

Psychoeducational assessment of students with intellectual disability: Professional-action framework analysis

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Abstract

Background: The right to educational inclusion for students with intellectual disability (SWID) requires the development of good assessment and intervention practices from holistic perspectives not exclusively focused on the academic limitations that SWID may present. These practices are settled in Spain, via regulations drawn up by each Autonomous Community (AC). The variety of existing regulations demands a critical review of the decisions taken to promote the inclusion of those students. **Method:** Current regulations-in-force in each AC that regulate attention to diversity (AD) have been analyzed by using a checklist that includes the variables that defining each stage of the AD process and the ways of providing supports that favor the development, learning and participation of SWID. **Results:** Attention to diversity measures in each AC emphasize organizational and curricular issues, with no AC following holistic approaches in both assessment and intervention, but rather neglecting self-determination and the promotion of quality of life for SWID. **Conclusions:** Guidelines for the development of new legal frameworks and professional practices based on the latest evidence-based models of attention to SWID and on the results are discussed.

Keywords: Psychopedagogical assessment, attention to diversity, intellectual disability, quality of life, regulation.

Resumen

Evaluación psicoeducativa del alumnado con discapacidad intelectual: análisis del marco de actuación profesional. Antecedentes: el derecho a la inclusión educativa del alumnado con discapacidad intelectual (ACDI) requiere buenas prácticas de evaluación e intervención desde enfoques holísticos no exclusivamente centrados en las dificultades académicas que pueda presentar el alumno. Estas prácticas se regulan en España por la normativa de cada Comunidad Autónoma (CA). La variedad de regulaciones existentes demanda una revisión crítica de las decisiones adoptadas para favorecer la inclusión de este alumnado. **Método:** se ha analizado la normativa vigente que regula la atención a la diversidad (AD) en cada CA empleando una lista de comprobación que recoge las variables que definen cada fase de AD y los modos de prestar apoyos que favorecen el desarrollo, aprendizaje y participación. **Resultados:** las medidas de AD en cada CA enfatizan aspectos organizativos y curriculares, no habiendo ninguna CA que recoja enfoques holísticos tanto en la evaluación como en la intervención, descuidando la promoción de la autodeterminación y la calidad de vida del ACDI. **Conclusiones:** se discuten orientaciones para el desarrollo de nuevos marcos legales y práctica profesional partiendo de los enfoques basados en la evidencia de atención al ACDI y de los resultados del estudio.

Palabras clave: evaluación psicopedagógica, atención a la diversidad, discapacidad intelectual, calidad de vida, normativa.

The provision of adequate support that helps children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities (ID) to develop to their fullest potential requires professionals who are committed to good practices in psychopedagogical assessment and intervention, and who understand the importance of adopting holistic approaches (Schalock et al., 2010; Verdugo & Schalock, 2010). With an increasingly diverse student population (e.g., immigration, ethnic minorities, disability), inclusion has become the main problem facing the education system.

In Spain, the inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEEN), which incorporates students with ID (SWID), is governed by policies which set out the attention to diversity (AD) procedure, a process whereby student needs are identified and appropriate responses provided. This process involves a series of interdependent successive phases which vary according to the student's needs. When general AD measures are insufficient, a psychopedagogical assessment is carried out to identify the nature of the student's specific need for educational support (SNES) and appropriate responses provided. If the psychopedagogical assessment detects a special educational need (SEN), associated with the presence of specific conditions relating to individual functioning (i.e., disability or severe behavioral disorders), a schooling report is required, detailing the most appropriate form of schooling for the student (i.e., mainstream, combined or special).

Whilst AD is the responsibility of the whole school community (SCC), psychopedagogical assessment and the provision of educational support fall within the remit of school counselors (SCs), primarily educational psychologists, psychopedagogues and pedagogues, who mobilize the resources provided by the education authorities.

These professionals working with SWID face multiple challenges when it comes to AD: moving beyond traditional approaches focused exclusively on curricular aspects (Verdugo, 2009), outdated psychopedagogical assessment models (Echeita et al., 2017) and the need for a greater remit to address diversity (Anaya, Pérez-González, & Suárez, 2011). As a result, SWID are increasingly educated in special education schools (Ramos & Huete, 2016), despite article 24 of the Convention of the United Nations (UN, 2006) on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which stipulates that inclusive education through reasonable accommodations should be the priority response for SWID.

To overcome these challenges and develop good evidence-based practices for SWID, SCs should consider the following key points: the received definition of ID; a valid model for assessing needs and the provision of supports; a valid conceptual framework for quality of life (QOL), which promotes the participation and self-determination of SWID (Schalock & Verdugo, 2012); and the understanding of reasonable accommodations (UN, 2006).

The eleventh edition of the American Association on Intellectual and Development Disabilities (Schalock et al., 2010) sets out the most widely received definition of ID. It encompasses more than the limitations (i.e., in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior which originate before age 18), and considers SWID from a multidimensional approach, where supports play a central role in the improvement of functioning and QOL.

Secondly, the supports model is based on the strengths of SWID and understands ID as a mismatch between a person's capabilities and the demands of the environment (Walker, DeSpain, Thompson, & Hughes, 2014). This mismatch induces support needs, a psychological construct referring to the pattern and intensity of support which a person with ID needs to participate in activities linked with normative human functioning (Thompson et al., 2009). Once the support needs for a student have been determined, it is important to devise individualized supports to enhance human functioning and personal outcomes (Thompson et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2014).

As for the QOL model, it proposes a systemic strategy designed to enhance the possibilities and the effectiveness of the intervention and supports for SWID (Pazey, Schalock, Schaller, & Burkett, 2016). It is used in direct practice with students (microsystem), educational organization (mesosystem) and the development of inclusive education policies (macrosystem).

The main contribution of this model in the treatment of SWID is its consideration of personal outcomes (Schalock & Verdugo, 2012; Verdugo, 2009; Walker et al., 2014), which need to be evaluated using psychometrically robust scales. Along with the supports model, the QOL model constitutes a framework to evaluate the impact of supports in different areas of personal development which extend beyond the academic sphere, areas that also relate to the rights contained in the CRPD (Verdugo, Navas, Gómez, & Schalock, 2012).

Sharing this ecological-contextual approach, the CRPD defines reasonable accommodations as individualized supports which guarantee: (a) the access to and full enjoyment of their rights by persons with disabilities; (b) that their individualized needs are

met; (c) the full development of potential; and (d) participation in their community on an equal basis with others who have no disability (UN, 2006).

To implement these key elements of professional practice, an analysis of the AD process in Spain is required. The main particularities of this process lie both in the decentralization of education decision-making powers to each Autonomous Community; and in the successive levels of realization, from national legislation to direct practice, not forgetting Autonomous Community regulations and school documentation. As a result, it is not possible to draw conclusions on the professional action framework for SWID at a national level.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the different Autonomous Communities' (ACs) legal frameworks for AD, which regulate professional practice in the assessment of SWID and in the provision of individualized supports to this population. The supports model, the QOL model and the rights contained in the CRPD are used as frames of reference. The objective of the analysis is to assess whether the AC's legal frameworks incorporate the latest scientifically approved developments which facilitate a contextualized and individualized assessment of supports, as well as guarantees for the inclusion of SWID as required by the CRPD.

Method

The research was qualitative, using a descriptive methodology and content review technique. Specifically, the method entailed an analysis of current education legislation, as it constitutes the framework regulating assessment and support practices for SWID.

Participants

The sample consisted of: legislation governing various stages of education (i.e., curriculum, development, assessment-progression-certification, the management of schools and teaching staff at kindergarten, elementary, secondary, high school and vocational training stages), AD legislation, and legislation relating to the work of SCs in mainstream education, all in force as at 31 December 2016 in Spain's 17 ACs. The autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla were not included in the research, due to insufficient education decision-making powers.

The rationale for including legislation governing key education stages and SCs in mainstream education was to examine their AD content. Non-compulsory education stages-kindergarten, vocational training and high school diploma studies-were included given their respective importance in early detection and assistance for the transition to adulthood. A full list of the legislation analyzed may be obtained by contacting the author.

Instrument

The instrument used was a self-elaborated checklist with dichotomous response option (YES/NO), designed to analyze the action framework of SCs working with SWID, particularly in relation to AD.

The first step in the development of the checklist was a detailed study of the conceptualization of ID, of the supports model and the QOL model, and of article 24 of the CRPD. The result was a theoretical framework against which to analyze the response offered to SWID in the AD process.

Secondly, an independent expert, with professional experience in AD and in support needs research, prepared the structure of the checklist using six dimensions which would then inform the selection of items: (1) a preliminary dimension to evaluate if the SC action framework was up-to-date with current standards (i.e., *focus on rights and degree of updating of legislation*); (2) four dimensions corresponding to the staged phases of the AD plans (i.e., *detection and identification of the SNES*, which evaluates the degree to which each AC has indicators to guide the practices of each member of SCC generating protocols; *psychopedagogical assessment*, aimed at the contextualized evaluation of psychological and pedagogical needs; *schooling report*, which details the decisions made with regard to the most appropriate form of schooling for the SSEN; and *attention to diversity measures*, comprising strategies for personalized responses to the needs of these students; and (3) a dimension, common to all legislation, which considers the role of different educational stakeholders and the dissemination of results and good practices in work with SWID (i.e., *involvement of SCC and dissemination of data and results*).

Items were selected using an inductive approach on the variables which were common to all the AD plans regulated by the ACs (e.g., areas assessed, school documentation, etc.), and on the most important features of the QOL model, the supports model and the right to inclusive education embodied in the CRPD. A total of 42 items were obtained, divided across the six dimensions.

Finally, the reliability of the checklist was confirmed by a *kappa coefficient* of .97, indicating an excellent inter-rater agreement for the instrument.

Procedure

With the tool now developed, the current regulations relative to the defined criteria were downloaded from the education departments of the different AC websites.

Using the checklist, these regulations were independently assessed by two specialist education researchers. In the first instance, the two assessors carried out a pilot study on the legislation of Andalusia (selected at random) in order to detect potential issues linked to the use of the instrument. They then proceeded to a complete analysis of the legislation and calculated the *kappa coefficient*. For items where there was discrepancy between assessors, a third member of the research team made an informed final decision on the value of the item.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics for qualitative data (i.e., frequencies and percentages), recording compliance with the items on the checklist.

Results

The results are set out below according to the six dimensions of the checklist.

Preliminary dimension

Only 35.29% of the ACs (Andalusia, Extremadura, Castile-La Mancha, Aragon, La Rioja and the Balearic Islands) had up-to-date regulations on AD processes (i.e., they incorporated all the AD

phases into one document published within the last five years). As regards the focus on rights, only Castile and León, Extremadura, Galicia and Navarra explicitly referenced the CRPD (23.53%).

Detection and identification of the SNES

As shown in Table 1, only the legislation of Andalusia had a protocol specifying the concrete actions required of each member of the SCC, covering the different aspects of student development and the various contexts where they interact. In particular, it identifies: key stages for the detection of the SNES; the stakeholders who should be involved (counselors, teachers and principals) and what is meant by SNES; key areas to be assessed (e.g., cognitive, motor, sensory, communicative and linguistic development); and the appropriate procedures for obtaining information (such as observation or a log sheet). All these elements are developed in an annex (Junta de Andalucía, 2015, pp. 118-126). In addition, just 47.06% of the ACs (Castile and León, Andalusia, Valencia, Cantabria, Aragon, La Rioja, Navarra and the Canary Islands) specified the criteria that students needed to fulfill in order to be considered as having a SNES.

A total of 58.82% of the ACs used up-to-date terminology to refer to SWID. However, only the Basque Country, Aragon, Navarra and the Canary Islands explicitly highlighted the importance of adaptive behavior in the conceptualization of ID, and Navarra was alone in legislating for a specialist ID educational counseling and psychopedagogical team (SIDECPPT).

Psychopedagogical assessment

As depicted in Table 2, all of the ACs provided for psychopedagogical assessment in school documentation and appropriately defined the role of professionals and family members alike (the Basque Country uses nonnormative documents, which do not form part of this analysis). In the same way, they all underlined the importance of obtaining information on the family, social and cultural context, as well as the educational background. That said, only in Andalusia were specific guidelines proposed to detect different needs in these contexts (i.e., family dynamics and expectations, environmental characteristics, family-school cooperation and family/teaching-learning process cooperation,

Detection and Identification (SNES)	%	n
Are there minimum indicators to be met... for each educational stakeholder?	5.88	1
in the different development areas?	11.76	2
in the various contexts relevant to the student?	5.88	1
by educational stakeholders, development areas and context in this phase?	5.88	1
Are inclusion/exclusion criteria specified for each SNES and SEN?	47.06	8
Is there a protocol that articulates the decision-making process in the different phases of AD?	5.88	1
Is up-to-date terminology used to refer to SWID?	58.82	10
Is adaptive behavior referred to in relation to SWID?	52.94	9
Is the importance of adaptive behavior in ID highlighted?	23.53	4
Is there a SIDECPPT?	5.88	1

social inclusion and support resources and/or sociocultural resources to further the student's development).

Of all the ACs, 47.06% (Castile and León, Andalusia, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Cantabria, Galicia, La Rioja and the Canary Islands) in their regulations defined different procedures for psychopedagogical assessment, although none referred to the need for standardized tools which meet good psychometric properties (i.e., reliability and validity).

With the exception of Catalonia, the Basque Country, Murcia and Aragon, the majority of the ACs (76.47%) set out guidelines for the preparation of the psychopedagogical report.

Andalusia, Catalonia and Asturias (17.65%) were the only ACs to regulate the assessment of support needs beyond curricular, organizational and/or coordination aspects. The aforementioned Andalusian protocol describes the importance of paying attention to the different aspects of the student's development, with varying degrees of emphasis.

Schooling report

Except for the Basque Country (which uses nonnormative documents), all of the ACs defined the role of each member of the SCC and set out the decision-making process for the most appropriate form of schooling for the SSEN (Table 3). However, it is striking that in this key phase for the inclusion of SWID, only 41.18% of the ACs (Andalusia, Extremadura, Catalonia, Murcia, Aragon, the Balearic and Canary Islands) were up-to-date on the conceptualization of ID.

The regulations of Andalusia, Catalonia and Asturias provided for the assessment and provision of support beyond curricular and/or organizational aspects (e.g., postural aids, adaptive behavior or activities for daily life); and Catalonia, the Basque Country and Aragon were the only ACs to explicitly allude to support needs and supports from an ecological-contextual approach.

Attention to diversity measures

Table 4 shows that all of the ACs specified ordinary, extraordinary and exceptional AD measures; they also defined the

Psychopedagogical assessment (Students with specific educational support needs and SSEN)	%	n
Is the role of each professional defined?	94.12	16
Is there a decision-making process...?	94.12	16
...Set out in school documents?	100	17
Is the role of the SC clear?	94.12	16
Is the role of the family defined?	94.12	16
Are procedures for obtaining information defined?	47.06	8
Are psychometric quality indicators proposed for standardized information collection instruments?	0.00	0
Is there recognition of the importance of the social, cultural or family context, in addition to the educational context?	100	17
Are concrete guidelines proposed to detect needs in these contexts?	5.88	1
Are specific guidelines provided for the completion of each section of the psychopedagogical report?	76.47	13
Is there an assessment of support needs beyond curricular, organizational and/or coordination aspects?	17.65	3

Schooling report (SSEN)	%	n
Is the role of each professional defined?	94.12	16
Is there a decision-making process?	94.12	16
Set out in school documents?	94.12	16
Is the role of the SC clear?	94.12	16
Is the role of the family clear?	94.12	16
Is up-to-date terminology used for SENs associated with ID?	41.18	7
Are support needs assessed and supports offered beyond curricular/organizational aspects?	17.65	3
Is the supports model used?	17.65	3

Attention to diversity measures	%	n
Are ordinary, extraordinary and exceptional measures specified by education levels?	100	17
Is the procedure for applying these measures specified?	88.24	15
Is there a decision-making process that relates measures, procedures, educational stakeholders and students according to the SNES?	64.71	11
Are staffing aspects, as well as ordinary and specific materials defined?	100	17
Is there recognition of the importance of supports beyond curricular/organizational aspects?	76.47	13
Are there regulated measures for support provision to SSEN with ID in different contexts (e.g., health and safety, social activities or self-determination)?	35.29	6
Is there an alignment of supports and better quality of life for SSEN?	17.65	3
Are the roles of professionals and family members defined?	100	17
Are they set out in school documents?	100	17

role of each member of the SCC, other staffing aspects and AD materials.

Apart from Catalonia and Murcia, all of the ACs (88.24%) explained the process for the application of these measures. This figure fell to 64.71% (Andalusia, Extremadura, Valencia, the Basque Country, Asturias, Castile-La Mancha, Aragon, La Rioja, Navarra, the Balearic and Canary Islands) for those ACs which distinguished between the measures to be adopted depending on the needs of the student.

A total of 76.47% of the ACs recognized the importance of providing support beyond curricular and/or organizational aspects. However, the only ACs to actually regulate measures for support provision in areas such as health and safety, social activities or self-determination were Andalusia, Asturias, Castile-La Mancha, Murcia, La Rioja and Navarra (35.29%). Finally, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Aragon (17.65%) were the only ACs to emphasize explicitly the relevance of aligning interventions to improve the QOL of SWID.

Involvement of SCC and dissemination of data and results

All of the ACs highlighted the importance of AD coordination between education cycles and stages, as well as across departments (health, social services and education). Similarly, apart from the Basque Country, they all emphasized the role that SCC had to play in the process.

All of the ACs stressed the importance of exchanging experiences of good practice and of analyzing collated results.

Discussion

This paper analyzes how the different ACs regulate and establish AD measures which promote the provision of appropriate supports to SWID and direct the professional practices of SCs towards inclusion. To this end, we consulted the relevant regulations of each Autonomous Community in order to evaluate their respective AD processes. We used as frames of reference the concepts of support needs and reasonable accommodations consistent with the supports model, the QOL model and the CRPD. Certain elements of this analysis merit further comment.

First, the data show that no Autonomous Community clearly articulates the assessment of support needs for SWID and, at the same time, has AD measures based on individualized supports that transcend curricular and/or organizational aspects. The ACs closest to this approach are Andalusia, which establishes protocols with indicators for the detection of more than just academic needs (Junta de Andalucía, 2015); and Catalonia, the Basque Country and Aragon, which mention—but do not elaborate on—measures aimed at improving the QOL of SWID. Failure to establish a clear protocol for the assessment of support needs in all areas of a student's development will have implications. In the event that a schooling report is required, decisions are not based on a holistic approach to assessment and support provision, which may lead to the segregation of the student without having assessed his/her functioning with appropriate supports in other areas of his/her life.

Secondly, all of the ACs assert that the psychopedagogical assessment and schooling report should be based on both qualitative information (i.e., interviews, clinical judgment and observation) and quantitative information (i.e., standardized tools). Yet our data reveal two critical issues. First of all, there is a distinct lack of up-to-date knowledge about ID (i.e., obsolete terminology, lack of regard for adaptive behavior and lack of specialist teams), which can lead to improper practice in the assessment and provision of supports, giving excessive importance to IQ—over other types of skills—or to exclusively curricular support. In this respect, the low percentage of ACs which use up-to-date terminology in schooling reports is striking, all the more so given the implications for decision-making. The second issue is that the lack of reliable and valid tools to support interventions and decisions (Muñiz, Hernández, & Ponsoda, 2015) can lead to improper practice, especially in processes which may result in the segregation of SWID, compromising their full development and restricting their rights.

Thirdly, the data suggest that in terms of AD measures, the regulations of the different ACs employ the term “educational support” to refer mainly to organizational and curricular measures. The exceptions are Aragon, Catalonia and the Basque Country, although the latter two use nonnormative documents. In Aragon, the notion of support as set out in Decree 135/2014 (pp. 24,833) aligns with an ecological-contextual approach which is consistent with the supports model, the QOL model and the CRPD.

When all is considered, our analysis has identified two barriers to the admission of an ecological-contextual notion of supports which would promote the inclusion of SWID in Spain: the conceptualization of SENs and how the “reasonable”

accommodations proposed by the CRPD are interpreted and applied.

In relation to the first, the regulations state that SENs are “a consequence of the disability”. This is an erroneous assumption, since a person can have a disability without necessarily presenting activity limitations or participation restrictions (WHO, 2007).

The second barrier arises from the lack of regulatory clarity in information on “reasonable accommodations” as provided for by CRPD, which is most likely due to the lack of knowledge surrounding this term. These accommodations refer to the supports required to ensure the full inclusion of SWID (UN, 2016), and which Spain is obliged to apply as a State Party to the CRPD and having ratified its optional protocol. Using the economic crisis or “excessive reasonableness” as an excuse for failure to apply the supports is a violation of article 24 of the CRPD (Verdugo & Navas, 2016).

Finally, whilst almost all of the ACs highlight the importance of family participation for the inclusion of SWID, they nonetheless assign families a passive role in this process. The two exceptions are: Andalusia, which counts on the active participation of families at the detection of needs stage (Junta de Andalucía, 2015); and Aragon, which regulates the creation of advisory monitoring commissions for policy improvement and inclusive practices (Gobierno de Aragón, 2015).

The results presented in this paper are consistent with those of other studies in affirming that AD does not adequately address the inclusion right of SWID (Echeita et al., 2017; Liesa, Castelló, Carretero, Cano, & Mayoral, 2012; Ramos & Huete, 2016; Verdugo, 2009), since they focus principally on curricular aspects which, on occasion, can act as barriers to inclusion (Palliseria, Fullana, Puyalto, & Vilà, 2016; Verdugo & Rodríguez, 2012).

The main value of our analysis is its new contribution. Previous studies analyze or compare specific aspects of educational policies (Beltrán-Villamizar, Martínez-Fuentes, & Vargas-Beltrán, 2016; Torres & Castillo, 2016), but none has addressed the objective of this paper.

This study could be used as a basis for future research, with the aim of contrasting results and overcoming limitations, such as the inductive method used to draft the checklist or the descriptive nature of the study. For these reasons, the results of this study should be treated with caution. We suggest further investigation into the culture within schools for the inclusion of SWID, as well as into the direct practice and training programs of SCs.

Based on the collated evidence and on the valid approaches for working with people with ID, this study has implications which should serve as guidelines for the attention of education authorities and professionals.

In relation to education authorities, our study highlights: the significance of defining action protocols to avoid duplication among SCC (as reflected in the Instructions of June 22, 2015 in Andalusia); the importance of incorporating validated psychometric tools into AD; and the need to define holistic assessment and response processes which transcend traditional approaches. Various studies describe the impact of the QOL model in developing inclusive educational policies (Pazey et al., 2016; Verdugo et al., 2012).

That being said, guidelines for policy development do not necessarily translate into new professional practices. It is therefore crucial to provide guidance to support the work of the counseling psychologist with the aim of overcoming the limitations of AD in relation to SWID, as identified in this study and in existing

literature (Anaya, Pérez-González, & Suárez, 2011; Echeita et al., 2017; Verdugo, 2009). Such guidance is informed by the practical application of the supports model and the QOL model within an educational context.

When applied to the work of counseling psychologist, the supports model facilitates the individualized assessment of support needs from a holistic approach, as it consists of a work plan to both identify the specific needs and provide individualized supports to address them (Thompson et al., 2016). Moreover, to measure support needs, this model proposes tools which have been tested for reliability and validity, and thus offers psychometric alternatives to complement qualitative approaches to assessment. Given that the Supports Intensity Scale - Children's version has been validated in both Spanish and Catalan (Guillén, Adam-Alcocer, Verdugo, & Giné, 2017), the model can now be implemented in practice as in other countries (Walker et al., 2014). It provides counselors with useful information in their planning of individualized supports for home, community and school, as well as for self-determination, thus helping students to develop to their fullest potential and to improve their personal outcomes.

Although not essential, it is nonetheless recommended that the tool be applied by psychologists, as they have the necessary experience and competence in the principles of psychological assessment (Thompson et al., 2016). What is more, psychologists are the best equipped to understand human development, psychological needs and the assessment thereof, as well as the utilization and implication of psychometric tests.

This suggestion is made not to exclude other professionals from AD, but to recognize the role of psychologists and their contribution to processes for the inclusion of SWID. Furthermore, as the tool takes the form of a semi-structured interview (Guillén et al., 2017), psychologists can reconcile their knowledge with the

experience of professionals in the field of education (e.g., teachers or educationalists) and with family members of the SWID, thus availing of comprehensive information to shape the provision of individualized supports. As a result, AD assessment and response procedures are enhanced by this validated working model, which brings the educational setting closer to a holistic understanding of needs and supports.

As for the QOL model, it allows professionals to evaluate how individualized supports contribute to the achievement of desired personal outcomes. As with the other model we have discussed, it offers tools, such as the QOL scales (e.g., Gómez et al., 2016). These are based on validated models; in addition, they record information at different stages – at the outset, during, and at the end –, which facilitates the collation of data and the comparison of the results of interventions, ultimately contributing to evidence-based practices (Schalock, Gómez, Verdugo, & Claes, 2017).

By way of conclusion, the only way to assist SWID in developing to their fullest potential, and thus respect the rights set out in the CRPD, particularly article 24, is to adopt and integrate the supports model (i.e., assessment and planning of individualized supports) and the QOL model (i.e., focus and impact of the intervention) into direct practice. For this to take place, it is imperative that education authorities, SC training programs and the SCs themselves adopt the latest assessment and intervention techniques for their work with SWID.

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