

Emotional competences' development and evaluation in the Non-University teaching staff in Spain.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research has been to validate the need to promote emotional competences in the teaching staff, oriented towards improving coexistence and teaching' quality in schools and high schools in Spain.

For this, we propose the design and assessment of the effectiveness of a permanent training program for intrapersonal (emotional awareness, emotional regulation and motivation) and interpersonal (empathy and social abilities) competences, through an educational quasi-experimental research, with pre-posttest. In order to do this research, we count with the collaboration of two schools in Salamanca (Spain), with a total of 47 teachers from the different educational levels (Preschool, Primary and Secondary). We will introduce the different used assessment strategies and their sense in terms of feedback in a formative type of intervention.

After the data analysis, the results show, on one hand, a significant improvement (alpha ,05) of the level in the different assessed emotional competences depending on the tool, and the need rate as well, the interest and satisfaction sensed by the teachers in terms of the development of this kind of competences; judging them as useful for the teaching performance.

General Terms

Design and experimentation

Keywords

Teacher qualifications, educational personnel training, skills development

INTRODUCTION. The importance of the Emotional Education at school.

The 21st century School has been, and still is in the midst of important process of transformation that end up reflected on the curriculum, the different needs, challenges and requests that need to be approached [10]. Violence issues at school, school failure and the difficulties related to coexistence, demand new and innovative answers that allow us to turn schools into real gathering and development spaces, where the different educative agents' tasks transcend a simple transmission of knowledge onto promotion and development of basic life skills and abilities, turning into a true comprehensive education [13], [14], [18].

This way, it is not uncommon that in the last few years the role and importance of emotions in education have increased [11], [17], [2]. Therefore we are talking about Emotional Education as an strategy and an educational innovation that arises as an essential complement to the cognitive development and it is established as: "an educational process, constant and ongoing, that tries to strengthen the development of emotional competences as an indispensable element of the integral development of the human being, in order to train him/her for the everyday life. This aspects aims to improve personal and social well-being" (Bisquerra, 2005, p. 96). [3]

Prior researches have shed some light into the effects of Emotional Education as a strategy to improve our emotional and social competences, boosting personal and social well-being and decreasing our vulnerability faced with dysfunctions' appearance [4]. That way, people with more development of the emotional skills are less prone to interpersonal conflicts, to maintain violent attitudes, to have risky conducts or have stress and anxiety problems. Moreover, there are studies that state that emotions and emotional competences affect learning process, physical and mental health, interpersonal relationships' quality and school and work performance [5], [6], [20], [19].

Our contribution to this study focuses on supporting the teaching staff's emotional competences, as a strategy to deal with the challenges related to teaching, preventing intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts, inside the educational community. More specific, teachers' training in these skills guarantees de quality and effectiveness of the learning-teaching process and an essential requirement in order to improve the students' emotional development [22], [23], [24], [28].

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2. STATE OF AFFAIRS. Context and motivation that supports the research

2.1. The need to develop teachers' emotional competence.

From our research team about Educational Assessment and Counseling, in the University Institute of Education Sciences (IUCE) from the University of Salamanca, we have been answering to requests for initial and permanent training for the development of emotional competences among the teachers. Throughout this experience, we have been seeing the perceived need from the teaching staff and the importance given to this kind of training in order to answer to intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges of their practice and being able to maintain a healthy emotional balance [30], [29].

In this sense, we think promoting teachers' emotional competence is the previous step, fundamental to address not just the development of these skills with their students, but also to improve the personal well-being and the relationships with other peers, management team and families, preventing discomfort, stress or frustration... feelings that are felt a lot of times when we come across certain challenges in our teaching practice [8], [12], [31].

However, since many programs in recent years have been launched to promote emotional skills in schools and even verifying the benefits [9], [19], [25], [27], we find that most of them are aimed to the student as the main beneficiary of this kind of intervention.

There are not a lot of researches, in our environment, focused on developing teachers' emotional competence and, in most of the occasions, this training is reduced to offer a set of materials and counseling advices in order to introduce certain activities and methodologies in their classrooms. And even though teachers have become aware of the importance and interest of the development of this kind of training, the problem presents itself when it is time to implement it, because sometimes it can be too theoretical and less experiential and practical [15].

Therefore and in order to face this need, we set out the design, implementation and assessment of a formative program for teachers to promote and develop intrapersonal and interpersonal competences like, for example, emotional consciousness, emotional regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills sociales [29]. The following hypothesis leads our research: *the implementation and evaluation of the teaching staff' formative programs, as a strategy of ongoing training, will boost the emotional competences' acquisition and, consequently, it will contribute to improving the coexistence and the quality of teaching in schools.*

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Depending on the hypothesis of this study and the availability of the samples, we choose a quasi-experimental, with pre-posttest measure [1], [7]. We check the level of effectiveness of the program assessing both the level of competence acquired, such as satisfaction with training, at different times of the intervention program, (initial, development and final).

To do this, we apply different tools that allow qualitative and quantitative data processing, taking into account current methodological approaches in educational research [3], [16].

3.1. Population and Sample selection.

Following the implementation of the pilot project [29], we get in touch with the management staffs from different schools of Salamanca. The sample for final availability, consisted of teachers from two centers of semi-private ownership (publicly funded) who agreed to participate in this training, and got involved the majority or all of the faculty of each school in the training process, with a total of 47 teachers.

- Group 1 consists of 27 teachers, 67% being women, aged between 26 and 42 years old, with the average age around 36 years. As for the years of teaching experience, the average is 11, with teachers from different educational levels: Kindergarten (22.2%), primary (29.6%) and secondary (48.2%).

The application of the learning process was conducted at the request of the center for 4 weekends in the months of January and February 2014, Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings, with sessions of 4 hours.

- Group 2 consists of 20 teachers, 65% being women, aged between 30 and 61 years old, with the average being around 44. The average number of years of teaching experience revolves around 18 and depending on the educational level in which they carry out their work, we see 20% in Kindergarten, 30% in Primary Education and 50% in Secondary.

The implementation of the program with this group of teachers was agreed, at the request of the school, Monday and Wednesday afternoons, with 3-hour sessions.

3.2. Variables and tools for collecting information

The tools for collecting evidence and information that have been used for the evaluation and adaptation of the program can be summarized in the following ones:

- Variable 1: Level of Emotional Development, measured through the Questionnaire of Adults Emotional Development –CDE-A- [25]. It is a self-report measure developed by the Research Group on Guidance Counselling from the University of Barcelona (GROP). It consists of 48 items and it allows us to detect needs within the five dimensions of emotional competence according to the GROP pentagonal model: emotional consciousness, emotional regulation, emotional autonomy, social skills, and live and well-being skills [5]. The CDE-A gives us an overall score and one for each of the 5 dimensions, allowing us to determine the perceived needs of teachers and the potential development in the different competences.

- Variable 2: Level of skills for conflict resolution, measured through "Rubric" tools applied to practical situations that could easily happen in the environment of the school. A series of case studies that describe different life situations that occur in a school have been developed. From those situations, participants are asked to identify what their thoughts and emotions are and what they would do as professionals of this field. After this, through an

expert judgment criterion responses are rated by a process of assessment rubrics.

- Variable 3: Level of motivation and satisfaction with the program, measured through the Questionnaires of motivation and satisfaction with training in emotional competencies. Ad hoc processed and validated using expert judgment. Both tools have open and close questions (Likert scale of 5 points) and allow us to know the interests, knowledge, expectations and satisfaction with teacher training

- Follow-up information of the program. Collected through the elaboration of follow-up "diaries" of the sessions and incident logging

4. RESULTS

4.1. Motivation for training in emotional competencies.

When asked about their motivation facing this kind of training, teachers' response was: 59,6% of them said it was high or very high, 36,2% said it was intermediate and only 4,2% saw it as low. Comparing these results between groups, we see that motivation was higher in the first group, with an average score of 3.81 out of 5; while in the case of the second group the score was 3.50.

Among the different reasons that led the teachers to this training, they stated that this course had been imposed to them from the school, expressing also, although to a lesser extent, curiosity and interest.

76% of the sample expressed having some knowledge on the subject, and among the main sources of information they highlighted having done other training courses related to Emotional Intelligence (31%), having read certain books (21%) or consulted the Internet (19%).

Regarding the degree of importance attached to the development of various skills, it showed a remarkable interest in working the recognition of emotions in both groups (average score of 4.57 out of 5), showing scores slightly higher in respect of the importance and need to develop skills and abilities to recognize the emotions of others (4.23 out of 5). Besides, they consider necessary and quite important to develop communication skills and work on empathy (average score of 4.42 out of 5).

55% of the teachers, accept that in some occasions they have felt overwhelmed by their emotions, 12% say that only in a few occasions, 4% declares they have never felt that way and the remaining 14% answers that they sometimes have been overwhelmed (percentage that is slightly higher among teachers of the second group).

When asked about the perceived need to get support to improve emotional regulation 38% declare that quite a lot and 46% say that they need some help. 12% manifest a low need to develop this competence and only 2% say they never need any kind of help in this matter.

The vast majority recognize that they find their work motivating and satisfying citing among the main reasons that lead them to go to work every day is to relate to students and the gratification and satisfaction of working with people and contribute to their development.

4.2. Satisfaction with training in emotional competencies

Teachers valued positively the interest and usefulness of the developed competencies, finding an average valuation higher in the second group. In terms of training methodology we find differences between both groups, because even they valued it positively, these scores are lower in group number 1, (3.81 in comparison to 4.55), which is due to 74% of the first group sample said that they would feel more comfortable with a less experiential but more theoretical training.

We find that 63% said that they had acquired a higher level of competence than they had initially noticed, whereas the remaining 36% thought it was enough. When asked about each of the worked competencies, they acknowledged that the program had provided improvements and learning advices in each and every one of them (being the average scores in the case of the second group higher, being as it ranges between 3.9 and 4.2 out of 5, versus 3.33 and 3.59 of the first group).

In terms of the duration of the training, 61% of the teachers thought it was convenient, 64% said they thought it was too short, 29% thought it was too long and just 2% said it had been excessive.

They saw as very positive the level of competence of the teaching staff responsible of providing the training (average scores of 4.26 and 4.60 out of 5 in each one of the groups), as well as management and coordination of the training course (4.00 and 4.25 respectively).

In this way, it is not surprising that in assessing the overall satisfaction level we find that the vast majority were quite satisfied with the training and that more than 90% of the sample would recommend the training course to other professionals and just to those of the educational field, mostly increasing interest in further education in the field of Emotional Intelligence.

4.3. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the program on increasing self-perceived level of Emotional Development (CDE-A)

CDE-A initial scores showed adequate levels in both groups in each and every one of the dimensions, being the lowest scores those obtained in the dimension of emotional autonomy, which relates con self-management skills, among those we would highlight self-esteem, positive attitude and personal efficacy [5].

After the training course, the final scores indicate an improvement in all the dimensions as it can be seen in the following table.

Group of teachers		Average score	N	Standard deviation	Standard error	
Group 1 Siervas	Global Score pre	6'1448	27	'75756	'14579	
	Global Score post	6'9559	27	'96675	'18605	
	Emotional Consciousness pre	7'1270	27	1'10242	'21216	
	Emotional Consciousness post	7'9893	27	1'15996	'22323	
	Emotional Regulation pre	5'4237	27	'97508	'18765	
	Emotional Regulation post	6'3870	27	1'08507	'20882	
	Social Competence pre	6'0337	27	1'20264	'23145	
	Social Competence post	6'7044	27	1'39069	'26764	
	Autonomy pre	5'2900	27	1'10059	'21181	
	Autonomy post	6'3337	27	1'18609	'22826	
	Life skills pre	7'3463	27	'78804	'15166	
	Life skills post	7'8907	27	'97046	'18677	
	Group 2 Trinitarios	Global Score pre	6'0775	20	1'36378	'30495
		Global Score post	7'1385	20	1'30241	'29123
Emotional Consciousness pre		6'8565	20	1'26271	'28235	
Emotional Consciousness post		7'6140	20	1'22541	'27401	
Emotional Regulation pre		5'0495	20	1'81136	'40503	
Emotional Regulation post		6'5500	20	1'88259	'42096	
Social Competence pre		6'3120	20	1'34623	'30103	
Social Competence post		7'2660	20	1'22565	'27406	
Autonomy pre		5'4430	20	1'61382	'36086	
Autonomy post		7'0080	20	1'34012	'29966	
Life skills pre		7'1280	20	1'37478	'30741	
Life skills post		7'5430	20	1'41967	'31745	

Table 1. Results and analysis of the CDE-A prior and post training.

The contrast and analysis of the normalcy applying Kolmogorov-Smirnov (with Lilliefors' correction) and Shapiro Wilk tests didn't show enough evidences in order to affirm that these distributions don't come from a normal distribution (alpha '05). Therefore we choose to do a parametric contrast, we apply Student's t test for related samples (pre and post-test), obtaining results that showed that there actually is a general tendency to show significant differences (alpha '05) in favor of post-test, especially in the case of the first group, just it can be seen in the following table

Group of teachers		t	Sig (bilateral)
Group 1 Siervas	Global Score pre – Global Score post	-5'845	'000
	Emotional Consciousness pre – Emotional Consciousness post	-4'543	'000
	Emotional Regulation pre – Emotional Regulation post	-5'792	'000
	Social competence pre – Social competence post	-3'794	'001
	Autonomy pre – Autonomy post	-4'597	'000
	Life skills pre – Life skills post	-3'144	'004
Group 2 Trinitarios	Global Score pre – Global Score post	-4'580	'000
	Emotional Consciousness pre – Emotional Consciousness post	-3'302	'004
	Emotional Regulation pre – Emotional Regulation post	-6'895	'000
	Social competence pre – Social competence post	-3'048	'007
	Autonomy pre – Autonomy post	-5'034	'000
	Life skills pre – Life skills post	-1'655	'114

Table 2. Results from the t test for the related samples.

4.4. Evaluating the effectiveness of the program on the level of skill in resolving conflicts on practical cases.

The initial study of answers that the participants gave to the practical cases, showed difficulties to recognize their own emotions and conducts provoked by the different suggested situations. Regarding the conducts and the answers given to the practical cases we find little conciliatory responses and an important number of the participants say that they will seek out help from other professionals trying to find a solution (for example, "I would ask the principal, or the counselor ...)

After the training we see a notable rise of the emotional vocabulary, decreasing the difficulties to identify their thoughts and distinguishing them from the emotions. There is a higher tendency to approach conciliatory and assertive conducts, looking for not only their own benefit but the benefit of others as well.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Paying attention to the obtained data we can conclude that the formative process helps with the acquisition of emotional competences from the teaching staff that takes part in this study, these results are consistent with similar studies such as that conducted by authors like Merchan and González Hermosell [22] or the one done by Pérez Escoda, Filella, Fondevila and Soldevila during the year 2013 [25].

Although the teachers were aware of the fact that this training had been imposed by the management team, we find out that, in general, they find themselves motivated and they think the contents of the training course are very useful and interesting for their teaching practice.

Even though it is true most of them have medium average levels in different competences (according to the initial results of the CDE-A and the initial Questionnaire), the analysis of the practical cases and their answers in different activities and real situations that took place during the training sessions, showed the need to work on some of the competences like emotional regulation and empathy.

This way we confirm the need to present the development of the formative program in a flexible way and adapting it to the different needs that present themselves during the implementation process beyond those initial results, emphasizing the importance of using an active and participative methodology, based on previous experiences, more centered in the “how to be” and “how to do” rather than just “knowing”.

This way, we shouldn't be surprised that this formative process doesn't develop all the dimensions equally, highlighting especially the progress made in the dimension of emotional regulation and emotional autonomy y both groups, where it was discovered through the pre-test phase a higher potential development.

We have to emphasize that the level of global satisfaction with this training program is quite high, therefore, it doesn't surprise us that the motivation to keep training and developing their emotional competences have increasing, maybe because after the formative process they become more and more aware of their needs.

In view of these results, we have to keep investigating this field of knowledge, opening an interesting line of research facing the possibility of studying the generalization of these learnings over time and their influence in the school environment, in the quality of the teaching practice and, consequently, in the improvement of the school's coexistence as well.

As limitations for this study, we have to take into account not just the size and the specific profile of the sample, but that all the tools used throughout the process have the characteristic of being self-report, having the probability of influencing a quite important social desirability bias. Because of this we should be cautious when trying to generalize this study's results; assessing the usefulness that, in consecutive applications of the program, we could corroborate and add other collection-data strategies from other sources (peers, families...) or other measures of emotional abilities, like, for example, the MESCEIT of Mayer, Salovey and Caruso [21].

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