

the report

Personalizing education, a possible challenge

Experts in education exchange ideas and personalization strategies
to respond to the needs of each student and their unique context

by Jordi Viladrosa i Clua

Currently, personalization occupies a prominent place in any educational proposal that has a special interest in addressing the unique needs of each student, whether to include all students in the classroom or to seek educational excellence. However, there are almost as many conceptions about personalization as there are proposals. It is difficult to get an idea of what is really meant and even more so what methodologies or strategies should be used when implementing a truly personalized model.

In view of this situation, **Impuls Educació** study center promoted the study *“Personalization, a model for quality education in the 21st century”* in order to seek and take advantage of synergies through a dialogue between experts with diverse views and experiences, with the aim of building a common framework of consensus on the following questions:

- what is meant by personalizing in education;
- why should one personalize in education?;
- what is the goal of personalization and what can we expect from personalized learning?;
- what are the principles that an educational model should have in order to be considered personalized?;
- how to do it, that is, what methodologies, strategies, or ways of acting favor an effective application of personalization?; and finally,
- what will the personalized education school of the future be like?

What methodologies, strategies or courses of action favor an effective application of personalization?

The research was done using the Delphi method of experts because it allows consulting a diverse, international and extensive group of professionals and academics with experience and extensive training in the field. Experts that took part in this study can be seen in the table at next page.

Seven key points of personalization

Despite the divergences that arise in any study when the starting points and the conceptual and experiential framework of each expert are different, we highlight some relevant points that were the result of a broad consensus.

REGARDING PERSONALIZATION

- Personalized teaching is different from individualization because, despite being student-centered, it recognizes the student's own identity, and aims to develop or foster skills while empowering the student in the design of his or her personal path.
- Personalized learning has to be experiential. It implies the use of inquiry methodologies, as well as motivation and personal responsibility.

AS FOR THE CONCEPT OF PERSONALIZED EDUCATION

- It is an educational model aimed at educating unique, autonomous, open, responsible, supportive and resilient people who are able to overcome and persevere on their own.
- Its purpose is to educate people with integrity,

EXPERTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD WHO TOOK PART IN THIS STUDY

IN PERSONALIZATION	PROFESSIONALS				ACADÉMICOS			
	 Barbara Bray	 Kathleen McClaskey	 Paulina Bánfalvi	 Coral Regí	 Neus Sanmartí	 César Coll	 Antonio Bernal	 José Bernardo
IN EDUCATION								
	 Richard Gerver	 John Moravec	 Francesc Torralba	 Nacho Pozo	 Javier Tourón	 Arturo Galán		

committed to personal and social improvement. It is necessary to favor the knowledge of oneself, the configuration of one's identity (values and dignity) and openness to others and to the world (solidarity, commitment), in order to consciously and critically decide on one's personal life project.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, THE MAIN CHALLENGES THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE FACED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PERSONALIZATION ARE:

- Educating people who are adaptable to change, globally minded, knowledgeable and respectful of differences with other people (other cultures or other values), aware of the resources and care of the Planet. Supporting students to become innovators, capable of using their own imagination and creativity to achieve new results for society.
- Establishing cooperative work and planning dynamics among teachers that include the design of projects and learning environments, the choice of measures to meet the needs of each student and progress information.
- The personalized school of the future will be an open, flexible and welcoming school, where students feel accompanied and are autonomous in their learning, follow their own pace and according to their needs.

Sparks from a very suggestive round table

Moderated by **Gerardo Meneses**, this table posed, in a first round of interventions, a first question to each

speaker according to their area of specialization and a second part with more generic questions so that everyone could intervene freely.

Neus Sanmartí was asked for her opinion on the current curriculum by relating it to personalization and she compared the one prescribed by the administration with textbooks that often present something different. Sanmartí defends that: "there must be some basic minimums established for the whole population, trying to achieve that each student can deepen in specific aspects". Establishing key content is the role of educational administration, and it is up to each school to ensure that each student has the opportunity to expand this fundamental content with others that they can choose for themselves.

César Coll answers the question: What sense does it make for him to talk about personalized education and what are its characteristic notes? undoing the possible confusion of terminology: "It is education that is personalized; learning, on the other hand, is personal because it has a meaning for them, it is relevant to them". We must be careful, he said, because "learning can be personalized but it may not be personal". He specified the role of educators by stating that they had to implement a series of personalization strategies that have the purpose of involving students in their learning.

Paulina Bánfalvi was asked how can personalization help integrate students with special educational needs in the case of both difficulties and high abilities and what does an inclusive school that works and pursues equal

opportunities for all students require? She responded by arguing that “in a personalized context all students are different, without having to be labeled”. And also that “what we have to do is understand the student’s profile in all its complexity and respond by making the curriculum and their interests coincide at a meeting point”.

What features do you think are most characteristic of a teacher in personalized education? Why do you think they are important? were questions addressed to **Antonio Bernal**, who said that “changes in the generic sense are very complex and we must avoid ending up with the exhaustion of the people who try to carry them out; we must set sustainable milestones”. Bernal opts for a style of teaching that bets on processes of real personalization that have to start by identifying the unique people in front of them, leaving them space to be really unique.

Coral Regí responded, in turn, to the questions: What organizational aspects do you think are most relevant to personalize education? And how do you see the school-family collaboration in relation to personalization? affirming that “there is no quality education if it is not personalized” and that “resources and time are two key elements in school organization to make it possible”. This implies devoting part of the teachers’ available time to prioritize these areas in order to make the creation of personal links between teachers and students a reality and to accompany their personal growth through tutoring or mentoring. For Regí it is also important that class groups are as heterogeneous and diverse as the society in which we live. In the school she directs, she argues, time



Sparks from a very suggestive round table

“What I love about this report is that it focuses on students body and its perspective, since personalized learning means being compromised with what you want to learn.”

Barbara Bray

“The most relevant thing in education is what we teach and how, and the way we teach teachers to teach, how we create a learning environment, a curriculum and an evaluation.”

Richard Gerver

“There must be some basic minimums established for all the population trying to achieve that each student can deepen in specific aspects.”

Neus Sanmartí

“Education is what is being personalized; Instead, learning is personal because it has a meaning for them, it is relevant for them.”

César Coll

“In a personalized context all students are different, without having to be labeled.”


Paulina Bánfalvi

“Changes in the generic sense are very complex and must not end with the exhaustion of the people who try to carry them out; they have to be sustainable milestones.”

Antonio Bernal

“Theres is not a quality education if it is not personalized. Resources and time are two key elements in school organization to make it possible organización escolar para hacerlo posible.”

Coral Regí



must also be devoted to coordinated and joint work with families, since it is important to share everything that is done.

Among the open interventions, it was stated that too often a lot of time and resources have been invested in working on contents that end up being forgotten (Bernal); it was argued that the evaluation should be personalized (Regí) and it was defended to evaluate what the curriculum asks for and not other aspects (Sanmartí). Coll proposed that the interests of the students should be the starting point to work on them and not to understand them as a menu of options. He also defended the contents as the basis for developing the curricular competences in context in each particular case. Finally, Regí believed that beyond the minimum content there is an even more key element: self-improvement and the ability to self-regulate the effort that must make lifelong learning possible.

A new investigation is opening its way

Impuls Educació carries out an annual study on one of the main axes on which the quality of education should pivot according to this center of studies: personalization, thinking and technology. The theme being studied in this new edition is: Delphi Competence of the 21st Century "Critical Thinking" in the school stage.

Objective: to agree on a statement for the Critical Thinking competence in the school stage and to offer some principles and strategies for its development and evaluation in the classroom.

Critical and creative thinking skills are part of the key competencies of the 21st century and are present, in some ways, in most school curriculum. Impuls Educació proposes to carry out a scientific and systematic study, with the participation of experts from different countries and fields, which will allow us to take a step forward and achieve the maximum consensus in the conceptualization of the critical and creative thinking competencies that the school curriculum should contemplate, as well as the specification of which would be the most relevant skills and cognitive dispositions for the current times and the most adequate method to achieve their transference to the real life of students.

