

legacy



Pere Pujolàs, in memory of a committed pedagogue

Pujolàs is a benchmark for inclusive schools and a forerunner of cooperative learning

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It will soon be seven years since the Catalan educationalist Pere Pujolàs i Maset passed away at 65. Pujolàs was and is a benchmark in educational psychology counselling, educational inclusion and cooperative learning, areas on which he focused his research and publications. Born in Girona and professionally based in Vic, he knew to find time for friends, family, and community.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Those who knew him emphasised his generosity, nobility and affability. When he gave some teacher training sessions, one immediately realised that his pedagogical convictions came from an underlying “philosophy”, that inner voice that made them even more visible: to turn the classroom into a welcoming space for everybody; that everyone is relevant in a classroom, and, therefore, we have to help those who need it. This approach is also related to another aspect of him: his religious convictions made him a committed Christian. He was involved in various religious movements until the last moment of his life.



As for his academic training, he graduated in Education Sciences from the Autonomous University of Barcelona and had a Master's degree in Psych-pedagogical Intervention and Curriculum Assessment from the University of Barcelona and a Doctorate in Pedagogy from the University of Girona. Among his professional tasks, he had taught carpentry at the Vocational Training Institute of Anglès, of which he was director. He was also a member of the Psycho-pedagogical Attention Team (EAP) of Pla de l'Estany from 1992 to 1998. From 1998 onwards, he taught and carried out research at the Faculty of Education of the University of Vic, where he held several positions and created the Centre for Innovation and Training in Education (CIFE) and the Educational Research Group on Attention to Diversity (GRAD).

PUJOLÀS, AN EXPERT AND ACCESSIBLE TRAINER

During the academic year 2009-2010, I attended a permanent formation seminar he led and was organised by the [Institució Familiar d'Educació](#) in Montblanc (Tarragona). I kept it in my memory and, seen from the perspective of everyone who took part in it, we all realised that there was no theoretician in front of us but an experiential, expert and experienced pedagogue. He lived inclusion from the depths of his being. He is credited with the phrase: "In an inclusive school, there are only pupils on their own, without adjectives". And this is how he transmitted it.

His unequivocal commitment to the practical side of his proposals did not prevent theoretical rigour from being present at all times. You approached him after the session and never had the feeling that he was in a hurry to finish the day. He simultaneously exuded simplicity and intellectual depth. It is not easy when the trainer knows that what he shares is helpful if it is done well despite the legitimate objections of those who attend the training with a developing conviction. My colleagues and I saw a teacher in the noblest sense of the term.

A rigorous theory accompanied by a practice full of educational experiences was carried out in the classroom in all contexts and academic centres. On November 20th 2013, he delivered his retirement lecture entitled "Fire marks. Lessons in pedagogy", in which he confessed, "I am very much in love with my work and career as a pedagogue". He considered that the pedagogues Lorenzo Milani, Célestin Freinet, Paulo Freire and Emmanuel

Cooperative learning is a way of involving each student in the learning process

Mounier, among others, had been for him like "marks of fire". That is the reason for the title he chose.

FEATURED PUBLICATIONS

- "Atención a la diversidad y aprendizaje cooperativo en la educación obligatoria". Archidona (Málaga): Aljibe, 2001.
Pujolàs provides tools for responding to diversity through cooperative teamwork with specific guidelines on how to put it into practice.
- "Un altre assessorament per a l'escola. L'assessorament psicopedagògic des d'una perspectiva comunitària". Barcelona: La Galera, 2002 (Co-authored with Reyes Carretero and Joan Serra)
A proposal for change based on analysis, reflection and action aimed at all those who are professionally involved in psycho-pedagogical counselling in formal educational settings.
- "El aprendizaje cooperativo. 9 ideas clave". Barcelona: Graó, 2008.
In this publication, we find answers on how to move from a structure primarily based on individual and often competitive activities onto a different one, where cooperative activity is a key element to enabling the inclusion of all kinds of learners in a regular classroom.
- "Aprender juntos, alumnos diferentes. Los equipos de aprendizaje cooperativo en el aula". Barcelona: Octaedro, 2004 (2ª edición, 2017)
A book proposes a school for everyone and suggests applying the cooperative learning methodology in the classroom, making students the protagonists.

SCHOOL INCLUSION ACCORDING TO PERE PUJOLÀS

In the course of a conference on inclusive schools held at the University of Vic in 2007, Pujolàs stated that the postulates on school inclusion were as follows:

- School must celebrate diversity. It must be enjoyable while learning: at school, everyone must be comfortable and feel safe.
- A school must be based on an equality policy: not everyone must be treated equally - as if boys and girls were not different - but everyone must be treated equally well, precisely because of their differences.
- A school must especially emphasise motivating pupils, and teachers must focus on facilitating learning and not simply transmitting knowledge.
- Schools must prepare for cooperation, not competition.

To the above postulates he added three reasons for an inclusive school:

- Learning together for different learners is right.
- Learning together for different learners is necessary for everyone.
- Learning together for different learners is possible.

According to our author, the reasons for the unequivocal commitment to inclusion are ethical and a matter of justice; social inclusion is a value. To get pupils to learn together is to go even further: “to learn that they can learn together, that they can live and live together despite their differences”. He argued that we should not try to make homogeneous groups: it is impossible, but the most logical thing would be “to think about managing heterogeneity”.

He defended behind the choice for inclusion that there is an “ideal of life”, a “way of living and living together”. It is a challenge for any educator to make it possible to overcome the resignation to the “status quo”. He understood that “the excellence in a school for everyone in the compulsory stages, is not measured by the ablest’s success, but by the progress that ensures everyone reaching the maximum of their potential”.

THE COOPERATE TO LEARN/LEARN TO COOPERATE PROGRAMME

As a result of Pujolàs’ research, the CA/AC programme (“Cooperate to Learn / Learn to Cooperate”) was born. It was applied in many schools in Catalonia and Spain thanks to workshops, training and advisory seminars. That led to the creation of the Khelidôn Network (a Greek word that means ‘swallow’, i.e. a type of bird that needs to go in a group). It gives the name to the space of schools, groups and individuals willing to share experiences and materials on Cooperative Learning, one of his latest projects.

At the conference he gave in Barcelona, at the invitation of the Institutió Familiar d’Educació, Pere Pujolàs stated that “an inclusive school is the one where different students can learn together”: this is possible if both the teaching and learning processes are structured cooperatively; i.e. “teaching as a team” (cooperative teaching structure) and “learning as a team” (structure of student activity in the cooperative classroom). The various studies show that “in a continuous experience of cooperative work, a two-way relationship is established between the performance or productivity of the participants, the quality of their interpersonal relationships and their psychological health”.

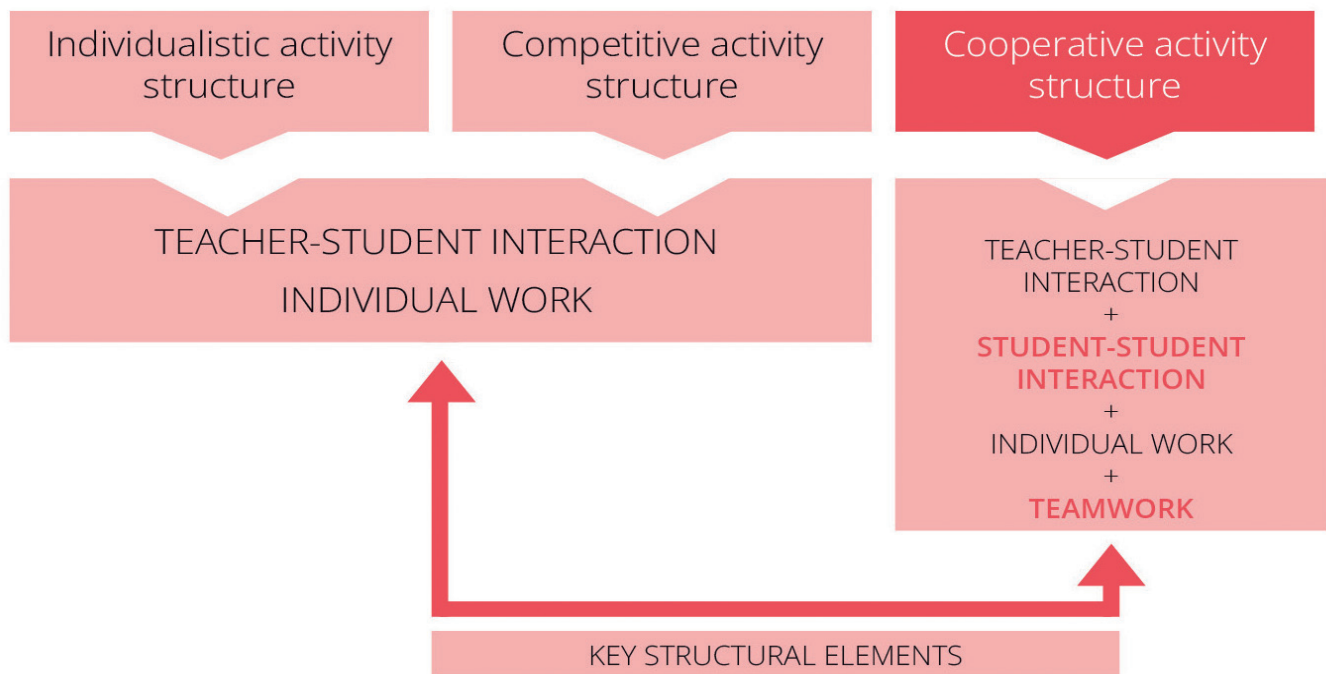


Figure 1: P. Pujolàs i J.R. Lago (Coords.) (2011): Programa CA/AC per ensenyar a aprendre en equip. Universitat de Vic.



Excellence is measured by the progress each person makes to the best of his or her ability

Cooperative learning is not just another way of getting students to work in a team but to achieve the maximum possible involvement of each student in their learning process; it is to transform an individualistic or competitive situation into a cooperative one, in which social competencies come to the fore. In figure 1, we can see students' different types of interactions with the teacher and with each other.

The Co-operate to Learn, Learn to Cooperate (CAVAC) programme goes beyond being considered a resource for learning curricular content because "it is, in itself, another curricular content that students have to learn and which, therefore, has to be taught". It is therefore essential to plan several areas of intervention: first, group cohesion, with the application of various dynamics; second, teamwork as a resource for teaching, which is done based on techniques and structures that facilitate it; and third, teamwork understood as its own content. In each team, a set of rules will be established to enable it; a team plan and define

the objectives to be achieved and an evaluation plan. The different roles and functions to be carried out by the various students within a framework of shared leadership and sharing of responsibilities are key elements. Individual responsibility and positive interdependence are also a feature of this inclusive methodology.

EPILOGUE

Finally, we would like to highlight his commitment to pedagogy and to the training of teachers, who are the ones who have to transfer it to the pupils to whom it is addressed. This paper praising the figure of Pere Pujolàs is an act of academic and social recognition of an author who had educational inclusion and peers learning as the backbone of his work. His legacy is still very much alive through his books and publications and, above all, through the many professionals who continue to use him as a point of reference. We thank him for his outstanding contribution to the transformation of schools and, by extension, of society.