

Evaluation of the Socio-Emotional Competences of the Prioritized Curriculum in the Exit Profile of the Ecuadorian Bachelor: From Curriculum to Practice

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Abstract

Educational programs are increasingly inclined to promote values that favor the integral development of students, for which various formulas are implemented that seek from the methodological point of view to adjust to social, educational and curricular demands. The new curricular proposal with an emphasis on competencies focuses on the development of students' abilities so that they are competent in their lives. It is proposed as an objective to evaluate if the student has obtained the socio-emotional competencies according to the prioritized curriculum of the Ecuadorian high school. A documentary and field research is carried out, with the application of an instrument designed for the collection of data in the study population made up of students of the first semester of the Bachelor's Degree in Education Sciences, at the Faculty of Sciences of Education from Milagro State University. As a result, it was shown that the students were able to develop the skills provided for in the prioritized curriculum and are able to show them in their continuity of studies, both in their student life and in social and family life.

Keywords: *Socio-Emotional Competencies, Prioritized Curriculum, Soft Skills, Teaching and Learning Process.*

INTRODUCTION

In the world, day-to-day life is profoundly marked by information technologies, social and cultural diversity, with large doses of complexity, so it is essential to take into account the training and preparation of students for life as part of the educational processes from the first stages of life.

As Mónica and Guillén (2012) state, in order for an educational system to be of quality, traditionally academic aspects must be taken into account, as well as others such as the development of intellectual autonomy in students and ethical training for responsible citizenship. All this, together with the good performance of teachers in their professional action or the effective management of schools.

Bisquerra Alzina and López-Cassà (2021) explain emotional education as a continuous and permanent educational process that takes place throughout life and its objective is the development of emotional competencies considered an important part of the integral development of the personality.

For his part, Infante (2022), in his research, proves that if a student receives an acceptable emotional education, he or she will also have acceptable soft skills that allow him or her to establish an adequate balance between his or her emotions and his or her personal and social relationships within a climate of respect and tolerance. According to Fernández et al. (2022), soft skills are understood as the set of abilities of the person to interact with others by facing different situations through assertive decision-making. They are also known as social skills.

A different conceptualization of school, as Peraza (2022) argues, is necessary. A school that considers not only the developmental aspect of cognitive intelligence, but also perceptions, emotions and behaviors as vital structures for the understanding of human, scientific, cultural and natural phenomena that the person experiences. This implies a different look at the internal practices of the classroom and its transformation for the formation of socio-emotional competencies, which, according to Gallardo (2017), allow us to understand, express and regulate

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emotions in order to maintain behaviors that facilitate effective and satisfactory interaction in relationships with others. On the other hand, they allow schools to have the capacity to generate more adaptive responses to their environment with reflective action, with empathy and patience towards others, carrying out the analysis of the consequences of actions as an exercise for making good decisions.

On the other hand, Mejía et al. (2016) define socio-emotional competencies as those that include not only the development of cognitive or mental processes, but also affective areas such as emotional awareness and management, relationships with others and projection towards society. Socio-emotional competencies can be considered as a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that allow us to identify emotions, regulate them and relate harmoniously to build well-being and happiness.

According to Mejía et al. (2016), the development of socio-emotional competencies is part of citizenship education and, therefore, is consistent with citizenship competencies. It is closely related to the formation of young people who are responsible for their own lives and who are concerned with building good relationships with others.

Gallardo (2017) also states that these competencies correspond to permanent characteristics of the person, related to the successful execution of an activity. This coincides with Capsada and Ferrer-Esteban (2016), when they state that the correct development of socio-emotional competencies is closely related to success in academic, professional and personal life.

In people, the lack of self-esteem, self-management, persistence or motivation can cause them to not succeed in different scenarios of life despite having a high IQ. On the other hand, there are those people with a more limited intellectual capacity, however, discipline and self-confidence allow them to achieve their goals. The objective of this research is to evaluate whether the student has obtained the socio-emotional competencies expected for their continuation of studies according to the prioritized curriculum of the Ecuadorian baccalaureate.

Competency-Based Curriculum

The new curricular proposal with an emphasis on competencies promoted by Ecuador, as explained by Pereira Valdez et al. (2022), focuses on the development of students' capacities so that they are competent in their lives, educational institutions must contextualize and make it more flexible by valuing their reality and autonomy, based on pedagogical leadership to achieve social recognition. In this proposal, skill is seen as the key to strengthening competence, depending on its characteristics, whether communicational, mathematical, digital or socio-emotional in any of the subjects or educational levels/sublevels.

The prioritized curriculum, with an emphasis on communicational, digital, mathematical and socio-emotional competencies, is part of the 2020 Prioritized Curriculum, which is made up of skills with performance criteria and evaluation indicators. Skills with performance criteria are structured by skills, learning content, and procedures of different levels of complexity that provide students with the opportunity to be more effective in applying the knowledge acquired in the activities of their daily lives. While the evaluation indicators correspond to the descriptors of learning achievements that students must achieve in the different sub-levels of Basic General Education and at the Baccalaureate level (Varas et al., 2021).

As stated in Varas et al. (2021):

Communication competencies refer to the skills of comprehension and production of texts of all types and in all communicative situations. It also includes the essential skills that enable speakers to perform different speech acts with relevance and fluency (Jam et al., 2016). Communication competencies refer to the skills of comprehension and production of texts of all types and in all communicative situations. It also includes the essential skills that enable speakers to perform different speech acts with relevance and fluency.

Digital competences are defined as a set of knowledge and skills that facilitate the responsible use of digital devices, technological applications for communication and networks in order to access information and carry out proper management of these devices. Social-emotional competencies are defined as the set of knowledge, capacities, skills, and attitudes necessary to understand, express, and appropriately regulate emotional phenomena.

In addition to all the elements described in the prioritized curriculum, each educational institution has the ability to enrich it with its own values adjusted to its pedagogical processes, which are closely related to its responsibilities and identity. The baccalaureate comprises three years of compulsory education and aims to provide students with general education and interdisciplinary preparation that will allow them to integrate into society as good people. According to Quito et al (2023), the baccalaureate develops students' lifelong learning skills and citizenship skills, and prepares them for work, entrepreneurship, and access to higher education.

Importance of Socio-Emotional Competencies for the Continuity of Studies

The inclusion of socio-emotional competencies in the curriculum has come to strengthen the teaching and learning process as part of a more complete and quality education. The curricula are designed in such a way that they collect the skills with performance criteria, objectives, methodologies and evaluation indicators that contribute to the achievement of the exit profile in a way that is consistent with the level of learning of the students.

For each of the subjects of the program, these elements are identified with icons that represent the emphasis on each of the competencies: communicational, mathematical, digital and socio-emotional. According to Hernández-Jorge et al. (2022), it is important to note that we are talking about competencies and not just skills because it is a know-how well, where knowledge, capacities, attitudes and skills are integrated to be put into practice in different life contexts effectively.

However, skills such as assertive communication, control of negative emotions, knowledge of personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, problem management and resolution, teamwork, self-motivation, self-leadership, creativity, active listening and communication, empathy, proactivity, decision-making, tolerance and adaptability are considered by Carazas (2023) as soft skills and considered to be of great importance in students, especially in the management of emotions and in the progress of the development of socio-emotional competencies. On this scenario, an analysis was made of the curriculum of each of the subjects, taking into account those that are marked by the icon that identifies socio-emotional competencies. Of the 12 subjects included in the curriculum, 10 of them develop these competencies, while Physics and Chemistry are not identified in this way.

In general, the analysis made it possible to define the following socio-emotional competencies to be achieved in students in each subject.

Language and Literature

Research.

Analysis.

Expression of Opinion.

Creative Writing.

Mathematics

Establish the proper order of operations.

Intuition.

Identify the relationship between mathematical problems and real situations.

Problem Solving.

History

Ethics.

Citizenship Education.

Process Analysis.
Political understanding.
Principle of equality among human beings.
Recognition of democracy as a social experience.
Exercise deliberative practices.
Accept different national cultures.

Philosophy

Living in Society.
Dilemma Analysis.
Case Studies.
Differentiating Ethical and Unethical Behaviors.
Living in Society.
Dilemma Analysis.
Entrepreneurship and Management.
Compliance with Legal Obligations.
Planning.
Organization.
Integration, Direction and Control Skills,
Social Responsibility.

Biology

Understanding of Human Growth and Development,
Prevention and Protection of Sexual Health.

Cultural and Artistic Education

Represent an idea or feeling through art.
Ability to self-evaluate, Ability to create and direct small projects (Of individual or social interest).

Physical Education

Participation in sports practices.
Awareness of your body condition.

English

Understanding of Different Cultures.
Empathy.
Tolerance.
Ease of Expression.
Conveying Personal Experiences and Feelings.

Achieving the management of these competencies will allow benefits such as having better academic and professional performance, making responsible decisions, avoiding risky behaviors and showing less emotional stress. Good management of socio-emotional competencies will be of vital importance for individual and social well-being, helping to regulate the way in which life situations are faced.

According to Capsada and Ferrer-Esteban (2016), the main reason for their inclusion in the curriculum is that these competencies are closely related to the ideal of being a good student, citizen and worker. This means that they can reduce risky behaviors and dropouts from school. On the other hand, it helps to deal with bullying, violent behaviors, and drug use. Emphasizing these types of skills helps to build the character of students and is an opportunity to promote values related to social and family integration.

According to Hernández-Jorge et al. (2022), contemplating emotional competencies is essential, they allow people to face the challenges of creative work, the search for and solution of important problems and the generation of original ideas.

METHOD

The present study is considered documentary and field. A documentary review of articles was carried out and mainly scientific articles, scientific journals and relevant degree projects in the field of socio-emotional competencies were used as sources of information, highlighting their importance for the development of students in all spheres of their lives.

Population and Sample

The research is conducted at Milagro State University, located in CDLA. University "Dr. Rómulo Minchala Murillo" – Km. 1.5 Via Milagro – Virgen de Fátima; Milagro, Guayas, Ecuador at the Faculty of Education Sciences in the Bachelor's Degree in Education Sciences. La población del estudio son 229 estudiantes de primer nivel (semestre) de la carrera de Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Educación, jornada vespertina y nocturna, periodo abril – agosto, 2023.

Table 1. Division of students by day and parallel.

Parallel	Day		Total
	Afternoon	Night	
B1	60		60
B2	59		59
C1		55	55
C2		55	55
	119	110	229

Source: Self made.

The sample was selected in a non-probabilistic way, taking into account the characteristics of the students who, according to the researcher's assessment, were considered to meet the requirements for the sample and, on the other hand, respecting the principle of voluntariness. A total of 186 students were selected, representing approximately 80% of the population, who are considered representative for the study.

Instrument

For data collection, a questionnaire was developed with a total of 24 questions with a structure based on the Likert scale with the values (Never, Almost Never, Sometimes, Almost Always, Always), with an easy-to-apply design, simple to understand and quick for students to complete. For data collection, a questionnaire was developed with a total of 24 questions with a structure based on the Likert scale with the values (Never, Almost Never, Sometimes, Almost Always, Always), with an easy-to-apply design, simple to understand and quick for students to complete.

Table 2. Relationship between Competencies and Value Areas.

Skills	Areas of Value
Language and Literatur	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation • Analysis • Expression of opinion • Creative writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Innovation, Analysis and Creativity *Expression
Mathematics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the proper order of operations • Intuition • Identify the relationship between mathematical problems and real situations • Problem resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Justice and Responsibility *Innovation, Analysis and Creativity *Solidarity and Self-awareness
History	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Justice and Responsibility
Education for Citizenship	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process analysis • Political understanding • Principle of equality between human beings • Recognize democracy as a social experience • Exercise deliberative practices • Accept different national cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Justice and Responsibility *Perception, Understanding and Empathy
Philosophy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in society • Dilemma analysis • Case studies • Differentiate ethical and unethical behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Justice and Responsibility *Solidarity and Self-awareness *Innovation, Analysis and Creativity
Entrepreneurship and Management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with legal obligations • Ability to plan, organize, integrate, direct and control • Social responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Justice and Responsibility *Innovation, Analysis and Creativity
Biology	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of human growth and development • Prevention and protection of sexual health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Solidarity and Self-awareness *Regulation
Cultural and Artistic Education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent an idea or feeling through art • Self-assessment capacity • Ability to create and direct small projects (of individual or social interest) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Justice and Responsibility *Regulation *Expression
Physical education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in sports practices • Awareness of your body state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Regulation *Expression
English	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of different cultures • Empathy • Tolerance • Ease of expression • Transmit personal experiences and feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Regulation *Perception, Understanding and Empathy *Expression

Source: Self made.

The proposed questionnaire aims to allow the collection of information on general functioning in the areas of communication, motor and cognitive, as well as to obtain a vision of how students perform in previously defined areas of value, such as Justice and Responsibility, Innovation, Analysis and Creativity, Solidarity and Self-Awareness, Regulation, Perception, Understanding and Empathy and Expression.

The aim of the results is to evaluate whether students in the first semester of public universities after graduating from high school were able to assimilate the socio-emotional competencies integrated into the prioritized curriculum.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The survey was published online and the results will be treated confidentially, exclusively for academic purposes. Students' responses will be anonymous and will not be related to their academic performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The flexibility and contextualization of learning seeks to motivate the development of studies that contribute to continuously evaluating and strengthening the educational model, in terms of the relevance, timeliness, and contextualization of the curriculum, the extraordinary offer, academic progression, educational innovation, and digital citizenship; and the development of evaluation, educational standards as a mechanism to measure progress and educational quality, mainly on the learning trajectory (Valeria et al., 2022).

The results obtained after the processing of the data according to the grouping by value areas proposed in the instrument are presented below.

Tabla 3. Autovaloración del cumplimiento de la justicia y responsabilidad.

Criteria	Always	Almost always	Sometimes always	Hardly ever	Never	Total
I act with ethics, generosity and honesty in most of my actions.	108	63	15	0	0	186
I proceed with respect and responsibility towards my colleagues and other people.	157	29	0	0	0	186
When I make decisions, I take into account the consequences of my actions.	95	68	22	1	0	186
When I make a decision I value that there are more positive results than negative ones.	113	60	11	1	1	186
I can recognize ethical and unethical behaviors in the environment around me.	79	79	26	2	0	186
I am able to plan and control my planning.	64	81	39	2	0	186

Source: Authors' own creation. Data obtained from the student survey.

Justicia y Responsabilidad

As can be seen, the majority of the students, among the answers, have always and almost always managed to assimilate justice and responsibility as important elements for their individual and personal performance. Acting ethically, honestly and respectfully prevails in the conduct of students, who also express the concern to do the right thing when making decisions.

Table 4. Self-assessment of the fulfillment of innovation, analysis and creativity.

Criteria	Always	Almost always	Sometimes always	Hardly ever	Never	Total
I can analyze and propose solutions to conflicts that arise in my field of study and society.	67	84	35	0	0	186
I can create and direct small projects of individual or social interest.	60	75	46	5	0	186

Source: Authors' own creation. Data obtained from the student survey.

Innovation, Analysis and Creativity

According to Giler-Medina et al (2023), learning occurs most effectively when all aspects of a person's life are involved. It is for this reason that this new approach is considered very important, where education is promoted not only in knowledge but also in skills and values. Therefore, according to the author, addressing topics such as creativity, problem solving, critical thinking and the ability to adapt to change are very valuable elements for the student's participation in society.

As can be seen in the results, a representative majority of the students consider themselves capable of analysing and solving conflicts within their range of action, as well as feeling able to create small projects and take them towards a desired state of execution with creativity and responsibility.

Table 5. Self-assessment of the fulfillment of solidarity and self-awareness.

Criteria	Always	Almost always	Sometimes always	Hardly ever	Never	Total
I respect the cultures and identities of other people and peoples.	175	10	1	0	0	186
I apologize when I hurt my friend unintentionally.	147	29	9	1	0	186
I recognize equality among human beings and support democratic practice in group decision-making.	132	39	12	2	1	186

Source: Authors' own creation. Data obtained from the student survey.

Solidarity and Self-Awareness

As shown in the results table, most of the students surveyed consider themselves supportive, aware and tolerant of the acceptance of the diversity of cultures, identities and people. These skills are a very important factor for the successful development of human relations and school insertion in the new groups, where students arrive from different regions with customs of their origin.

Table 6. Autovaloración del cumplimiento de la regulación.

Criteria	Always	Almost always	Sometimes always	Hardly ever	Never	Total
Mantengo la calma y supero la ansiedad en situaciones nuevas o cambiantes	57	79	47	2	1	186
Soy capaz de mantener el buen humor, aunque pase algo malo	59	67	45	14	1	186
Cuando estoy de buen humor, todos los problemas parecen tener solución	75	78	32	0	1	186
Actúo de forma responsable en la prevención y protección de mi salud sexual	149	27	7	0	3	186

Source: Authors' own creation. Data obtained from the student survey.

Regulation

As the results show, regulation and self-control prevail in the majority of respondents, which means that they consider themselves capable of controlling both positive and negative emotions. This characteristic can represent a considerable improvement in their results for them, as they can achieve better handling of difficult situations and better decision-making.

Table 7. Autovaloración del cumplimiento de la percepción, comprensión y empatía.

Criteria	Always	Almost always	Sometimes always	Hardly ever	Never	Total
When I meet someone I know, I immediately notice their mood.	56	79	48	2	1	186
I am able to detect mood swings in my friends	80	71	34	0	1	186
I recognize my strengths and weaknesses to be a better human being.	100	68	17	0	1	186
Interacted with heterogeneous groups proceeding with empathy and tolerance.	96	60	28	1	1	186
When I see how someone feels, I can usually tell what has happened to them	31	64	74	12	5	186

Source: Authors' own creation. Data obtained from the student survey.

Percepción, Comprensión y Empatía

According to Schoeps et al (2017), studies on emotional intelligence in adolescents affirm that young people develop emotional skills superior to those expected of them, with abilities to perceive and understand emotions.

Many of them, as shown in the results, are more sensitive to the emotional content they perceive in their close environment in the group of friends and family, as well as in social networks and television programs. This allows

them to better understand that each person expresses their emotions differently depending on the context and culture.

Table 8. Self-assessment of the fulfillment of the expression.

Criteria	Always	Almost always	Sometimes always	Hardly ever	Never	Total
I'm able to express my body state.	45	80	51	9	1	186
I am able to describe my emotional state.	56	72	44	12	2	186
I can convey personal experiences and feelings with ease	57	70	44	14	1	186
I can express my opinion at any opportunity without fear of being rejected	48	70	54	11	3	186

Source: Authors' own creation. Data obtained from the student survey.

Expression

As can be seen, the expression of feelings, emotions and body state is not so easy, nor so generalized. In this value area, there is an increase in the number of students who respond to the almost never. This group is among those young people who express their feelings non-verbally, that is, acting on them, so we must continue to strengthen the ability to express what we like, what we are afraid of, say the things that generate joy, those that we perceive with opposition, express our gratitude or show apologies is what helps us to release and share our feelings. And it's the best way to feel good.

School climate has a significant impact on students' academic success and their ability to develop social-emotional competencies. The prioritized baccalaureate curriculum is a tool for educators, facilitating the creation of more positive, equitable, and social environments that support student learning.

As Ibáñez-Martín and Fuentes (2021) put it, intelligence must be approached from a variety of approaches, encompassing the cognitive, emotional and aesthetic, moral, religious, sexual education and physical education, and without limitations in both school and family-related education.

On the other hand, Aldunate et al. (2012) defend the theory that among all the educational aspects that would require an additional effort, contributing to the socio-emotional well-being of students should be one of the priorities. It is for this reason that special attention is paid to the development of socio-emotional competencies and their follow-up in the continuity of studies.

Closely related to the development of these competencies and even to a certain extent as part of them, are soft skills, because according to Sánchez et al. (2018), the most important thing in the development of a person is not only the knowledge they can learn, but also the ability to develop a set of skills such as persistence, self-control, curiosity, awareness, determination, and self-confidence.

Activities where social skills are accentuated, group work, collaborative work, participation and presentation of projects in real situations, should be encouraged as part of the curriculum to promote the active participation of students. After the study presented, it is considered that the current curricular design has managed to foster in students sufficient socio-emotional competencies and skills to face their social and educational life.

Better progress was made in the value areas related to justice, responsibility, solidarity and self-awareness. Regarding regulation, perception, comprehension, empathy and expression, less progress was identified, which coincides with Sala et al (2021), who also found lower developments in comprehension and regulation skills. Although the results were mostly positive, it is considered important to continue the work as part of the prioritized curriculum in higher education, where, according to Calle et al. (2021), each educational institution can promote the development of values specific to its pedagogical proposal.

It is important to understand and teach that young people do not need to judge emotions, but to know how to identify, notice and feel them. Only then will they be able to recognize when they are good or bad, comfortable and uncomfortable. It is very important to do activities with them so that they reflect on their own emotions and

thus develop good emotional intelligence. Studies claim that students who are emotionally intelligent will have better well-being and a much stronger personality.

CONCLUSIONS

School climate has a significant impact on students' academic success and their ability to develop social-emotional competencies. The prioritized baccalaureate curriculum is a tool for educators, facilitating the creation of more positive, equitable, and social environments that support student learning. School climate has a significant impact on students' academic success and their ability to develop social-emotional competencies. The prioritized baccalaureate curriculum is a tool for educators, facilitating the creation of more positive, equitable, and social environments that support student learning. As Ibáñez-Martín and Fuentes (2021) put it, intelligence must be approached from a variety of approaches, encompassing the cognitive, emotional and aesthetic, moral, religious, sexual education and physical education, and without limitations in both school and family-related education.

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