WORKING SIDE BY SIDE IN A SPACE FOR EVERYONE. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When we talk of inclusive education, we talk about a paradigm shift - a change that involves breaking with the traditional memorise-by-rote paradigm and moving towards active methodologies that encourage all students to attend, participate and progress, and thus encourage interactions in the classroom.

Desks should be laid out in ways that help foster dialogue and student participation. How do I have the desks arranged in my classroom?

This change in methodology implies a change of role that drives the active learning of all students in the classroom; they cease to play a passive role in education and take control of their own learning. This boosts their autonomy and means that rich learning situations need to be designed that promote higher-order thinking skills among all students. It also means creating spaces for developing and producing knowledge, given that students will, with this change of role, go from being mere consumers of content to producers of it, and develop critical and creative thinking in the process. This requires transforming the classroom into a true learning laboratory.

What is my classroom like? Is the space well used? Have I created different environments within it? Can students move around freely? Are materials organised so that students can get to them? Is the furniture adapted to the requirements of learning situations?

But changes are not just needed in classrooms; this change also implies a change in other areas of the school. Schools need to be open, flexible, adaptable spaces; not rigid, closed, classrooms that are for single use (eg computer room, art room, etc). We need to start talking about environments: environments that encourage active learning that implies inclusive education… warm, welcoming environments that enable all students at the school to feel that are part of it and feel safe there… welcoming environments that break from traditional spaces and are redesigned and redecorated with the goal of transforming them into places that stimulate learning.

What are the different spaces and areas of my school like? Are they welcoming? Are they rigid and restrictive, or are they flexible? Are they environments that allow work to be done beyond the school's normal hours?

It is clear, then, that the design of classrooms and educational centres is affected by a change in methodology that promotes inclusive education. However, this use of active methodologies is not new; we are now returning to adapting the spirit of the early twentieth century New School that instigated a wonderful dialogue between architecture and pedagogy. Giner de los Ríos defended both the pedagogical use of spaces and "the need for pedagogues to play a fundamental role in the design of schools"[1]. Similarly, Manuel Bartolomé Cossió wrote Notes on School Buildings", in which he set out guidelines on how schools should be built and how the spaces within them should be distributed.

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[1] See website http://laescueladelarepublica.es/la-institucion-libre-de-ensenanza-y-la-arquitectura-escolar/

If, therefore, we are calling for inclusive, equitable and high-quality education for all students, then let's break away from the cold, rigid spaces that limit how we operate and instead invest in flexible, open spaces that allow different types of groupings, that allow project-based working and the learning of twenty-first century skills, that enable free movement and team working, and enable all students to take part in building understanding. In short, let's turn our schools into true places of learning for all.

Following are some **teaching-related proposals for transforming** classrooms and schools, with the aim of supporting reflection on this matter.

THE CLASSROOM

Before starting, you might like to watch this video: https://vimeo.com/60818003. It features a camera in a ceiling, filming different types of groups related to pedagogical and methodological needs at the University of Helsinki.

To help with the process of reflecting after watching the video, consider: *Is it a flexible classroom? How many different types of grouping does it allow? When would you use them? What is the teacher's table like? What is its purpose? What are the student's tables like? What colour and shape is it? What do you think about this? How about the chairs? What are the walls like? Is there light in the room?*

And now consider: *what is my classroom like? How do I use the space? Does it limit me?*

The classroom should be a versatile, multi-purpose place that can be adapted to all learning situations. It should be a space that does not limit the implementation of any desired inclusive education practices based on active methodologies.

Desks and chairs with tennis balls on the bottom of chair legs can be a way of avoiding annoying scraping noises when students are moving around, if there is no budget to buy chairs with wheels.

Image 1 Taken from the internet - Pilu's Desk https://goo.gl/fvms4q

But, above all, the classroom must be welcoming, so that students feel part of it. You can even invite the children to help set it up. For example, painted boxes or crates can bring a different feel to the space.

Image 2. Seen at https://proyectos.habitissimo.es/proyecto/ideas-para-organizar-los-juguetes-de-los-ninos

Image 4. Seen on Pinterest https://goo.gl/cpS8AQ

Image 3. Seen at Pequeocio. https://goo.gl/4QRTN3

Walls painted with slate paint on which messages can be written, task organisers, walls painted with magnetic paint... these are just a few suggestions for the classroom. You can also look for new places to write - such as on the windows.

Painting furniture with chalk paint can also give the classroom a different feel.

Moving furniture to encourage different learning environments.

Image 5. Seen at https://goo.gl/a1jUMQ Classroom at the La Llacuna del Poblenou School http://www.escolalallacuna.cat/

More ideas from the lecture[2] that Sonia Rayos and Silvana Andrés gave at the UIMP in La Coruña entitled "The Physical Space as an Educational Resource".

CORRIDORS

Corridors can be made into extensions of the classroom, and offer ample possibilities. One very simple idea could be to stick rolls of continuous paper onto the walls and paint them or paint them with slate or magnetic paint. If you wanted to take it a step further, you could turn corridors into true learning spaces, with low tables, armchairs and cushions on the floor. They could then be used both as spaces to share and learn, and as places or corners for chatting or relaxing.

THE SCHOOL

The idea is to remodel areas within the school in order to "create true makerspaces so that students can come together with others outside their chronological age to share resources and knowledge, work on projects, in teams, exchange experiences and construct things".[3]

And why not create a maker library? A maker library[4] transforms a library from a space intended only for consumption into a space for creating new knowledge, in line with the philosophy of the student as *prosumer* - ie one that not only consumes, but also produces. The library therefore becomes the school's driving force for true multi-literacy, with potential that reaches beyond books. A library with a chroma green screen, video cameras and computers for editing, 2D and 3D printers, spaces for working in silence, for creating, drawing, writing and more.

PLAYGROUNDS

Playgrounds are often places of conflict, isolation and segregation, as well as shared joys and laughter. In primary and secondary schools, playgrounds usually revolve around a football or basketball area, leaving little room for children who do not play those sports. It is therefore a matter of democratising spaces, with the aim of offering alternatives for play and a fairer distribution, where everyone has his or her place.

Playgrounds are also spaces with few trees and plants, and even fewer areas for relaxing, as they tend to lack benches and fountains.

A suggestion for encouraging all students to play and have fun is to offer different options and alternatives to choose from. These include: drawing games onto the floor and teaching students to play; energising the playground with traditional games learned in Physical Education lessons; installing ping-pong tables; putting up dartboards with adhesive darts; setting up a board games area and so on.

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[2] Course INTEF UIMP 2017 Games and spaces as educational tools. See the lecture here https://youtu.be/orpQEYVOt6A

[3] On the internet https://coralelizondo.wordpress.com/2016/12/18/movimiento-maker-en-educacion-todos-somos-hacedores/

[4] To learn more: http://www.julianmarquina.es/makerspaces-en-bibliotecas-el-fenomeno-bibliomakers/

SCHOOL GARDEN

School gardens are also spaces for learning that allow curricular content to be delivered and skills to be developed in multi-faceted ways. They also enable work to be done in the area of environmental awareness, thus supporting sustainable development objectives.

Another suggestion would be to turn the school into an *ECO school*, investing in recycling and providing containers and bins as well as training for the entire educational community.

To learn more about the suggestions made on this topic, you'll find supplementary information about interactive online training on our competition website.