

# Education for emotions in Portuguese primary school students: development of (socio) emotional skills

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## Abstract

The qualitative study (case study) addresses in its scope the emotions and socio-emotional skills in Portuguese students with learning difficulties from two elementary schools with the application of a program. The objectives were: to understand how students deal with emotions; to analyze the relationship of learning difficulties with emotional state; to valorize education for emotions at school; to develop emotional intelligence in students. Data collection techniques were: semi-structured interviews; participant observation; intervention; focus group; field notes. The results showed improvement in relationships, emotional skills, and school performance.

**Keywords:** socio-emotional skills; education for emotions; learning difficulties; basic education.

## Introduction

Educating children's emotions as they develop skills is an essential action on the part of parents/family, teachers and/or professionals at school, as it implies improving essential aspects of their lives (BISQUERRA, 2017; WOYCIEKOSKI; HUTZ, 2009). Both school and family must enable students to be able to deal with emotions, to learn how to react to anxiety/stress, frustrations, to recognize their own anxieties and fears etc. That is to say, by learning socio-emotional skills, the student is enabled to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems and develop positive relationships with peers (EXTREMERA; FERNÁNDEZ-BERROCAL, 2015). In fact, this learning constitutes the process of acquiring and effectively applying knowledge, attitudes and key competences in (self) knowledge and managing one's

own emotions and those of others, making responsible decisions and developing positive relationships of coexistence, with highlights to self-awareness, self-control, social awareness and relational skills in this process. (RESCHKE; WALLE; DUKES, 2017; WU; SCHULZ, 2018). Emotional responses develop in conjunction with cognitive and/or neurological development, varying in quality and intensity, as children must learn to know, manage and control when subjected to various factors that interact and change with each other. We know that emotions are the result of multiple interactions (both internal and external factors), physiological and linked to genetics, and their manifestation depends on the subject, their learning and previous experiences (CANDEIAS; REBELO, 2012). It is true that the components constituting emotions have a multifactorial origin (cognitive, neurophysiological, motivational, expressive and subjective feeling) in a continuous process of valorization (PALMERO-CANTERO et al., 2011).

The present study, of a qualitative nature, based on the interpretive paradigm and in the modality of case study, intended to develop emotional intelligence and/or socio-emotional skills in students from two classes of the 4th year of basic education (1st CEB – Cycle of Basic Education in Portuguese) from two schools belonging to a School Grouping in the Portuguese city of Castelo Branco, held at the end of 2019, with the application of the Emotional Intelligence Program (PIE in Portuguese abbreviation), seven sessions, which used part of the material/instruments of the International Project “Emotional Intelligence Program for students of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education in the Castelo Branco region (2011-2017)”, in a total of twenty sessions during the school year, under the Protocol established between the Polytechnic Institute of Castelo Branco (Portugal) and the University of Extremadura – Faculty of Education (Badajoz/Spain), coordinated by the first. The objectives were: to understand how students from the 4th year of 1st CEB deal with their and others emotions; to analyze whether these students’ learning difficulties are triggered by their emotional state and lack of socio-emotional skills; to understand from the teachers’ perspective the importance

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of education for emotions in school; to develop emotional intelligence in students, through the PIE, in order to improve their social relationships, school performance and educational environment; to value the intervention of the PIE in the development of emotional skills in students.

We resorted to the theoretical-conceptual framework of specific studies on emotions, emotional education, the development of emotional intelligence, social and emotional skills and competences, all of them referenced in the bibliography, in order to list the approach to the theme in the school context, aiming demonstrate the importance of the emotional part associated with the cognitive in the formation of the (future) citizen, especially in students with learning difficulties, as they do not know how to properly manage their emotions. The results were positive both in the development of socio-emotional skills in the students and in the improvement of their school relationships.

## Contextualization: emotions and learning difficulties

The importance of the affective-emotional component in the student's development is notorious, in an articulation between the cognitive and emotional part (BISQUERRA, 2017). It is therefore important that he/she develops his/her emotional intelligence, the ability to perceive their own emotions and those of others, knowing how to manage and control them, so that his/her thinking understands emotions and, consequently, emotional growth and intellectual (VALENZUELA-SANTOYO; PORTILLO, 2018). In fact, the understanding of emotions implies the (self) knowledge of oneself and others, as well as their causes and regulatory mechanisms (PONS; HARRIS; DE ROSNAY, 2004), and therefore it will be necessary to teach educational strategies so that the children know how to understand and manage them. This process is essential for emotional structuring and personality development, considering it an important social-emotional predictor in childhood, including school problems/difficulties, conduct with parents/teachers and peers, relational success, and educational performance (BRACKETT; RIVERS; SALOVEY, 2011). The proper understanding of (the nature of) one's own emotions and those of others implies skills (basic, complex) that allow recognizing and attributing these emotions to circumstances and being able to interpret them (BISQUERRA, 2017). This process of emotional understanding requires social and emotional skills.

### Many students have difficulties in learning due to the intermittency of their emotional state and the family and social environment

In recent decades, specific studies have emerged on the role of emotions in learning, whether due to the influence of positive and/or negative attitudes on subjects, or to develop socio-emotional skills and/or emotional intelligence at school (REBELO, 2012). Bisquerra, Pérez-González and García Escoda (2015) take into account five dimensions in emotional competences: emotional awareness (ability to recognize one's own emotions and those of others); emotional regulation (skills in relating emotions to behavior and knowledge); emotional autonomy (emotional self-efficacy, criticism of social norms, responsibility and positive attitude); social ability (having good relationships); skills and well-being (acting responsibly). For Gottman and De Claire (2009), the school must promote: the (self) awareness of emotions in the student;

the recognition of emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and learning; knowing how to listen with empathy, accepting and validating feelings; helping the student to express their emotions and know how to classify them at the moment they are feeling them; setting limits when defining strategies for solving school problems.

On the other hand, many students have difficulties in learning due to the intermittency of their emotional state and the family and social environment, and therefore educating emotions becomes an adequate strategy to manage many of these learning situations (SCHULZE; ROBERTS, 2005). These learning difficulties at school pose designations of, for example: school failure, school undervaluation, specific learning difficulties, specific developmental disorders, school problems, etc. In other words, for Lopes (2010, p. 41) that term "[...]" presents a significant gap between

expectations in terms of age and the actual accomplishments in academic terms". These students are a very heterogeneous group, as each one of them is unique and different from all the others and their difficulties are different. In general, these difficulties in students reflect an inability/impediment to learn (reading, writing, calculating or acquiring social skills), very much due, according to Fernández-Berrocal, Cabello and Gutiérrez-Cobo (2017), to manifesting socio-emotional problems such as: behavioral disorder, which manifests itself through conflicts with peers (pedagogical relationship); low self-esteem; poor popularity among their peers and poor ability to make and keep friends. Teachers consider these students less socially skilled and with more behavioral problems. In fact, the problems associated with learning difficulties are internalized and, as stated by Ros et al. (2017) and Wu and Schulz (2018), they generate: a system of beliefs and perception of personal control; high levels of anxiety in relation to school-related situations, even not being motivated to go to school; low academic self-concept; moments of depression, emotional and behavioral problems.

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**Most of the difficulties in learning come from the lack of support, commitment and/or involvement of families with their children**

According to Lopes (2010) and Valgôde (2016), learning difficulties stem from two school situations. The first one is its relationship with the concept of learning, which has underlying definitions of various theories, comprising the student's acquisitive phenomenon, highly dependent on his hereditary background or abilities, and also on the range of formative stimuli of his personality (LÓPEZ-CASSÁ; GARCÍA-NAVARRO, 2020). In this sense, the need for school support and guidance (personal and social) is fundamental. We consider that learning derives from different theoretical frameworks (theories or learning models), which analyze and develop scientific bases on how learning should be (IBARROLA, 2016). We can also refer to: Piaget (cognitivism), in which human development consists of achieving maximum operability in motor, mental, verbal and social activities, thus resulting in a learning intimately related to such operability; Vygotsky (emphasis on social interaction), in which language and thought are essential factors for human development; Wallon (emphasis on psychogenetics), in which the factor for the subject to interact with the environment, i.e., going from the condition of the self to the world, is affectivity as a result of emotions.

The second situation is the act of learning (acquisition process related to the teacher-student action), which requires conditions that are sometimes influenced by factors that are anomalous to the learning process and that prevent the student from learning normally (REBELO, 2012). In fact, these difficulties pose impediments that can be both tenuous/weak and easily overcome, as they can be strong and lasting and not always possible to detect their causes. Thus, any difficulty in learning is related to learning anomaly(ies), constituting manifestations of the child at the time of acquiring knowledge and performing tasks, very dependent on the

surrounding conditions where their learning takes place (formal and non-formal) in the educational act (BISQUERRA, 2017). Most of the difficulties in learning come from the lack of support, commitment and/or involvement of families with their children, especially those that manifest emotional breakdown. The influence of the family and the school in the development of the child's abilities and in their learning process is therefore crucial.

Most of the situations faced by students come from the social environment and family life, the lack of a pattern of discipline imposed by parents/family, the manifestation of indiscipline without being corrected, disrespect for colleagues and teachers, uncontrolled impulsiveness, lack of anxiety/stress management etc. (GOTTMAN; DECLAIRE, 2009). It is obvious that the family is a key player in the child's affective-emotional development, and it must accept the difficulties it brings from school, and seek to educate it emotionally (active listening, interactive communication, socio-emotional skills), in particular, knowing how to learn with mistakes, creating a disciplined and normative environment, which promotes the development of their abilities and skills, so that they feel free to express their thoughts, in order to become a persistent student throughout their learning. Therefore, students with learning difficulties manifest a plethora of characteristics, as pointed out by Palmero-Cantero and collaborators (2011) and Woyciekoski and Hutz (2009): distraction; hyperactivity; impulsivity; strange handling of school supplies; lack of coordination at the level of perception; lack of organizational skills; little tolerance for frustrations and problems; difficulty in developing reasoning; difficulty in one or more basic education curriculum areas; poor self-esteem; social relationship problems; difficulty in starting or completing activities; irregular and unpredictable performance in a formal assessment situation; sequential auditory and visual memory deficits; visual-motor coordination problems; dysfunctions in the neurological system etc. Students, by not having (psycho)pedagogical support, develop frustration and low self-esteem, generate relationship conflicts, mood disorders and have anxiety.

It is quite evident that these students cannot achieve significant school achievements and many of them develop a feeling of incapacity, lack of skills, which leads to disinterest, frustration and academic failure (MAYER; SALOVEY; CARUSO, 2008). When learning difficulties are not dealt with well at school or are ignored, they worsen over time, thereby intensifying and causing disturbances in these students, including communication problems. It is up to the school, teachers/directors and parents/family to be aware of these difficulties, as most of these problems come from the affective-emotional aspect. Likewise, specialized school support services (student and family support office) must guarantee an adequate intervention, which combines, in an interdisciplinary dynamic, psycho-pedagogical actions and personal/social/school guidance, with the cooperation of the family.

## Methodology and design

Our study, carried out between October and December 2019, was guided by a qualitative methodology, in the typicality of a case study (exploratory, descriptive, analytical and interpretive), with the intervention of an Emotional Intelligence Program (EIP) in a sample of students (N = 33), from two 4th year classes (N1 = 11; N2 = 22) of Basic Education (1CEB) belonging to two basic schools (designated: suburban school “Castelo” and urban school “Afonso”), from a Group of “AP” Schools in the Portuguese city of Castelo Branco, which show difficulties in learning in a school context.

**The scores between the two temporal moments (pre and post) in each of the classes were not very significant**

We used the following data collection techniques: sociometric friendship test (TSA – Portuguese abbreviation), before and after the intervention; documentary observation (class dossier) and participant; intervention with IEP of seven sessions (two hours each session) in a classroom with an established methodological structure (session: story and exploration, dramatization and activities and self-assessment form); in-depth interview with the two full professors of the classes about the importance of emotions in education and the impact on the personal/social development of students, consisting of four topics that generate responses, which were recorded and then transcribed and validated by the interviewees, to be submitted to content analysis, which allowed us an objective and systemic description of the collected information and respective interpretation (grounded theory); the focus group with each class during PIE sessions (appreciation); field note records. We comply with the institutional protocol requirements, the terms of free acceptance with the subjects under study (teachers) and other ethical and legal procedures for educational research.

The TSA was applied before the PIE at the end of September and was applied again in December, after the PIE. It is about valuing each student with their peers in the class, on a Likert scale: “A great friend of mine” (5 points); “My friend” (4 points); “It doesn’t matter to me to be a friend (neither like nor dislike)” (3 points); “Not my friend” (2 points); “I don’t like him/her at all” (1 point). The scores between the two temporal moments (pre and post) in each of the classes were not very significant, having carried out statistical tests of “U” Mann-Whitney and “T” of Wilcoxon giving a series of  $p = 0.582$  despite an increase of scores in post, mainly in the “Afonso” school class. This fact of little statistical significance, in sociometric terms, is accounted for the fact that the students’ relationships come from previous academic years, with the friendship groups being cohesive in their choices and interactions (some stability and little rejection) and, therefore, there was no significant changes, probably because the intervention (PIE) was short and in sessions, and in the case of the “Castelo” class, the change of teacher. If we compare the results of classes in “pre-pre”, the attitudes of friendship did not produce differences in the relationships of students within each class, although there is more cohesion in the “Afonso” school and less in

the “Castelo”, which show emotional levels uncoordinated, scarce emotional skills, with an impact on their learning difficulties, due to the lack of support from parents, and also the fact that they had substitute teachers (tenured teacher leave for a month). While at the “Castelo” school, being a small class, the differences between pre and post in the test were not significant, despite some increase in scores, in “Afonso” school these post-graduate scores were much higher. The pre and post inter-schools showed significant differences, especially in the “Afonso” school, where there was more support from parents and teachers to overcome educational difficulties and promote better socio-emotional relationships.

## Results: content analysis of interviews

In the analysis of the content of interviews with full professors (PC = Castelo school; PA = Afonso school) we defined four categories (Cat.), with their respective subcategories and evidence (text segments), with an interpretative basis.

**\*-Cat1- Learning difficulties** (three subcategories: school/teacher attention; pedagogical strategies; educational support). PC: “Yes, the school pays attention to those students with difficulties [...] A student with learning difficulties can have different types of help [...]” in the way the content is explained/taught; PA: “Teachers have always paid close attention to students with socio-emotional problems, often filling gaps they have at home”, and adds that “My attitude towards a student with learning difficulties is all I do to overcome or at least minimize these difficulties it reveals, adapting strategies or using resources”; each teacher creates their own resources so that all students learn and do not experience difficulties, however as PA says, “There are many supports that today’s school has available for students with learning difficulties. In the grouping there is a Psychology and Guidance Service and socio-educational support, tutoring, classes in small groups, advice, among other measures”, in addition to the educational system providing for greater curricular flexibility. That is, “I look for the best strategies to work with this student [...] or I adapt the teaching to their difficulties with an Individualized Educational Plan (PEI - Portuguese abbreviation) appropriate to their problem, or I signal to the Special Education support service” (PC). This PEI is either elaborated jointly by the teacher and the class director, depending on the student’s level of education, or else by the special education teacher and parents. The technical-pedagogical support services of the Grouping of Schools have a Support Center for Learning + Inclusion as an educational response to reconfigure the paradigm of a specialized unit, which is like a privileged space for the development of (psycho)pedagogical dynamics and other educational responses, made by professionals and technicians. It is a physical space, with resources, which ensures school inclusion with inclusive dynamics in the context of the classroom and aimed at the class. The interviewees often performed different work with these students and inserted them in a more structured environment, but in the case of the “Castelo” class, it was not very effective.

**Understanding  
the emotions of the  
other implies/  
requires  
understanding  
one's own emotions**

**\*-Cat2- Relationship of emotions with learning difficulties** (three subcategories: typology of emotions; physical-emotional well-being of students; socio-educational relationships). PA admits that "Emotions can contribute to learning difficulties, as children do not always see positive emotions from home". Students in these classes/schools cannot achieve better academic achievements, as many of them develop feelings of incapacity and lack of motivation, which lead to frustration. Students at the "Castelo" school show, as a rule, an inability to perform school tasks successfully, because "The physical and emotional well-being is one of the fundamental factors for the teaching-learning process to work effectively [...]" (PC), because they have socio-emotional problems and are therefore "more likely to manifest learning difficulties and reveal greater difficulties in overcoming them" (PC). However, the non-development of emotions and/or socio-emotional skills has consequences in the relationships and educational process of these students, and it is important for the teacher to educate the emotions and their respective skills (BISQUERRA, 2017). At the "Castelo" school, students are socially unskilled and have behavioral problems, which is why they need more educational support than those at the "Afonso" school, with intervention in the emotional area that generate social skills and competences and a good pedagogical relationship (GOTTMAN; DECLAIRE, 2009).

The school must not only transmit a range of knowledge and limit to mere cultural reproduction, but it must also enable comprehensive training, so it is essential to develop emotions in the curricular area (CANDEIAS; REBELO, 2012). This idea is shared by PA: "I think that the school, in the way it is presented to us, focuses too much on school curricula and is formatted equally for everyone. It is not prepared to deal with emotions". And PC states as well: "Creating situations, through games and programs, so that students can understand their feelings and those of their colleagues." In other words, insisting on school life programs, parental responsibility projects and the development of emotional intelligence, fighting school failure, etc. involving family-school and teacher-students. There should also be additional training in this area for teachers (ZURITA, 2011).

**\*-Cat3- Educating emotions versus learning.** Understanding the emotions of the other implies/requires understanding one's own emotions, which "[...] are strategies and ways that we acquire to deal and react to certain situations and, therefore, emotional competence is the ability to understand their emotions and those of the others" (PA). That is, "The ability to regulate and control oneself" (PC). When a student has an emotional disturbance, it can lead to difficulties in learning, as this instability causes them to be demotivated, lacks interest in the curriculum and to school, and conflicts. A student who cannot deal with and overcome their negative emotions has difficulties at school level and in relationships with teachers and peers. PA states that "[...] emotionally aware simply means the ability to recognize and identify one's own emotions and feelings and perceive the emotions of the other". The teacher,



through observation, must know how children deals with their emotions, guiding them to overcome negative feelings, fears and anxiety, in order to overcome school difficulties, relational and social problems (LÓPEZ-CASSÀ; GARCIA-NAVARRO, 2020). Both teachers showed evidence related to the importance of emotions in the educational process and in the situations of students with learning difficulties, warning of the need to develop social and emotional skills in them, despite the fact that they have educational support, which has little effect on their achievement school (success under “Castelo” school).

**\*- Cat4 - Develop Emotional Intelligence** (three subcategories: school activities/projects; develop social skills; know and deal with emotions). PA states that “Activities are developed that allow students to understand and be able to give meaning to the emotions felt”. And so PC: “In recent years, some projects have been developed in schools to develop emotional intelligence. I have already participated with a class in a mindfulness project, which proved to be very interesting and with very positive results, but there is still a long way to go in this field.” We highlight the importance given to projects in the area of parental education and emotions so that children develop their skills and know how to manage emotions in their daily lives, as PC says, “The skills and ability to deal with feelings are important, but emotional awareness takes precedence over IQ”. As stated by Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2008), or Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (2016), emotions are central processes in human functioning, playing an important role as organizers in brain development and in various domains of psychological and social functioning, despite interviewees recognize that “[...] it is not always easy and it varies a lot from student to student [...] Most of the time they recognize their own emotions [...]” (PC). Namely, this intention of “[...] teaching students to recognize emotions requires spending a lot of time with the student, as it is not always easy to understand how he understands and deals with emotions” (PA), knowing these skills are improved by professional experience, but the two interviewed teachers recognize that there is a lack of training in this area of approaching emotions.

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**Both teachers showed evidence related to the importance of emotions in the educational process**

## The intervention and enhancement of the PIE

The PIE consisted of eight sessions, applied between October and December 2019. The Program modules covered the following areas of intervention: self-knowledge – self-concept of emotions; intra-group/class communication; expression and understanding of the emotions and feelings of others; relationships of help and cooperation; conflict resolution. Group dynamics was used with the development of actions in each session (story and exploration; dramatization and activities; session (self) evaluation sheets; focus group). There was a very positive feedback from students in classes/schools in each session, with commitment and interest in the tasks.

**Session 1: "Carpentry assembly".** It was intended to value that each one is unique and different from the others. The activity "I am unique and special" was proposed, in which students drew themselves in a frame and had to say what they were so special about, highlighting the characteristics of friendliness, being handsome and tall. Then they talked about each other's differences, concluding that we can't all be the same, we all have flaws, but also qualities and that everyone together, even in different ways, did amazing and useful things. So, everyone should like themselves since the people around us like us for who we are and not for the things we do. At the end of the session, the students reflected in a focus group on what they had learned in the knowledge of emotions and skills, highlighting a few sentences. In the "C" school class: "Highlight the positive qualities"; "Nobody is perfect"; "No one speaks ill of others"; "They learned to know each other"; "You don't compare colleagues just by their characteristics"; "That we must be good to each other". The students of "A" answered: "We are unique and have many flaws"; "Respect others whatever their faults"; "Don't be angry about anything"; "We must be friends and not just look at people, we also need to look at ourselves"; "We must be united and educated, that not all of us are equal, but for a team we are all necessary"; "We shouldn't look at the negative side of people"; "We all have flaws, but we must work with our qualities";

**It was intended to value that each one is unique and different from the others**

"We have to respect others"; "We are all special"; "Be assiduous and a good citizen"; "Despite being different, we make a great team (class)"; "Do not insult"; "We are all useful". As stated in the literature (PALMERO-CANTERO et al., 2011), negative characteristics can become positive for you, as you must think positively and like each other, and when we are sad we must promote joy. In addition, it was reflected on controlling impulses and precipitation before acting (activities) or communicating/speaking.

**Session 2: "The chained elephant".** With the story of this session, students learned to assess the intensity of feelings and progressively control their emotions. Subsequently, the students were asked: "Has it ever happened to you what happened to the elephant? Or are you resigned, or do you do something?" In terms of skills, the students in the classes/schools learned to never give up on difficulties, overcoming the impression that we can't, just because we failed, but we must persist and strive, that is, no matter how hard you can't, you have to try again. They were explored in focus group phrases like: "Not falling for what we think we can't do"; "That we shouldn't stop trying because we're going to make it"; "That we should strive"; "We have to control our emotions"; "Be patient when someone does bad things to us and we shouldn't get angry."

A situation was then proposed in which the younger brother scribbled on their math work to be turned in the next day at school, describing how they felt at that time. All emotional reactions were commented on by the focus group, with most students in the classes/school highlighted: anger and revenge; sadness and anger; I would feel sad and angry with him; be patient; scolded him; feeling bad/sad/angry that the work was scrapped.

In the second activity, they wrote the meaning of the expressions "worry", "obsession", and "tachycardia"

Likewise, in the activity "Easy, nothing's going on" the students wrote their emotional reactions in writing (What did you feel, or would you feel?), for example: "I would laugh because I don't care, as I love math and I would do it again"; "Little brother don't do that again! For the second time I punish you"; "You can't do it again because this is important to me"; "I would punish and chastise him, so he wouldn't do it again"; "I explained to him that if he did that again I would leave him in his room for punishment"; "I explained to him that he could get a bad grade for spoiling the work"; "I give it a chance and go back to doing my homework"; "I warned him for his attention, he tore the scribbled sheet from the notebook and did it again"; "I forgave him because he had no idea what he was doing"; "I asked him if he would also like to have something crossed out for him"; "He told his mother to scold him or call him to attention"; "I yelled at him or turned my back on him, didn't talk to him" etc.

**Session 3: "Two sprites and two wishes"**. The tale was about anxiety and worry, thinking about things that make us nervous. The classes had as their first activity the drawing of the human body, where they indicated in which part of the body they felt anxiety and the ways to express it. Some answers (drawings) were explored, for example: "Heart beats faster, my legs tremble"; "The arms and hands or head tremble"; "Heart pounding and negative thinking (head)"; "I shake my head, I kick, I shake my legs and I get restless"; "My hands are shaking"; "My feet and legs tremble"; "My whole body trembles"; "I think negative things, I tremble my feet"; "I force my hands and blow"; "Mouth, fingers, I shake my legs, I tap my feet"; "I don't rest quietly".

In the second activity, they wrote the meaning of the expressions "worry", "obsession" and "tachycardia", with the help of a dictionary, and read it to the class. Then they answered the questions in focus group: "When do you feel nervous? What do you do to calm down?" To the first question, most of them answered: "I feel nervous when I have a test"; "When I move to a new school and on test day"; "When I go to the beach and when I take scouting tests"; "Before a test and an event"; "On auditions and on my family's birthdays"; "I try to calm down or drink tea to relieve the stress of being nervous"; "When I go to a game"; "When my brother takes my things from me". To the second they answered: "I try to think positive and take a deep breath to calm down"; "I take a deep breath many times"; "I take a pill"; "I calm down playing". Afterwards, we did a relaxation dynamic with each class, teaching them breathing and muscle relaxation, with exercise together. The question "What things or situations make you anxious?" was explored, obtaining the following answers, explored in a focus group: "The tests"; "My birthdays"; "When I go to the beach"; "On auditions and on my family's birthdays"; "When I go to a game"; "Go on vacation or to the beach"; "When will something happen". Later, it was explained to them what they had to do when they felt nervous and anxious, for example: take a deep breath; breathe and think positive; relax and calm down; relax and take a deep breath"; "count to five!".

In this session, we worked with images and situations to get to know the state of anxiety and stress, rage, and anger/wrath, and consequently reflected on how to

avoid/control anxiety and learn not to be impulsive, to think before saying something, to be patient and behave well, etc. They described in writing a situation in which they had been impulsive, answering for example: "Before traveling"; "In my birthdays"; "I've already destroyed my mother's perfumes"; "When they irritate me"; "When I don't like to have things taken away"; "On test"; "When I said something ugly to a friend and then regretted it"; "When I had a new dog it had been an impulsive day"; "When Christmas came".

**Session 4: "The two brothers"**. The tale tells us about a conflict between two brothers who stopped talking. We asked if they knew how to define what anger (wrath) was. The meaning of the expressions was explored: "Being full of anger!", "Being very angry"; "Fill with wrath and frustration", "What things or situations cause the anger?". The answers given were diverse, and some of them resorted to the dictionary: "Anger is when people get angry"; "It's being angry"; "Wrath is annoyance"; "Anger and bad jokes" etc.

An activity was proposed with answers, in writing, to the following questions, which were then explored in a focus group: "What do you do to not be angry?" and "What do you do when you get really angry?" Most students in the classes answered: "I must calm down"; "I come out from next to that person"; "I ask you to stop"; "Be quiet in my place"; "Come to terms"; "I take a deep breath and calm down or I'll leave"; "I ignore the person"; "I rarely get angry"; "I stay calm in the face of provocation and walk away to avoid conflict"; "When a friend of mine doesn't let me play with her I get angry"; "I'll go away and calm down"; "I shake hands very tightly so I don't hit him right away"; "I yell at the person"; "I'll tell someone."

A story was proposed to them: "João and André started to argue for a joke. João takes things very seriously and feels a great annoyance with André because he believes he was the one who started the conflict", having the task of rewriting this story with a different attitude and positive emotions.

**Session 5: "The Bad Neighbors"**. The idea of this tale is that we should not judge the intentions of others, nor invent or misrepresent them. Dialog is a way of understanding to solve problems. The objective was to analyze the errors that occur in communication when talking to others, pay attention to the messages that others give us and recognize situations in which communication failures occur. In other words, knowing how to actively listen. The students in the classes played on the broken phone, in which a student created a sentence and had to reach the last student, but this did not always happen, either because they didn't hear it, or weren't paying attention or they laughed at the sentence because it didn't arrive. at the end of the line just like what the first student had said. Only in the last sentence with more attention they were able to go through the students without a single flaw. The following questions were explored by focus group: "not to judge people right away without hearing them first"; "not to be discussed"; "that one should not act without thinking";

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**We asked if they knew how to define what anger (wrath) was. The meaning of the expressions was explored: "Being full of anger!", "Being very angry"**

“we must not judge others”; “that revenge is not good”; “that we should not say what we want on impulse, we have to tell the truth without feeling bitterness”; “don’t judge right away without thinking twice”.

**Session 6: “I am your friend”.** The text of the short story addressed an aggressive child who gradually became more friendly towards other peers. Her dog showed how important it was to have friends, to know how to speak well with them, to listen to them and to be affectionate. Then we made a silent film (mimic), where each class/school was divided into two groups, and each created a short story that then represented/dramatized the others, who had to say what they understood (meaning) of this story. In this activity of “silent film” we proposed a brief description of the representation of each group. Class/school “A” stated: “We were five kids who first played hide-and-seek and then had a picnic.” And the “C” class/school: “We were game YouTubers and we won.” We asked two questions: (Q1) “Did your colleagues correctly guess the situation?” Most students in the classes answered “Yes”, because they listened well and were attentive; (Q2) “Which story did you understand best?” The groups of each class said “it had been theirs because they had elaborated it, so it was the best or was less complicated to understand”. With these activities, the students in the classes became more participative and collaborative with each other, that is, they created social skills, knowing how to listen to others, collaborating as a team, dealing with the emotional part (MAYER; CARUSO; SALOVEY, 2016). In focus group, they reflected on being less violent, aggressive and undisciplined, not being bad for their colleagues, but rather being friends.

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**As we carried out the PIE, the students were interacting more and more and showing their social-emotional skills**

**Session 7: “I’m chubby and then...”.** This tale told of a chubby boy that other boys of his age laughed at because he ate a lot, and his stature was more robust. At school he was known as “Bomba de Nata” [Cream bombshell] because he stole snacks from his classmates. Everyone was afraid of this boy for being fatter and mocked him, until one day he saved a girl by pulling her out of the well. Then his colleagues saw him with different eyes and already thought he was brave. This activity was narrated and then explored in a focus group, addressing the differences between people, as it is important to value everyone, since not all of us are equal (REBELO, 2012). Everyone has their own body, their personality, their friends, so there should be no bad thoughts towards each other, we should all get along, respect each other, including differences (MINBASHIAN; BECKMANN; WOOD, 2018).

## Retention of some conclusions

The PIE was highly valued by the teachers and students of the two classes/schools, who expressed in the self-assessment sheets that they were very fun and that they learned a lot to know, deal with and manage their emotions and those of others, and developed skills social-emotional factors that are useful to their relationships and to the educational environment. One of the attractions that

motivated their interest and commitment in the activities was that the stories were not known to them, and they knew, in focus groups, to express, analyze and reflect the core ideas of each theme of “emotion” in the various sessions. They regretted that there were no more sessions and activities, getting excited about knowing how to manage the emotional part of their relationships, school performance/ performance and conflicts. As we carried out the PIE, the students were interacting more and more and showing their social-emotional skills. Teachers expressed the importance of emotional skills in students, especially those with learning difficulties, undisciplined or violent situations in class, as they favor social relationships (school coexistence), the achievement of better academic results and the educational environment (IBARROLA, 2016; VALENZUELA-SANTOYO; PORTILLO, 2018). Being emotionally intelligent also means taking responsibility for the things we do (FERNÁNDEZ-BERROCAL; CABELLO; GUTIÉRREZ-COBO, 2017). Incorporating the education of emotions at school and developing socio-emotional skills in students promotes interpersonal skills in relationships (BISQUERRA; PÉREZ-GONZÁLEZ; GARCÍA, 2015; ROS et al., 2017).

We know that students with greater emotional skills have more academic success, better relationships and are less involved in harmful behaviors (EXTREMERA; FERNÁNDEZ-BERROCAL, 2015). It is increasingly necessary to train people who are aware of their emotions, who know how to understand them and those of others. Students, as future citizens, need to know how to self-regulate and interact with others with empathy and respect, as this is the only way to build a better society. At the same time, special attention is needed for children with learning difficulties, so that they can better develop their emotional skills and improve their school results (RESCHKE; WALLE; DUKES, 2017). We know that students with learning difficulties are a very heterogeneous group, their practical dysfunction implies non-compliance with school organization and discipline. They challenge what school represents, are undisciplined and aggressive with peers, very unstable and have difficulty concentrating on tasks and study (hyperactive and impulsive), and consequently show lack of interest and motivation for learning. Teachers easily identify symptoms of introversion in these students (silent children, apathetic, absent from activities, manifesting anxiety, insecurity, and communication difficulties) and/or externalization (indiscipline, violence, disrespect).

Obviously, these detectable categories in the school context are not distinct since many of these children oscillate between the indicated characteristics. However, some of them are stagnant or stuck in a functioning educational process that seems to have no possible way out (LOPES, 2010). It is these child-students who usually do not learn, due in part to their social and emotional difficulties, that influence their ability to learn. Apparently, the so-called normal students – so called for following the rhythm of formal learning in school terms – invariably present learning difficulties and, therefore, academic failure, in addition to being apathetic and lazy. A student with learning difficulties does not necessarily have a low or high IQ, he/she only has

specific difficulties in a certain curricular area, and this student can be successful in school if properly supported, being helped individually.

If families and teachers are more aware of the influence that the emotional part has on learning, it is obvious that they will be able to collaborate in action and intervention programs that include emotional education, the development of emotional intelligence and social skills. The focus on this emotional part implies improvement in school performance and in the relational and social environment. The experience of everyday situations related to emotions and pedagogical practice, such as psychopedagogy and/or psychotherapy, allow attention to the most frequent problems of these children who do not learn, since in general these problems are affective-emotional (PONS; HARRIS; DE ROSNAY, 2004; VALENZUELA-SANTOYO; PORTILLO, 2018).

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