Towards the fulfillment of the right to inclusive education for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: Framework for action

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Abstract

Since the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was passed (2006), inclusive education evolved from a principle of education towards a right to be guaranteed for all students. Despite this, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have not enjoyed this right on an equal foot with others, experiencing a stagnation in their inclusion over the last 15 years. Moreover, there is an important gap between the policies passed at national, regional, and local levels aimed at including these students, and the educational experiences that they are currently receiving within education systems. To address this mismatch and to provide educators with a framework for action that shortens what is current education of students with IDD and what should be, the purpose of this work is to present the conceptual and practical implications of the supports paradigm and the quality of life model, two frameworks that have now join together and that offer a systematic approach to address the access, participation, learning, and development of students with IDD to their fullest potential, the necessary goals of an inclusive and quality education.

Keywords: intellectual disability, developmental disability, supports paradigm, quality of life, inclusive education

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1. Introduction: Current needs regarding the education of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Most countries all around the world are concerned about the education they provide to their citizens, as a mean to keep developing their communities and strengthening their democracies by enhancing the participation of everybody since the early stages of their lifespan (Hernández-Sánchez and Ainscow, 2018). In this sense, a growing emphasis has been placed over the past years in the development of an equitable, quality, and inclusive education (IE) that welcomes all students, no matter their social or personal conditions (UNESCO, 2015). Although advances in IE are evident if we look into the published research (e.g., Amor *et al.*, 2019; Hagiwara *et al.*, 2019), the changes in legislation (e.g., Verdugo *et al.*, 2018), and, most important, in the data reflecting inclusion trends (e.g., Alcaraz-García and Arnaiz, 2020; Buchner *et al.*, 2020), IE has not reached all student groups equally.

One of the groups who is still especially vulnerable to the risk of both educational and social exclusion and, therefore, has not benefited from IE to the same extent than other learners, is the group of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). As an example illustrating this fact, in a recent research comparing the advances towards IE for students with special educational needs (SEN) across seven European countries in the last 15 years, it was found that, although clear steps could be witnessed, the percentage of students with IDD included in mainstream settings have not increased as much as for other students with SEN, and students with IDD still remain a key population within segregated schools (Buchner *et al.*, 2020). Different factors can be appointed to shed lights on this data. First, although many countries committed with the right to IE for students with IDD through the signature and ratification of the *United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD; United Nations, 2006), many of them still have two parallel education systems that generate the conditions for their systematic segregation (United Nations, 2016). In the European context, there is an important variability regarding this issue. For example, there are countries like Portugal, that took a sudden closure of almost all special schools in 2018 and committed with the supports arrangement for students with IDD in mainstream schools (Echeita *et al.*, 2020); and, at the opposite pole, there are countries like Spain, where education for these pupils still keeps swimming through porridge and legal changes occur on a slow and nonlinear fashion, with steps forward and backward depending on the political sign of governments (Amor *et al.*, 2018; Verdugo *et al.*, 2018). The need to update the knowledge and practices of education professionals towards support needs assessment and planning for students with IDD has also been consistently appointed by different authors as

a reason for the lack of inclusion of students with IDD (e.g., Sandoval *et al*., 2019; Thompson *et al.,* 2018). Finally, a third factor that hinders the inclusion of these students is the need to better align the development of IE policies with research and practice knowledge, and a clearly defined strategy to gather data under a formative assessment that allows education systems to know what they are doing good or wrong to act consequently and update themselves to be more inclusive with learners with IDD (European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities [EASPD], 2020).

Two main lessons can be derived from what has been outlined above. First, the signature of documents like treaties and conventions does not immediately get translated into a real advance towards IE nor does it mean that the education experiences that are arranged and provided to students with IDD are beneficial. Second, and closely related with the former, there is an important gap between the assumption of IE in countries' education policy agendas and how IE is understood and delivered on a daily basis to students with IDD on the part of schools and educators, the ultimate responsibles of translating policies into practice to include students with IDD. Therefore, there is the need to bridge the gap between the situation described regarding the education of students with IDD and what an equitable, quality, and IE should entail for these learners. Shortening the distance between «what is» and «what should be» requires: (a) To better understand the outcomes to achieve in students with IDD through IE (i.e., to have clear goals to pursue); and (b) to empower practitioners in their task of including students with IDD by offering them approaches aligned with IE (i.e., how to advance towards these goals). The purpose of this work is to contribute to fill this gap by shedding lights on these two aspects by highlighting what IE should entail for students with IDD in terms of outcomes to achieve and placement taking as a reference the *UNCRPD's* article 24 (United Nations, 2006), and to offer the conceptual and practical underpinnings of two parallel frameworks that have now join together and that offer a systematic approach to address IE as understood in the *UNCRPD*: The supports paradigm (Schalock et al., 2010; Thompson et al., 2009) and the quality of life model (QoL; Schalock and Verdugo, 2002).

2. Clarifying the «what should be»: What outcomes should inclusive education be aimed at and where should they be addressed?

Answering the «what should be» question requires this work to briefly focus on the advances towards the recognition of IE as a right. Over the last decades, there have been different documents that have addressed IE, making it evolve from a general principle guiding education towards a right to be recognized and

guaranteed for all students, and that is based on normalization, equity, and social justice (Azorín and Sandoval, 2019). Among these documents, they are worth stressing: (a) *The Warnock's Report* (1978), which was the first document ever to claim the need to leave behind diagnostic tags and move towards the consideration of students in terms of the extraordinary supports they might require, giving place to the current concept of SEN; (b) the *Jomtien Declaration on Education for All* (1990), aimed at meeting the basic learning needs of all students, universalizing access to education, and developing policies to address these two goals; (c) the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (1994), which was focused on enhancing the education opportunities of students with SEN by highlighting the need to develop education systems regarding different level of support needs and to build integrative schools; (d) the *Dakar Declaration* (2000), a new edition of the Education for All, in which participant States set up a series of priorities to be achieved by 2015, like the need to protect and provide education to all children since early childhood, especially among the most vulnerable ones, and the need to cover the learning needs of youths and adults; (e) the *UNCRPD* (United Nations, 2006), which recognized the right to IE and stated the need to develop «inclusive education systems»; (f) the *48th International Education Conference* by UNESCO (2008) whose aims were to shed lights on the IE concept and to advance towards it; and (g) the *Incheon Declaration* (2015), the last edition of the World Education Forum on Education for All, focused to achieve a free, equitable, quality and IE by 2030.

Regarding the education of students with IDD, the most important milestone among the abovementioned is the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006), given that it claimed IE as a right for all students, regardless of their social or personal conditions. The UNCRPD was passed in 2006 as the very first international treaty of the XXI century and the fastest negotiated in history. Moreover, the UNCRPD supposed a qualitative change in the way to address the rights of persons with disabilities, given that it is legally-biding, so signatories must accomplish changes in their legal system to cover the rights embodied in the document (Verdugo *et al.*, 2013). Looking at its structure, the UNCRPD included 50 articles, being the social and civil rights from articles 5 to 30, while the general principles (which are transversal to all the rights) are described in article 3.

The right to IE is described in the article 24, the longest of the UNCRPD. Regarding this right, the UNCRPD states that Sates Party must ensure an «inclusive education system» at all levels and lifelong learning for all students directed to: (a) The full development of human potential; (b) the development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents, creativity, physical, and mental abilities to their fullest potential; and (c) enabling persons with

disabilities to effectively participate in a free society. To achieve these elements, signatories are abided to ensure that: (a) Students with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability; (b) persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality, and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live; (c) reasonable accommodation of the person's requirements is provided; (d) persons with disabilities receive the supports they need in general education contexts to facilitate their effective education; and (e) effective personalized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion (United Nations, 2006).

However, as has been shown, signing documents like the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006) does not mean that the education that is currently being provided to students with IDD enhances their IE-related outcomes. Thus, enabling education systems to advance in the inclusion of their learners with IDD requires to make explicit the goals or the outcomes to achieve in all their students and where to achieve these goals, so that education systems do not lose the sight of what IE entails. In this sense, from the article 24 of the UNCRPD emanate two key aspects regarding the IE of students with IDD that help the present authors to answer to the «what should be» question. First, IE needs to be provided in general education contexts, where all children establish relationships, learn, and interact (i.e., mainstream schools within the communities where children belong to). This does not mean that special schools have no role to play in IE nor does it mean that mainstream schools, as currently designed, are the perfect examples of inclusive settings. It means that: (a) Talking about inclusion requires educating all learners in general education contexts, and; (b) both, mainstream and special schools, need to reorganize themselves, open to community, and redefine their relationships to maximize the opportunities of including students with IDD (Huete *et al.*, 2019). In this sense, there are several experiences that show how special schools can redefine themselves as resource centers that help mainstream schools in their task of including diverse learners (e.g., Echeita *et al.*, 2020). The second point to answer the «what should be» is that, beyond access, learning, and participation – the classic goals of IE –, according to the article 24 of the UNCRPD, education systems must provide all students with the necessary opportunities and supports to achieve the development to their fullest potential. Only by doing so, education systems will truly make all students ready for a transition process beyond education that allow them to be included and contribute to their communities, something necessary to achieve full inclusion in democratic societies.

Until now, the present authors have shown the current needs regarding the education of students with IDD and have clarified the goals to achieve for students with IDD through IE and where to achieve them. However, advancing towards these goals makes it necessary to provide professionals with approaches that go beyond what they have been doing to include their learners. In this sense, in the following section, this work describes the conceptual and applied contributions that the supports paradigm (Schalock *et al*., 2010; Thompson et al., 2009) and the QoL model (Schalock and Verdugo, 2002) bring to education systems to help in the task of including students with IDD. These two approaches, based in decades of research and practice in the field of IDD, after 25 years of parallel trajectories have now join together and constitute a «Quality of Life Supports Paradigm» (Gómez *et al*., 2021; Schalock *et al*., 2021; Schalock *et al.,* in press; Verdugo *et al.*, in press) that provides a systematic approach to meet the rights of persons with IDD at all stages of their lifespan. However, for didactic purposes, these two approaches are presented first separately to help understand the implications of each one for educating students with IDD. Finally, a general orientation on how to align these two approaches with the goals of IE for planning purposes is also provided.

3. Paving the road towards inclusive education: The Supports Paradigm and the Quality of Life model

3.1. The Supports Paradigm: Conceptual and applied implications

Although research has shown that it is possible to include students with IDD in mainstream schools and that IE has benefits in different spheres for both students with IDD (e.g., Hehir *et al*., 2016; Kurth and Mastergeorge, 2010; Shogren *et al*., 2015) and their typically developing peers (Dell'Anna *et al*., 2019; Szumski *et al*., 2017), research and daily practice are two different elements. Research is characterized by implementing controlled and limited (in terms of time) pilot experiences with a small number of participants. However, in day-to-day practice, schools and their professionals have the duty to meet the evolving needs of their students, address curricular goals within pressing deadlines, and deal with a lack of resources. All these factors may be perceived as overwhelming by schools and, therefore, the task of including students with IDD can be seen as an added challenge rather than an opportunity of development and growth (Amor, 2019). Therefore, schools and professionals need clear frameworks for action that help in their task of including students with IDD; they need solutions, no more problems. In this sense, one approach that has gained importance to support professionals in their task to include

students with IDD is the supports paradigm (Schalock *et al.*, 2010; Thompson *et al.*, 2009). The supports paradigm means a way to go beyond the current practices aimed at arranging supports for students with IDD and it provides a renewed view of IDD and of students with IDD (e.g., Sánchez-Gómez *et al.*, 2020), practical tools (e.g., Thompson *et al.*, 2016), and a framework for action that makes it possible a holistic support needs assessment and planning aimed at achieving the goals of access, participation, learning, and development of students to their fullest potential.

From a conceptual point of view, the supports paradigm is embedded in a social-ecological approach and in a strengths-based perspective (Thompson *et al.*, 2009). Through a social-ecological lens, IDD is conceptualized as a mismatch between personal competencies and environmental demands, defined by the contexts of participation and age – and culturally – valued activities in which to participate in such contexts (Schalock *et al.*, 2010). This misfit creates support needs, defined by Thompson *et al.* (2009) as «a psychological construct referring to the pattern and intensity of supports necessary for a person to participate in activities linked with normative human functioning» (p. 135). The main characteristic of the supports paradigm is stressing the interaction «*person by environment*», therefore, every person has support needs given that everybody experiences mismatches in different situations and moments. The key is that the support needs of people with IDD are extraordinary, that is, extend beyond what most of typically functioning people need to participate in the same contexts and activities (Amor *et al.*, 2021). Applying this to education means understanding students with IDD as learners who experience mismatches between their personal competencies and the environmental demands posed by education contexts and activities (Sánchez-Gómez *et al.*, 2020), such as: (a) Access to and learning from the grade-level general education curriculum in the classroom; (b) social interactions and self-determination activities regarding different places of the school, like in the courtyard or when transitioning between classrooms; and (c) education activities linked to the community (e.g., visiting a museum). Hence, given that education contexts are not only limited to the classroom and that education activities cannot be reduced to teaching-learning ones, the supports paradigm asserts that students with IDD present global support needs that are not only related to the curriculum and that will influence their access, participation, learning, and development to their fullest potential (Amor *et al.*, 2021; Verdugo *et al.*, 2018). So then, what this approach brings new to education? In opposition to traditional education perspectives that understand students with IDD in terms of their deficits, the supports paradigm shifts the focus towards the current functioning of the students with IDD and their extraordinary support needs to access, participate, learn, and develop in the same contexts and activities than

their typically-developing peers. Moreover, the supports paradigm is based on a strengths-based perspective that assumes that students with IDD have not only extraordinary support needs but also strengths to identify and to build upon, and that students with IDD should be the causal agents over the supports they receive so that they take a proactive role in the definition of vital goals (including learning goals) used to determine their strengths and support needs (Thompson *et al.*, 2018).

Regarding the practical implications of the supports paradigm to help practitioners in the inclusion of students with IDD, the aforementioned conceptual characteristics are the foundations for its implementation. In this sense, the active role of students with IDD and their self-determined action in the definition of their vital goals, and the knowledge of their strengths and extraordinary support needs to participate in education contexts and activities, are the starting points for the implementation of personalized supports directed at meeting their needs, boosting their strengths, improving their functioning, and achieving personal outcomes aligned with their access, participation, learning, and development to their fullest potential within general education contexts (Amor *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the critical aspect regarding the implementation of the supports paradigm is to provide the personalized supports that students with IDD require to fill the gap between their competencies and the environmental demands of education. Thus, beyond the foundations, to apply this paradigm, it is essential to determine the pattern and intensity of the extraordinary support needs of students with IDD to provide them with the personalized response they require. In this regard, the supports paradigm brings a resource to schools to assess the extraordinary support needs that students with IDD aged 5-16 years old have to access, participate, learn, and develop in general contexts and activities: The *Supports Intensity Scale-Children's version* (SIS-C; Thompson *et al.*, 2016). The SIS-C enables professionals to systematically address the pattern and intensity of the supports required by children with IDD to effectively participate in 61 activities of seven contexts that are relevant to achieve outcomes linked to the four goals of IE (see Table 1). Further, the tool not only allows to identify areas for which students have extraordinary support needs, it also makes it possible to identify a support needs profile to know in which area(s) the relative intensity of support needs for a given student is higher or lower, to plan consequently and better direct efforts. As a standardized resource, it also enables schools to compare the support needs of two different students with IDD, and the support needs of a given student with IDD with those of a group of students with IDD, to better allocate resources based on a comparative view of support needs (Arias *et al.*, 2020).

Table 1 – Supports Intensity Scale-Children's version domains, exemplary activities and inclusive education goals

SIS-C domain (Nr. Of activities)	Domain's exemplary activities	Inclusive education outcomes related to the domain
Home Living Activities (9)	Eating, using electronic devices	Development of students to their fullest potential
Community and Neighborhood Activities (8)	Using public services, shopping	Development of students to their fullest potential
School Participation Activities (9)	Following classroom and school rules, participating in activities in common school areas	Access and participation
School Learning Activities (9)	Learning, completing homework assignments	Access, participation, and learning
Health and Safety Activities (8)	Maintaining physical fitness, responding in emergency situations	Development of students to their fullest potential
Social Activities (9)	Making and keeping friends, maintaining conversation	Participation, development of students to their fullest potential
Advocacy Activities (9)	Making personal choices, making personal decisions	Development of students to their fullest potential

To end with the practical implications of the supports paradigm, based on the information provided by the SIS-C tool and within the social-ecological approach to education, the SIS-C task force has developed different «support needs assessment and planning strategies» directed to achieve the four goals of IE. Presenting in detail these strategies is out of the scope of this work, although the present authors offer in brief the key elements of these proposals. Interested readership can go to Walker *et al.* (2014) and Thompson *et al.* (2018) to learn more about the frameworks they propose. Walker *et al*. (2014) use a strategy called «*Support Needs Assessment and Problem-solving*» that focuses on redefining the way general education schools understand their students with IDD and prioritizing areas to work with students with IDD after applying the SIS-C and discussing its results. Thompson *et al.* (2018), for their part, develop the «*Systematic Supports Planning Process*», a comprehensive framework to support students with IDD to access to and learning from general education curriculum through the identification and planning of supports for access, instruction, and participation.

3.2. The Quality of Life Model: Conceptual and applied implications

Although necessary, the supports paradigm is not enough to offer full inclusion opportunities to students with IDD. There is a need to adopt

complementary approaches that allow to center the education focus on the whole development of the students, going beyond the view of education as academic achievement and focusing on the students' outcomes in the classroom, the school, and the community (Muntaner, 2013; Verdugo, 2009). Adopting a framework to understand personal outcomes of students with IDD is essential for schools to assess the extent to which they are contributing to their fullest development through the implementation of personalized supports. This issue is critical for the improvement of the inclusion process itself, given that it must be nourished by the ongoing collection of evidence (Azorín and Sandoval, 2019; Booth and Ainscow, 2011) on the students' outcomes as a key point to support processes of transformation regarding educational practices, cultures, and policies (EASPD, 2020; Pazey *et al.*, 2016; Sánchez-Gómez *et al.*, 2020).

This is precisely what contributes to IE the QoL model (Schalock and Verdugo, 2002). This model conceptualizes QoL as a state of personal wellbeing that incorporates objective and subjective elements, is influenced by personal and environmental factors and their interaction, has universal and cultural properties, and considers eight essential domains in students' lives: emotional wellbeing (EW), physical wellbeing (PW), material wellbeing (MW), personal development (PD), self-determination (SD), social inclusion (SI), interpersonal relations (IR), and rights (RI). Bringing a QoL framework to education implies adopting a whole student-centered approach focused on the core domains that make up the students' lives and from which to understand their aspirations and needs as a starting point to define programs and offer supports aimed at enhancing outcomes regarding these domains (Muntaner, 2013; Verdugo, 2009).

Beyond this conceptual view of education, the model offers a measurement framework of personal outcomes consistently validated by research (Schalock *et al.*, 2016). Thus, each domain is operationalized through core indicators that refer to specific conditions, behaviors, and perceptions of each domain and that are observable and measurable. The indicators, in turn, are developed through items, which allow measuring personal outcomes, understood as the aspirations and needs of the person in the core indicators. In addition to being observable and measurable, the indicators are sensitive to the goals established in the articles of the UNCRPD (Gómez *et al.*, 2020). Specifically regarding article 24, different authors (Sánchez-Gómez *et al.*, 2020; Turnbull *et al.*, 2003) have aligned the goals of IE with the QoL domains (through their core indicators): (a) Access is related to RI; (b) participation to SI and IR; (c) learning to PD and SD; and (d) maximum development to EW, PW, MW, SD, and PD. Moreover, EW, PW, and PD are foundational skills relevant to train students ready for transition purposes (Morningstar *et al.*, 2017; Yurrebaso *et al.*, 2020). Based on

the concreteness offered by the model (i.e., translation of conceptual domains into measurable aspirations and needs) several QoL assessment instruments have been developed that serve the purpose of measuring personal outcomes to support decision making based on the evidence gathered of such results.

Table 2 – Quality of life measurement instruments

Tool (authors)	Target group	Educational stage	Assessment approach (self-report or proxy-report)	QoL domains and items
CVI-CVIP: Quality of life assessment questionnaire in childhood (Sabeh *et al.*, 2009)	Children with and without SEN	Primary education (children aged 8-11 years)	Self-report and proxy-report	Self-report: 53 items, EW, IR, PD, PW, and MW domains Proxy-report: 64 items, same domains
CCVA: Questionnaire for assessing quality of life in adolescent students (Gómez-Vela and Verdugo, 2009)	Adolescents with and without SEN	Secondary education (adolescents between 12 and 18 years)	Report of others	56 items, EW, SO, IR, PD, PW, SD, and MW
KidsLIfe Scale (Gómez et al., 2016)	Children and adolescents with IDD	From elementary education to transition to adulthood (4-21 years)	Report of others	96 items, 12 by each one of the eight QoL domains
KidsLife Scale-Down (Gómez et al., 2017)	Children and adolescents with Down's syndrome	From elementary education to transition to adulthood (4-21 years)	Report of others	96 items, 12 by each one of the eight QoL domains
KidsLife Scale-ASD (Gómez et al., 2018)	Children and adolescents with ASD and intellectual disability	From elementary education to transition to adulthood (4-21 years)	Report of others	96 items, 12 by each one of the eight QoL domains

Note. SEN = Special Educational Needs; IDD = Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; ASD = Autism Spectrum Disorders; EW = Emotional wellbeing; PW = Physical wellbeing; MW = Material wellbeing; PD = Personal development; SD = Self-determination; SI = Social inclusion; IR = Interpersonal relations

How to gather and use evidence on personal outcomes to support decision-making in education from the QoL model? The last characteristic that helps to understand the applied implications of QoL model is that it is based on a systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecology of human development assumes that persons live in a complex social system made up of

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three levels (i.e., microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem) that encompass the necessary areas for persons to live. The microsystem refers to the immediate context in which the person lives (e.g., household or classmates). The mesosystem includes everything that directly affects the microsystem (e.g., communities or schools). The last level, the macrosystem, refers to the broader cultural patterns, socio-political trends, and economic patterns. The procedure to gather evidence always occurs at individual level, through the assessment of personal outcomes using QoL assessment instruments directly with the students with IDD. The evidence gathered, however, can be used at microsystem, through disaggregated data (i.e., the data obtained from a single person), or at meso- and macrosystem using aggregated data. Regarding the use of evidence on personal outcomes at microsystem, information mainly serves for two purposes: (a) to identify current needs to define programs; and (b) after conducting a pre- and post-assessment, to assess the degree of effectivity of the supports implemented (i.e., to see if the student's outcomes have improved in the domains related to the goals of access, participation, learning, and development). At mesosystem level, the use of aggregated data (e.g., the QoL scores obtained by all the students with IDD of a given school) can be used to see the general impact that school's current cultures, policies, and practices have in their students with IDD regarding relevant domains related to the four goals of IE to act consequently and update these three key elements in a school's life. At macrosystem level, the aggregated data of a given region or country makes it possible to gather general information about personal outcomes of social actions and decision-making concerning the development, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of public policy (Amor and Verdugo, 2018).

3.3. *A systematic approach to supports planning for including students with IDD*

Now it is time to put the pieces of the puzzle together. The last point to address is how to integrate the supports paradigm (Schalock *et al*., 2010; Thompson *et al*., 2009) and the QoL model (Schalock and Verdugo, 2002) to offer professionals a systematic support needs assessment and planning framework oriented towards the access, participation, learning, and development of students with IDD to their fullest potential. In this sense, it is essential to adopt a logic model that allows the identification of *input*, *process*, and *outcomes* variables. Figure 1 offers such framework, considering the rights, supports and QoL approaches from a horizontal alignment in terms of *input* variables (i.e., rights, supports, and QoL), *processes* (supports), and *outcomes* (QoL).
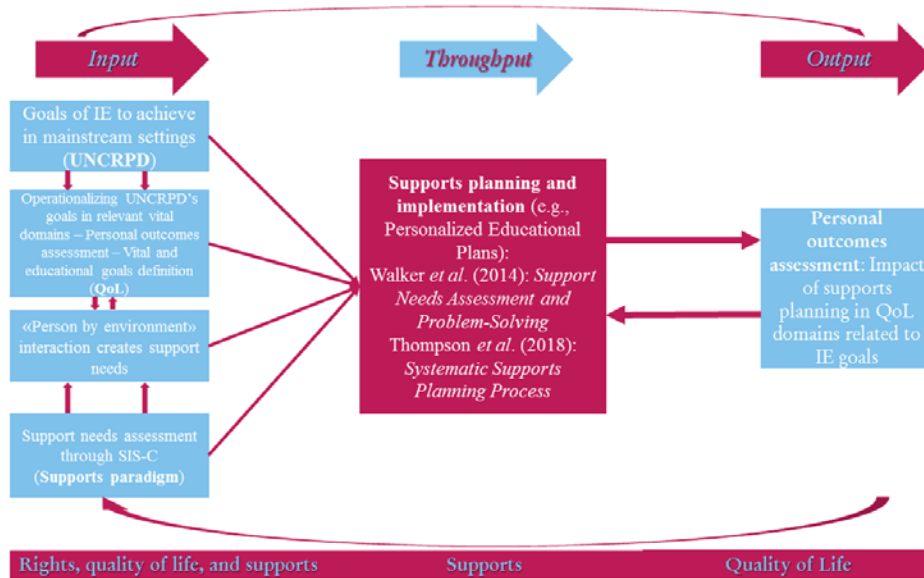
Figure 1 - Alignment between UNCRPD, Supports Paradigm, and QoL model

Within a logic framework, the *input* refers to all the elements that are provided to the framework since the beginning. In this sense, as observed in Figure 1, there is, on the one hand, the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006), which contributes to the model the goals of access, participation, learning, and maximum development to be achieved with a given student with IDD within general education contexts. For its part, QoL, given its sensitivity to these four IE objectives, makes these goals operative in contexts relevant to the student's life in terms of vital needs and aspirations. The knowledge of the student's aspirations and needs through the assessment of personal outcomes with QoL instruments must be the starting point to define vital and educational goals that, within general education contexts, are directed at achieving personal outcomes in the QoL domains linked to these four IE objectives. Precisely, it is this definition of goals that will introduce environmental demands to the model (i.e., specific contexts and activities to address in the achievement of said goals) that, by interacting with the competencies of the student with IDD, will generate support needs, whose pattern and intensity need to be determined through instruments such as the SIS-C. All this information on the *input* variables must be synthesized as a *process* variable (which mobilizes and transforms the *input*) by means of adequate supports planning strategies. To this end, the strategies proposed by Walker *et al.* (2014) and Thompson *et al.* (2018) offer adequate examples of how to build comprehensive personalized educational plans that

allow the provision of personalized supports within general education contexts to advance the goals of access, participation, learning, and maximum development. Finally, as *outcomes*, it will be necessary to reassess and collect evidence on whether there has been an effective improvement in the satisfaction of aspirations and the coverage of the needs of the students with IDD. If outcomes are improved for that student with IDD, it is indicative that it has been possible to improve his/her participation in the vital domains relevant for his/her inclusion. If, on the contrary, there has been no improvement, it will be necessary to start the process again. Since IE has no end, the process presented here require ongoing feedback and constant review to adjust to the needs and aspirations of students.

4. Conclusions

In the present study, it has been highlighted that progress towards IE is not being the same for all students, being necessary to create the conditions that make it possible to improve inclusion opportunities for students with IDD. To do this, this work has clearly highlighted the goals to be achieved through IE and the context from which to approach them. Subsequently, two interdependent frameworks for action have been offered to direct the efforts of education to promote access, participation, learning, and development of students with IDD to their fullest development: The supports paradigm (Schalock *et al*., 2010; Thompson et al., 2009) and the QoL model (Schalock and Verdugo, 2002). Presenting models such as those exposed here serve to empower and contribute to the professional development of educators who want to work towards the inclusion of their students. However, educators and schools need to be warned that adopting these approaches only makes sense if the school itself explicitly recognizes the need to improve its response to diversity. Therefore, before undertaking the adoption of the approaches presented here, it is recommended that the schools adopt shared journeys towards questioning their own cultures, policies, and practices in order to identify their barriers to learning and participation, and seek solutions to the problems that, collaboratively, have identified. If done so, then the approaches presented in this study will be seen as an opportunity to address the needs of improving the school to meet the needs of their students with IDD; otherwise, they will be seen as an additional threat to run from.

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