SHOULD DIFFERENCES BE INCLUDED? ON A WRONGLY FRAMED PROBLEM AND AN UNBEARABLE REALITY

Carlos Skliar

Phd Education. Researcher in the National Council for Research in Science and Technology (CONICET)
skliar@flacso.org.ar

Abstract

This paper proposes an ethical reinterpretation of the right to education of persons with disabilities, with emphasis being made on the situation in Latin America. After consideration of juridical systems, political funding methods, inclusion percentages and follow-up programmes for disabled people of schooling age, a series of issues on the idea of educational training, of being with others and about the ethical responsibilities in the task of teaching.

Key Words: Disability; Inclusion; Difference; Ethical Responsibility

Introduction

I shall try in this article to highlight a number of questionings, doubts, problems and uncertainties that originate from a report on the right to education for people with disabilities by Vernor Muñoz, Relator of the United Nations Organization for the right to education, in which I humbly took part along with other people, and to which I contributed some general reflections.

It must be recognized, in all honesty, that this report tackles all governmental levels, that it pretends to cast a world-wide look at the educational situation of persons with disabilities, that rakes through every corner on the planet in search for relevant information to rethink specific public policies. But this is done at the same time as one trips over the first stone, as the first obstacle is encountered, namely, not being able to determine the real extent of the problem. And although it can be intuited that this is a critical problem, it is no longer a lament for something "that is in crisis", but that we are facing a truly dramatic question – and it would not be at all incorrect to put it in these terms because it is related, first and foremost, with the conditions of existence of others and also with our own lives. From the point of view of a certain ethical positioning that I shall henceforth assume, the separation between "us" and the "others" has ceased to work, both theoretically and politically. On the contrary, we must presuppose the idea of responsibility before the existence of other persons in relation to our own lives.

The report encountered, as we have already mentioned, an insurmountable difficulty: the assessment of the extent of the problem itself, a problem whose precise dimension

remains unknown. The paradox lies, then, in pretending to discuss the extent of a problem without having data to enable measuring it with precision: how many persons with disabilities could be within the educational system that are not? Where are those disabled boys, girls, youngsters, who are not within any known institution? How many disabled persons are within the educational system? And how are they doing, i.e. what is going on with their education? To what extent there has been an increase in drop-out rates because students did not find adequate pedagogical singularities for them in common non-special institutions. This is especially serious in Africa and in Latin America, but it is also worrying in other continents.

But it is not only a question of statistics, it is not a question of just knowing what the number of people we are referring to is, or to what extent this quantification announces a certain kind of problem. This is directly related to a lack of information that forewarns a historical evolution and an ethical dimension of a unique nature: it is as if there were a population, in our case, a disabled population, about which worry little or nothing, and this worry is so negligible that we do not even know who they are, where they are, what they need, what they want, how it would be possible to guarantee their most basic rights.

On the other hand, I think one must be guarded against believing that information is everything, that it can do everything; I mean, it is possible to have updated information but at the same time, one can maintain a relation marked by alienation and disinterest. Therefore, it is not simply a question of evaluating the situation of disabled persons, but rather to consider how, indeed, the extent of the problem is itself threatened by the extent of the lack of information.

Concerning Latin America, the right to education and the schooling situation of persons with disabilities

There is one detail in particular, that even if it is not surprising, it brings about pain, pain I say, that comes from and represents part of the language of the ethical position that I have assumed, concerning the right to education of disabled persons in Latin America. To describe it, I shall refer to just four of the variables previously analyzed, according to the answers submitted in the questionnaire sent by Vernor Muñoz to all countries. My intention is to show where neglect lies, where indolence is stronger, where there is slackness and, also, where this lack of interest in this population with disabilities grows and is constituted.

To do this, I shall first refer to the kind of survey carried out on a world - wide basis, and then to proceed to focus on some crucial topics concerning Latin America.

A certain number of questions was sent to all countries in the world, to get some orientation and whose answers reflected the situation of persons with disabilities as sharply as possible. Among these questions were the following: the existence of juridical recognition of the right to education in general terms, the juridical recognition of the right to education of disabled persons, more specifically, the role of the juridical framework and public policies as regards their effective compliance, the importance of inclusive education, the necessary adaptations in regular education, the impact of financing and economical globalization in educational projects, the establishment of equitable mechanisms for accessing it, percentage of persons younger than 18 with disabilities, percentage of persons younger than 18 with disabilities that go to school, the institutions responsible for identification of the special educational needs specific to each country, what inclusive measures have been introduced, what specialized support services are available, what percentage of schools is subsidized, what is the number of special schools in each country, what other educational alternatives are offered, whether there is or not a direct or indirect fee charged in public education, whether there is or not a direct or indirect fee in special education, the cost of access and continuance within the educational system, financing assistance to families whose members have some degree of disability, legal or administrative guarantee of access to school buildings, the regulations to guarantee effective learning conditions, the availability of free transportation, kinds of programmes of promotion for inclusion, a comparative drop-out rate, comparative schooling success or

failure, other discriminating factors at work within the educational system, curricular treatment of differences, contribution of education to the "empowering" of subjects, conditions of schooling environment, whether the curriculum includes training in human rights, evaluating the quality of education provided to persons with disabilities, evaluation of disabled students' performance and, finally, on this long list of questions and answers, the kind of teacher education and training.

Evidently, this is a myriad of questions, a myriad of issues, that perhaps most of our countries are not yet able to answer. In the collected data, one can appreciate what countries answered and which did not; one can perceive a large number of answers mainly from non-governmental organizations, rather than from State Agencies. It is interesting to see the discrepancy that appears when the answer is from an NGO or from the State. This perception is peculiar, though of course perfectly justifiable. This discrepancy arises, fundamentally, from the fact that for NGOs (perhaps because they are associations of parents or relatives of disabled persons) the diagnosis is much more

severe and the need for a solution more urgent, while for State Agencies everything would be "in the process of being solved."

Considering such a number of questions, it is doubtless that the result is interesting and at the same time painful, it is rich in shades and detail, but dismal in its own generalization. Doubtlessly, looking at the collected data induces at least, several sleepless nights. The word sleepless acquires here an important relevance as some people affirm that the ethical subject is the one who cannot "sleep", who cannot "rest", when he knows that the existence of the other is threatened(2).

There are four issues I would like now to underline:

1.	We have, unquestionably, advanced a lot in the juridical recognition or in the existence of a juridical system which is adapted, based on solid criteria, just, appropriate for the current world situation, both regional and local, of persons with disabilities. This is the first interesting point, as it allows to reveal to what extent juridical language answers or reflects on, in their language and structure, i.e. in its own appearance, in its permanent proclamation, this issue in particular.

2.	There are on our continent, financing levels that are relatively adequate but are not directly related to the content and aims of juridical texts on inclusion. It is clear that the question of financing of public policies in education must be the object of careful discussion. However, it is possible to affirm that most countries have had some resources in this sense, but they have only been used for the implementation of partial and insufficient mechanisms of teacher education and training

3.	The percentage of disabled persons of school age that effectively are within the educational system is extremely small, regardless of whether this system sets out a sharp division between special and common education, or if it comprises a unique student body in its general system of education.

4.	There are, judging by the collected information, no follow-up or control projects, for inclusion projects of persons with disabilities within the educational system. Or, expressed in a different – perhaps healthier - way, there is no accompaniment in school life for this population, except for a few countries like Costa Rica, and, albeit in a different sense, Cuba.

 The first problem. The final problem.

Beyond the points from the Report that are shown to be inappropriate and also independently from what should be done, the truth is that in our Latin American countries scarcely 1 to 5% of disabled persons in school age are within the educational system. How can one interpret this fact? What is the ethical and educational meaning of the fact that only 1 to 5 % of this group (of persons with dissimilar characteristics, of course) are in the educational system of the countries in question? And it is not just a matter of proclaiming policies of universal access to institutions, unrestricted access of all disabled personas to schools, but at the same time, within the same timeframe, creating a thinking pattern and a sensitivity associated to the meaning of being together, the why and wherefore of being together, the conception of being together.

Someone might say, and justly so, that the first step is to "force" once for all the access of this population to educational institutions. Then, educational, didactic strategies as well as adequate syllabuses and curricula must be developed so that coexistence and inclusion become meaningful Honestly, I do not believe these processes are different and/or consequential or that one derives from the other. I do not think that "inclusion" must come first, and then to ponder on what living together at school is like.

One can realize how in many countries on our continent these two questions are completely unrelated, dissociated, divorced. That is: the statement that "we all must be together" has been imperatively underlined, but at the same time the question "what for and how to do it?" has been left aside or, simply, it has not been a subject of debate or in-depth analysis. Somehow, it seems to become clear that all students must be together within in the educational system but we have not yet developed a firm standpoint regarding the event itself, the pedagogical relationship as such.

It is not incumbent on me nor am I in favour of stating what inclusion should be and I reassert it now, as this is the main conclusion drawn after an in-depth reading of the report: inclusion "is", after all, what we do about it, what we do with it. It "is" not an entity by itself, from itself, by its own definition. Thus, this is how we should interpret it in the mouths of those who utter the word "inclusion" regardless of the meaning we attribute to the word inclusion. Partly in contradiction to what I previously stated, I want to record that the origin of the word inclusion can be found in the Latin expression *in-clausere* , i.e. to cloister, to lock oneself from within, to seclude something that was not at a given place, to act in such a way that something that did not belong in a given space, becomes part of its interior.

Notions of inclusion. Notions of disability

I do not think I am wrong when I state that the report in question presents three broad ways of thinking about the possible meanings of inclusive education. There is an entire first part where an effective assertive narrative appears, I should add that it is neither speculative nor interpretative, where the text turns around what inclusive education is; what inclusive education should be, to what point inclusive education must be based on a set of specific laws, appropriate formulae, and universal mechanisms.

Notwithstanding, the report swiftly changes its narrative style as it leaves aside, in part, the idea of inclusive "morals", and grows in complexity as it incorporates, not more and more laws, more and more official texts, more and more formulae or techniques, but the concrete subjects of educational action: men, women, children, fathers, mothers, etc.; it is there, in my opinion, where the report changes from a "technical" position on inclusion to a rather more "relational" dimension.

Verner Muñoz suggests that three conditions must be fulfilled to ensure that the idea of inclusion remains connected with the idea of justice, of what is just. In the first place, the *temporality of the project*, i.e. the idea that inclusive education depends on its evolution from its earliest instances within institutional educational systems up to professional training. This must be highlighted, although it is probably common knowledge nowadays, because inclusive education does not refer uniquely to the basic education system, and it would be a discrepancy to create inclusion systems within a certain period of the institutional life of children and only then.

Secondly, the idea of inclusion should be founded on the *parents' and their relatives' freedom* to choose the educational system adequate for their children. Geographic location and the kind of educational and institutional project is a decision centred on freedom of choice of the family circle. I believe this indication by Vernor Muñoz is related to some data emerging from information offered by some countries: the decision regarding children's institutional movements and trajectories, mainly on our continent, have depended on a technical decision, by teachers, teaching teams and directive teams, leaving aside parents' perceptions and faculties to make decisions relative to their children's inclusion.

To the temporal reach and family choice, a third element should be added to the relationship between inclusion and justice, that has to do with *the children's right to express their opinions.* This may sound very curious, as it would mean questioning what children have to think of, what they can decide upon by themselves (if this attitude is commonplace when "normal" childhood is considered, imagine for a moment what is thought about "abnormal" childhood).

But if the work that is being done serves any purpose, it is precisely to think from the point of view of childhood, and not from the adults' point of view. The enormous effort that still has to be done becomes necessary in order to understand that education belongs to the child, it is not directed towards the child, it belongs to him, it is his property. Sometimes when debates are carried out in legal terms, one tends to forget that rights are every person's property, we are not the ones who enable or disable a given right, rights belong to every one of us, to any human being that should be ethically considered as preceding our own selves.

Let us focus, then, on that triad, this sort of triple affirmation over what takes up the sense of educational inclusion: the "lengthened" temporality of projects, the parents' freedom to make educational decisions and the children's right to express their opinions on their own education. I believe that these are three facets that although one of them looks more institutional, the other two are decidedly ethical. It is a question of movement, of a tension associated with the creation of spaces – not so much of teaching and learning in traditional terms – but of establishing a peculiar conversational style between the educational community, the family and the children regarding what we do with school, what we do with the schooling project, what we do with what we call inclusion.

I have tried from the very beginning to state that the most serious problem is the huge number of disabled persons that are not part of the educational system. It is not a question of whether they are in a regular school or in special institutions, it is simply the fact that "they are not there". It is true that in our countries this situation does not affect this population exclusively or peculiarly, for that matter. But it is also true that information collected in the report alludes to two very different issues: on the one hand, drop-out rates are high among disabled persons (expulsion? exclusion?); and there is also a large sector which has never been in the educational system (lack of interest? irresponsibility? apathy?). The report shows in crystal-clear terms that the problem becomes more complex when we think of how educational institutions search within their community or identify in it the places where this population lives, their way of life, their day-to-day experiences. The problem experienced by those who are in the educational system is not a minor one, either.

To turn this debate more transparent, in the first situation, that alludes to the absence of the majority of the population, we consider that it is essentially a quantitative problem. In the second situation, where the population, albeit a minority body, is present, the problem is of a qualitative nature, relative to the kind of schooling projects that may or may not address their individual characteristics. The serious problem of high drop-out rates depends on these two questions. Indeed, almost 80% of the school population with

disabilities, in the end drop out from the system. In this line of thought, it becomes necessary to reflect not only on the need to find strategies to preclude initial exclusion, but also on those that may help to prevent students from dropping out.

An inclusion proposal requires the instrumentation of varied policies, that should be both integrated and enabled simultaneously. From the point of view of the political time frame, it is understandable that all efforts should have been directed to the access of the population to the educational system. However, this is not a problem related to the temporal sequence, which must first address the presence at the institutions, and then to imagine the nature of this inclusive "interiority"

We leave aside some of these considerations to focus in greater detail on some of the possible interpretations of what is happening to inclusion, judging by data generated by the report.

One possible conclusion, clearly pointed out by Vernor Muñoz, is related to the discrepancies between unfathomable progress of juridical frameworks and the deterioration or stagnation of public policy funding specific to the project.

Another conclusion may appear more than obvious, however imprecise and harrowing though it may be. It is what is known as "lack of political will". It is true that this expression appears as a *cliché* to justify all that does not happen, what cannot be done, what is interrupted because of superficial disagreements. However, in this particular context, it can have a very precise root. Historically, in Latin America, the lack of political will creates most of the times a real sensation of discontinuity and abandonment of regional and national educational projects. To exemplify what has just been asserted, I must go back to the four central points I started my intervention with, thus showing the reality of current inclusive policies in most of our continent.

There is, at the same time, a flawless legislation, scarce and/or underemployed financing, a very low percentage of access and absolute absence of pedagogical accompaniment of subjects. Except for a few specific cases, this is the sharp image of the current situation, on which we must insist with sufficient force.

Whose problem is inclusion?

Leaving aside, at least partially, the formal structure of the report and its narrative, I have the impression that the crucial question, the threatening question, both disturbing and necessary, might be worded thus: Whose responsibility is, then, the inclusion problem? Immediately, we feel tempted to answer "*it involves all of us*". But with this general and fuzzy assertion, complexity and seriousness quickly get diluted. I am not afraid to assert that the problem, the question of inclusion, depends to a large extent, on the general

system of education. In principle, this affirmation is a direct way of precluding people from identifying inclusion as a movement that depends entirely on the special education system, its institutions, professionals, families and on their knowledge. Whom or what is he referring to? A theoretical and historical revision in greater detail should be made around this question; however there is the feeling that in most countries, inclusion has been the result of direct and exclusive action by special education bodies. This is apparent even when we perceive the disciplinary transformation and the discursive transvestism   that   is denoted by the passage from special education to "attention to diversity". The protagonism of special education in inclusion is indisputable and, at the same time, insufficient and incomplete by necessity and because of its nature. The knowledge and practices of special education cannot only reside in the professionals. Not only because they have been justly and vehemently criticized and, in some cases with undue severity, but because even when this knowledge and these practices are solid enough, they are not always decisive or pertinent for a complete transformation of common educational institutions. Change in these institutions does not only depend on a disciplinary transference from special education to regular education.

In this sense, we should revise the question about inclusion whose answer as given by the regular school is almost always: "we are no prepared", or also, "I am not prepared to look after this boy, that girl, or that young man".

Many countries which are vigorously facing this question, have decided that it all depends on a good education, a good training in the domain of inclusion, trying to give a new and different meaning to what is commonly meant by "being prepared".

At this point, it is possible to affirm that we do not know what to be prepared really means. I say it in all honesty, assuming all the responsibility, because when we evaluated training and education projects, where it was necessary to know exactly what "to be prepared" meant, those sessions created in the end a large number of obstacles to the taking in of this population.

What can the expressions "to be prepared" and "not to be prepared" mean? What can be construed from this affirmation in relation to a supposed "knowing what to do" before every child, every body, every language, each learning process, each way of being in the world? Personally, I believe it is impossible to know, to feel and to be prepared for what might come. One must emphasize the idea that rather than to be prepared, trying to anticipate, unsuccessfully, what might turn up, one must be available and be responsible. The idea of availability and responsibility is, unquestionably, of a clear ethical nature. I am available to receive anyone, no matter whom, everybody, everyone. What is, then, the

problem? Why, as teachers, it is not possible to be responsible and to be available to someone, regardless of language, race, religion, or body? Why could he not, instead, be available and feel responsible? To be prepared is another question. This is the object of permanent discrepancies by specialists who never get to the point of defining precisely what is meant by being prepared when teachers have to work with psychotic children or children with multiple disabilities.

Does being prepared mean to anticipate what will come and work on what will be done pedagogically beforehand? In any case, we should rather talk about being predisposed, or expressed in a more emphatic terms, we should talk about "being available", in particular, in the sense of gainsaying and placing under suspicion the archetypical idea based on the belief of the existence of common, normal children. Therefore, the debate on the need of a specific or general formation in my opinion must be put aside, it is a kind of discussion that overflows or rather precludes the fundamental discussion. Rather than being prepared, in the sense of anticipation of some kind of educational situation in particular, what really matters, what is worthwhile, is to be available, to be open to the existence of the other persons. In any case, any previous preparation, any anticipation, makes up a technical tool, a certain degree of rationality, but that does not necessarily work as an ethical positioning of the teacher in relation to the others. For this same reason, we understand that it is not s question of a kind of education based only on the inclusion of the subject in school syllabuses, even if most countries which answered the questionnaire have stated that this was their main policy, their main educational transformation. Then, all that has been done is to talk thematically about disability, talking about diversity, deafness, poverty, blindness, femininity, the situation of indigenous, black or foreign people, etc,

I would like to be even more emphatic on this point   Since the very beginning the idea of educational inclusion, it has been thought that the decisive question for formation had to be related to the issue of including specific subjects of special education and/or of other specific populations. To those teachers trained in general education, it is clear, their knowledge was recognized and restricted to knowledge about "normal" childhood, adolescence and youth. Of course, childhood, adolescence and youngsters have been made 'subjects' of study. There is a body of knowledge, for example, on childhood, that does not accept that the subject of study can replace by itself the pedagogical relationship with each girl or boy. Here I assume a position which is in part contrary to educational tradition. I think we should reverse the logic between thematic knowledge and relational pedagogical knowledge. I believe, in particular, that relational knowledge comes before disciplinary knowledge, but the reverse is not true: how can I guarantee, then,

pedagogical relations between current/future teachers and the disabled persons? How can we live, ethically, the encounter with the other. How can we avoid this identification of the subject with a thematic category? How not to fall into the temptation of confusing a deaf person with the theme "deafness", a blind person with the subject "blindness", a foreigner with the subject foreignness?

In the scholar tradition there seems to persist a marked attachment to thematic compartmentalization, as when people "talk" about drugs, or about drug-addicts, but nobody speaks with them. Then one might ask: could it be that pedagogy should know everything about a given subject, or its specificity should be focused on "knowing how to speak with" each and every one of the learning subjects? We might speak about deafness, sub-Saharan immigration, drug-addiction, extreme poverty, it is true, but what would be important is to start conversing with these men and women, and for them to start speaking among themselves. In short, there is no pedagogic case if we fail to stress, if we do not place at centre stage the question of "what goes on between us", replacing the question about "what happens to the other person".

Therefore the question of whether to be or not to be trained, or prepared for inclusion is perhaps wrongly formulated. This question might not be related to the specific preparation for looking after subjects with certain characteristics, stripping them of the excessive halo of mystery that surrounds some groups, as long as it does not become necessary for the teacher to hyper-specialize in a given subject.

It must be remembered that the opinions regarding the alleged anachronism of special education were induced, amongst other reasons, precisely by virtue of hyper-specialization, i.e. the obstinacy for a double formative excess: excess in particularization and the excess in generalization regarding "their" subjects, "their" techniques, "their" institutions, "their" syllabuses, "their" knowledge, etc.

If the first question to be reformulated is related to formation tradition and thematic compartmentalization, the second one should be related to another kind of things, even if their effects might be similar in some degree.

It is an ambiguous and contradictory relationship between the juridical reason and the ethical reason. Inclusion is assumed, in most cases, from the point of view of a set of indisputable rights: subjects have the right to egalitarian education, to have a school for everyone, the right to educate for diversity, a personal right and a social right. However: what happens when the juridical reason is over-present, i.e., when it is presented as the unique reason or, even, when it is posed as a previous condition, as a precedent, to what we might call the ethical reason?

People might say that there is no contradiction whatsoever, that the ethical reason and the juridical reason might be allies, moving as conjoined entities. I think something has happened that has made constitutional systems and juridical language ever more perfect. Meanwhile ethical reason is giving in, drowning in its own dilemmas, disappearing as a primordial and universal value. Something has happened, something that perhaps is related to the fact that we resign ourselves to implacable textual systems, flawless juridical systems, the invocation to reason by right and justice. The report confirms, once again, the large gap there is between the juridical reason and the inclusion proposal within the educational systems. In a certain way, we are here faced by a contradiction, in so far as only a juridical reason is wielded, but not a universal ethical formulation. And the educational conversation does not take place:"I have my rights, you have yours". There have been painful situations in this sense: in some countries, the children's right to attend school in opposition to the teacher's right to reject him because he did not feel "prepared". Everybody wields their rights but nobody thinks about their reach. We live in an era characterized by over-abundance of juridical reason and a clear lack ethical debate. What I wish to uphold is that the ethical reason should come before the juridical reason, as well as give it support, foundation, vitality, turning it more humane, even though it might sound strange.

A huge number of situations concerning educational inclusion has been resolved exclusively by legal means. Without the intention of judging this procedure either right or wrong, I wonder if this idea of inclusion might not have to do with an acceptance, with a welcome, with a certain way of saying "feel at home ", of offering hospitality to the other person.

Images of inclusion. Images of hospitality

Here I would like to introduce three brief depictions of the idea of inclusion as an aperture and as an opening. In fact, in many schools from many different countries, inclusion seems to be associated specifically to a metaphor about opening the doors of schools, while exclusion, would be related with the opposite, i.e. the doors remain closed. From an ethical point of view there appears a very clear image, since "to open" presupposes an "aperture" or "opening", an aperture or opening of the self (repeated, enclosed) to the other person, opening to what comes from the other person, opening to the other person's existence. These three images of inclusion and of aperture/opening would be as follows: the image of inclusion *with open doors*, the image of inclusion and *revolving doors*, and the image of inclusion with doors provided with *metal detectors.* I think these images are clear enough and do not require further comment. Even so, they refer to three different

instances of inclusion: that of institutions that open their doors or that already had them open or that do not consider the existence of doors and that do not request or demand anything from the newcomer; that of institutions that allow the subject to come and that at the same time, the subject is excluded, expelled; and the institutions that, before opening their doors, carry out a thorough diagnosis of the newcomer (Who are you? What language do you speak? What is your name? How do you go about learning? What have you got? What do you want from us?). I would like to mention that the act of "opening the doors" of the institution does not imply any moral virtue to boast about, it is rather an initial condition, an (if I am allowed to make a pun) *unconditional* condition. Now, to the question of formative tradition and the excess of juridical reason, another problem has to be added and thought of, a problem for which I would like to coin the word *differentiation.* The debate I propose to carry out concerning this concept has multiple facets and I am afraid I will not be able to deal with it with the depth it deserves. To begin with: Has educational inclusion anything to do with equality and with difference? Is related to equality or to difference?

I think it is timely and necessary to describe and try to clear up here a usual confusion that comes across the educational field, derived from the use of the term "differences" in relationship with a similar term: the "different". The different are subjects that are pointed at, singled out, whose description is the result of a long process of differential construction and invention. This is said to be a process of "differentiation", i.e. a form of categorization, separation and reduction of some identity features linked to the vast and chaotic set of human differences. These "differences", whatever they might be, can never be described as "better or worse than.."., "superior or inferior to...", "good or bad, normal or abnormal", etc. The fact that some identities or identity features are considered different, suggests that there has taken place a certain kind of differentiation, i.e. that these features are considered as negative and are opposed to the idea of what is normal, of what is normality. Thus, differentiation, on top of being a political process, constitutes a cultural and educational trap, that leads, for example, to the consideration of women as the different ones when considering gender, the black as different when it is a question of race, children and old people as different with respect to age, the disabled persons as different in relationship with corporal, intellectual normality, etc.

 It is worthwhile to insist once again on this point: one could be using the idea of difference as a value, but one ends up using the term "different" as an indication of "abnormality".

It is curious that up to not so long ago, when anyone pointed someone with his finger to identify a person who was different, what we all did was to evaluate the subject who was different, because we believed in this singling out that seemed to be specialized, well

made and flawless. However, what nowadays is being questioned is not the subject who is different but rather the one who is pointing at him. What we want to affirm is that inclusion may become again a policy with which subjects who are different may be branded, as if instead of welcoming, accepting, providing hospitality, availability and responsibility, there was a repositioning of the school norm. It is noteworthy that in many so-called inclusion experiences there is a demand (sometimes hidden and sometimes ostensibly shown) that leads us to suppose that children who are "different" must in the course of time, become similar to those who are not "different". And even though at the beginning of this experience of inclusion, in its accessibility, there is a deletion of the norm, the fact that the difference keeps being a difference, might induce the creation of novel forms of standardization.

Perhaps we should consider as valid the following ethical-discursive position:"*in thinking about the difference, there are not subjects who are different*" This is tantamount to saying that if we talk about differences in corporal characteristics, all bodies are part of it; if we talk about learning differences, all learning strategies fit into it, if we talk about differences in language, all production and comprehension means are there. However, there always appears a subtle drifting of the difference towards the different, as if we were not capable of talking about the difference itself, and we needed abnormal subjects, who must be corrected. In many educational institutions a process of inclusion has been started, but we are permanently obsessed by the subjects who are different. And this a paradigmatic change that, in my opinion, we have not yet performed: an ethical transformation that will re-direct our glance from subjects singled out as different to a glance of all of us, of that which happens – pedagogically, between us and them.

A possible conclusion: responsibility and not to be obsessed with the other person
I would like to end this presentation with a brief discussion on some questions that are even farther away from the literary and material connotations of the report but that, certainly, in their privacy, they are at their heart's centre. I think that the pedagogical thought of inclusion should abandon once and for all this sort of obsession for the other person and address its attention to the idea of being together, taken as the essential educational question. This means getting rid of the permanent and insistent questions: Who is the other person? What does he have or what does he lack? Why is his learning outside the canons of "learning"? What is wrong with him? What is going on with his family? And then to be able to think, as I mentioned earlier: What is happening – pedagogically speaking – between us. This is about transforming this record that starts with a question pointed at the other person, to a question that answers constantly what

goes on among ourselves. I think this is the key to our political and educational transformation(3).

What happens "between us" in inclusion cannot be analyzed in a simple manner in terms of fictitious calm, of constant harmony , of an immediate empathy and the solution of all conflicts, past or future. Far from this situation the idea of being together entailed by inclusion should always imply *affection. This is the definition proposed by Jean-Luc Nancy*(4)*:* awake affection in the other person and develop affection for him or her. If there is no affection in inclusion we would be creating a far too paradoxical scenario: an encounter with the other subject, in which no feelings are involved. We cannot be together without developing mutual affection. Well then: the teaching community has been requested until not so long ago that they should teach the same things to all students, while today, the request is for them to teach different things to different students. That is why teachers perceive these transformations under the (im)possible demand of having to carry out heroic acts, huge exploits, excessive actions. Perhaps inclusion does not demand so much heroism, but only that which we might call "small gestures", "minimum gestuality". What am I referring to? I am talking about looking at a person without judging him or condemning him *a priori*, to look at others enabling other forms of existence different to ours, to salute, to welcome, to ask, give way, allow, enable, let do, allow to do, suggest, speak, etc. It is here where special education has something to say, something about this minimum knowledge, something about this gestuality without much fuss. Will we be able to think about inclusion in terms of small gestures, rather than in terms of great feats that, in the end, render impossible the relationship of equality and difference?

I would like to end this presentation with two important questions that, in my opinion, are at the heart, or pith, of the act of teaching and in consequence they are also concerned with inclusion. These two questions(5) which education cannot fail to ask itself and others, regardless of what language they speak, what their bodies are like, or what is their way of learning. The first one, that in the recent past might have been considered as typical in special education, is related to the teaching of how to live, i.e.: Is it possible to teach how a person should live? This question is necessarily linked to a second one: When will you become responsible for your own life? And I have the feeling that special education has been trying to teach how to live "in spite of" the other person, and that common schools have practically forsaken the vital meaning of this question. Perhaps inclusion will allow us to rediscover an educational ethics in both of them.

Notes

1. Document: Application of Resolution 60/251 of the Assembly General, from March 15 th , 2009, entitled " Council of Human Rights " . The right of persons with disabilities to education. Special Relator's report on the right to education. Vernor Muñoz.

2. Emanuel Lèvinas (1998) suggests that the ethical responsibility is a state of perpetual insomnia, of being alert. In this same sense, Joan-Carles Mèlich (2003) conceives ethics as a way of developing relationships with others, a non-indifferent relationship before the victim's suffering.

3. Regarding this issue, your may consult a recent book by José García Molina, "Images from a distance", Barcelona : Laertes, 2008 and the one written by Nuria Pérez de Lara, "The capacity of being. A look beyond techniques in Special Education", Barcelona : Laertes, 2002.

4. Jean-Luc Nancy, To be singular plural , Madrid : Arena Books, 2006.

5. On this point, I wish to make use (as they represent exactly my own view) of the same two questions formulated by Jacques Derrida in his work: "Learning (at last) how to live". Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 2004.

References

1. Aplicación de la Resolución 60/251 de la Asamblea General , del 15 de marzo de 2006, titulada "Consejo de Derechos Humanos": El derecho a la educación de las personas con discapacidades . Informe del Relator Especial sobre el derecho a la educación Vernor Muñoz.

2. Derrida, J. (2004) Aprender (por fin) a vivir . Buenos Aires: Amorrortu.

3. García Molina, J. (2008) Imágenes de la distancia . Barcelona : Laertes, 2008

4. Levinas, E. (1998) Entrevista con R. Kearney en La paradoja europea (pp. 208-209). Barcelona: Tusquets.

5. Mèlich, Joan-Carles. (2003) La sabiduría de lo incierto: sobre ética y educación desde un punto de vista literario. En Educar N°31 (pp. 33-45). Barcelona.

6. Nancy, J. (2006) Ser singular plural, Madrid: Arena Libros.

7. Pérez de Lara, N. (2002) La capacidad de ser sujeto. Más allá de las técnicas en Educación Especial , Barcelona: Laertes.