stored,
or transmitted by any means
without the prior authorization
of the author.

Printed on demand.
Sustainability recommendation:
choose the digital edition to
help reduce paper consumption.



Dedication

To the teachers who made me feel that I did not belong: thank you for teaching me, through your mistakes, the vision of what I did not want to become.

To those forward-thinking educators—who, fortunately, were many throughout my academic journey—thank you for demonstrating that education can inspire, transform, and open new paths.

To my father, who was presented with unique educational opportunities but chose not to pursue them because of his steadfast determination not to embrace the shortcomings of the traditional academic culture of his time. His independent spirit found it difficult to adapt to systems built upon uniformity and predetermined pathways. Instead, he chose to learn through experience, build businesses, take risks, and forge his own path through work, observation, and life itself.

Contrary to what one might assume, his most valuable lessons did not come from his material achievements, but from the way he revealed to me a truth that is rarely taught in classrooms: that money comes and goes, positions change, and success is often temporary. What endures is that which no one can take from us: the education we cultivate, the experiences that transform us, and the good we are capable of contributing to others.

His discipline, strength, and perseverance taught me that a person's true wealth lies not in what they possess, but in what they learn, what they share, and what they become.



Preface

This book is not about my personal story. Nor is it intended to be the account of an individual experience presented as a universal model. However, before inviting readers to explore the ideas developed in these pages, I believe it is important to share certain aspects of my journey. Not because they are exceptional, but because they reflect a reality that has accompanied millions of students across generations.

I was born in a time and context in which a large proportion of educational systems operated according to a deeply rooted logic: shaping individuals capable of adapting to pre-established structures. For decades, many institutions were designed to promote standardization, compliance with norms, and adaptation to expectations constructed from a limited view of human potential. Within such a framework, academic success often appeared to depend more on the ability to fit in than on the opportunity to discover one's true identity.

As was the case for many other students, my experience at school was marked by moments when learning ceased to feel like an opportunity for growth and began to be perceived as a distant obligation. What should have awakened curiosity, creativity, and a desire to understand the world frequently resulted instead in apathy, frustration, or a persistent sense of not belonging.

Looking back, I recognize that a significant part of my life could have followed that path. Fortunately, I grew up in a family that understood that education is not limited to the transmission of knowledge; it also involves protecting the uniqueness of each individual. Thanks to my parents' vision, consistency, and commitment, I had the opportunity to continue my education in an environment more open to independent thinking, the development of diverse abilities, and the exploration of personal interests.

Over time, I came to understand that this change represented far more than a simple transition between institutions. It likely prevented me from spending more than a decade immersed in educational dynamics focused exclusively on performance, constant comparison, and external validation. When prolonged over time, such dynamics can profoundly shape how individuals perceive themselves, limiting confidence, reducing initiative, and conditioning their relationship with learning.

However, the story did not end there. Upon entering higher education, I encountered some of the same cultural patterns that had characterized educational systems for years. I remember professors who stated, either explicitly or implicitly, that certain individuals simply lacked the potential necessary to progress academically. At different points, I came to believe those assessments. For a period, I allowed those voices to influence my perception of my own capabilities.

As a consequence, I redirected my energy toward other paths. Following a strong family tradition linked to entrepreneurship and the business world, I began developing projects, taking risks, and learning through contexts beyond academia.

From the age of eighteen, my professional trajectory became closely connected to the creation and development of various business organizations. This experience enabled me to understand firsthand how organizations grow, transform, and respond to the needs of individuals and society.

Among these ventures, I became involved as a partner in companies related to the field of special education. It was there that many of the questions that would eventually give rise to this research first emerged. What do we truly mean by special education? How has its approach evolved over time? To what extent do existing models respond to the complexity of human diversity? And above all, why did so much of the conversation seem concentrated on certain specific perspectives while other forms of diversity and human potential remained relatively unexplored?

These concerns quickly transcended the business sphere. What initially emerged as an observation from the world of enterprise gradually transformed into a much deeper intellectual and human inquiry. I realized that behind every educational model lay philosophical, scientific, social, and cultural assumptions worthy of closer examination. The question was no longer simply how particular educational organizations functioned, but rather what we understand by learning, inclusion, human development, and individual potential.

As I delved deeper into these issues, the need to find more robust answers progressively led me toward academic research. What began as a series of questions related to special education ultimately evolved into a much broader exploration of educational systems, their limitations, their possibilities, and their capacity to recognize the diversity of human abilities. To a large extent, the book now in the reader's hands is the result of that journey: a path that began in the business world, continued through critical observation of educational realities, and culminated in the rigorous pursuit of knowledge to better understand one of the most important challenges of our time.

These and other experiences opened new paths for growth, yet they also left me with an unresolved question: was academia truly a space reserved for a select group of specific profiles, or was there something deeper that I had not yet understood?

The answer began to emerge years later. Traveling, encountering other cultures, engaging with people from diverse backgrounds, and observing more advanced educational models transformed my perspective profoundly. I discovered universities, researchers, educators, and organizations that understood learning in a different way. Institutions whose goal was not to shape identical individuals, but to cultivate diverse capacities. Spaces where difference was not regarded as a problem to be corrected, but as a source of individual and collective enrichment.

It was then that I understood something that would forever transform my relationship with knowledge: the problem does not always lie with those who learn; more often, it lies within the models that attempt to define too narrowly what learning means.

That realization allowed me to reconcile myself with the academic world. What I had long perceived as a restrictive structure began to reveal itself as one of the most powerful tools for human development when guided by principles of inclusion, diversity, and recognition of individual potential. Since then, I have returned to the path of study with renewed conviction. Today, I have had the opportunity to complete multiple master's degree programs and continue to view learning as one of the most extraordinary expressions of humanity's capacity for transformation.

I do not share these experiences as personal validation or as an example of individual achievement. I share them because they illustrate a question that runs throughout this book: how much talent, creativity, innovation, and collective well-being have we lost when educational systems have been designed to select, classify, or exclude rather than to understand and develop the diversity of human capabilities?

This question belongs not only to students who have at some point doubted themselves. It also belongs to families, educators, leaders, organizations, and entire societies. Every time a person is defined by apparent limitations rather than by developmental possibilities, we all lose a portion of the human potential that could have enriched our shared future.

My hope is that future generations will not have to choose between adapting to rigid models and relinquishing part of themselves in order to be accepted. May

educational systems evolve into spaces where differences are not merely tolerated, but understood as an essential component of learning and human progress.

However, when we speak of inclusion, it is important to recognize that we are referring to a concept that extends far beyond the educational sphere. Inclusion permeates numerous dimensions of human life: migration processes, labor market transformations, cultural differences, economic dynamics, civic participation, and the many ways in which individuals interact within an increasingly complex and interconnected society.

It could be argued that inclusion begins long before school and continues long after it. This is probably true. Nevertheless, I believe that education represents one of the most powerful starting points for cultivating the changes we later hope to see in other human systems. What a society learns to value within its classrooms is often reflected later in its businesses, institutions, communities, and social structures.

For this reason, the primary focus of this book is on schooling and higher education. Not because they are the only spaces where inclusion is necessary, but because they constitute one of the most important arenas in which we can lay the foundations for a more open, more conscious, and better-prepared society capable of understanding human diversity.

Over recent decades, social progress has enabled a clearer recognition of the importance of including individuals who have historically been excluded on the basis of disability, ethnic background, migration status, socioeconomic circumstances, or cultural differences. This progress represents a significant achievement for our species and provides evidence that we are capable of building more humane systems than those inherited from previous eras.

However, I believe the conversation remains incomplete.

There is another dimension of human diversity that deserves deeper exploration: the diversity of abilities, learning paces, ways of understanding, motivations, talents, and forms of engagement with knowledge. These are individuals who may not necessarily present a clinical condition or an identifiable special need, yet whose ways of learning, processing information, and developing their potential differ from the models for which many educational systems were originally designed.

The question that emerges is simple, yet profoundly relevant: how many students considered average, distracted, unmotivated, or lacking promise might

develop extraordinary capabilities if educational processes were able to connect with them in more diverse ways?

Some may require different methodologies. Others may respond more effectively to alternative schedules, learning rhythms, or levels of academic intensity. Some learn through practical experience; others through autonomous exploration, interdisciplinary projects, or technological tools. Perhaps the difference lies not in the capacity to learn, but in the conditions under which learning is allowed to flourish.

This reflection inevitably leads to another issue that is rarely discussed with sufficient depth. In many contemporary societies, education has increasingly come to be valued primarily for its capacity to generate economic outcomes. Success is often measured in terms of income, wealth, or professional status. Material well-being is undoubtedly important and represents a legitimate aspiration for millions of people. However, when education is reduced solely to its economic utility, we risk losing sight of a fundamental dimension of its purpose.

This perspective may be particularly understandable in emerging societies or in contexts where large segments of the population continue to struggle for economic stability. When material progress represents a recent or still unfinished achievement, it is natural for it to occupy a central place in collective aspirations. Yet historical experience suggests that those who have been able to observe human development beyond economic accumulation often arrive at a different conclusion: money is important, but it is not the most valuable resource an individual or society can possess.

What truly expands human possibilities is the capacity to learn. It is the ability to understand complex phenomena, develop critical thinking, construct coherent reasoning, evaluate evidence objectively, question assumptions, and adapt to changing realities. Economic capital can be lost or transferred; intellectual capacity and the habit of learning can accompany a person throughout life and become a permanent source of individual and collective growth.

Perhaps this is why, in an era characterized by rapid technological transformation, the true wealth of societies lies not solely in their financial resources, but in the quality of their human capital, the breadth of their critical thinking, and their capacity to generate knowledge, innovation, and understanding.

This observation becomes particularly important when we examine another phenomenon that increasingly concerns researchers, educators, and educational institutions: the growth of school and university dropout rates in many countries.

Millions of students abandon educational pathways each year that initially began with expectations of growth and development. The causes are multiple and complex, yet the phenomenon raises a difficult question to ignore: how many individuals leave their studies because of a lack of ability, and how many do so because the system failed to connect with them?

At the same time, movements, communities, and initiatives promoting various forms of deschooling and alternative learning models have emerged. Regardless of the positions one may take regarding these proposals, their growth reveals a significant reality: a considerable number of people do not find within traditional systems adequate responses to their needs, interests, or particular ways of learning.

I do not interpret this phenomenon as a reason to abandon formal education. On the contrary, I see it as an invitation to strengthen it. To rethink it. To ask whether current educational systems are truly making use of all available human potential, or whether they continue to lose talent that could enrich our societies.

A community is strengthened not only by producing highly specialized professionals. It is also strengthened when it develops researchers, entrepreneurs, technicians, artists, scientists, innovators, critical thinkers, engaged citizens, and lifelong learners. Every individual who expands their intellectual capacities represents a form of collective wealth. Every mind that learns, understands, creates, or contributes becomes an asset for human development.

This book does not propose an impossible model in which a unique strategy exists for every individual. The reality of educational systems requires balance, feasibility, and coherence. Nor does it advocate an endless fragmentation of methodologies that would render any academic structure unmanageable.

What it does propose is a reflection on the possibilities offered by our historical moment.

For the first time in history, we possess technologies capable of expanding access to knowledge, diversifying learning experiences, adapting content, providing greater flexibility in schedules, strengthening different sensory channels, and generating assessment processes far more dynamic than those available to previous generations. We have tools that enable us to understand more effectively how people learn and to respond more accurately to their needs without sacrificing academic rigor.

We also find ourselves at a particularly significant moment of social transformation. Many occupations that for centuries depended primarily on

physical strength, mechanical repetition, or standardized execution are being replaced or profoundly transformed by automation and technology. Simultaneously, professions are emerging that require creativity, critical thinking, adaptability, social intelligence, complex problem-solving abilities, and continuous learning.

In other words, we are moving toward a society that increasingly demands distinctly human capabilities.

And if human needs change, the educational paradigms designed to prepare individuals for those needs must evolve as well.

Persisting with excessively rigid models designed to identify only a limited set of abilities may result in wasting a vast amount of talent needed to address future challenges. Continuing to classify individuals within narrow categories of academic success or failure not only limits people; it also limits our collective capacity for innovation, adaptation, and progress.

The history of our species has, to a large extent, been the history of expanding possibilities. Every significant advance has occurred when we have been able to incorporate new perspectives, new knowledge, and new ways of understanding reality.

Therefore, true inclusion does not consist solely of allowing more people to enter the system. It also requires asking whether the system is prepared to recognize and develop the diversity of potential that already exists within it.

The pages that follow emerge precisely from this concern. Not to provide definitive answers, but to explore questions that I believe are

essential to the present and future of education, human development, and the society we are building



Author's Notes

Note 1: Although this book has been organized according to a logical and progressive sequence, it may be read in different ways depending on the interests and needs of each reader.

The opening chapters present foundational concepts drawn from education, psychology, neuroscience, sociology, history, and human development. Their purpose is to provide a conceptual framework for understanding human diversity, learning processes, and the evolution of educational systems.

Subsequently, Chapter 11 develops one of the central pillars of this work: a multidimensional framework of diversity within educational contexts. The categories included therein are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive; rather, they seek to illustrate the broad range of realities, capacities, trajectories, and contexts that coexist within education.

The final chapters present tools, approaches, and strategies aimed at strengthening more comprehensive and coherent processes of inclusion that are aligned with this diversity.

Although I recommend following the proposed sequence, readers who are specifically interested in the different forms of diversity may proceed directly to Chapter 11. Nevertheless, reading the preceding chapters will facilitate a deeper understanding of the foundations that support the reflections developed later in the book.

The ultimate purpose of this work is to contribute to a broader understanding of human diversity and to explore how educational systems can evolve to recognize, value, and develop it more effectively.

Note 2: This book is the result of research conducted from a multidisciplinary and international perspective. Its development draws upon contributions from diverse disciplines, studies, institutions, authors, and educational experiences that, in many cases, converge around similar issues related to education, inclusion, and human development.

For this reason, readers will encounter recurring references to certain researchers, institutions, studies, and conceptual frameworks. This recurrence is not the result of unintentional repetition, but rather reflects the recognition of contributions that have exerted significant influence across multiple fields of knowledge addressed in this work.

Likewise, this book is grounded in a conception of knowledge as distributed and open. Consequently, the references included herein are not intended to constitute a closed or exhaustive framework, but rather to provide points of departure for reflection and further academic inquiry. Readers are encouraged to

compare, expand upon, and complement the ideas presented here through consultation of additional sources, perspectives, and lines of research.

To support this objective, an extensive bibliography is included at the end of the book, organized by chapters, themes, and fields of study. Its purpose is to facilitate independent exploration of the content and to serve as a resource for readers who wish to deepen their understanding of the various topics addressed throughout the work.

Note 3: This work has been developed and published independently. During its preparation, the manuscript attracted interest from various European academic institutions; however, certain publication processes required modifications and reductions that, in the author's judgment, could have limited part of the conceptual and argumentative scope of the work.

For this reason, an independent and self-funded academic edition was chosen in order to preserve the integrity of the ideas presented herein and maintain the freedom necessary to address topics that invite reflection on education, learning, and human diversity.

This decision should not be interpreted as opposition to academic institutions, but rather as an intention to preserve a broad and open space for reflection. The purpose of this book is to contribute to the dialogue surrounding the multiple forms of learning, talent, and human development present within educational systems, while also exploring new possibilities for recognizing and fostering the diversity that already exists within them.

Table of Contents.

Introduction	XXVIII
Chapter 1: The Myth of the Ideal Student	34
1.1. The Emergence of a Singular Model of Success	34
1.2. Standardization as an Educational Paradigm	36
1.3. When Learning Becomes Fitting In	39
1.4. The Consequences of Measuring Everyone by the Same Standard	43
Chapter 2: Human Diversity in the Face of Educational Uniformity.....	48
2.1. Diversity as the Natural Condition of Humanity	48
2.2. Cognitive, Emotional, and Social Differences	52
2.3. Learning Paces, Learning Approaches, and Learning Motivation.....	55
2.4. Neurodiversity and Human Uniqueness.....	58
2.5. The Mistake of Teaching Everyone the Same When They Are Different	61
Chapter 3: The Diverse Brain.....	68
3.1. Neuroplasticity	68
3.2. Cognitive Variability.....	70
3.3. Attention and Learning	73
3.4. Motivation	75
3.5. Emotion and Learning.....	78
3.6. Executive Functions.....	80
3.7. Implications for Inclusion.....	83
.....	85
Chapter 4: The Invisible Cost of Educational Exclusion	86
4.1. Academic Apathy as a Symptom	86
4.2. School Failure Beyond Grades.....	89
4.3. Self-Esteem, Identity, and Belonging.....	92
4.4. Silent Disengagement.....	94
4.5. When the System Produces Demotivation	97
Chapter 5: Difference Does Not Mean Deficiency	104

5.1. Difference versus Deficit.....	104
5.2. Invisible Intelligences	106
5.3. Unrecognized Talents.....	108
5.4. Diversity as a Strength.....	110
Chapter 6: The Talents That Education Failed to Recognize.....	114
6.1. Creativity and Divergent Thinking.....	114
6.2. Historical Cases	116
6.3. Innovators Outside the Mold	118
6.4. The Social Cost of Wasted Talent.....	120
Chapter 7: The Long Evolution of Education.....	126
7.1. Learning to Survive.....	126
7.2. The First Educational Systems	129
7.5. Education Through Punishment and Obedience.....	138
7.6. The School of the Industrial Revolution.....	141
7.7. The Discovery of Human Diversity.....	144
7.8. From Control to Human Development.....	146
Chapter 8: From the Correction of Differences to the Valuation of Diversity	152
8.1. History of Exclusion/Inclusion.....	152
8.2. Derechos humanos e inclusión educativa	154
8.2. Human Rights and Inclusive Education	157
8.3. Inclusive Movements	160
8.4. Education for All	164
Chapter 9: From the School That Classifies to the School That Includes	168
9.1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	168
9.2. Personalization	172
9.3. Curriculum Flexibility.....	174
9.4. Strengths-Based Learning.....	177
Chapter 10: Rethinking Assessment Are We Assessing What Students Know, or Only What We Know How to Measure?	180
10.1. Origins of Modern Assessment.....	180

10.2. Limitations of Grades.....	183
10.3. Formative Assessment.....	186
10.4. Effective Feedback.....	189
10.5. Diverse Evidence	192
10.6. Inclusive Assessment.....	195
Chapter 11: A Multidimensional Conception of Diversity for Educational Inclusion	202
11.1. Functional Diversity and Disability.....	202
Physical or Motor Disability.....	202
<input type="checkbox"/> Spinal Cord Injuries.....	204
<input type="checkbox"/> Neuromuscular Diseases	204
<input type="checkbox"/> Amputations	205
<input type="checkbox"/> Rare Motor Disorders	205
<input type="checkbox"/> Blindness	207
<input type="checkbox"/> Low vision.....	207
<input type="checkbox"/> Deafness	208
<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Loss.....	209
<input type="checkbox"/> Deafblindness	209
Intellectual Disability: Mild, Moderate, Severe, and Profound	210
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding Intellectual Disability Through Capabilities	211
<input type="checkbox"/> Mild Intellectual Disability.....	212
<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate Intellectual Disability.....	212
<input type="checkbox"/> Severe Intellectual Disability	213
<input type="checkbox"/> Profound Intellectual Disability.....	214
<input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion as Environmental Transformation	214
Multiple Disabilities	215
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding Multiple Disabilities as Interaction Rather Than the Sum of Deficits	216
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Implications and Support Systems	216
11.2. Neurodiversity and Neurodevelopment.....	217
Neurodevelopmental Disorders.....	218

<input type="checkbox"/> ADHD	218
<input type="checkbox"/> ASD	219
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication Disorders.....	219
<input type="checkbox"/> Developmental Motor Disorders.....	220
<input type="checkbox"/> Specific Learning Disorders.....	220
Specific Learning Difficulties.....	221
<input type="checkbox"/> Dyslexia.....	222
<input type="checkbox"/> Dyscalculia.....	222
<input type="checkbox"/> Dysgraphia.....	223
<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling Disorder (Dysorthografia)	224
Less Common Neurological Differences.....	224
<input type="checkbox"/> Dyspraxia	225
<input type="checkbox"/> Auditory Processing Disorder	226
<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory Processing Disorder	226
11.3. Psychosocial Diversity and Mental Health	227
Severe Psychiatric Disorders.....	228
<input type="checkbox"/> Schizophrenia.....	228
<input type="checkbox"/> Bipolar Disorder	229
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychotic Disorders	229
Traumatic Experiences	230
<input type="checkbox"/> Post-Traumatic Stress and Complex Trauma	230
<input type="checkbox"/> Complicated Grief.....	230
Behavioral Disorders.....	230
<input type="checkbox"/> Oppositional Defiant Disorder	230
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct Disorder.....	231
11.4. Condiciones médicas y de salud	231
Enfermedades crónicas.....	232
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes	232
<input type="checkbox"/> Epilepsia.....	233
<input type="checkbox"/> Asma severa.....	233

<input type="checkbox"/> Enfermedades cardíacas.....	233
Enfermedades raras.....	234
<input type="checkbox"/> Síndromes genéticos.....	234
<input type="checkbox"/> Enfermedades metabólicas.....	234
<input type="checkbox"/> Enfermedades degenerativas.....	234
Condiciones temporales.....	235
<input type="checkbox"/> Hospitalización prolongada.....	235
<input type="checkbox"/> Recuperación de accidentes.....	235
<input type="checkbox"/> Tratamientos oncológicos.....	235
<input type="checkbox"/> Procesos de rehabilitación.....	235
11.4. Medical and Health Conditions.....	236
Chronic Conditions.....	236
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes.....	236
<input type="checkbox"/> Epilepsy.....	237
<input type="checkbox"/> Severe Asthma.....	237
<input type="checkbox"/> Cardiovascular Conditions.....	237
Rare Diseases.....	238
<input type="checkbox"/> Genetic Syndromes.....	238
<input type="checkbox"/> Metabolic Disorders.....	238
<input type="checkbox"/> Degenerative Diseases.....	238
Temporary Conditions.....	239
<input type="checkbox"/> Prolonged Hospitalization.....	239
<input type="checkbox"/> Recovery from Accidents.....	239
<input type="checkbox"/> Oncological Treatments.....	239
<input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation Processes.....	239
11.5. Linguistic and Communicative Diversity.....	240
Bilingualism and Multilingualism.....	240
Indigenous Languages.....	241
Regional Dialects.....	241
Recent Migration.....	241

Sign Language.....	242
Augmentative and Alternative Communication Systems (AAC)	242
11.6. Cultural and Ethnic Diversity.....	242
General Cultural Diversity.....	243
Indigenous Peoples.....	243
Afro-descendant Communities.....	244
Ethnic Minorities	245
Migrants, Refugees, and Displaced Persons	245
11.7. Identity Diversity and Personal Expression	246
Personal Identity	247
Gender Identity.....	247
Gender Expression.....	248
Sexual Orientation	248
Religious Beliefs and Worldviews	248
Artistic Expressions.....	249
Sense of Belonging	249
11.8. Social and Contextual Diversity.....	250
Family Context.....	250
□ Single-Parent Families.....	250
□ Extended Families	251
□ Foster Care	251
□ Child Protection Services	252
Social Vulnerability	252
□ Poverty	252
□ Social Exclusion.....	252
□ Child Labor.....	252
□ Domestic Violence	253
□ Food Insecurity.....	253
Community Factors	253
11.9. Learning Diversity	254

Learning Paces	255
Differentiated Strategies	255
Cognitive Styles.....	256
Executive Functions	256
Self-Regulation.....	257
Motivation	257
Interests.....	257
Academic Expectations	257
Integrative Conclusion	258
11.10. Diversity of Talents and Abilities	258
High Abilities	258
Specific Talents	260
<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific Talent.....	260
<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematical Talent	260
<input type="checkbox"/> Artistic Talent	260
<input type="checkbox"/> Musical Talent	260
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletic Talent	261
<input type="checkbox"/> Technological Talent	261
<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Talent.....	261
Creativity and Divergent Thinking.....	261
• Creators	262
11.11. Environmental and Systemic Barriers.....	263
Technological Barriers	263
<input type="checkbox"/> Technological Divide	264
<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Connectivity	264
Geographical Barriers	264
<input type="checkbox"/> Territorial Isolation.....	264
<input type="checkbox"/> Limited Access to Transportation.....	265
Physical Barriers.....	265
<input type="checkbox"/> Inaccessible Infrastructure.....	265

□ Absence of Accommodations	265
La Social and Institutional Barriers	266
□ Discrimination	266
□ Stigmatization.....	266
□ Prejudice.....	266
□ Institutional Exclusion.....	267
Emergency Factors	268
□ Armed Conflicts	268
□ Humanitarian Crises.....	268
□ Natural Disasters	269
□ Public Health Emergencies.....	269
Chapter 12: Technology as a Bridge Toward Inclusion.....	274
12.1. Technology as an Educational Resource	274
Evolution of Educational Tools.....	275
From the Printed Book to Digital Ecosystems.....	275
Democratization of Access to Knowledge.....	276
Technology as an Educational Resource (Expanded Core Idea).....	276
Applied Examples in Real-World Contexts.....	277
Paradigms of Educational Benefit.....	277
12.2. Technology as a Learning Channel	278
Learning Without Geographical Barriers.....	278
Synchronous and Asynchronous Education	279
Continuous Access to Knowledge	279
Technology as a Learning Channel (Expanded Core Idea)	280
Applied Examples in Real-World Contexts.....	280
Paradigms of Educational Benefit.....	281
12.3. Technology and Accessibility.....	281
Screen Readers	282
Automatic Captioning.....	282
Real-Time Translation.....	283

Tools for Visual, Hearing, and Motor Disabilities 283

Technology and Accessibility (Expanded Core Idea)..... 284

Applied Examples in Real-World Contexts 284

Paradigms of Educational Benefit 285

12.4. Personalized Learning..... 285

 Adaptive Platforms 286

 Personalized Learning Paces..... 286

 Strengths-Based Learning 287

12.5. Artificial Intelligence in Education..... 288

 Intelligent Tutoring Systems 288

 Content Generation 289

 Automated Feedback 290

 Early Detection of Learning Difficulties 290

12.6. Ethical Risks and Challenges of Technology in Education..... 291

 Digital Divide..... 292

 Data Privacy 292

 Technological Dependence 293

 Algorithmic Biases..... 293

 Dehumanization of Learning 294

Chapter 13: New Ways of Learning in the Digital Era 296

 13.1. Multimodal Learning: Text, Audio, Video, Simulation, Virtual Reality,
and Augmented Reality 296

 † Text as the Foundational Medium of Learning..... 297

 † Audio as a Channel for Narrative and Emotional Understanding. 297

 † Video as Audiovisual Integration of Knowledge 298

 † Simulation as Controlled Experiential Learning..... 298

 † Virtual and Augmented Reality as an Expansion of the Cognitive
Environment..... 299

 † Systemic Integration of Multimodal Learning 299

 13.2. Hybrid Education: Face-to-Face Learning, Virtual Learning, and the
Contemporary Reorganization of Learning..... 301

‡ Face-to-Face and Virtual Learning: Not Opposition, but Structural Complementarity	301
‡ Educational Flexibility: From Rigid Models to Adaptive Learning	302
‡ New Learning Spaces: From the Physical Classroom to the Expanded Ecosystem	303
‡ Systemic Integration of Hybrid Education	304
13.3. Adaptive Learning: Personalized Content, Continuous Assessment, and Individual Learning Pathways	305
‡ Personalized Content: From a Uniform Curriculum to Individual Cognitive Design.....	305
‡ Continuous Assessment: From Single Examinations to Observation of the Learning Process	306
‡ Individual Learning Pathways: From a Single Route to a Personalized Learning Map.....	307
‡ Systemic Integration of Adaptive Learning.....	308
13.4. Gamification and Motivation.....	309
The Relationship Between Motivation and Learning: What Science Tells Us	309
‡ Game Mechanics	310
‡ Active Participation.....	312
‡ Experiential Learning.....	313
Systemic Integration: Gamification, Motivation, and Learning	314
13.5. Autonomous Learning	315
‡ Self-Management.....	316
‡ Metacognition	317
‡ Learning to Learn	319
‡ Systemic Integration: Autonomy, Technology, and Human Development	320
13.6. Digital Learning Ecosystems.....	321
Understanding Digital Learning Ecosystems	322
‡ Global Communities	323
‡ Lifelong Learning	324
‡ Knowledge Networks.....	325

‡ Systemic Integration: Learning as a Connected Phenomenon.....	327
Chapter 14: Beyond Competition: Human Diversity and Evolution.....	330
14.1. Human Evolution and Cooperation	330
Collective Survival.....	331
Functional Specialization	332
Community Building.....	333
14.2. From Survival to Social Complexity.....	334
Agriculture: When Cooperation Began to Build the Future	335
Civilizations: The Expansion of Human Cooperation.....	336
Division of Labor: The Strength of Differences.....	337
Cumulative Knowledge: The Superpower of Our Species.....	338
14.3. Diversity as an Adaptive Advantage.....	339
Genetic Variability: Diversity as the Species' Biological Insurance.....	340
Cognitive Diversity: Different Minds for Different Challenges	341
Adapting to Changing Environments: The True Evolutionary Advantage	342
14.4. The Multiplicity of Human Abilities	344
Creativity: Imagining Possibilities Before They Exist	344
Leadership: Coordinating Efforts Toward Shared Goals	345
Empathy: Understanding Others to Strengthen Cooperation.....	346
Logical Thinking: Understanding Patterns and Solving Problems.....	347
Technical Skills: Transforming Knowledge into Action.....	348
Social Intelligence: Navigating Human Complexity	348
14.5. The Error of Reducing Human Talent.....	349
Overvaluation of a Limited Set of Competencies.....	350
Selective Educational Systems.....	351
The Loss of Collective Potential.....	352
14.6. The 10 Skills of the Future: When Human Evolution Meets the Demands of the Twenty-First Century	354
Chapter 15: The Need for Heterogeneous Strengths.....	360
15.1. A Complex Society Requires Diverse Talents	361

Social Complexity	361
Specialization	362
Interdependence.....	363
15.2. Cognitive Diversity and Innovation.....	365
Different Ways of Thinking.....	365
Collective Creativity.....	366
Problem Solving.....	367
15.3. Collective Intelligence	368
Diverse Teams.....	368
Collaborative Learning.....	370
Distributed Knowledge.....	371
15.4. Multidisciplinary Teams	372
A Human Response to Complexity	372
Technology: The Convergence of Knowledge	374
Education: An Ecosystem of Multiple Forms of Knowledge.....	375
Health: The Human Being as an Integrated System	375
Public Governance: Governing Complex Systems	376
Toward a Culture of Integration	377
15.5. Systems Thinking.....	377
Interconnection.....	378
Complex Systems.....	379
Holistic Vision.....	380
Thinking in Systems to Build Smarter Futures	381
Chapter 16: The Role of Teachers, Families, and Institutions	386
16.1. The Teacher as a Mediator of Human Potential	386
Expectations of Teachers	386
Motivation.....	387
Classroom Climate.....	388
Identification of Strengths.....	389
The Need for Transversal Skills	389

The Need for Multidisciplinary Professional Qualifications	390
16.2. The Family as an Educational Environment	391
Attachment.....	392
Emotional Support.....	392
Family Expectations.....	393
Cultural Capital	393
Blended and Diverse Family Structures.....	393
Family Conflict	394
Families in the Twenty-First Century.....	394
Family Inclusion in the Academic Process	395
Family Human Quality	395
16.3. Institutional Leadership.....	396
School Culture	396
Inclusive Management.....	397
Educational Policies	398
16.4. Cross-Disciplinary Training in Inclusion.....	399
Teachers.....	400
Psychologists: Facilitators of Holistic Development.....	401
School Leaders: Builders of an Inclusive Institutional Culture.....	402
Educational Counselors: Supporting Educational Pathways	403
Families: The First Educational Ecosystem.....	403
Students: The Protagonists of Inclusion	404
16.5. An Open Interdisciplinary Framework for Understanding Educational Inclusion.....	405
† The Learner.....	406
• Vocational Psychology and Life Project Development	409
† How People Learn.....	410
• Educational Neuroscience.....	410
† The Person in Context.....	411
• Sociology of Education.....	411
• Ecological Theory of Human Development.....	412

• Capability Approach	413
‡ Diversity Within Complex Systems.....	413
• Evolutionary Theory and Human Diversity	414
• Complexity Science and Systems Thinking.....	414
16.6. Shared Responsibility	415
Educational Community.....	416
Support Networks	417
Social Co-responsibility.....	418
Chapter 17: Inclusion as a Societal Project.....	420
17.1. Inclusion Beyond the School.....	420
Education	420
Employment	421
Civic Participation.....	422
Community Life.....	422
17.2. Human Development	423
Human Capabilities	423
Freedom of Choice.....	424
Social Well-Being.....	425
17.3. Social Equity	426
Social Mobility.....	426
Educational Justice	427
Equality of Opportunity	428
17.4. Inclusion, Innovation, and Progress	430
Untapped Talent	430
Economic Development.....	431
Social Competitiveness	431
17.5. Toward a Society Without Exclusion.....	432
Inclusive Culture	432
Diversity as a Value	433
Plural Citizenship.....	433

Epilogue	436
Final Reflections and Integrative Conclusions	436
Proposal for the Transformation of Practices and Systems	437
Reflection and Application Questions by Chapter	439
Bibliographic record.....	450

Introduction

There is a question that rarely occupies the center of educational debates and yet may have profound implications for the future of our societies:

How much human talent have we lost without even realizing it?

We are not referring solely to students who dropped out of school or to individuals who never had access to education. The question is broader and, perhaps for that reason, more unsettling. It also concerns those who remained within the educational system for years and nevertheless never had the opportunity to fully develop what they were capable of becoming.

Across generations, millions of people have passed through schools, colleges, and universities designed on the premise that there is a proper way to learn, a desirable developmental pathway, and certain indicators capable of identifying who possesses potential and who does not. This model enabled extraordinary advances in literacy, access to knowledge, and educational expansion. However, as scientific research has deepened our understanding of the brain, learning, and human diversity, a question has begun to emerge with increasing force:

What if the problem was not always those who failed to adapt, but also the models that defined what it meant to learn appropriately?

History is filled with individuals who were considered distracted, problematic, slow, unpromising, or insufficiently academic. Some of them went on to transform entire industries, revolutionize scientific fields, create cultural movements, or develop innovations that changed the lives of millions of people. Others never had the opportunity to discover what they could contribute because they learned too early that they did not fit within the expectations that had been constructed for them.

It is difficult not to wonder how many abilities remain invisible in today's classrooms.

How many students labeled as average possess extraordinary talents that no one has yet identified?

How many individuals abandon their educational trajectories not because of a lack of ability, but because the system never found an effective way to connect with them?

How many opportunities for innovation, human development, and collective well-being are lost each year when we confuse uniformity with excellence?

These questions do not belong solely to the educational sphere. They also concern families, organizations, policymakers, and any society that aspires to fully harness the potential of its citizens. The way a community educates reflects, to a considerable extent, the way it understands human value.

This book emerges precisely from that concern.

It does not seek to provide simple answers to complex problems. Nor does it propose a critique of education as an institution. On the contrary, it is grounded in a profound conviction regarding the transformative power of learning and the fundamental role that education plays in both individual and collective progress.

However, any institution that aspires to serve people more effectively must be willing to examine itself, question itself, and evolve.

Throughout the following pages, readers will encounter a multidisciplinary journey that integrates contributions from education, psychology, neuroscience, sociology, history, philosophy, public policy, and human development. The purpose is not merely to understand educational inclusion as a response to certain populations that have traditionally been excluded. The objective is broader: to explore the extent to which human diversity, in all its forms, challenges the assumptions upon which many of our educational systems have been built.

Inclusion is often associated with concepts such as disability, accessibility, or equal opportunity. All of these are fundamental. However, this work invites readers to broaden the conversation. It proposes that we also consider differences in learning styles, developmental trajectories, talents, motivations, cultural experiences, life pathways, and capacities that do not always fit within the traditional categories employed by educational systems.

Because perhaps the most abundant form of diversity within any classroom is not the one we can easily identify.

Perhaps it is the one we have not yet learned to see.

We also find ourselves at a singular historical moment. Artificial intelligence, automation, the expansion of digital technologies, and the rapid transformation of labor markets are reshaping the competencies that societies demand. The ability to

reproduce information is becoming progressively less relevant, while creativity, critical thinking, adaptability, complex problem-solving, and lifelong learning are becoming increasingly important.

Paradoxically, while the world becomes more diverse, dynamic, and unpredictable, many educational systems continue to operate under structures designed for very different realities.

Are we preparing people for the future that is approaching, or for a world that no longer exists?

The answer to this question transcends any pedagogical discussion. It carries economic, social, cultural, and human implications.

Because when a society fails to develop the potential of its citizens, it does not merely lose individuals. It loses possibilities. It loses innovation. It loses well-being. It loses its future.

This book invites readers to explore that reality from a broad, rigorous, and profoundly human perspective. It invites them to question certain ideas that we have taken for granted for decades. It invites them to view education not merely as a mechanism for transmitting knowledge, but as one of the most influential systems in the construction of opportunities, identities, and life projects.

And above all, it invites them to consider a possibility that is as simple as it is transformative:

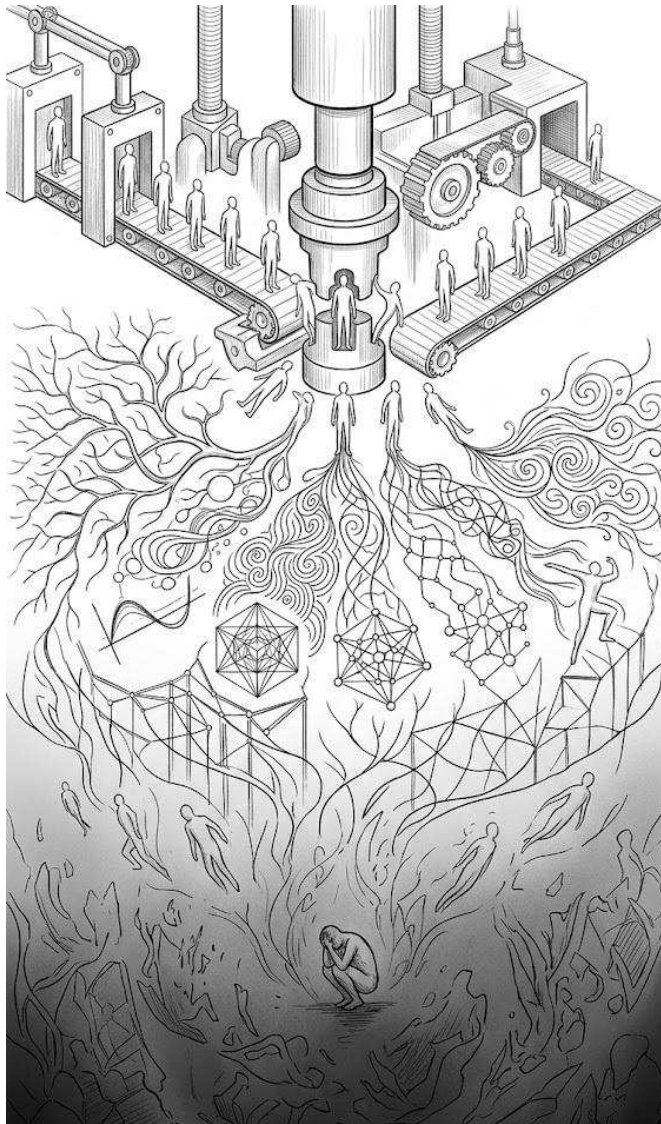
That true inclusion may not consist solely of allowing more people to enter the educational system.

Rather, it may consist of building systems capable of recognizing the extraordinary diversity of human potential that already exists within them.

This introduction also serves a legitimate communicative function for the academic reader: it stimulates curiosity, raises questions that are difficult to ignore, fosters both intellectual and emotional engagement, and positions the book as a work that extends beyond traditional discussions of inclusion to address human potential—a subject with educational, social, and organizational relevance. This considerably increases readers' motivation to engage with the work from its very first pages.

PART I

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM



Chapter 1: The Myth of the Ideal Student

For generations, educational systems have operated on an apparently simple premise: there is a correct way to learn, an appropriate way to behave, and a defined set of skills that enable success. This perspective, deeply rooted in the history of modern education, contributed to the construction of the figure of the “ideal student”: disciplined, homogeneous in learning patterns, and capable of responding successfully to standardized assessment criteria. However, when we closely examine the human diversity present in classrooms, families, organizations, and society as a whole, an unavoidable question emerges: to what extent does this model truly reflect the complexity of human development? This chapter invites readers to explore the origins of this narrative, the assumptions that sustain it, and the consequences it has had for millions of individuals whose abilities, talents, and ways of understanding the world did not fit within a singular definition of intelligence or academic success. Rather than questioning the need for education, the purpose is to reflect on the need to broaden our understanding of what it means to learn, grow, and contribute value within an increasingly diverse and interconnected society.

1.1. The Emergence of a Singular Model of Success

Few ideas have influenced modern education as profoundly as the belief that there is a correct way to learn, a desirable developmental pathway, and a specific set of characteristics that define the successful student. Today, this notion appears so natural that we rarely pause to ask when it emerged, who defined it, or which historical interests contributed to its consolidation. Yet, when we examine the evolution of educational systems, we discover that what is often regarded as a universal truth is, in reality, a social and historical construct.

The earliest forms of organized education were reserved for relatively small groups. For centuries, access to knowledge depended upon an individual's social, economic, religious, or political position. With the rise of modern nation-states and, particularly, during the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, education began to assume a new function: preparing large numbers of citizens to integrate efficiently into increasingly complex productive systems.

Modern schooling undoubtedly represented an extraordinary advance in terms of literacy and access to knowledge. However, it also inherited organizational principles characteristic of the factories of its time: rigid schedules, age-based grouping, standardized curricula, uniform procedures, and assessment mechanisms

designed to classify performance. The German sociologist Max Weber observed how modern institutions increasingly tended to organize themselves through processes of rationalization and bureaucratization, seeking efficiency, predictability, and control. Schools were no exception to this transformation.

Within this context, a relatively homogeneous definition of academic success gradually became established. Particular value was assigned to the ability to follow instructions, maintain attention for extended periods, memorize information, adapt to common norms, and demonstrate knowledge through standardized assessments. These undoubtedly valuable skills progressively evolved from being important abilities among many others to becoming the primary indicators of human potential.

Yet a question deserves careful consideration: do these characteristics reflect the full spectrum of human capabilities, or only those that were most functional to the needs of a particular historical period?

The philosopher and educational theorist John Dewey warned early on about the risks of turning education into a mechanical process of content transmission disconnected from students' lived experiences. For Dewey, learning did not merely consist of acquiring information; it involved actively participating in the construction of knowledge through interaction with one's environment. His concern remains highly relevant today: when educational systems prioritize uniformity over diversity, they may ultimately confuse conformity with learning.

Decades later, Paulo Freire deepened this reflection by challenging what he termed the “banking model of education,” a framework in which students are viewed as passive recipients of knowledge previously defined by others. From this perspective, education risks valuing intellectual obedience more than curiosity, repetition more than understanding, and adaptation more than transformation.

The second half of the twentieth century brought new evidence that began to challenge the notion of a singular intelligence. Researchers such as Howard Gardner proposed the theory of multiple intelligences, arguing that human abilities are expressed in diverse forms: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic, among others. Although the theory has generated academic debate, it contributed to a fundamental insight: individuals may demonstrate talent, creativity, and learning capacity in profoundly different ways.

More recently, authors such as Ken Robinson have argued that many educational systems continue to operate within structures designed for economic

and social realities that no longer exist. According to Robinson, schools often recognize and reward certain forms of ability while rendering other equally valuable forms of human contribution invisible. This is not necessarily the result of a deliberate intention to exclude, but rather because the criteria used to identify success remain anchored in inherited paradigms.

When we examine the life trajectories of artists, entrepreneurs, scientists, athletes, community leaders, social innovators, and professionals from a wide range of disciplines, we encounter a reality that is difficult to ignore: traditional academic performance does not always predict an individual's capacity to create value, solve complex problems, lead teams, build meaningful relationships, or transform their environment.

This does not mean that academic effort lacks importance. Nor does it imply that schools have failed in their mission. Rather, it suggests that human diversity is too broad to be understood through a single definition of success.

Perhaps the most relevant question is not who managed to adapt to the dominant educational model, but how many talents remained invisible because their strengths did not align with the established parameters. How many students learned to perceive themselves as inadequate when, in reality, they simply possessed different ways of understanding the world? How many abilities remained hidden because they were never recognized by the instruments designed to measure them?

Understanding the emergence of the singular model of success does not require rejecting formal education. It requires recognizing that every institution reflects the needs, beliefs, and knowledge of its time. And if societies evolve, perhaps we must also ask whether the time has come to broaden our definition of intelligence, learning, and human potential.

1.2. Standardization as an Educational Paradigm

When we observe a contemporary school, we encounter a series of elements that appear entirely natural: students grouped by age, identical schedules for all, subjects organized into fixed time blocks, assessments administered simultaneously, and common criteria used to measure performance. These practices are so familiar that we rarely stop to ask why they exist or what assumptions about human learning sustain them.

Yet behind this apparent normality lies one of the most influential paradigms of modern education: standardization.

Standardization may be understood as the effort to establish common procedures that enable the education of large numbers of students according to shared criteria. From a historical perspective, this model responded to a legitimate need. As societies expanded and education ceased to be a privilege reserved for minorities, states faced the challenge of ensuring mass access to schooling. To achieve this objective, it became necessary to design structures that were organized, predictable, and scalable.

From an administrative standpoint, the logic appeared reasonable. If thousands or millions of students were to receive an education, it was necessary to define minimum curricular content, learning sequences, assessment mechanisms, and parameters for certifying knowledge. Standardization offered efficiency, comparability, and quality control.

Nevertheless, a question emerges when we examine human diversity in all its complexity: is it possible to apply the same model of learning to individuals who think, feel, process information, and develop in profoundly different ways?

Developmental psychology has suggested for decades that the answer is more complex than we often assume.

Jean Piaget demonstrated that children actively construct knowledge through developmental processes that do not occur at precisely the same pace for all individuals. Later, Lev Vygotsky showed that learning is deeply influenced by cultural, social, and relational factors. Both scholars shared a fundamental insight: learning is not simply the reception of information; it is a dynamic process shaped by multiple individual and contextual variables.

Yet when we examine educational systems in practice, we encounter a paradox. While science has accumulated substantial evidence regarding the diversity of learning processes, many school structures continue to operate under the assumption that large groups of students should progress at the same pace, toward the same objectives, and be assessed according to similar criteria.

Let us imagine two students sitting in the same classroom.

The first quickly understands abstract concepts, enjoys reading, and performs well on written assessments. The second needs to manipulate objects, experiment, engage in dialogue, and connect ideas to concrete experiences before achieving

deep understanding. Both possess the capacity to learn. Both are intelligent. However, if the system privileges only certain ways of demonstrating knowledge, one will be perceived as successful, while the other may begin to perceive themselves as inadequate.

What is most interesting is that this difference does not necessarily reflect a genuine difference in potential, but rather a mismatch between the student's way of learning and the way the system expects learning to occur.

Howard Gardner contributed significantly to this discussion through his theory of multiple intelligences. Although his model has been the subject of academic debate, it had the merit of challenging a deeply rooted belief: the notion that there is only one valid way of being intelligent. His work encouraged consideration of the possibility that human abilities may be expressed in diverse forms and that many of them remain invisible when assessment systems focus exclusively on particular competencies.

Years later, psychologist Robert Sternberg argued that success in life requires far more than the abilities traditionally measured by academic tests. According to his research, practical intelligence, adaptability, creative thinking, and the ability to function effectively in real-world contexts play a role that is just as important as conventional cognitive competencies.

These observations become particularly relevant when we listen to the life stories of many individuals.

It is not uncommon to encounter adults who recall having been labeled average or even problematic students and who later become successful entrepreneurs, recognized artists, social leaders, brilliant researchers, or highly competent professionals. Nor is it uncommon to find individuals who achieved excellent grades throughout their schooling but later struggled to adapt to complex, uncertain, or rapidly changing environments.

These cases do not invalidate the importance of formal education. Rather, they suggest that traditional metrics capture only a portion of the abilities required to navigate the real world successfully.

The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu observed that educational institutions do not merely transmit knowledge; they also legitimize particular cultural and social forms of behavior. From this perspective, some students enter the classroom with experiences, codes, and skills that are more closely aligned with institutional expectations, while others must make additional efforts to adapt to them.

This leads us to a particularly important reflection.

When a student does not fit within established parameters, we tend to ask what is wrong with the student. Less frequently do we ask which characteristics of the system may be hindering that student's full participation.

The difference between these two questions is profound.

The first directs attention toward the individual as the bearer of the problem.

The second invites us to examine the relationship between the individual and the environment.

Contemporary psychology, particularly through approaches such as Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, has demonstrated that human development emerges from the continuous interaction between individual characteristics and the contexts in which people live. From this perspective, learning difficulties cannot be understood solely by observing the student; it is also necessary to examine the systems, practices, expectations, and structures that surround them.

Perhaps the central issue is not whether standardization has been useful. Undoubtedly, it has played a crucial role in expanding education on a large scale and ensuring certain levels of access and organization. The real question is different: can a paradigm designed to manage diverse populations adequately respond to the uniqueness of each human being?

As research in neuroscience, psychology, and learning continues to advance, the evidence appears to point toward an increasingly clear conclusion: diversity is not an exception within the human experience. It is the norm.

If this is true, then perhaps the educational challenge of the twenty-first century is not merely to improve standards, but to develop systems capable of recognizing, understanding, and fostering the extraordinary diversity of ways in which human beings learn, create, collaborate, and contribute to the world.

1.3. When Learning Becomes Fitting In

Every educational process involves some degree of adaptation. Learning a language requires adjusting to certain grammatical rules. Learning to live with others involves recognizing boundaries, agreements, and shared responsibilities.

Even professional development requires understanding norms, procedures, and social expectations. Adaptation is part of human life.

However, there is a profound difference between adapting in order to participate and adapting in order to belong.

The former expands our possibilities.

The latter may ultimately diminish them.

When we examine the experiences of many students, a troubling question emerges: at what point does education cease to focus on learning and begin to focus on fitting in?

The question may seem uncomfortable, but it deserves attention. A significant part of the educational experience does not revolve solely around knowledge. It also involves the ability to adjust to explicit and implicit expectations regarding how to think, behave, express oneself, participate, and even feel.

Students often learn very quickly which behaviors are rewarded and which provoke disapproval. They learn when to speak and when to remain silent. They learn which questions are considered intelligent and which may be interpreted as interruptions. They learn which approaches to problem-solving are accepted and which are viewed as unnecessary deviations.

And little by little, without anyone explicitly instructing them to do so, many discover that being accepted can become more important than being authentic.

Social psychology has extensively studied this phenomenon.

Solomon Asch's classic conformity experiments demonstrated that individuals may ignore evidence visible before their own eyes when they perceive that the group holds a different opinion. The desire for belonging exerts a powerful influence on human behavior.

Decades later, numerous studies would confirm that the need for social acceptance constitutes one of the most influential psychological forces in the development of identity. Human beings do not merely seek to learn; they also seek to belong.

This reality becomes particularly relevant within educational systems.

For a child or adolescent, school is not merely a space for academic learning. It is also an environment where relationships are built, identities are formed, and perceptions of personal worth are developed.

Consequently, when certain characteristics are consistently rewarded while others are ignored or corrected, students receive messages that extend beyond the academic domain.

They do not hear only: “This answer is incorrect.”

They often interpret: “There is something wrong with me.”

Carl Rogers, one of the leading figures in humanistic psychology, observed that individuals flourish when they experience acceptance, authenticity, and positive regard. Conversely, when they feel that their worth depends exclusively on meeting certain external conditions, they may begin to disconnect from important aspects of themselves in order to gain recognition.

This reflection is especially significant in educational contexts.

Imagine a student who is deeply curious. She enjoys exploring complex topics, connecting seemingly unrelated ideas, and asking unexpected questions. Yet she discovers that her contributions are often perceived as distractions from the planned curriculum. Over time, she learns that repeating expected answers is safer than asking new questions.

Now imagine another student whose energy seems inexhaustible. He learns through experimentation, construction, movement, and collaboration. Yet he spends much of his day attempting to suppress natural impulses in order to adapt to dynamics designed for stillness and sustained attention. Eventually, he learns that a significant part of his daily effort consists of appearing to be someone different from who he truly is.

Neither of these students lacks the capacity to learn.

What they face is a tension between their natural way of engaging with the world and the expectations of their environment.

Self-Determination Theory, developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, offers a valuable perspective for understanding this phenomenon. Their research demonstrates that individuals develop deeper and more sustainable motivation when they experience autonomy, competence, and social connectedness. When

these basic psychological needs are constrained, motivation tends to shift from genuine interest toward the pursuit of approval or the avoidance of rejection.

In other words, learning can gradually become an act of satisfying external expectations.

Sociologist Erving Goffman used the theatrical metaphor to describe how individuals constantly manage the impressions they project in different social contexts. To some extent, we all perform roles.

Yet it is worth asking what happens when a student spends years performing a character they believe to be acceptable within the educational system.

What happens when the energy that could be devoted to exploring, creating, or discovering is directed primarily toward avoiding mistakes, meeting expectations, or fitting into a particular definition of normality?

The answer does not always manifest itself in the form of academic failure.

Sometimes it appears as demotivation.

At other times as anxiety.

Occasionally as extreme perfectionism.

And very often as a gradual disconnection between learning and the joy of learning.

Paradoxically, many students succeed remarkably well at fitting in.

They achieve good grades.

They follow the rules.

They reach the expected objectives.

Yet some arrive at adulthood without having had many opportunities to explore who they truly are, what their distinctive strengths may be, or what forms of contribution they might develop beyond traditionally recognized pathways.

From a humanistic perspective, this possibility deserves careful consideration.

Abraham Maslow argued that human development does not consist solely of satisfying basic needs or achieving certain external accomplishments. It also involves progressing toward self-actualization, a process through which individuals can express their most authentic capacities and build lives that are aligned with their potential.

Viewed from this perspective, education faces a fundamental challenge.

It is not enough to transmit knowledge.

It is not enough to develop competencies.

It is not enough to prepare individuals for the labor market.

Education also participates in the construction of human identity.

And when an educational system primarily promotes adaptation to predefined models, it risks reducing the space available for the exploration of human diversity.

This does not mean eliminating rules, structures, or expectations. Every community requires shared agreements in order to function. The real question is another: to what extent are our educational institutions helping individuals discover who they are, and to what extent are they merely helping them become what the system expects them to be?

Perhaps the deepest purpose of education is not to produce individuals capable of fitting perfectly into existing structures. Perhaps it is something more ambitious and profoundly human: to create the conditions that enable each person to develop their unique capacities and, through them, contribute meaningfully to collective well-being.

For a society does not become stronger when all its members are the same.

It becomes stronger when every individual finds a place where their differences are also valued.

1.4. The Consequences of Measuring Everyone by the Same Standard

There is an image that has circulated for years in various educational contexts. In it, several animals—a monkey, a fish, an elephant, a bird, and others—stand