Emotional Education in Vulnerable Contexts. An Emotions and Arts Based Intervention in a Primary School

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Abstract

Aims: This study aimed to verify the effectivity of an intervention based on Emotional Intelligence (EI) and arts. **Method**: a didactic program was carried out for the development of EI, with 55 Primary Education pupils aged between 8 and 12 years. It focused on artistic and musical activities. The participants belong to a school with high rates of marginality and social exclusion. **Results**: The data were collected with the TMMS24-Questionnaire, which assesses the EI in three dimensions: attention, clarity and emotional repair through a pretest, a postest and a deferred postest. **Conclusions**: After the data collection, the students' achievement of the emotional dimensions was analysed and the main results obtained show notably significant improvements.

Keywords: Emotional education; art education; primary education; education in vulnerable contexts.

Introduction

Nowadays, thanks to the transformation of teaching models, the development of emotional competence is quite present in schools and teachers often pay great importance to it. However, the application of effective emotional programs in the classroom continues to pose an educational challenge that few teachers are prepared to face. Though, it is necessary to work in the classroom with emotional competences, in order to make students able to succeed in their future. Creative and artistic subjects have proven to be effective in teaching emotional and social skills (Fernández Berrocal & Extremera, 2005) but are not worked enough in the classes. The present research is based on the need to educate emotionally through the artistic subjects students in situations of vulnerability. The aim was to train the students of a vulnerable background in activities designed to notice, understand and manage their emotions, through music and visual arts, using them as tools to promote a better quality of life for themselves and their environment.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is an umbrella term that can be understood in different ways. One of the most accepted is the one conceiving it as a capacity that encompasses different skills that human beings practice in an intrinsic way and in their interpersonal relationships. The rise of EI begins with the Emotional Intelligence study of Salovey and Mayer (1990). Goleman and his book Emotional Intelligence (1995) popularized the concept. At the beginning of the 21st century, EI turns out to have a growing prestige, both in the psychological and educational aspects, counting with many researches on the field and the emergence of new teaching models.

In the emotional education iterventions, resilience must be promoted, as an ability to develop psychologically in a successful way. This has to be achieved despite of being born and raised in risky environments (Rutter, 1993). One of the first researches on resilience was a longitudinal study by Werner and Smith (1982), which showed that "a wounded child is not necessarily condemned to be a failed adult" (Vera, et al., 2006, p. 44). Thus, resilience is a useful and beneficial tool to work with students of these characteristics (Acevedo and Restrepo, 2012). The work on resilience and emotional

competence in the educational context reduces the possibilities of health problems, both physically and mentally, and early school leaving, opening a path of hope for many children living in conditions of vulnerability and disadvantage.

Objectives

The main objetive was to educate emotionally students belonging to vulnerable contexts through artistic activities in Primary Education.

Subsequently, three general objectives were set:

- To verify the existing relationship between Emotional Intelligence and art with students of Primary Education in disadvantaged contexts.
- To evaluate the emotional quotient of the students through the results of the pre-post-test in the dimensions of attention, clarity and emotional repair.
- To assess the effectiveness of the didactic intervention in the students three weeks after finishing it by means of a delayed posttest.

Method

The focus of the didactic artistic-musical emotional intervention, covers the emotions, feelings and values that were intended to transmit to the students. It included the reading of the book 'Emocionario' (Emotionary) and a series of chosen melodies and songs. After a first contact with all the students of the school, based mainly on observation, four classes were selected to focus the didactic intervention on the work of eight emotions: sadness, joy, anger, serenity, fear, amazement, envy and gratitude. The choice was made due to the lack shown by the majority of the students concerning the attention, expression and management of these emotions.

A similar research can be found in the work of Morales (2017), studying

the relationships between coping with daily stress, self-concept, social skills and emotional intelligence in Secondary Education students.

The didactic approach of the proposed sessions consisted of selecting an emotion and its opposite. Thus, we worked with an emotion, with its definition, and it was accompanied with a melody, an image and different reflexible activities, aiming their identification, classification and proper management by the students. The activities of the programme aimed to develop the emotional content, linked to the visual arts and music. This was done through a work booklet that each student performed individually. Subsequently, they exchanged their ideas, and held debates, to share with the rest of their peers their emotions, feelings, experiences, experiences, memories, etc. in order to promote social and communication skills, such as respecting the turn of speech and oratory.

Participants

The research was carried out with Primary Education students in a school of a neighborhood in Albacete, with high levels of marginality and social and cultural models, characterized by low or no formal training and rigid patterns of behavior and conflict resolution, based mainly on violence, the threat and the aggression. The majority of the families faced situations of marginality and risk of social exclusion, due to and destructured families and dysfunctions in socio-family dynamics, precarious economic backgrounds and health problems. All these circumstances made the students of the school especially vulnerable, being necessary a socio-educational intervention. It had to be multidisciplinary and coordinated from different areas, such as school, families and social services. Regarding the academic issues, the teachers of the school gave priority to the teaching of functional contents, with the purpose of training their students as individuals with values, responsible, tolerant and well behaving. The academic level achieved by the students tends to show low results, generally. The classroom climate, in relation to the emotional and physical aspects is usually good, being welcoming and promoting confidence

and integration in the group, since when conflicts arise teachers spend a lot of class time solving them.

Initially, the participants of the study were 77 students of 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th grade of Primary Education, with 48.05% of males and 51.94% of females, whose age range ranges from 8 and 13 years old. As a consequence of the school's high absenteeism rate the number of participants was finally reduced to 55, with 43.63% males and 56.36% females. The choice of experimental groups was non-probabilistic, also known as intentional sampling, using age as a selection criterion. The total number of students per primary education (PE) course and students participating in the study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Figures of the total number of students per primary education (PE) course and students participating in the study.

Groups		Participating students				Total students		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Class 3	o	9	5	14	12	5	17	
		52,94%	29,41%	82,35%	70,58%	29,41%	100%	
Class 4	0	6	8	14	10	10	20	
		30%	40%	70%	50%	50%	100%	
Class 5	o	3	8	11	6	12	18	
		16,66%	44,44%	61,11%	33,33%	66,66%	100%	
Class 6	0	6	10	16	9	13	22	
		27,27%	45,45%	72,72%	40,90%	59,09%	100%	
TOTAL	0	24	31	55	37	40	77	
		31,16%	40,25%	71,42%	48,05%	51,94%	100%	

Source table 1: Own elaboration

Design

The research has followed a quasi-experimental and intra-subject type design, as the subjects were not randomly selected and three measurements

were made (pre-post-testpostest deferred), in order to assume the causal relationship between the comparison of the response variable before and after the exposure of the subjects to the experimental intervention. The comparisons were made between the treatment performed on the same experimental group of subjects. The data collection was carried out at three different moments of the research, having also a short-term longitudinal approach.

Shared-type categories were used, characterized by attempting to know the attitudes, values, knowledge and beliefs about the emotional education of several members of the social system studied. Patterns of relational type and human development were also followed, given that the links between individuals and personal improvement represented an important aspect in this research (Sampieri, et al., 2014).

Instruments

To cover the objectives of the study, a quantitative instrument was applied to measure the emotional variables, specifically a questionnaire, in order to collect data about the students' El at three key moments: at the beginning of the intervention, at the end of it and after three weeks.

Salovey, et al., (2007) developed an instrument in 1995 with the purpose of evaluating the meta-knowledge of emotional states through 48 items, the Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS-48). There is a reduced and modified adaptation to Spanish of the original English version, which was the one used with the subjects of the research, the TMMS-24 questionnaire (Fernández Berrocal et al., 1998). It contains 24 items, divided into groups of 8, corresponding to three dimensions that assess the knowledge and beliefs that subjects have about their ability to attend and monitor their emotions and feelings (emotional attention), to understand and label their emotions (emotional clarity) and to regulate negative emotional states and extend positive ones (emotional repair); three key features in EI.

The items are presented with simple statements. Through a Likert scale

the subjects indicate the degree to which they agree with the statements, which ranges from 1 (no agreement) to 5 (totally agree). Regarding the reliability of each component, Fernández and Extremera (2005) establish the following values checked through Cronbach's Alpha: attention (α = .90); clarity (α = .90) and repair (α = .86). In the same way, it presents an adequate test-retest reliability: attention (α = .60); clarity (α = .70) and repair (α = .83). On the other hand, other authors who have used the questionnaire in their studies give it the following values. The reliability obtained in different studies using the TMMS-24 is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability obtained in different studies using the TMMS-24.

Parameters	Reliability	Authors		
	α: 0,90	Pertegal et al. (2011); Perandones, (2006); Cabello, (2005).		
Attention	α: 0,88	Muñoz Fernández (2016); Augusto-Landa et al. (2012)		
	α: 0,87	De la Fuentes et al. (2010).		
	α: 0,86	Augusto-Landa et al. (2011 y 2006).		
	α: 0,60	Palomera, (2006).		
	α: 0,90	Pertegal et al. (2011); Perandones, (2006); Cabello, (2005); Augusto- Landa et al. (2011 & 2006).		
	α: 0,88	Muñoz Fernández (2016); Augusto-Landa et al. (2012)		
	α: 0,81	De la Fuentes et al. (2010).		
Clarity	α: 0,70	Palomera, (2006).		
	α: 0,86	Muñoz Fernández (2016): Pertegal et al. (2011); Perandones, (2006); Cabello, (2005); Augusto-Landa et al. (2011 y 2006).		
	α: 0,83	Palomera, (2006).		
Repair	α: 0,80	Augusto-Landa et al. (2012)		
	α: 0,76	De la Fuente et al. (2010).		

Source table 2: Aguayo-Muela & Aguilar (2017) Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License

Procedure

The research was conducted with the students of four courses of Primary Education, from 3rd to 6th class, in a school of Albacete. The timing consisted of sixteen sessions per group, held for two months, between the second and third trimesters of the school year 2017/2018. The aforementioned TMMS-24 questionnaire was provided to the participants in the study. They answered it anonymously. In the evaluation, the established scale was considered for each dimension, taking into account the differences between the sexes.

The activities were flexible and with a playful, creative and emotional character, thanks to the musical and artistic elements that helped the manifestation of emotions progressively.

The activities carried out followed a didactic sequence of 16 sessions, divided into 2 weekly sessions, with an average duration of 60 minutes each. They were designed with a ludic nature, related to the musical, artistic and emotional theme, to achieve the previously established objectives.

Results

The TMMS-24 questionnaire evaluated different emotional dimensions: attention (items 1 to 8), clarity (items 9 to 16) and repair (items 17 to 24). The score of each dimension is interpreted following Fernández et al., (2004), as shown in Table 3. The scores are disaggregated by gender.

Table 3. Interpretative scores of the TMMS-24 granted by the authors

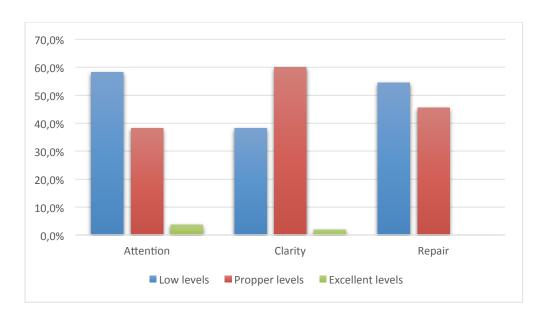
Dimensions	Levels	Men Marks	Women marks
	Must improve his attention: pays little attention	< 21	< 24
Emotional attention	Adequate attention	22 to 32	25 to 35
	Must improve his attention: pays too much attention	> 33	> 36
Emotional	Must improve his understanding	< 25	< 23

clarity	Adequate understanding	26-35	24-34
	Excellent understanding	> 36	> 35
	It must improve its regulation	< 23	< 23
Emotional repair	Adequate regulation	24 to 35	24 to 34
	Excellent regulation	> 36	>35

Source table 3: Own elaboration, based in Fernández Berrocal, Extremera & Ramos (2004).

The results of Cronbach's Alpha turned out to be adequate: emotional attention (α = .82), emotional clarity (α = .69) and emotional repair (α = .73). Therefore, according to these data, it can be affirmed that the questionnaire is an adequate instrument, since it indicates a good level of internal consistency. Levels of students in TMMS-24 pretest are shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Levels of students in TMMS- 24 pretest.



Source figure 1: own elaboration.

The Spearman non-parametric type correlation coefficient test, was applied to check if there was a significant linear relationship between the pretest

scores of each emotional dimension of the questionnaire,. This was made to calculate a correlation coefficient to evaluate the relationship between the pretest scores in the dimension of attention, clarity and emotional repair.

The results show that there is a statistically significant correlation between the attention dimension and emotional clarity (rs = .402, p = .002). The same occurs between the emotional attention and repair factor, since the correlation coefficient indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between these variables (rs = .283, p = .036). The correlation coefficient between the dimension of emotional clarity and emotional regulation also shows a statistically significant relationship (rs = .283, p = .036), therefore, it can be affirmed that there are statistically significant relationships among all the variables of the questionnaire.

In order to confirm if there were statistically significant differences among the three measurements for each of the variables, Friedman's nonparametric test was used. The results show that there are statistically significant differences between the pre-post-test (X 2 (2) = 16.32, p <.001), deferred pre-post-test (X 2 (2) = 4.93, p = .001) and post- deferred post-test (X 2 (2) = 12.76, p <.001) for each one of the variables.

It can be affirmed that the emotional level of the students is markedly different before the artistic-musical intervention and after finishing it and also three weeks after the training.

The scores between the first two data collections (pre-post) were analyzed through the Wilcoxon signed rank test. By the level of significance (p <.001), it can be verified, that there are remarkably significant differences between the EI level of the subjects before and after the emotional-didactic intervention in each of the dimensions of the questionnaire. Additionally, the effect size between these two measurements, for emotional attention (r = .53), emotional clarity (r = .66) and emotional repair (r = .72) the effect appears to be quite relevant.

After the analysis of the post-test and the delayed post-test through

Wilcoxon, the level of significance in attention (p = .001) and emotional clarity (p < .001) shows differences in these dimensions three weeks after the measurement of these variables, as the values have decreased. However, in the emotional repair factor, this level of significance does not show that there are statistically significant differences between the two tests (p = .480), so it indicates that it is the emotional dimension that has remained more stable with the passage the time. Respecting the size of the effect, it can be observed that in both, emotional attention (r = .43) and emotional clarity (r = .53) the effect was bigger, due to the small change that the values had undergone compared to the dimension of emotional repair (r = .09) whose data in the tests show that apparently there is no effect on the scale, since the values remained practically stable after three weeks.

Finally, deferred pre-post-test scores were studied in order to observe the evolution of the values throughout the time, after the didactic intervention and to check whether there were significant differences between these two measurements. The non-parametric test, used to compare the samples was the Wilcoxon test. The results indicate that between the pretest and the post-test, there were statistically significant differences in the factors of clarity (p = .025) and especially in emotional repair (p <.001), whose levels indicate an improvement by the students. in these two dimensions. In contrast, in the emotional attention factor no significant differences were found in these two measurements (p = .162), which indicates that it is least developed dimension, although the results are more positive in the post-deferred post-test than at the beginning of the investigation. On the other hand, the values shown by the effect size test show that in these data the effect in the emotional attention dimension is small (r = .18), while in the dimension of clarity it is in the intermediate levels (r = .30) and in the emotional repair the levels achieve a remarkably large effect (r = .70). The score distribution with respect to the emotional dimensions of the questionnaire in the different moments in which the students were evaluated can be observed in the following graph.

In the three factors of attention, clarity and emotional repair, the levels are lower at the beginning of the research, increase at the end of the didactic

intervention and, finally, tend to decrease over time as reflected by the deferred post-test. The graphical pretest-posttest-posttest deferred scores TMMS-24 is shown in figure 2.

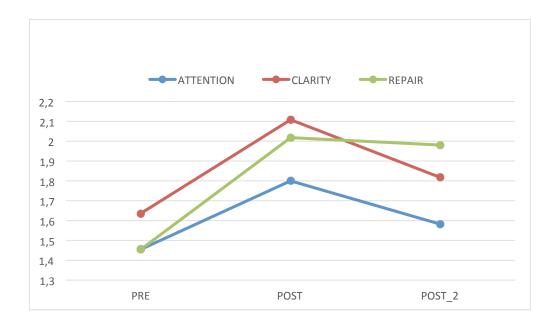


Figure 2: Graphical pretest-posttest-posttest deferred scores TMMS-24.

Source: own elaboration

Discussion

The EI factors evaluated in this study, attention, clarity and emotional repair, refer to self-reported items, that is, to the perception of the subjects themselves about their EI levels and not to a real emotional ability test (Mayer, 2001). Therefore, the results have shown to be significant since an improvement in the evaluated scales has been observed through the key instrument of the study, the TMMS-24. This test has shown a remarkable increase in the values presented by the subjects. For this reason, it can be affirmed that EI is closely related to art, due to the success of the intervention in terms of the development of the aforementioned emotional dimensions.

The pretest shows that the students tend to describe and distinguish their emotions but do not excel in the ability to reflect on them, identify them at the right time and regulate the emotional reaction produced.

Three weeks after the intervention finished, the students were reevaluated with the same questionnaire through a delayed post-test. In general, the results were lower in this last data collection, in comparison with the previous one, but it is noteworthy that the students showed higher emotional levels than in the pretest.

The data reveal again that emotional attention is the dimension with lower scores, with a an important decrease between the second and third data collection, being the least developed factor during the study. On the other hand, , although emotional reparation does not reach high scores, it is the only dimension that manages to maintain its levels stable over time. The emotional clarity obtains very high scores in the second data collection that decrease in the last evaluation.

Therefore, emotional repair is the factor that presents most significant changes. In the pretest, this scale shows values below the average that manage to increase and maintain with the passage of time. However, the other two dimensions, in spite of presenting lower levels between the post-test and the deferred post-test, point out that most of the students are in the emotional mean indicated by the creators of the questionnaire. In addition, in the last data collection, their levels continue to be above the values of the first measurement. Thus, we can affirm that there has been a development of the EI through the artistic-emotional intervention.

With regard to the relationship of the emotional attention dimension with the rest, the results coincide with one of the first investigations carried out in Spain using this measure, the study by Fernández et al., (1999) where the emotional variables correlated among each other and the emotional attention scale showed positive correlations with emotional clarity. From this it follows that, in general, persons who tend to attend to their emotions will not have so many difficulties in differentiating them properly.

In the analysis of this dimension it is observed that it has the lowest

levels compared to the other two scales. In the pretest, more than half of the participants indicated paying little attention to their emotions and feelings, since the levels mostly show low attention, compared to 38.2% of students that presents adequate levels. According to Gohm (2003) the low results on this scale characterize the participants as people who do not take into consideration their affective states and are not competent in the regulation of their emotions, since they do not usually employ emotional attention strategies. In the second data collection, at the end of the didactic intervention, the results showed remarkable differences. This time, most of the subjects presented adequate levels of emotional attention, specifically 72.7%. These scores are very positive, since they indicate that, in general, students tend to use more adaptive emotional regulation strategies when they know how to use the information obtained from their emotions in their social relationships (Gohm, 2003). Despite these positive data, 23.6% of students continue to show a lower level on this scale. In the last data collection, the percentage of students with low levels of emotional attention increases, reaching 45.5%, and as a result, the percentage of students that had adequate levels in this scale decreases.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that 3.6% of the subjects show excessive emotional attention during the three data collections. According to studies carried out by Nolen-Hoeksema et al., (1999) these students could have consequences in their future related to the increase of anxious and depressive moods. Individuals with high levels of attention, in addition to suffering from depressive symptomatology and anxiety, usually present a greater number of physical symptoms (Fernández Berrocal & Extremera, 2005). Graphical emotional attention scores of the students TMMS-24 is shown in figure 3.

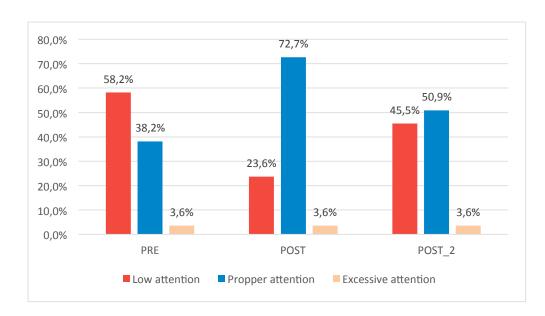


Figure 3: Graphical emotional attention scores of the students TMMS-24.

Source: own elaboration

The dimension referred to emotional clarity (emotional comprehension), analyzes the ability of subjects to understand emotions and feelings. It is the highest score obtained in the pretest, with levels of 60%, indicating an adequate emotional understanding of the students compared to 38.2% with lower levels. In the post-test, very significant figures were achieved: 89.1% of the sample reported having adequate levels compared to 10.9%. These results are very positive, since, apparently, there are no students with low scores in emotional clarity and the scores obtained suggest that they are individuals prone to have some emotional well-being, as they become more skilled in the resolution of emotional conflicts.

In the last data collection, 78.2% continues to show an adequate emotional understanding, while the number of students who must improve on this scale increases to 20%. Levels of excellence in emotional comprehension, only reached a tiny percentage of students.

The evolution of emotional clarity ratings TMMS-24 is shown in figure 4.

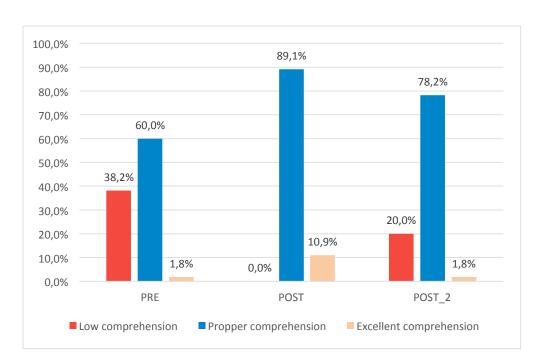


Figure 4: Evolution of emotional clarity ratings TMMS-24.

Source figure 4: own elaboration

The emotional repair dimension shows in the pretest that 54.5% of the participants have low emotional regulation. In the second data collection, the results increase remarkably until 90.9% of the subjects who indicate having abilities to be able to regulate their emotional states, while 3.6% show the opposite, while a minority indicates having a excellent regulation. In the deferred post-test, the number of students that presents adequate values in this dimension continues to remain unchanged, while the number of participants with excellent levels is reduced and the subjects with low levels in this scale increase minimally.

Among the different components of EI, emotional repair has been one of the most significant scales of the study. The level of adequate regulation has increased significantly in the last data collection compared to the pretest, showing a relevant level of the effect, which shows that the students have perfected their emotional competence, especially in the skills of regulation and control of emotions. Likewise, this factor has been the most stable after the intervention ended, showing no differences between the post-test and the deferred post-test, as students have been able to maintain the values efficiently.

The graphical emotional repair scores evolution of the students, measured with the TMMS-24 is shown in figure 5.

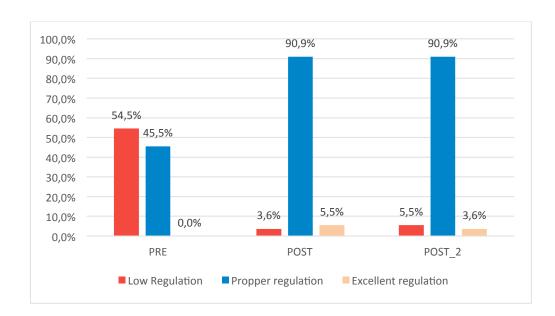


Figure 5: Graphical emotional repair scores evolution TMMS-24.

Source figure 5: own elaboration

Conclusions

Teaching based on knowing how to reflect, having empathic and creative skills, making decisions, judgments, knowing, expressing and controlling emotions effectively, among others, happens to be basic in our educational system. In this sense, artistic and creative subjects, in addition to enhancing intellectual abilities, awaken the most sensitive side of students and help them develop emotional competence by allowing them to express and understand emotions through different artistic activities (music, poetry, image).

Therefore, it is necessary to implement socio-educational measures that include emotional content in the schools, so that children who go through difficult situations can overcome negative emotions. The school is a fundamental framework for emotional teaching, where children interact constantly with their peers, but the main context of emotional development is

the family environment. In this space, children learn social and emotional strategies through constant bidirectional connections with their parents and other family members. Unfortunately, not all family environments have satisfactory characteristics for children to develop their emotional competence properly being the center and teachers to help overcome the difficult circumstances that some children go through. In this sense, as we have seen in this study, EI can be an effective tool to face these situations, balancing the negative effects of adversity, favoring learning and strengthening resilient capacity, regardless of the family, social and cultural origin of the students.

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