

PERSONALISED EDUCATION IN CURRENT
PEDAGOGICAL RENEWAL CENTERSCarmen Romero-García^{1*} , Francisco Javier Pericacho-Gómez² ,
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Abstract

Pedagogical renewal is a concept loaded with a historical-pedagogical trajectory linked to reflection, social justice, educational improvement, teacher commitment and the questioning of the educational model, with personalised education being a key aspect. The aim of this paper is to analyse how learning is personalised in primary education centres that promote processes of pedagogical renewal. A qualitative methodology is used, based on a case study. Two schools with a high intensity of pedagogical renewal were selected and in-depth interviews were conducted with the management team and teachers, focus groups with families and students, and participant observation. The information derived is analysed with the ATLAS.Ti 22 programme, after coding and categorisation. The results reveal a number of common elements and processes of personalisation of learning which are structured in three dimensions. In the first dimension, school characteristics, the following stand out: student autonomy, individualisation of learning and freedom of choice of learning pathways. As for the second dimension, educational project, the following elements stand out: flexible curricular organisation, active methodology where group work is a key element, organisation of timetables without previously established patterns, the role of accompanying teachers, student focus and active participation of families in daily school life. Finally, from the third dimension, inclusion, the following can be extracted: daily educational work where diversity is not a limitation, but a source of learning of great didactic value.

Keywords – Pedagogical renewal, Personalised education, Primary education, School organisation.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Pedagogical Renewal: Concept, Influences, and Characteristics

The history of education shows that each historical moment shapes both a framework for discussion and a specific pedagogical imagination (Negrín & Vergara, 2018; Puelles, 2002; Viñao, 2002). In this respect, concepts such as liquid capitalism (Bauman, 2013), post-capitalism (Mason, 2016), postmodernity (Lyotard, 1987), and liquid pedagogy (Laudo, 2014) are substantial today for improving the understanding of educational reality. Indeed, they highlight a change of era (Bauman, 2007) in which large narratives seem to weaken, establishing the foundations of global neoliberal education (Fernández & Monarca, 2019; Klees, 2020). In this context, according to a notion widely accepted by most academics, a vision of ephemeral educational innovation has proliferated, lacking ambition, devoid of criticism and critical reading of reality (Carbonell, 2019, 2022; Feu, Besalú & Palaudàrias, 2021; Martínez & Rogero, 2021; Rogero, 2016; Sancho, 2018). However, there exists a fruitful trajectory of pedagogical renewal that goes beyond the current meaning of innovation (Torrent & Feu, 2020).

Pedagogical renewal is a broad and multifaceted historiographic concept that questions the fundamental educational model and is inscribed in the history and contemporary educational thought of Spain (Palacios, 1979). Thus, attending to different contexts and circumstances, pedagogical renewal, as a construct, is in continuous transformation; it does not refer to something static, on the contrary, its pedagogical ideology emerges from eclecticism (Beneyto, Carrete, Arregui & Domingo, 2023; Pericacho, 2016). This concept began to be used towards the end of the 19th century, with the emergence in Madrid of the emblematic Free Institution of Education in 1876. In the words of Luzuriaga (1948), one of the leading exponents of pedagogical renewal at the time: “The Institution has been the nucleus from which the pedagogical renewal of Spain has emerged” (Luzuriaga, 1948: page 132). Subsequently, the classic historical-educational studies of Escolano (2002), Molero (1985), or Palacios (1979) use this concept to refer to realities that break with the hegemonic pedagogical imagination, with a strong component of collective reflection and critical reading of reality. Finally, it is during the 60s and 70s when the concept of pedagogical renewal is more specifically circumscribed in the contributions of organised groups of critical teachers with the education at the end of the dictatorship: the Movements of Pedagogical Renewal (hereinafter MRP) (Esteban, 2016).

A wide historical-educational literature analyses, from different planes of analysis, the trajectory and evolution of pedagogical renewal since the end of the 19th century (Agulló & Payá, 2012; Delgado, 2013; Domínguez, 2016; Jiménez, 2016; Lorenzo, 2016; Parejo & Pinto, 2019; Segovia, 2017). In these analyses, especially fertile stages are observed, such as that experienced during the Second Republic or as that which occurs from the 70s of the last century. There have also been adverse stages, such as that experienced during the Dictatorship from 1939 to 1975. Regarding the theoretical influences of pedagogical renewal, scientific production refers that, despite being heterogeneous, there are more prominent references than others, namely: Dewey, Fröbel, Montessori, Claparède, Luzuriaga, Giner de los Ríos, Ferrière, Ferrer i Guardia, Freire, Milani, Neill, Tolstoy, Steiner, Rogers, Makarenko, Decroly, Freinet... (Gómez, 1966; Pericacho, 2023). These influences stand as the germ of collective and progressive reflections on the educational task: “Pedagogical traditions that promote a comprehensive, critical and emancipatory education, open to the environment; democratic and participative and with a transformative vision of the teaching model in all its aspects” (Díez-Gutiérrez, Horcas, Arregui-Murguiondo & Simó-Gil, 2023: page 32).

As evidenced, pedagogical renewal is not a hermetic concept, as it refers to disruptive school grammars (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) that have experienced all kinds of processes, tensions, and impulses, showing a singularity of responses according to circumstances. However, the academic literature that analyses the historical magnitude of the phenomenon and the epistemological and pedagogical elements and implications that comprise it, shows certain regularities and key elements, present in one way or another, re-signified over time. That is, distinctive features that despite the historical continuities and discontinuities, generate a specific theoretical and practical corpus. Firstly, comprehensive educational focused in their purposes, taking a personalised education as a starting point. Secondly, educational spaces

with active methodologies and a child-centred view, understanding the classroom as a laboratory of practical pedagogy. Thirdly, collective experimentation of democratic and participatory processes. Finally, construction of a school culture and educational task critical of the context and social reality, from perspectives linked to the search for cultural elevation and social justice (Agulló & Payá, 2012; Feu et al., 2021; Marín, 1990; Moscoso, 2011). In the words of Torrent and Feu (2019): “the attempt to rethink and put into practice another school culture, as it questions the meaning of the conventional educational model” (Torrent & Feu: page 150).

In short, pedagogical renewal is a historiographic concept that refers to the transformation and comprehensive and collective rethinking of education (Esteve, 2016; Pericacho, 2014, 2023). Always from a close relationship with the environment and a progressive conception and with a political-social background of educational practice (Feu & Torrent, 2020; Feu et al., 2021; Ortiz, Torrego & Santamaría, 2018; Parejo & Pinto, 2019; Rabazas, Sanz & Ramos, 2020; Soler, 2009; Soler & Vilanou, 2018). A concept loaded with a historical-pedagogical trajectory intimately linked to reflection, social justice, educational improvement, teaching commitment, and questioning of the fundamental educational model at each historical moment.

1.2. The Uniqueness in Educational Practice: Personalised Education

The concept of personalised education (a distinctive feature mentioned in pedagogical renewal practices) is currently quite widespread in the educational community, forming the fundamental substrate of the current notion of inclusion. As UNESCO (2017) states: “The concept of inclusion encompasses much more than mere physical access to education: inclusion implies high-quality differentiated teaching” (UNESCO, 2017: page 9). The origins of this pedagogical trend are in France, as an innovative educational response to the dramatic consequences of European totalitarianisms and the post-war period. It progressively spread to nearby countries and arrived in Spain during the last years of the Francoist period, giving this expression a unique sense. According to the work of Rabazas et al. (2020), “the reception and appropriation of this teaching system in Spain is introduced by the Institución Teresiana, which integrates and implements it in two Madrid schools” (Rabazas et al., 2020: page 109). In the words of García-Hoz (1993):

The double upheaval caused by the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War demanded a reconsideration of pedagogical ideas and educational practices. It is this approach that gave rise to the explicit birth of personalised education. (García-Hoz, 1993: page 20)

Personalised education represents a response to the deficiencies that mass education systems present for the proper development of each individual (Jardón-Giner, Sancho-Álvarez & Grau-Vidal, 2014). It considers that each learner is unique and unrepeatable (Martínez, 2021), meaning that the student is at the centre of the teaching and learning process (Ferrini, 2006). From this, didactics centred and contextualised on the learner is derived, giving them a more leading role in the educational journey, which contributes to the construction of meaningful learning. As Martín, Solari, De Vicente, Luque, Nieto and Coll (2018) point out: “Students attribute a personal meaning to their learning when they can link what they have learned with their knowledge, experiences, and past life events” (Martín et al., 2018: page 41).

According to the classic work of García-Hoz (1988, 1993), a fundamental reference in Spain on personalised education, three essential issues govern personalisation: autonomy, openness, and uniqueness. In other words, each person is unique and different from any other, has an existential need to open up to others, and is capable of self-governance.

Personalisation in didactic processes is not something new; on the contrary, it has been present, in one way or another, with greater or lesser intensity, in many of the innovation proposals throughout the 20th century (OECD, 2006). However, the increasing diversity of educational contexts and depersonalisation in schools (Hargreaves, 1996) has reinforced this educational trend and scientific interest in its didactic implications (Lerís & Sein, 2011). In this regard, a critical review of academic literature has identified

certain elements that promote personalised learning, enrich teacher-student interaction, and improve certain aspects of learning, providing specific orientations, actions, and didactic strategies. Taken together, the following stand out: first, considering the students' interests in the design and development of the didactic process; second, identifying significant learning experiences for the student; and finally, promoting the learner's reflection and responsibility for the teaching and learning process (Aliaga, 2022; Coll, 2016; Huang, Liang, Su & Chen, 2012; Hwang, Sung, Hung & Huang, 2013; Liu, McKelroy, Corliss & Carrigan, 2017; Paz, 2017; Song, Wong & Looi, 2012; Wongwatkit, Srisawasdi, Hwang & Panjaburee, 2017; Xie, Chu, Hwang & Wang, 2019). With regards to this, the words of Engel and Coll (2022) are particularly interesting when they state that “the potential of a given learning personalisation strategy is conditioned by its confluence with others” (Engel & Coll, 2022: page 229). In other words, orchestrating different personalisation strategies in the same didactic reality increases the likelihood that the learner will attribute personal value and meaning to the teaching and learning process (Coll, 2018). However, while evidence reports positive didactic implications in general, studies highlight the need to always adopt a multidimensional and contextualised approach (Valverde, Garrido & Burgos, 2019), taking into account the different variables involved, challenges, and specific limitations that each context experiences.

On the other hand, the position of organisations such as UNESCO on personalised learning is quite clear: “it should be a central goal of educational systems, as it is the path to quality education” (UNESCO, 2017 page 10). The learning that takes place in educational centers seems to experience a certain disconnection with the interests and concerns of the students (Coll, 2016; OECD, 2006). Special interest should be paid “to the prior knowledge, needs, abilities, and perceptions of students during the teaching and learning processes” (UNESCO, 2017: page 5).

The necessary uniqueness of educational work undoubtedly constitutes an unavoidable and significant challenge today. Personalisation, as an educational approach, promotes and reinforces the personal sense and value that students attribute to what they learn (Coll, Esteban & Iglesias, 2020; Engel & Coll, 2022). The individuality of each student is recognised, adapting the didactic process to the different singularities (Calderero, Aguirre, Castellanos, Peris & Perochena, 2014; Martín et al., 2018). In this way, school education is brought closer to the particularities of the new learning ecology (Coll, 2016), questioning both the foundations of the objectives and the possibilities of teaching (García-Hoz, 1988; OECD, 2006; UNESCO, 2017).

Based on the arguments presented above, the main objective of this work is to address the analysis of how learning is personalised in primary education centers that promote pedagogical renewal processes. In this way, part of the results of a much broader national-level research project are shared.

2. Methodology

This article, based on a case study, is grounded in a qualitative methodological perspective, with the aim of critically understanding practices, discourses, as well as the stance of individuals regarding how diversity is conceived and practiced in any educational center, which is a fundamental issue. It is important to note, for methodological effects, that in this article the concept of “diversity” is conceived from an open perspective, focusing on personalised education. This is based on material derived from the project “The Fourth Impulse of Pedagogical Renewal in Spain” funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation, I+D+i Projects Call: (PID2019-108138RB-C21), conducted during the years 2019-2023. In this project, various aspects of seven renewing centers in Spain were studied (one in Andalusia, one in Valencia, one in Madrid, and four in Catalonia), which, according to what was established in the mentioned research project, met between seven and nine of the following items: I) progressive educational purposes (opposed to those imposed by the market and neoliberal thinking); II) use of active methodologies (opposed to fundamentally memoristic and uncritical methodologies); III) organisation of open and flexible times and spaces; IV) delivery of a curriculum as unsegmented as possible and conveyed through integrative methodological proposals of different knowledge; V) embodiment of educational roles that, although differentiated, are minimally hierarchical, facilitate participation, and foster trust; VI) implementation of a cross-sectional, qualitative, and continuous evaluation of learning processes; VII) genesis of shared

leadership; VIII) a clear commitment to participation and democratic practice; and IX) a close relationship with the environment.

For the preparation of this article, the two centers that according to the research team had the most “intensity” in terms of renewal were selected; that is, they delved with greater educational radicalness into each of the nine aspects just mentioned. This “radicalness” was established based on a scale from one to five, blindly assessed by at least two members of the research team.

The two selected cases have the following sample characteristics. Regarding territorial distribution, one center is in Madrid (center 1) and the other in Catalonia (center 2). Concerning the ownership of the center, both are private (though not elitist in the classical sense of the term). As for legal status, both centers are accredited by the competent educational authority. In terms of the time they have been involved in the renewal project, center 1 has been in existence for 20 years, and center 2 for 8 years. Both centers, unlike “converted” centers, were born with a renewal vocation). Regarding the renewal perspective, both centers are based, according to the research team’s categorisation, on the principles of “free education,” although methodologically we can consider them “eclectic” renewal centers in that they have constructed their project from a conglomerate of various postulates and pedagogical renewal traditions. Regarding the teacher-to-student ratio, it is 1:10.

The information gathered for the preparation of this article comes from various sources and instruments: a) specialised bibliography in the field of pedagogical renewal, with special emphasis on contemporary pedagogical renewal; b) specific documentation prepared by the researched centers (educational project of the center, annual reports, internal circulars, own publications, etc.); c) in-depth interviews with the management team; d) in-depth interviews directed at teachers; d) discussion group of families; e) student discussion group; and f) participant observation.

The in-depth interviews, participant observations, and discussion groups were conducted by pairs (research team members from each autonomous community) and agreed upon with the centers. In the case of interviews, a profile of an experienced teacher with knowledge of the center (more than four years of seniority) was sought; the discussion groups of families and students (in which between 4 and 6 people participated) were formed based on the criteria of gender parity; and the student discussion groups were only accessed by children from the upper cycle, after consulting those who wanted to attend. All discussion groups were recorded by the research staff, who guaranteed anonymity at all times. Table 1 presents the recording hours. The participant observation, carried out from a previous systematic observation record, was developed over a period of between three and five days in each center, and the information was recorded in a field notebook.

	Management Team	Students	Teachers	Families	Total
Center 1	2h 12'	1h 31'	1h 24'	1h 43'	6h 50'
Center 2	2h 20'	35'	1h 12'	1h	5h 7'
Total	4h 32'	2h 6'	2h 36'	2h 43'	11 57'h

Table 1. Hours of Recording Analysed According to Different Information Sources

The information derived from the interviews, discussion groups, and observations has been transcribed verbatim based on pre-established criteria and has been analysed using the ATLAS.Ti 22 software. For this purpose, thirty-two codes were established ex ante (prior to the completion of the fieldwork and once the instruments were designed) and five ex post (after the coding of all the information was completed).

The analysis was initially conducted through thematic categorisation with various levels of triangulation. This categorisation was based on three dimensions: characteristics of the centers, educational project, and inclusion. Table 2 includes the codes that make up each analysed dimension, as well as the number of categorised comments in each of them.

Dimension	Code	Number of comments
1. Characteristics of the centers	1.1. Outstanding characteristic	24
	1.2. Philosophy	22
2. Educational Project	2.1. Curriculum	10
	2.2. Methodology	32
	2.3. Timetables	13
	2.4. Organization and student grouping	13
	2.5. Materials	26
	2.6. Roles of Educational Agents	154
	2.7. Democracy and Participation	76
	2.8. Evaluation	15
3. Inclusion	3.1. Inclusion	35
Total		420

Table 2. Dimensions, codes, and number of comments derived from the qualitative analysis conduct

3. Results

Below, the results obtained from the qualitative analysis carried out are presented, which are structured in the three dimensions previously described.

3.1. Dimension 1: Characteristics of the Studied Centers

Among the characteristics or philosophy that define these centers, we can highlight, firstly, the autonomy of the students in a broad sense, taking into account physical, psychological, and emotional aspects, as they believe that there is a positive relationship between autonomy and confidence. The aim is for the child to connect with themselves and their emotions and learn to express themselves and communicate effectively with others.

(Management Team, Center 2): The foundation is autonomy [...] in different senses: physical, psychological, and emotional. Being emotionally autonomous, not depending on anyone [...] and this is linked with an extreme care for social relationships and with oneself.

Secondly, individual learning is respected. Starting from the needs of each student, a personalised program is created, giving each one what they need based on their interests and needs, in order to achieve harmony with the environment and in social relationships.

(Management Team, Center 1): To me, it seems quite interesting to emphasise that we do not believe in individualistic learning, but in individual learning. That is, when you respect the needs of a child and the child feels good, they can start to care about others.

Related to the above, another defining characteristic of these centers is the freedom of learning. In this regard, students can choose the activity to carry out based on their interests, level of knowledge, learning style, and capacity, always under the attentive and careful guidance of the facilitators, who suggest and support them, and where making mistakes is seen as a positive part of learning. Students have the freedom to move around the center to experiment with materials, go outside, and interact with other children, not just during recess. The teachers or facilitators, as they are called in these centers, play a prominent role as guides in the learning processes. This support is extended to families, who receive training so that everyone is aligned with the center's approach. There is a sense of complicity with the facilitators, who often are or have been parents of children at the center.

In conclusion, the aim is for students to learn to think and be critical and reflective. It's about ensuring that children have confidence in themselves to know what they want and the skills to achieve it, learning values through experiencing them.

(Families of Center 2): One of the most relevant aspects is the fact of accompanying each individual's uniqueness, and one of the things that moved me the most [...] the facilitators allow each child to decide what they want to do at any given moment, encouraging them so they can come to feel what they want, decide on it, and do it.

(Management Team, Center 1): For us, it is very important that this is not a didactic center, where I tell you what you have to think and what you have to do, but rather that you learn to think. [...] What we want is for each child to be more critical, more reflective. [...] We do not believe in teaching values, we believe that they are learned by example.

The main pedagogical references for both centers at their inception are Rebeca and Mauricio Wild, although throughout their development over the years, they have been enriched by other references (Montessori, Freinet, Pestalozzi, aspects of Neill's Summerhill and Ferrer i Guardia) until, at a certain point, each center launches its own pedagogical line.

(Management Team, Center 1): "[...] When we started, there wasn't enough training. We had very good training from Mauricio and Rebeca Wild, from Antonio Guijarro (pedagogical references), and other people we have been training with all these years."

3.2. Dimension 2: Educational Project

3.2.1. Curriculum and Methodology

In both centers, a curriculum organised by regulations or age is not followed; instead, they focus on maintaining the intrinsic motivation of students to learn. The content is approached flexibly, and it is selected considering that each student has significant autonomy to decide what they want to learn and how they want to do it at any given moment. The starting point is the experiences, personal interests, and everyday reality of each student. The facilitators keep track of the learning students are achieving so that they always know what they have left to learn and in which areas they have more gaps.

(Management Team center 1): "In terms of the curriculum, we don't care when a child learns to read or when they learn to divide. What matters to us is whether they keep their desire to learn alive. And if the things they want to do, they can actually do them. [...] We are always recording what the children are doing and what learning they are acquiring in such a way that you know perfectly well what they still need to learn and where they have more gaps. So, all you have to do is occasionally offer some activity that may coincide with their interests, which helps them work on the tools they lack, whatever they may be.

This way of working with the curriculum is facilitated through the use of an active, experiential, investigative, relational, and interdisciplinary methodology. The activities offered to the students (research, workshops, games, etc.) are based on learning that starts from the experiences and knowledge of the children. They work in contexts that promote observation, the interrelation of data, the formulation of hypotheses, their testing, and ultimately, discovery-based learning, where students can experience the rules of how the reality around them functions.

(Management Team center 1): Through play, through spontaneous activity, and by creating a space, children can learn through discovery. That is, there is no need to tell children how things are, but if you prepare the environment in the right way, they can discover reality on their own.

3.2.2. Time Management – Work Plan

One of the relevant aspects of the studied schools is the organisation of schedules, which do not follow fixed patterns as in other schools.

Based on the observations made, in both schools, students create a work plan where they sign up for activities and workshops that align with their interests and preferences. These workshops are mostly proposed by the facilitators, although students can also suggest them at certain times. In center 1, the work plan is created and reviewed daily, while in center 2, this is done on a weekly basis. In both schools, during the supervision of each student's work plan, the facilitators continuously note what they are doing, what they are learning, and any difficulties they may be facing.

It is worth noting the personalisation of student learning, given their ability to choose and create their work plan, as schedules adapt to the needs of the children, respecting their timing and preferences. The goal is for students to learn and draw their own conclusions at their own pace, promoting understanding and creativity over memorisation.

(Interviewer center 2): [...] The question I have for you is: next week, when you have to create your work plan again, do you take this into account to adjust your schedule a bit? In other words, do you learn to manage your time?

(Student 1 center 2): Yes, sometimes we do.

(Student 2 center 2): Yes, or you choose another task that is shorter, or one that you know you can complete faster.

(Student 3 center 2): Or sometimes, if we didn't have time to do something, we do it another day during the same week when we have time.

3.2.3. Organisation of Students, Spaces, and Materials

Regarding the previously mentioned work plan, and based on the observations made, we can see how the activities selected by the students are carried out both individually and in groups. Some of these activities correspond to curricular work (English, geometry, mathematics, science, etc.), while others are workshops proposed by the companions and sometimes by the students themselves (cooking, art, astronomy, etc.). Throughout the school year, the workshop themes change.

In this regard, group work is a key element in the methodology of these schools. They use heterogeneous groups to encourage social interaction among students of different ages and interests. They believe that in environments with different age groups, the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children is significantly enriched. It promotes values such as cooperation, caring for others, respect for differences, self-esteem, empathy, and autonomy.

(Management Team center 1): [...] Instead of organising everyone into horizontal groups, they are mixed: older children with younger children, children with different abilities; and we don't try to make everyone do the same thing, but we try to make it so 'I see and learn also because I see other children doing things.

(Teachers center 1): Yes, because apart from having multi-level groups, we have children grouped, and it's very easy for a child from one group to say: 'Well, I'm going to a working group of another group that's older or younger,' or 'I want to go play for a while or do an activity with other children from another place.' And this can happen easily and has no limits in this sense. If we see that it's appropriate, the child can do it.

Regarding the materials used in the schools, we observe a wide variety of both structured and unstructured materials. It's worth noting that they are mostly organised by knowledge domains and distributed in a way that allows students to access them easily, freely, independently, and autonomously, encouraging exploration and manipulation. The educational materials foster students' interest in subjects, personal inquiry, reflection, and free discovery. The use of materials in an environment of experimentation and play is encouraged, enhancing learning through discovery.

3.2.4. Roles of the Teaching Staff, Students, and Families

The accompanists, which is the term used to refer to the teachers, guide the students' learning process by harnessing their interests as the driving force and trusting that they can lead it. During this process, they provide individualised attention, fostering autonomy and emotional development. The accompanists prepare the environment to be rich in stimuli and possibilities and propose challenges that generate new interests in the students. In essence, they support students in facing the difficulties that may arise when tackling these challenges, and they accept errors as a self-assessment process that leads to learning. The profile of an accompanist is that of a person who is receptive to students' opinions, warm, welcoming, sensitive, and does not raise their voice at any time to manage conflicts.

It is worth noting that within the freedom of choice that students have, accompanists establish certain boundaries that promote mutual respect and cooperation instead of competition, where self-reflection and personal growth are fundamental. In this regard, accompanists receive specific training to join the school's project, and this training should continue for effective support. Collaboration and teamwork among accompanists are crucial.

(Families center 1): [...] Children are attended to, they feel seen, they feel accompanied; there are no teachers, but rather accompanists who guide them and accompany them in their own learning.

(Management Team center 1): [...] And then, what has also been very important is the relationship within the team itself, among the different accompanists [...] we really work in a very coordinated way and collaborate a lot, it's very collaborative work, and we have many meetings where we discuss how the children are learning.

(Interviewer from center 2): What, in your opinion, is a good teacher or a good accompanist? How should they be?

(Student 1 from center 2): I don't know, someone who understands you and helps you when you have a problem with any material, and who is kind.

(Student 2 from center 2): Also, they should be patient. Some of them are very patient.

(Student 3 from center 2): Also, they should always be cheerful and laugh, and joke around too.

Regarding the roles of students, it is emphasised that they are in control of their time and make decisions regarding their learning, but always with responsibility and considering that the decision-making capacity granted to them depends on their level of maturity. Autonomy and decision-making capacity are fundamental and innovative aspects, where children engage in meaningful projects, taking responsibility for the necessary work. In decision-making, students bear the consequences of their actions, which are decided by themselves in the assembly.

It is observed that the children are very relaxed in school, addressing the accompanists as equals. Furthermore, since they have the capacity to decide and choose what they want to do, they appear calm, happy, and relaxed, feeling that they are truly the protagonists of the direction of their own learning.

(Management Team center 1): “[...] they decide what they want to do, so they are in control of their time. If you sign up for a work group, it's your decision. Now, you have to be consistent with it [...] We give them the capacity to make decisions based on their maturity and ability, and also that they are able to take responsibility for it.”

(Teachers center 2): [...] (the students) are at the centre of the learning experience, but the learning they choose, not the learning that I or a curriculum has decided they should do.

Collaboration between the school and families is a fundamental axis. Observation, the organisation of activities, and family participation in the daily life of the school are encouraged. Both centers invite families to enrich the educational proposal with their voluntary contribution to the organisation of events and workshops.

Before joining the center, families participate in an exhaustive process of understanding the philosophy and pedagogical approach of the centers. The management team dedicates a lot of time to interviews, visits, and meetings with families before admitting a child to the center. The center maintains a close cooperative relationship with families, which they consider essential for coherent and effective work.

In summary, the involvement of families in both centers goes beyond the Family Association (AFA). It is a collective effort in various areas, from organising festivals to participating in pedagogical meetings. Families appreciate this level of involvement because it provides them with a sense of community and mutual support, while also contributing to the well-being of their children.

(Management Team center1): From the beginning, families, for us, have a very different role than in many other spaces because we believe that parents are responsible for their children's education, and we are only a small support for a period

of time. So, for us, it's super important that parents get to know the center thoroughly, that they come to observe, and participate in activities.

(Families center 1): Here we know that we can enter at any time, and that gives you security. You can come to observe and see how your children are and how they interact. And if you feel secure, then your daughter will also feel safe and trust the place where you are leaving her.

(Families center 2): [...] the family is the cornerstone of the project's well-being and of the children [...] this focus on families, I feel that it's also key for beneficial processes in the children's growth and for the family itself, right? United in the project.

3.2.5. Democracy and Participation in the Centers

In the studied educational centers, collaboration and communication are fundamental pillars. Emphasis is placed on effective communication as a tool for conflict resolution and decision-making. Additionally, the model extends to students through assemblies and workgroups that allow them to make autonomous decisions, thus maintaining a balance between the well-being of children and adults.

A balance is maintained between the decisions of the majority of the group, and the concerns of the minority, which is critical for fostering an inclusive environment. However, the companions remain the final arbiter in complex decisions, although listening and dialogue are prioritised. This method goes beyond simple democracy and delves into the realm of informed consensus and empathy, ensuring that all voices are heard but not allowing decision-making to become a mere numbers game. In this regard, students claim to have a voice in the learning process and in the choice of topics, which are done through individual tutorials with the companions. They also value the flexibility and adaptability provided by the workshops they conduct, which seems to contribute to a more participatory and personalised learning environment. In addition, multiple communication channels are established with families, with regular meetings to discuss various topics, encouraging their voluntary and active participation.

(Management Team center 1): For us, communication is fundamental. I mean, it's not only important to consider the children; it's also important to consider the adults and listen to them, to understand their needs and what they need [...] In primary, there's a weekly assembly where part of the activities and part of the rules are decided as a group, within the group they are in but there's another part where the children themselves participate in advance in making decisions about the proposals for things they want to learn over three months...

(Teachers center 2): [...] they (students) are very clear that here the rules are decided by everyone, and sometimes they feel lazy to go to the assembly, but when you say, "Okay, we'll decide it ourselves" they say, "No, no, no." I mean, they don't use the word democracy, but they are very clear that everyone must agree.

3.2.6. Evaluation

A comprehensive assessment of learning is carried out, focusing more on competencies than on content. Formative assessment is highly important, supported by observation. The companions monitor each student's tasks in the classroom individually, allowing them to identify difficulties and determine the next task to offer to overcome them. In reality, with the activities and materials provided, the companions can assess the level of each student. Additionally, self-assessment is incorporated as part of individual activities.

Exams are only conducted in the final cycle of primary education (in Center #1) to prepare students for their transition to secondary school and are always optional. In line with the above, both centers do not issue report cards. Instead, the companions meet with families to provide information about each student's progress, the challenges they are facing, the acquired learning, and the difficulties they may be experiencing. They believe that report cards offer specific comparative data, which, given the personalised learning approach in these centers, does not make sense.

(Teachers center 1): [...] We focus on procedures, emotions, social aspects, conflict resolution... All these things are more related to competencies than content. In other words, our assessment is based on observation [...] we take note of it to provide them with the next thing (task or activity) that helps them overcome the difficulty.

(Student 1 center 1): And then, well, exams are optional if they want, and the grade doesn't count. Well, most of us usually want to take exams because we like it when they give us exams, even though in other schools, they don't.

(Management Team center 1): [...] legally, we are obligated to give grades [...] but the families who come to our center don't value those grades, so we don't give them to them. If any family requests it, we provide them. None do because they care about how their child is progressing.

3.3. Dimension 3: Inclusion

In the analysed schools, there is a presence of students with specific educational support needs (NEAE) (children with dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, high abilities, hearing and visual impairments). The way diversity is addressed in these schools seems to attract this type of student. However, the educational plan in these schools is so personalised that the “labels” fade away. Naturally, individualised curriculum adaptations are made as required by the Department of Education. For each student, the difficulty is specified, and the necessary tools are provided, but it is not experienced as a label by the students; rather, it is seen as just another characteristic of who they are. Those with communication difficulties are supported to communicate, and those with attention difficulties are supported to develop their attention skills, and so on.

However, some families do express the desire to encourage students with less initiative to participate in the activities and workshops held at the school. They also acknowledge that if these students are given time, they do participate on their own.

(Management Team center 1): We have many children with special needs [...] We make curriculum adaptations because the Ministry of Education requires it, but in reality, we create a different program for each one based on their specific needs. If there's a child who needs reinforcement in social skills, we work on that. For another child, it might be self-esteem, and for another, it could be overcoming challenges.

(Teachers center 1): Here, the concept of diversity support loses its meaning because we don't cater to diversity; we cater to individuality. So, if this child needs to work in a certain way, we work that way. If this child has an interest here, we support that interest. If they have a difficulty here, we assist with that difficulty. Therefore, the idea of diversity support doesn't make sense because we genuinely look at each child individually [...] We don't need to label a child. What we need to know is: What difficulties does this child have? What interests do they have? What needs do they have? What challenges do they need to overcome? Then, we accompany them in that process.

(Families center 1): I do believe that, perhaps, there are moments when I would like to see more integration, more inclusion, and activities encouraged in that sense, to create more awareness of the importance of [...] the richness of diversity. They (students), do participate, they do, but it's true that those who are less bold may participate less or not participate, and in that sense, maybe not enough is being done.

In the analysed centers, cultural diversity is observed. This diversity is used as a source of learning for students, considering that the educational model of the centers is based on the life experiences and realities of the students to work with them in school. They promote cultural diversity by addressing various aspects such as religion, customs, clothing, etc., from both the countries of origin of the students and those they learn about. Additionally, there is a welcoming system for new families that facilitates their integration into the school's project. Although these are private schools, there is diversity in social class, but it is considered just another reality, and there are no comparisons made.

(Management Team center 1): All the families that come, their cultural backgrounds, they can express them, and we accompany them. Many families come, and we ask parents to come with their differences, to share how they are. For example, we talk about how Christmas is celebrated all over the world: in the Netherlands, in the Basque Country, in

Venezuela, in Caracas... We start from who the children are and what they experience [...] from their reality, not from an external curriculum that dictates what you should think and feel.

Regarding gender equality, there is no specific program or approach to work on it, and they do not practice positive discrimination. They simply allow each child to learn, study, and dress as they wish, without judgment. They promote respect and believe that students learn all of this through the models provided by the educators themselves and through their daily experiences. One of the pillars of the educational model is the freedom to choose materials, games, workshops, etc., which naturally fosters gender equality.

(Management Team center 1): [...] there is material here for boys and girls to play with, and each one chooses. It's not like boys have to play with something and if it's a girl, she has to play with something else. But we're not going to force them to play with something else either. There's not a strong focus on girls having to do something very special because they've had many difficulties before, or boys having to do girls' work to project themselves. No, each one grows in the direction they want.

(Management Team center 2): With regard to a gender work approach, we don't do that. Visually, we have children, there's no gender, they are not boys and girls. We intervene in setting up the environment and activities, we do activities where they mix with each other [...] When they interact with each other, there are many moments (during lunchtime, when they make materials...) [...] during the day when they are together and they talk to each other without any gender differences; everyone is equal to everyone else. And even boys who may come dressed as girls, well, I mean, clothing, earrings, colors... There are no comments at any time.

In summary, the values of respect and gender equality are promoted in everyday life and in daily relationships, rather than through specific projects or speeches. They foster an environment of respect and acceptance of diversity in all its forms. They aim to maintain an atmosphere of respectful coexistence that is neutral in terms of political or ideological discourses, focusing their approach on values-based education and supporting children in conflict resolution.

4. Conclusions

Pedagogical renewal refers to particularly innovative experiences that challenge the dominant pedagogical paradigm, serving as an alternative that fosters the continuous evolution and rejuvenation of pedagogical discourse and practice (Domínguez, 2016; Pericacho, 2016; Torrent & Feu, 2019). In simpler terms, it acts as an educational engine for reflection, commitment, innovation, and constant transformation (Hernández, 2018; Jiménez, 2016; Ortiz et al., 2018). For years, educational experiences have been emerging that cultivate both a school culture and a set of didactic processes and organisational strategies that align with essential elements and educational aspirations inherent in the historical trajectory of Spanish pedagogical renewal (Beneyto et al., 2023). One of the distinctive features observed in these experiences is a particular uniqueness in educational practice, namely, personalised education (Ferrini, 2006; García-Hoz, 1988). It is worth noting that the distinctiveness of educational practice presents an unavoidable and significant challenge in the contemporary landscape (Lerís & Sein, 2011; UNESCO, 2017). Therefore, the conducted study characterises and describes elements and processes specific to personalised education (Aliaga, 2022; Coll, 2018; Lerís & Sein, 2011; Liu et al., 2017), developed within a sample of prominent primary education centers associated with pedagogical renewal.

Following the qualitative analysis conducted, the results obtained seem to reveal a series of common elements and processes of personalised learning in all the studied centers, categorised into three dimensions: (1) Characteristics of the centers, (2) Educational project, and (3) Inclusion. Subsequently, a series of significant pedagogical elements recurrent in the three described dimensions are presented, observed in all the centers under study. Firstly, concerning the characteristics of the centers, it is worth noting the autonomy of the students, the individualisation of learning (by creating personalised programming tailored to the needs and interests of each student), and finally, the freedom to choose learning paths and the ability for students to move freely. Secondly, regarding the educational project, several key aspects stand out: a flexible curriculum organisation, content structured around the interests of

each student, the use of an active methodology where group work plays a crucial role, scheduling without predefined patterns (schedules are adapted to the needs of each student, respecting their timings and interests), the role of the teachers, who, while guiding the teaching and learning process at all times (taking advantage of students' interests), act as mentors; the students take on an active role, families actively participate in the school's daily life, and lastly, a comprehensive assessment of learning (focused on competencies rather than just content).

Thirdly and lastly, there is the dimension of inclusion, in which daily educational practices are observed where diversity is not a limitation; on the contrary, it is a source of valuable didactic learning. Thus, in line with previous studies on personalised learning (Huang et al., 2012; Hwang et al., 2013; Lerís & Sein 2011; Song et al., 2012; Wongwatkit et al., 2017; Xie et al., 2019), the presented results provide a rigorous, useful, current, and comprehensive overview of specific personalised learning practices (Huang et al., 2012; Hwang et al., 2013; Lerís & Sein 2011; Xie et al., 2019) developed in primary education centers that are significant today due to their pedagogical renewal processes (Feu et al., 2021; Pericacho, 2016).

The results presented, taken together, contribute to understanding specific realities of personalised learning (Song et al., 2012; Wongwatkit et al., 2017), demonstrating common pedagogical ideologies and pedagogical processes in a significant number of educational centers that, while not homogeneous, illustrate today the achievement of a school that revitalises and redefines the legacy of pedagogical renewal that emerged in Spain in the late 19th century (Beneyto et al., 2023; Pericacho, 2023). Indeed, the results confirm the mentioned regularities, but they also highlight that each of the analysed centers demonstrates both an educational identity and its own characteristics, including pedagogical references, essential elements of the educational project (curriculum, methodology, scheduling, spatial organisation, student grouping, materials, roles, participation, etc.), and specific measures for addressing diversity. Perhaps, as Contreras (2010) points out: “what the experiences of some alternative schools show is that teaching, learning, education, and the school itself can be something else” (Contreras, 2010: page 564).

In conclusion, the uniqueness of educational practice undoubtedly represents a substantial challenge in the present day (Engel & Coll, 2022). Through their daily educational experiences, the analysed realities not only highlight their pedagogical value but also question several foundations of the dominant school grammar (Tyack & Cuban, 1995): the what, why, for what, and how of education (Díez-Gutiérrez et al., 2023; Domínguez, 2016). Some elements stand out: student protagonism, collective reflection processes, active pedagogy, meaningful learning, openness to the environment, democratic and participatory culture, comprehensive vision of education, innovation, critical reading of reality, teacher commitment, and more. The analysis conducted allows for questioning and expanding the theoretical and practical framework of educational innovation (Carbonell, 2019, 2022; Martínez & Rogero, 2021). Likewise, it promotes reflection and debate about the purpose of pedagogical action (Laudo, 2014) and the meaning of the 21st-century school (Bauman, 2013; Klees, 2020).

When we talk about a different school, it's not about inventing gunpowder, shaping grand speeches, or constructing large projects with impressive worldviews. On the contrary, it's about doing what is necessary, what common sense dictates, responding to the needs of the students, ensuring that they learn, and that they practice the values advocated or considered positive based on the acceptance of Human Rights (Rodríguez, 2003: page 20).

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