

# Emotional education and strengthening of emotional and social skills in the educational context

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## Abstract

This article is a product of the research "Emotional Education as a facilitator of peace processes to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent violence from preschool", carried out under a qualitative paradigm which had as an objective Emotional Education to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent violence rates from preschool. It was based on the question: How can emotional education be strengthened for 5 and 6 year-old children to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent violence in the classroom?

The theorists that have been approached propose "that emotional education should begin in the first moments of life and be present throughout the entire life cycle" (López, É, 2012, p. 18), that "bullying is any form of psychological, verbal or physical abuse produced among school children in a repeated manner over a given time" (Mendoza, M T, 2011, p. 9), that "the class is a community for the emotional and social learning of children (Cohen, J, 2005, p. 85), that interpersonal relationships in childhood are determinants of assertive behavior (Sierra, A, 2008, p. 70 and Jiménez, M, 2000, p. 22).

The sample was made up of teachers from Kindergarten and Transition grades. For the collection of information and analysis of results, focus groups were held.

It was concluded that it is a priority to involve the family in this process and to establish Emotional Education transversally from the curriculum, since an emotionally healthy child is willing to learn, to know, to relate and to build meaningful learning.

**Keywords.** Teaching, emotional education, pedagogical strategies, coexistence, peace, learning.

## Introduction

In recent years, the Ministry of National Education and various national and international entities and universities have been developing actions and projects through their research groups aimed at giving relevance to socio-affectivity as a fundamental axis of human development. These efforts are oriented towards training in attitudes and values that will benefit emotional intelligence in order to create a culture of non-violence and live in peace from the preschool years onwards.



In accordance with the above, emotional education is a very important subject at present; it is fundamental that from an early age the need for non-violence is made known in order to grow in a psychological and affectively healthy environment, which unleashes processes of peaceful coexistence that lead to the generation of a new culture in which the need and importance of being emotionally competent is rescued.

Likewise, it is fundamental to know the pedagogical and didactic concepts that guide the processes and activities that are carried out in this field, so that the classrooms constitute a propitious environment without ignoring the family, to advance training proposals that help not only to promote non-violence, but also to prevent future behaviors such as bullying at different educational levels. For this reason, we must think about the inclusion of the curricular processes of teacher training in

programs that are transversal and that take into account the development and strengthening of competencies in emotional education and, in this way, make evident the work done in this sense, since, despite being a transcendental field in training, it is marginalized and in some cases forgotten.

For all these reasons, we want to promote emotional education from the preschool level so that children begin to internalize the need and importance of living together in peace at an early age, so that they can project themselves as adults capable of facing life's challenges with emotional maturity and manage to perform adequately in different educational, social and family settings.

In developing countries such as Colombia, emotional education is one of the fundamental actions to reduce situations of violence, leading to respect for the integrity of others and adequate resolution of conflicts.



## Research process

The first moment of this research, "Emotional Education as a facilitator of peace processes to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent violence from preschool", was introduced in the book "Miradas Diversas de la Educación en Iberoamérica" (Diverse Views of Education in Latin America), where a first progress report was presented<sup>3</sup>.

The following is a result of the research: "Emotional education as a facilitator of peace processes to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent violence from preschool", which led to knowledge of the pedagogical strategies used to strengthen the socio-affective development of children aged 5 and 6, to create awareness of the need to assume, build and live a healthy relationship with others.

The research question was: How can we strengthen emotional education for 5 and 6 year olds to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent violence in the classroom?

Its objective was to analyze the importance of emotional education as a facilitator of peace processes, to promote non-violence from the preschool level and thus establish how teaching and learning processes in this specific field are favored from the pedagogical practice, in order to identify both its weaknesses and the strengths and to design a relevant program for the strengthening of emotional education at the mentioned level.

The research allows us to take up again the topic of childhood in our country and to recognize emotional and social development as central axes, so that childhood is thought as a stage of life where the influence of the environment and their own experiences affect

a great deal their daily life and their existence both positively and negatively. The child of five and six years of age must be understood from the point of view of human and social development, bearing in mind that from the institutions that provide infant education, the process of socialization that has begun in the family nucleus is continued and strengthened.

Among the theorists discussed are López (2012, p.18), who in his book *La Educación Emocional en la Escuela* (Emotional Education at School) states that "emotional education begins in the first moments of life and should be present throughout the entire life cycle. Similarly, Mendoza (2011, p. 9) in *La Violencia en la Escuela, Bullies y Víctimas* (Violence at School, Bullies and Victims) says that "bullying is any form of psychological, verbal or physical abuse produced between school children repeatedly over a period of time". Cohen (2005, p. 85) in *La Inteligencia Emocional en el Aula* (Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom) proposes to understand "the class as a community for the emotional and social learning of children. Jiménez (2000, p. 22) affirms that interpersonal relationships in childhood are determinants of assertive behaviors. These authors, among others, contribute significantly to the research supporting the analysis of the results.

Cohen (2005, P. 13) states that effective emotional and social education develops the capacity for conflict resolution "and involves the learning of skills, knowledge and values that increase our ability to "read" ourselves and others in order to use that information to solve problems with flexibility and creativity".

Effectively promoting both emotional and social behavior is necessary since it is the basis that provides a healthy development of the personality, which will have a direct impact on the structuring of the other dimensions of human development (cognitive, corporal communication and aesthetics). For this reason, it is important, says Cohen (2005), "to establish

<sup>3</sup> Arias C. Book Chapter: "Emotional Education as a facilitator of peace processes in the educational context". P.411-416. Book: Various views of education in Latin-America. ISBN: 978-958-8166-66-7. Santillana Foundation, 9EIDE. Latin-American Meeting of Education EIDE. UNAB University - Colombia. Alcalá de Henares UAH University - Spain, UNESP University - Brazil. 2014.

how teachers can promote skills, knowledge and values. There is no single or best way to promote social and emotional teaching”, but if one knows or has learned “about the social and emotional skills that reduce physical and verbal violence, students’ cooperative capacity increase, they are better prepared for healthy problem-solving, and their academic achievement is encouraged”.

Within the legal framework, account was taken of the Ministry of Education’s School Cohesion Act 1620 of 15<sup>th</sup> March 2013 “establishing the national system of school cohabitation and training in the exercise of human rights, sexuality education and the prevention and mitigation of school violence”, whose purpose is set out in article 1: “The purpose of this Act is to contribute to the training of active citizens who will contribute to the construction of a democratic, participatory, pluralist and intercultural society, in accordance with the constitutional mandate and the General Education Act - Act 115 of 1994 - by creating the national system of coexistence in schools and training for human rights, education for sexuality and the prevention and mitigation of school violence, which promotes and strengthens citizen training and the exercise of human, sexual and reproductive rights of students, and of preschool, basic and secondary education levels, and prevents and mitigates school violence and adolescent pregnancy”.

A qualitative paradigm and a descriptive methodological design were taken as a basis for the development of the research. Qualitative research is interested in capturing social reality ‘through the eyes’ of the people being studied, that is, from the subject’s perception of their own context (Bonilla & Rodriguez, 2007, p 84). The researcher induces the properties of the problem studied from the way in which “the individuals part of the reality being examined orient and interpret their world” (Bryman, 1988, p. 69-709); he/she does not start from theoretically derived

assumptions, but rather seeks to conceptualize reality based on the behavior, knowledge, attitudes and values that guide the actions of the people, subjects of the research sample. The qualitative research process systematically explores the knowledge and values shared by individuals in a given spatial and temporal context (Bonilla and Rodriguez, 2007, p. 86)

We have, on the other hand, descriptive methodology. According to what was proposed by (Hernández S, Roberto et al., 2010, p. 80), “descriptive studies look for the properties, characteristics and profiles of people, groups, communities, processes, objects or any other phenomenon that is subject to analysis”.

### Population and Sample

The population and sample were made up of teachers from kindergartens in the city of Bucaramanga.

### Techniques and instruments for collecting information and analyzing the results

To collect the information, the focus group technique was applied to the kindergarten teachers who were part of the research sample. The technique was chosen both for the collection of information and for the interpretation of the results and was carried out with the teachers who made up the sample, where the pedagogical viability of the program designed in emotional education was analyzed and reflected upon, based on the following categories of analysis:

**Emotional skills** (emotional awareness, regulation, self-esteem, autonomy, self-motivation)

**Social competences** (Communicative: Active listening, assertiveness, empathy, conflict resolution, assumed roles, family influence) and the emerging ones that arise during the research process. Conclusions and suggestions were also made in order to validate the impact of the research.



As a final product, a program and a module in emotional education were designed to be offered as support for the training of child educators.

### **Analysis of the results**

According to the problem description, objectives and previous research categories, the pedagogical viability of the program offered and valued by the participating teachers is evident, because it is designed taking into account the development of social and emotional skills in 5 and 6 year-old children, not only to start developing them – and in some cases strengthening them- but also in the projection and impact they have in relation to the prevention of future behaviors among peers such as bullying.

Similarly, because the design takes into account the stipulations of the pedagogy of the experts, who state the importance

of emotional education in the life of every human being, especially preschool children, the activities proposed both in the program and in the module of emotional education, designed as products of research, are relevant because they take into account the integral development at this age (5 and 6 years) and its developmental characteristics in each of its dimensions, emphasizing the determinants of socio-affectivity for the strengthening of social and emotional skills.

We reflected on the need and importance of undertaking this type of action with principals and teachers, which leads to the awareness and interiorization of educational communities to incorporate transversal programs in emotional education from the first levels of education, since this has a direct and definitive impact on the healthy structuring of the personality.

Similarly, there is an urgent need to offer this type of training, taking into account relevant

recreational and educational strategies that facilitate social and emotional learning in children aged 5 and 6. These strategies must be based on the real situations that children of this age experience in their daily lives and in their immediate context. In order to achieve changes and prevent behaviors that lead to peer abuse, it is essential that the activities carried out with them are part of a pedagogically structured program that contributes to comprehensive training.

It is necessary in all training to take into account the socio-affective dimension, because it offers the pillars for the solid construction of a personality that favors self-esteem, self-regulation of emotions, emotional awareness, emotional autonomy, conflict resolution, empathy, assertive communication, interpersonal relationships and the application of all social values, which lead to a healthy coexistence with others. In this way, the objectives and the answer to the research question were fulfilled.

## Conclusions

The conclusions were drawn from the results obtained and thus have a logical sequence relevant and consistent with what was done in the research process.

- From education, significant changes in people's behavior can be achieved, without leaving family aside with its different types and the influence it exerts on the integral formation of the preschool child.
- Increasingly, teachers must be provided with further training courses, as these help to provide better quality education, taking into account human development as a pillar of education.
- Emotional education should be set as a guideline in curricular design from early childhood, since it has a direct impact not only on strengthening socio-affectivity,

but also on all dimensions of development (cognitive, communicative, physical and aesthetic), insofar as an emotionally healthy child is willing to learn, to know, to relate to others and to build meaningful learning through the experiences provided by the environment in which he or she develops on a daily basis.

- Emotional education, with the development of emotional and social skills and their respective components, leads to form reflective and analytical students of their actions and therefore to be better human beings every day.

## Suggestions

- To integrate the family in the activities related to providing emotional education, since this transmits ways of thinking, values and behaviors that have a significant impact on the formation of children, which are structuring their personality, which is reflected in the way they carry out their socialization process in a specific community.
- To undertake research projects in education, having responsibly analyzed the needs of each context where they can be carried out, in order to actively involve children from 5 to 6 years of age and thus acquire citizenship skills, to live in community, taking care of themselves, of others and of the environment.
- To give continuity to the projects developed in the educational institutions, with the purpose of contributing from the education to the resolution of problems related to the coexistence, the observance of norms, and values so that each experience of life constructs in the children social and emotional learning.

## Impacts

The project is a proposal for work and training with teachers in educational institutions of early childhood education. The potential impact of the research has to do with the contributions to the integral development of kindergarten students so that they begin their process of acquiring emotional and social skills once the teachers know about the pedagogical workshops and implement those with them.

Similarly, the entire educational community benefits by building, through the relationships established within it and among all its members, affective bonds that lay the foundation for the future interpersonal relationships of children with other people who will be part of their relational environment and also the need as human beings to initiate the process of socialization in an appropriate manner.

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