

# in depth

## Personalized learning, an emergent model

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### INTERVIEW WITH JOSÉ BERNARDO CARRASCO

Benardo has a doctorate in Pedagogy, has been a teacher and director of primary, secondary and university education centres, and a pedagogical advisor to UNIR. He is the author of numerous publications, and currently collaborates with IDENTITAS and gives teacher training sessions. He has proven experience in the study and practice of personalised education

**We are not only dealing with an expert in personalised education theory but also with a personality who has put it into practice in many contexts and realities.**

**What stands out about his long career in this field?**

**What is essential?**

First of all, I think it is appropriate to clarify that everything I have set out here is sufficiently detailed in my books *Cómo personalizar la educación. Una solución de futuro*, by Ediciones Narcea, and *Educación personalizada: principios, técnicas y recursos*, by Síntesis.

To answer the question, studying and experience have led me to the conviction that, strictly speaking, "education" can only be personalised, since the only educable being is the person. The problem arises when the person is understood in very different ways - even opposites- depending on the ideological currents on which he or she is based. Therefore, the question would be: where can we find a concept of person that genuinely expresses his reality? This is an essential point for me. I am deeply convinced that personal reality is made up of some constituent principles (uniqueness, openness and originality) that are manifested in four dimensions that express the principles (body, affectivity, understanding and will). So, that personalised education must consist of the perfecting or harmonious development of these

principles and dimensions.

**Has the contribution of Víctor García Hoz as a pioneer in personalised education been sufficiently valued?**

**Highlight a couple of achievements that do him justice, in your opinion.**

García Hoz shook the dormant conscience of many educators with the publication in 1970 of his juicy book which he called *Personalised Education*. And he did so to such an extent, that the Spanish General Law of Education that passed that same year included for the first time many of his contributions (tutoring, cycle, personalising teaching, Parents' Associations, etc.), and were maintained by all the subsequent educational laws.

He is still a reference point in Latin America as the following anecdote reveals. I was teaching a Master's degree to Peruvian executives in Lima, and the director of a public school approached me and asked for a few minutes of my attention during break time. When I spoke to him, he told me that he only wanted to express his admiration because he knew that I had worked alongside García Hoz and that his school bore his name. Afterwards, I was told that there were many schools with his name in the different Spanish American countries. Personally, I saw that there were hundreds of schools that received

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advice to personalise the education they provided, both public and private.

**Do you think that technologies are currently a good ally for the practice of personalised education?**

Technologies have always been a good ally for personalised education when considered as means or instruments. This is shown by the use of the slide projector or the opaque body projector in past times. The important thing is the use made of them, that is, to consider what end I am aiming for and how they can help me achieve it. In my opinion, it is a matter of doing so in a metacognitive way as “personalisation” suggests: knowing what to do and why, learning how to do it, and controlling it while doing it (self-regulation of use).

**What, in your opinion, are the key indicators for the implementation of a personalised education model in an ordinary educational centre?**

A previous clarification: the expression “Personalized Education” is due to García Hoz, so that any educational concept - as he called it - different from the one he conceived, should be called differently. For this reason, I believe that personalised education has only one model, within which many educational systems fit.

To answer the question, in my opinion some key indicators for creating a personalised educational system based on these would be:

- The possibility that schoolwork and relationships allow the development of each student according to his or her capacity, interest and learning pace and the family and social circumstances of his or her personal history.
- Opening of the school institution to the family and social community.
- Determine the contents based on the personal experience of the students and orienting it to the systematic culture and the professional world.
- The organisation and programming of activities must allow schoolchildren to exercise their freedom of acceptance, choice and initiative.
- Use of the elements that technology offers in the service of education.

- Explicit programming of guidance for schoolchildren, in which technical factors are linked to the human factors operating in all educational situations.
- Action by the teacher to stimulate, guide and control the work of the students, so that what the students can do on their own, they do without the intervention of the teacher.
- Flexible grouping of students, alternating individual work with teamwork by the students.
- Student self-evaluation and demand for responsibility for the decisions taken and for the fulfilment of the activities initiated.
- Permanent evaluate all the conditioning factors and elements of education to discover new stimuli and methods that make the task of the educational community increasingly useful.

**What do you think should be done to bring order to an educational system such as ours that lacks the necessary consensus to move forward?**

Spain is a relatively centralised country in terms of education, either by the central state or by the autonomous communities. The compulsory education laws go down to the smallest details about what schools must do and how they must do it, and include a series of values that must be obeyed. As such, it is tough for the existing political options to be agreed upon because they do not coincide in the concept of a person or the values inherent in his or her nature. All of which, if we join it to other types of interests specific to each political party, the question becomes impossible.

That is why the General Education Act should propose, in my opinion, generic aspects referring to the different fields of education, for example. I think that everyone would agree on most of the indicators I have set out above, because they refer to concepts that are easy to share. From this point on, each school should propose its own educational system, which is none other than the Educational Project or Design of the Centre which, in turn, the Departments and Educational Teams would adapt to each cycle.

This would require the necessary autonomy of the educational centres.

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**Can we teach people to learn and think for themselves? How?**

In my opinion, the key is metacognition. The main task of the teacher is to teach his or her students to learn. That is to say, to teach them to read, write, memorise, pay attention and understand in a metacognitive way. This does not include any added difficulty, as many things that teachers and students do are done differently. For this reason, the mastery of both standard and individual learning strategies (unique, appropriate to the particular way of learning) should be a priority in the work of teachers and students.

As far as forming one's own criteria (thinking for oneself) is concerned, metacognitive learning itself makes things much more manageable, helped by the correct use of learning situations called “colloquial group” and “teamwork”, as well as in personal interviews, in the development of which students freely express their ideas and can be guided accordingly, with the greatest respect for their freedom.

**You claim that there can be no education without motivation. To what extent is it important?**

A person is only moved in life by his or her values, whatever they may be. Whatever he does, he necessarily responds to a motive, conscious or unconscious.

For me, the key phrase is this: “Motivation is always a consequence of a value. Everyone is motivated by what is important to him. Therefore, the question is that schoolchildren assume objective values following human dignity. By doing so, if they are convinced that helping a needy person is essential, they will feel motivated to do so, even if it costs them.

In short, nobody does anything without a reason to do so.

