Emotional education in times of crisis

Educar en las emociones en tiempos de crisis

Educar as emoções em tempos de crise

在危机时期的情感教育

التربية في ظل العواطف في أوقات الأزمات

López-Cassà, Èlia (1) 🆔**, Bisquerra Alzina, Rafael** (2)🆔

(1) Universidad de Barcelona

(2) RIEEB (Red Internacional de Educación Emocional y Bienestar)

Abstract

A wealth of evidence exists that highlights that emotional education can be applied in multiple contexts as a means of promoting better mental health. The present study aims to analyse the importance and utility of working on emotional competencies, especially in the educational environment. Further, the study strives to elaborate practical tools for use during crisis situations as a means of preventing or minimising mental health issues. The present study employs a descriptive design in which a literature review, synthetic analysis and content analysis were performed. The work examines research conducted in connection with organisations and institutions that has emphasised policies targeting emotional education and emotional competencies through proactive and preventive interventions. The present research argues that emotional competencies should be included in initial and in-service teacher training as it has a positive impact on educational quality, mental health and general well-being. A grounded approach is presented that could be followed with children, young people, families and teachers. The present paper concludes by highlighting the importance of developing emotional competencies and promoting projects aimed at effective implementation of emotional education during times of crisis, especially, when considering that many crises are permanent.

Keywords: emotional education, emotional competencies, emotional intelligence, crisis, mental health.

Resumen

Contamos con suficientes razones que nos permiten señalar que la educación emocional se puede aplicar a múltiples contextos y tiene efectos en la promoción de la salud mental. El objetivo del presente trabajo es analizar la importancia y necesidad de desarrollar competencias emocionales, especialmente en el ámbito educativo, y aportar algunas herramientas prácticas para afrontar las crisis y prevenir o minimizar problemas de salud mental. Este estudio corresponde a un tipo de investigación descriptiva, sustentada en los métodos de revisión bibliográfica, analítico sintético y análisis de contenido. En este trabajo se presentan investigaciones y estudios promovidos por organismos e instituciones que han puesto el acento en las políticas orientadas a la promoción de la educación emocional y al desarrollo de las competencias emocionales desde una intervención proactiva y preventiva. Se propone incluir las competencias emocionales en la formación inicial y permanente del profesorado ya que repercute positivamente en la calidad educativa, la salud mental y el bienestar general. También se presenta una práctica fundamentada que puede llevarse a cabo en niños y niñas, jóvenes, familias y docentes. El trabajo concluye con la importancia de desarrollar las competencias emocionales e impulsar proyectos encaminados a una puesta en práctica eficiente de la educación emocional en tiempos de crisis, teniendo en cuenta que las crisis son permanentes.

Palabras clave: educación emocional, competencias emocionales, inteligencia emocional, crisis, salud mental.

Corresponding author / Autor de contacto: Elia López Cassa. Universidad de Barcelona. Campus Mundet.
Passeig de la Vall d'Hebrón, 171, 08035 Barcelona, España; correo-e: elialopez@ub.edu

Resumo

Temos razões suficientes para salientar que a educação emocional pode ser aplicada a múltiplos contextos e tem um impacto na promoção da saúde mental. O objetivo do presente trabalho é analisar a importância e a necessidade de desenvolver competências emocionais, especialmente no ambiente educativo, e fornecer algumas ferramentas práticas para enfrentar crises e prevenir ou minimizar problemas de saúde mental e prevenir ou minimizar os problemas de saúde mental. Este estudo corresponde a uma investigação de tipo descritivo, baseada nos métodos de revisão da literatura, análise sintética e análise de conteúdo. Este trabalho apresenta investigações e estudos promovidos por organizações e instituições que se têm centrado em políticas que visam promover a educação emocional e o desenvolvimento de competências emocionais a partir de uma intervenção proativa e preventiva. Propõe-se que as competências emocionais sejam incluídas na formação inicial e contínua dos professores, uma vez que têm um impacto positivo na qualidade do ensino, na saúde mental e no bem-estar geral. Apresenta também uma prática fundamentada que pode ser levada a cabo com crianças, jovens, famílias e professores. O trabalho conclui com a importância de desenvolver competências emocionais e de promover projetos que visem a implementação eficaz da educação emocional em tempos de crise, tendo em conta que as crises são permanentes.

Palavras-chave: educação emocional, competências emocionais, inteligência emocional, crise, saúde mental.

摘要

我们有足够的理由指出，情感教育可以应用于多个领域，并对促进心理健康产生影响。本研究的目的是分析在教育领域中发展情感能力的重要性和必要性，并提供一些应对危机和预防或减轻心理健康问题的实际工具。本研究属于描述性研究类型，基于文献综述、综合分析和内容分析方法。本研究中介绍了由一些机构和组织推动的研究，这些研究强调了促进情感教育和从积极预防的角度发展情感能力的政策。建议在教师的初始和持续培训中纳入情感能力，因为这对教育质量、心理健康和整体福祉有积极影响。本文还介绍了一项基于实践的方案，可以在儿童、青少年、家庭和教师中实施。研究的结论是，发展情感能力并推动项目以有效实施情感教育在危机时期是至关重要的，因为危机是持续存在的。

关键词: 情感教育、情感能力、情商、危机、心理健康。

ملخص

لدينا أسباب كافية تسمح لنا بالإشارة إلى أن التربية العاطفية يمكن تطبيقها في سياقات متعددة ولها آثار على تعزيز الصحة العقلية. الهدف من هذا العمل هو تحليل أهمية وحاجة تطوير الكفاءات العاطفية، خاصة في المجال التربوي، وتوفير بعض الأدوات العملية لمواجهة الأزمات ومنع مشاكل الصحة النفسية أو التقليل منها. تتوافق هذه الدراسة مع نوع من البحث الوصفي، وهي مدعمة بأساليب المراجعة الببليوغرافية والتحليل التركيبي وتحليل المحتوى. يقدم هذا العمل الأبحاث والدراسات التي تروج لها المنظمات والمؤسسات التي ركزت على السياسات الرامية إلى تعزيز التربية العاطفية وتطوير الكفاءات العاطفية من خلال التدخل الاستباقي والوقائي. يُقترح إدراج الكفاءات العاطفية في التدريب الأولي والمستمر للمعلمين لما لها من تأثير إيجابي على جودة التعليم والصحة العقلية والرفاهية العامة. كما يتم عرض ممارسة راسخة يمكن تنفيذها مع الأولاد والبنات والشباب والأسر والمعلمين. ويختتم العمل بأهمية تنمية الكفاءات العاطفية وتعزيز المشاريع الهادفة إلى التنفيذ الفعال للتربية العاطفية في أوقات الأزمات، مع مراعاة أن الأزمات دائمة

الكلمات الدالة : التربية العاطفية، الكفاءات العاطفية، الذكاء العاطفي، الأزمات، الصحة النفسية

Introduction

Humanity is immersed in constant crises and turbulence that can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, stress, depression, emotional exhaustion, nervousness, sleep disorders, irritability, melancholy, frustration and social isolation. For this reason, it is important to take good care of the wellbeing and mental health of the general population by promoting their strengths and encouraging learning and engagement in healthy habits. Effective strategies in this regard include the development of emotional competencies to tackle any challenges and issues that arise, whilst, at the same time, employing promotional and preventive aspects of personal and social health and wellbeing. The aim of the present article was to examine the implications of emotional education in present society and its integration potential in the educational setting. The effects of crises and their impact on mental health are described. Two intervention models targeting crisis situations are discussed, whilst the effects of emotional education on mental health are examined alongside its impact on the development of emotional competencies. Likewise, scientific conclusions are presented in light of analysis related with emotional education and its applicability in educational practice. A grounded approach is also presented with the aim of producing knowledge, elaborating tools and developing skills and abilities in children, young people, families and teachers that contribute towards the development of emotional competencies, with the latter being understood as necessary life skills.

The present work pertains to a descriptive research study that is based on literature review, synthetic analysis and content analysis methods (Piza-Burgos et al., 2019). Findings are interpreted in accordance with the literature review performed and that proposed by pertinent authors, studies, and national and international organisations.

Crisis: Definition and societal impact

History teaches us that crises are constant. Just as one comes to an end, another one begins. This reality has been examined from diverse disciplines, in which different theoretical approaches strive to define this concept, its development and its impact in different societal and organisational spheres (Boin et al., 2018; Culebro & Romo, 2023; Dafermos, 2022).

Devlin (2007) defines a crisis as an unstable time that leads to undesirable outcomes which may cause irreparable damage and, therefore, in all cases, require complex decisions to be made.

Castro-Sánchez (2016) considers a crisis as a set of situations in which the daily running of things is interrupted. Such crises may be related to natural disasters or caused by human actions, or certain experiences or perceptions of an event that are hard to tolerate and exceed the resources and coping mechanisms possessed by individuals (James & Guilliand, 2001; Macías et al., 2013).

According to Cabrero et al. (2023) and Mena (2011), crises are destined to take place in complex systems, which are, similarly, ingrained in complex settings that lean on the interaction of multiple elements in order to be able to function. The greater the number of involved elements and interactions between them, the higher the risk imposed by a crisis. Some experts have argued that we live in a VUCA environment. VUCA corresponds to four terms, all of which characterise present society. Specifically, this acronym refers to volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Pérez-Escoda & López-Cassà, 2022). In other words, volatile pertains to the fact that contemporary society is characterised by increasingly fast and essential change. Next, the term uncertainty is relevant because it is increasingly difficult to predict the future, whilst complexity refers to society being increasingly more interconnected and the fact that changes in one part of the world can affect society in general. Finally, ambiguity means that it is becoming increasingly difficult to know what is happening in society.

From this perspective, crises are events that, at some point, affect an entire system, whether

this be an organisation, a region, a country, or, even, the planet as a whole. An example of this is the Covid-19 pandemic, which had an extensive and global impact. This is congruent with the standpoint proposed by Beck (1998), García-Farjat and Goycolea (2021), Paulus (2004) and Pérez-González (2008), which discusses a "risk society". This is characterised by increasing vulnerability due to the growing interconnection of elements and mounting complexity of economic, social and environmental development. At the same time, present society, as indicated by Han (2019), is moving towards becoming a burnout society. In this sense, different perceptions, feelings, emotions, symptoms, and physical and mental health disorders emerge that are related with exhaustion, disillusion and burnout, tinged with tension and fatigue (Fernández-Poncela, 2022).

Generally speaking, crisis refers to a conjunctural process of instability and alteration that can present as a traumatic change in the life of a person, a society or a situation. This situation generates uncertainty and varies with regards to its reversibility, profundity, acuity, consequences, etc. (Salazar et al., 2007). Many types of crises exist such as environmental, public health, socioeconomic, political, psychological, educational, personal, romantic (separation, divorce), family, professional, etc. All of these have diverse effects on individuals and contexts (Dafermos, 2022).

It could be argued that present society is subjected to permanent crises, which affect individuals in multiple way. One such way pertains to mental health. The next section discusses some of the effects of crises on mental health. Becoming aware of this reality, not only demands that it be understood, but, also, urges change in ways of thinking and acting. Further, with regards to its educational implications, better knowledge and information dissemination is essential for prevention. One such implication is the need for emotional education in order to tackle crises with a greater chance of success.

The effects of crises on mental health

Mental health issues, such as anxiety, emotional exhaustion, nervousness, depression, sleep disorders, irritability, melancholy, frustration and social isolation, amongst others, have increased globally with this being a huge cause for concern. The WHO (2024) reports that, with the pandemic, anxiety and depression increased by 25 %. Mental health issues are predicted to be the main cause of disability in the world in 2030.

The WHO describes mental health as "a state of wellbeing in which individuals take notice of their own abilities, are able to tackle daily life challenges and work productively and fruitfully, and are capable of contributing to their community" (2001, p.1).

In January 2020, the WHO officially recognised the presence of coronavirus (covid-19) for the first time and declared a global pandemic in March. This represented a global crisis that entailed confinement, social distancing, school closures, workplace closures, restricted movement, isolation and many other phenomena whose individual effects are still under investigation.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, a number of studies have been conducted on its impact on mental health (Imran, 2020; Orgiles et al., 2020; Salazar de Pablo et al., 2020; Xiong et al., 2020). Exposure to crisis has been observed to be related with a higher risk of developing mental health-related issues (Orgiles et al. 2020). Effects have particularly emerged in relation to anxious-depressive symptomology (Domínguez-Martín et al., 2022; Werling et al., 2022).

Various studies have examined the impact of the pandemic on mental health in children and adolescents (Hawes et al., 2022; Juncal-Ruíz et al., 2023; Orgiles et al., 2020; Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2021). Childhood and adolescence are critical periods for cognitive, social and emotional development and, therefore, individuals are more vulnerable at this time to suffering the consequences of crises, such as the covid-19 pandemic. Some

such effects influence mental health (Juncal-Ruíz et al., 2023).

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses have been performed on the impact of covid-19 on mental health. Panchal et al. (2023) performed a systematic review with the aim of summarising the findings reported by literature on the topic and exploring the effects of covid-19 on mental health in children and adolescents. Evaluation of the risk and protective factors involved has led to the conclusion that an important prevention factor pertains to the amount of quality time families spend together. Children and adolescents from families who spend more time together receive greater support for their mental health needs. Other protective factors include well-established routines, family communication, social support and appropriate use of free time and play. In contrast, risk factors include absence of a routine, adolescence, excessive exposure to the mass media, prior experience of mental health issues, female sex, high community prevalence of disorders and being employed in a front-line role working against covid-19. These authors conclude that guidance and recommendations are needed in order to alleviate negative effects. Public health strategies should be developed to support the general population.

Beyond the pandemic, various research studies have reported a growing number of mental health issues amongst adolescents (Erskine et al., 2015; OMS, 2021, 2024). The incidence of diagnosable mental health issues is approximately 20%, with half of all mental health issues beginning at the age of 14 years. The most common issues include anxiety, depression, eating disorders, addictive disorders, suicide attempts and self-harm (Burstein et al., 2019; Twenge et al., 2018). Research estimates that the majority of cases go undetected and only one third of affected young people receive the required psychological support (Deighton et al., 2019; Merikangas, 2018; Twenge, 2020). As a result of this, it is important to recover wellbeing and take care of the health of the general population, focus on strengths and fully

commit to the learning and development of healthy practices (Pérez- Escoda & López-Cassà, 2022).

In summary, enough evidence exists to suggest that crises can affect mental health. This means that many mental health issues are not due to inherited genetic causes, but, instead, result from the way in which individuals respond to their setting. Many protective factors exists that should be supported, whilst a number of risk factors have been identified that should be avoided. In this regard, protective factors include communication and emotional competencies. Bearing in mind that education is a form of communication, emotional education can play a crucial preventive role.

Two intervention models for crises situations

Interventions are needed to tackle crises situations. The concept of intervention has different connotations that affect whether it is relevant to use the term in relation to individuals and processes (Cifuentes, 2009). In the case of its most common use, intervention is defined as the action and effect of interceding in or mediating a situation in order to promote a change. Generally, this use is based on the assumption that an intervention occurs for the common good (Ayala, 2009). This being said, any type of intervention should not only address an immediate need, but, also, go beyond problem solving in order to establish effective preventive measures (Bisquerra, 1998; 2009).

Two intervention models exist, which will be distinguished and whose application will be discussed in the following section. Namely, these models are the clinical model and the psycho-pedagogical or educational model (Bisquerra, 2006; González-Benito, 2018):

a) The clinical model, based on medicine, is characterised by the following elements: a) a person feels a need; b) a person visits a specialist on their own account; c) the person is diagnosed; d) an intervention is proposed (pharmacological, psycho-therapeutic, surgical); e) follow-up is performed of their progress; f) at the right time, the person is

discharged. This model is reactive is the sense that it describes a response to a situation brought about by a crisis. It is personalised in the sense that individual patients are treated separately and, as a result, it is costly in terms of both time and money. It is healthcare-based in that it concerns a medical care provision.

b) On the other hand, the psycho-pedagogical or educational model is proactive in that it intervenes prior to a problem emerging. It is, therefore, preventive. This type of model is applied to populations as a whole. Using this model, the intervention targets large groups of individuals, making it more cost-worthy. This model focuses on competency development in order to tackle the crises and challenges that emerge in life with more chances of success. This model has been shown to be just as important, necessary and efficient as the clinical model (González-Benito, 2018; Velásquez-Saldarriaga et al., (2020). Nonetheless, the clinical model remains the go to when it comes to mental health issues. During the covid-19 pandemic, psychological healthcare provision was prioritised that was exclusively based on the clinical model. This has led to the mobilisation of psychology professionals calling for greater recruitment to meet the growing demands brought about by this aforementioned situation (Chacón-Fuertes et al., 2020). Virtually no attention has been given to the need for a preventive and mental health promotion approach through education.

It serves to highlight the social need for preventive, proactive and group action that targets the population as a whole and not only individuals with emotional disorders. Such action must strive to develop emotional competencies (Chao, 2022; Medina-Gual, et al., 2021; Peraza de Aparicio, 2021; UNICEF, 2020). This type of intervention strives to equip individuals with the necessary resources to tackle crises with a greater chance of success.

The present article strives to produce evidence about the importance and need for emotional competency development in the general population as a means of coming through crises with as little impact on mental health as possible and with greater chances of achieving good wellbeing.

Emotional education and mental health effects

The influence of emotional intelligence has been examined in the clinical, professional and educational setting. According to García Morales (2022), emotional intelligence is fundamental in many basic settings and for daily life in general, given that it directly influences the emotional impact of a disorder on education or on work. The educational applications of emotions and emotional intelligence can be categorised according to the concept of emotional education. Emotional education is understood as an educational process that targets development of emotional competencies, which, in turn, are considered as necessary basic skills for more successfully tackling the challenges posed throughout life (Bisquerra & Chao, 2021). The aim of emotional education is to improve personal and social wellbeing (Bisquerra, 2009; Bisquerra & Mateo, 2019).

Emotional education represents a qualitative jump in human development. In the 21st century, the general public requires new tools to be able to make sense of reality and construct fairer and more equitable, democratic, sustainable and resilient societies. Cultivation of the emotional dimension means empowering people to establish truly meaningful human relationships with other people, their environment and nature. Emotional education speaks to a process of personal development and collective action, specifically, for self-development and construction of a community in which feelings of personal wellbeing grow alongside the wellbeing of everybody else in a common and shared setting (Pérez-Escoda & López-Cassà, 2022). Emotional education is grounded in scientific research into, for instance, emotional intelligence, multiple intelligences, neuroscience, positive psychology and

humanist pedagogy (Bisquerra & Chao, 2021; Machado-Pérez, 2022).

Emotional education is a form of non-specific and transferable primary prevention that promotes health and wellbeing, making people less vulnerable. Further, it serves to target comprehensive development in individuals. In this sense, prevention and development are two key elements of emotional education (Bisquerra & López-Cassà, 2020). This educational resource takes a lifespan approach in the sense that it is applied during childhood, adolescence and adulthood, in other words, throughout the entire life course (Bisquerra, 2009; Bisquerra & Mateo, 2019; CASEL, 2024; Mahoney et al., 2020).

In Spanish speaking countries, emotional education is the generally used term. However, other alternative terms are used such as socioemotional education, social and emotional learning, emotional intelligence training, positive education, etc. In English, it is often referred to using the generalised terminology SEL (social and emotional learning).

A number of research studies have been conducted to provide evidence of the relationships between emotional education (*SEL, social and emotional learning*) and mental health. Research abounds examining the role of protective factors, such as emotional education (SEL) and resilience capacity, in relation to mental health, with most being conducted with adolescents (Grazzani et al., 2022). Literature on risk and protective factors demonstrates that emotional education influences wellbeing and mental health from early childhood up until adult life (Cahill & Dadvand, 2020; Cavioni et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2018).

Findings indicate that emotional education has beneficial effects on the promotion of mental health (Farina et al., 2021; O'Connor et al., 2018; Wallender et al., 2020; West et al., 2020). Based on available evidence, it can be confirmed that emotional competencies form one of the main protective and preventive factors that can be targeted by interventions. In addition, longitudinal studies reveal that effects tend to persist over time (Puertas-Molero et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2002).

In conclusion, it is important that research and action policies that consider emotional education are put into place prior to a crisis emerging, specifically, in order to avoid any potential harmful effects. Evidence that emotional education influences the promotion of mental health provides a sufficient basis for the promotion of projects geared towards effectively putting it into practice.

Emotional education on the agenda of educational policymakers

In the present day, emotional education presents one of the main challenges for 21st century education. In this regard, inclusion of emotional education has made its way onto the agenda of international entities responsible for education (Reynoso, 2023). Socioemotional learning is a core element of responding to, in the immediate instance, educational and subjective issues brought about as a result of the pandemic (Abramowski & Sorondo, 2022). In this way, these issues have a meaningful impact on public policy and curricular reform.

The report "Rethinking Education" published by UNESCO in 2015 highlighted the need to go beyond conventional academic learning, urging for the four pillars outlined in the Delors report to be considered. These four pillars correspond to learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. They form the basis of the humanist perspective of education (UNESCO, 1996). Further, the United Nations (UN), following approval in 2015 of its Agenda 2030, called for a big global push towards achieving 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), with the explicit ultimate goal of creating a better world. The third of these 17 goals is highlighted here, namely, "ensuring a healthy life and promoting wellbeing for everyone at any age". It should be remembered that the overall aim of emotional competency development is wellbeing. This refers to a complex and broad concept that is constructed

based on environmental factors and individual appraisals of these factors.

Further, the pandemic marked a clear turning point for education. Findings of a study conducted by López-Cassà and Pérez-Escoda (2020) reveal that the majority of participating teaching staff supported the need to introduce emotional education at all educational stages, considering it as an additional skill to be developed in the educational setting. This aspect concurs with recommendations outlined by different international entities, who highlight the need to promote emotional wellbeing in the educational community and improve emotional education provision (Save the Children, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

Various Spanish laws pertinent to education state the main aim of achieving comprehensive education. This means educating beyond the cognitive dimension and, therefore, addressing the emotional dimension. Over recent years, a process has taken place characterised by important change to study plans in the Spanish educational system. Since proclamation of the Organic Law of Education 2/2006, of the 3rd of May (LOE, 2006), up until introduction of the Organic Law for Improving the Quality of Education (LOMCE, 2013), mandatory schooling targeted the comprehensive development of individuals via competency development. In the present context, the Organic Law for Modification of the LOE (LOMLOE) considers emotional development to be the responsibility of all educational agents at all educational levels. It is important to target emotional development from the first stages of schooling right up until adulthood in order to encourage emotional competence throughout life (Pérez-Escoda & Filella, 2021).

Equipping individuals with emotional abilities is considered by the UN (2020) as a well-recognised practice with a strong empirical basis for providing them with the tools, knowledge and attitudes needed for them to keep themselves healthy and maintain a positive attitude towards taking on life's challenges. This is perceived as a paradigm shift in education. Such a change is justified

through scientific evidence about the plausible capacity for individual learning, change and improvement, together with the availability of conditions that enable opportunities for creating a better world to be capitalised on.

Thus, the purpose of education, with emotional education at its heart, must be the promotion of personal growth and orientating growth in a way that supports wellbeing (Bisquerra & Mateo, 2019; Pérez-Escoda & López-Cassà, 2022). Education, in response to societal demands, must assume its part of responsibility and emphasise, as a part of its formative role, the added value of emotional competence (Pérez-Escoda & López-Cassà, 2022) and wellbeing in students (Losada Puente et al., 2022).

Emotional education represents a protective factor that empowers and provides a tool for channelling resilience and promoting mental health and wellbeing. In conclusion, provision of emotional education requires trained and qualified professionals. Thus, it is essential to include emotional competencies within the initial training and ongoing professional development of teaching staff (Bisquerra & García-Navarro, 2018).

In conclusion, emotional education is not a luxury, it is a necessity and a challenge for future society. Providing the population with emotional education equips them with the resources needed to overcome challenges, open up new inroads and fight to achieve individual goals.

Emotional competencies in teaching professionals: Initial and lifelong training

Training on emotional competencies constitutes an important aspect of an active, effective and responsible society, and is applicable to any professional setting (Pérez-Escoda & Cabero, 2020). Numerous studies report that these competencies are predictors of academic and professional success (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Rodríguez et al., 2021). It is also clear that the targeting of emotional competencies through teacher training

programs has positive repercussions on the quality of education, job satisfaction and mental health (Puertas et al., 2018; Rojas-Chacaltana et al., 2023; Tschannen & Carter, 2016).

Initial teacher training and professional teacher development are, undoubtedly, related with the approach to intervention followed in day-to-day educational practice. In this sense, teachers must develop, at the same time as their academic abilities, the emotional competencies that will allow them to become more aware of their professional evolution and output. For this, emotional competence represents the capacity that enables an individual to interact with themselves and others in a positive way by supporting inner satisfaction, achievement of individual and professional success and suitable adaptation to their setting (Hernández-Barraza, 2017).

Further, it is important not to forget that teachers are highly engaged in their work on an emotional level and, generally speaking, the work demands and conditions placed on them tend to be out of step with the resources at hand, with other factors often also being out of balance. Chronic occurrence of these events can have a negative impact on teacher wellbeing and lead to burnout syndrome (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). In this sense, various studies have explored the benefits of developing the emotional competencies of this group, concluding that teachers with a greater capacity to understand and manage their emotions are more able to overcome the challenges of teaching (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2022).

Studies promoted by international entities and institutions, alongside recommendations outlined within the European Union framework, emphasise policies oriented towards improving the professional skills of teachers and put them forwards as decisive instruments for improving the quality of education and training. According to the report published by UNESCO (2021), "*Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*", it is argued that teaching

should continue to be professionalised as a collective task, in which the role of teachers as knowledge producers and key figures for educational and social change is recognised. On the other hand, as outlined in the report "*Effective Teaching Policies: Conclusions of the PISA Report*" published by the OCDE (2018), quality of the educational system depends on the quality of its teachers. According to the OCDE, we are immersed in a complex and rapidly changing society that demands that teachers are trained and prepared to take on the challenge of education provision. The current generation requires other types of resources to cope with and adapt to the fast pace of change. In this sense, available evidence suggests that trainee teachers place far greater importance on training that prioritises personal and social competencies over instrumental skills (Cejudo et al., 2015; Puiggali et al., 2023; Ruíz et al., 2017).

Given that discussed above, the curriculum should include training that develops emotional competencies at all levels, even at the level of higher education (Mira-Agulló et al., 2017; Rodríguez et al., 2021). An example of this comes in the shape of prestigious universities from around the world, such as Harvard Business School at Harvard University, USA, the University of South Australia and Griffith University, in Queensland, which are starting to make space for emotional competencies within their study plans (Llorent et al., 2020). In Spain, however, the only example comes from the Faculty of Education at the University of Cantabria, which has included emotional learning as core content of the curriculum followed with trainee teachers (Rojas-Chacaltana et al., 2023). Recently, the University of Zaragoza targets development of emotional competencies as transversal competencies within all university courses (University of Zaragoza, 2024).

Inclusion of emotional competencies is, therefore, urged when developing study plans for initial and lifelong teacher training (Bisquerra & García-Navarro, 2018; Pérez-Escoda et al., 2019). These competencies are multi-functional. On the one hand, they are

necessary to enable all teachers to effectively carry out their teaching duties. On the other hand, they are essential for their own education and progression (Llorent et al., 2020; Rodríguez et al., 2021; Rojas-Chacaltana et al., 2023).

UNESCO (2020) outlines diverse recommendations for improving teacher training. Firstly, it calls for inclusion of socioemotional abilities within teacher training programs both at the stage of initial training and during professional development (lifelong learning). Secondly, it maintains the need to ensure that directors of educational institutions allot time for teachers to undergo training and provide teachers with the chance to acquire emotional competencies. Thirdly, UNESCO defends the need to promote communication and the creation of networks between teachers to promote this type of learning, mutual support and wellbeing.

In conclusion, well organised and structured teacher training has positive implications in many personal and professional settings (Cabello et al., 2010), with, above all, positive effects within students. Teachers must accept that they are role models of behaviour and, as such, play a central role in equipping students with emotional competencies (Cejudo et al., 2015).

Grounded practice

One approach to delivering emotional education in educational institutions is through the implementation of programs. Programs entail planning and executing a set of actions directed towards achieving pre-defined aims in order to satisfy their needs and enrichening, developing and strengthening specific competencies (Bisquerra et al., 2015).

A number of reports exist on the implementation of emotional education programs the present relevant outcomes for improving the quality of education and human development (Durlak et al., 2011; Keefer et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019). The fact that evidence exists on the positive effects of emotional education does not mean that all

educational interventions will be effective, given that they require fulfilment of a number of organisational and pedagogical conditions (CASEL, 2020; Jones & Bouffard, 2012). One such condition is that they take a sequential approach. In other words, they must be implemented over the course of a number of academic years, or the entire course, where possible. Another important aspect is that it strives for a transversal approach, striving for the engagement of all teachers from all academic subjects. Emotional competencies must be coherently integrated into the typical attitudes and behaviours of students, teachers and families (Bisquerra & Chao, 2021). The aim of this is to develop emotional competencies, defined as the set of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes needed for effectively raising awareness, understanding, expressing and regulating emotional phenomena (Bisquerra & Pérez-Escoda, 2007).

Application of emotional education should be grounded within a robust theoretical framework and scientific research. This requires clearly establishing program goals and introducing them to those involved. Coordination with the educational community (families, teachers, students and other professionals attached to educational institutions) is essential for constructing, where possible, learning communities. Support from the educational community (school directors, school governors, families, and administration and services staff), beginning with management teams is also key, alongside use of active, varied and participative learning methodologies for development of emotional competencies. Such methods include role-playing, videos, relaxation, mindfulness, visualisations, cooperative learning. It is also important to ensure that programming is coordinated, integrated and meshed with all other educational activities. Given that educational interventions are rolled out in diverse situations and contexts (playground, family, street, society), it is important that a diversity of opportunities are made available for putting emotional competencies into

practice and supporting their transfer into different day-to-day situations and contexts. This will likely entail the provision of information and training to teaching staff, counsellors and families through training and evaluation plans. Finally, program evaluation should be conducted before, during and after program application. For this, valid and reliable instruments must be administered to evaluate program effects on emotional education (Bisquerra & Chao, 2021; Bisquerra et al., 2015; CASEL 2020).

The approach presented next is based on the emotional competence model described by Bisquerra and Pérez-Escoda (2007). This includes raising awareness of one's own emotions and the emotions of others (empathy), emotional regulation, emotional autonomy (self-knowledge, self-acceptance, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-motivation, etc.), social competencies (respect, conflict management, assertiveness, etc.) and wellbeing-related life skills (optimism, flow, positive attitude, etc.). All of this includes tolerance to frustration, impulse control, resilience, etc. In other words, the approach serves to develop competencies that contribute towards the appropriate identification, interpretation and expression of emotions (emotional awareness and emotional regulation), in addition to recognising and accepting emotions without judgement (emotional conscience) and acquiring emotional regulation strategies in order to keep calm (emotional regulation) in critical situations. Other aspects targeted include the construction of positive support networks through assertive communication, conflict resolution and cooperation (autonomy and social competence), promotion of the positive emotional wellbeing of oneself and others (emotional autonomy and wellbeing-related life skills).

1. Appropriate identification, interpretation and expression of emotions

The first step towards identifying emotions is development of emotional literacy with the aim of putting a name on the emotions one feels. Emotional vocabulary helps individuals to describe emotions and better understand what is happening to them and others. Pertinent work published by Ros-Morente et al. (2023) can be consulted for more in-depth information on the use of vocabulary at different ages.

The starting point of any program employing this model is to link feelings with bodily sensations such as tightness of the throat when scared, knotting of the stomach when anxious, acceleration of the heartbeat when mad, etc. As an individual starts to identify emotions they also become aware that sometimes they feel more than one emotion at once (emotional ambivalence): "I feel proud of my progress, but I am afraid that things won't work out well". The degree of intensity of different emotions must be identified, alongside the way in which they change over time if nothing is done to regulate them.

In order to develop the ability to interpret emotions, it is necessary to identify the underlying cause of feelings (cause) and the way in which emotions guide behaviour itself (consequences). This helps understanding around why those specific feelings are harboured and the circumstances that bring them about. This requires understanding about the way in which emotions may be of use. For example, anger may help one to confront their problems.

Some questions that may help guide work on this aspect:

- What happened to you? How did it make you feel?

- What information does this feeling provide you with?

- Why are you harbouring this feeling at this time?

It is advisable to gain awareness of the emotions experienced and value them in order to later be able to behave accordingly. Ignoring or repressing feelings does not cause them to disappear, nor does it prevent them from reigniting unexpectedly at a later date. Adequate expression of emotions means

striking a balance between internal processing (recognising, naming feelings and interpreting them correctly) and external expression (how often, where and with whom they are experienced).

To this end, the following activities are proposed:

- Making a list of words pertaining to emotions and feelings.

- Drawing a map of the body to indicate the places in which emotions are manifested.

- Mime and body games about feelings.

- Interpretation of emotional situations (emotion, cause and consequence).

- Support the dynamics of communication and expression through the use of verbal language (emotional vocabulary), non-verbal language, artistic language and other types of language.

2. Recognising and accepting emotions without judgement

People may feel the need to avoid the most uncomfortable and intense emotions such as fear, anger and shame. There is nothing wrong with feeling such emotions. Indeed, no particular feeling is either good or bad, as they simple transmit information and form a part of the essence of human beings. Numerous research studies have reported that ignoring or repressing negative emotions may increase psychological malaise (Gross, 2015; Pascual & Conejero, 2019; Piqueras et al., 2009). Emotional suppression decreases negative emotional behaviours, however, it may also have adverse consequences, such as sleep disturbance, poor nutrition, stress, disease, mental health issues, etc. (Gross, 2015; López-Pérez et al., 2017)

It is important to acknowledge people's experiences for them to able to tune into their emotions. It is advisable to avoid phrases and thoughts such as "you shouldn't feel like that", "I shouldn't feel like that", "it's not a big deal", "cheer up and stop being sad". Such responses do not support emotional develop and impinge

progress towards better handling of emotions. Instead, better expressions are: "I understand that you feel frustrated by this situation" and "it is normal and understandable to feel like that. This shows empathy and legitimises emotions.

One might think that it should be easy to accept emotions but, in reality, challenges arise for various reasons. Although it is not aware of it, society is characterised by a repressive communication style. We find it difficult to validate emotions due to lack of empathy. A trend also exists towards wanting to help one feel better, without accepting that unease is inherent to all of us. It is important not to confuse one's feelings with one's actions (behaviours). Indeed, validating a given emotion is not the same as agreeing with the behaviour exhibited.

In terms of practical application, it is recommended that activities, such as those listed below, are performed that promote:

- Dialogue and exchange of both positive and negative emotional experiences.

- Reflection on beliefs and thoughts pertaining to emotions.

- Spaces for listening and reflecting on emotions and their responses.

- Knowledge of culture and an individual's context in order to understand the situation.

- Distinguish between feeling, thinking and acting.

3. Acquire emotional regulation strategies in order to remain calm

It is difficult to remain calm in times of crisis given that stress mechanisms are immediately activated as the body's response to threat. This is when individuals start to experience symptoms such as palpitations, sweating, irritability and anxiety. The calming of emotions means quashing them and relaxing oneself, alleviating tension and emotional pain or providing consolation. When calm is maintained, one can think logically about issues and search for objective information,

whilst also retaking control over the situation. Nonetheless, sometimes people are carried away by their impulses (Pascual & Conejero, 2019).

Emotional regulation can be understood as a set of conscious or unconscious processes that enable the intensity and duration of both positive and negative emotions, and their related behavioural, experiential and physiological responses, to be modified (Bisquerra & Mateo, 2019). In this way, it plays a fundamental role in the psychological functioning and mental health of individuals (Del Valle et al., 2019). It pertains to one of the most important emotional competencies. Regulation refers to the balance between repression and lack of control. There is a distinction between intrinsic (of one's own emotions) and extrinsic emotional regulation (of the emotions of others) (Bisquerra & Mateo, 2019). Strategies supporting regulation are defined as a set of actions that are performed to reach a common goal, in this case, remain calm.

Work performed by Pascual et al. (2016) is of note in this area as it presents general positive and negative emotional regulation strategies. Other relevant studies have demonstrated that regular engagement in *mindfulness* reduces stress, improves emotional wellbeing, stimulates creativity and attention, and promotes calm states, optimism and positive emotions (López-González et al., 2016). Likewise, it is important to highlight the physical and mental (emotional) health benefits of engaging in conscious relaxation and breathing exercises (Baena-Extremera & Ruíz- Moreno, 2015), physical activity (walking, dancing, cycling, etc.), and sport, especially, when performed outdoors (Ballester-Martínez et al., 2022).

Showing gratitude helps improve wellbeing, promotes changes at the brain level, generates positive attitudes, and greater personal and social wellbeing, amongst other aspects (Fox et al., 2015; Tala, 2019).

Visualisation techniques consist of imagining something pleasant or something that brings to mind a nice memory. Scenarios must be related with positive emotions such as happiness, joy, peace, rest, security, serenity, etc. This psycho-physical ability comprises volition and imagination (López-González, 2007) and has a positive effect on wellbeing.

The following represent some activity that can be performed in order to help one remain calm:

- Full attention or mindfulness.
- Relaxation and conscious breathing.
- Physical activity (dancing, walking strolling, engaging in sport, etc.).
- Showing gratitude.
- Positive visualisation.

It is key that these aforementioned tools be introduced when an individual is in a calm and quiet state, in order for them to associated this practice with positive experiences. Once individuals become familiar with these exercises they will be in a better condition to tackle critical situations and intense emotions, subsequently, calming and relaxing themselves.

4. Constructing a positive support network through employment of assertive communication, conflict resolution and cooperation

The capacity of individuals and groups to recover and come out stronger after a crisis situation is denominated resilience (Rascón, 2017). At some point in their life, all individuals experience challenging moments or adversities that affect their emotions. Resilience is the outcome of a positive interaction between personal and environmental factors (Cyrulnik, 2001). In these situations, it is crucial to count on support networks, whether personal and institutional, that provide accompaniment, affection, acceptance, empathy and the support resources needed to overcome adverse situations. Humans are social beings and, therefore, need emotional support from the individuals around

them in order to survive and enjoy basic satisfaction.

Social support is defined as a set of interactions and behaviours that demonstrate the interest and support given between individuals (González-Quiñones & Restrepo-Chavarriaga, 2010). Social support networks refer to the instances in which supportive behaviours are modified. They can be both informal (family and friendships) and formal (organisations, health centres, etc.) (Roldán-Ramírez et al., 2023). Society is formed by individuals who inherently exhibit concern for others and offer help when needed. A lack or insufficiency of support can have consequences for individual health and wellbeing (Aranda & Pando, 2013).

Social support provides individuals with a sense of stability, predictability and control that makes them feel better and positively perceive their environment. At the same time, these feelings can motivate these individuals to take care of themselves, interact positively with others and use more personal and social resources to cope with stress. The combination of these factors have positive effects on emotional wellbeing and health (Barra, 2004; Roldán-Ramírez et al., 2023).

The cultivation of positive emotions can help individuals, groups and communities to grow and flourish. Community change is possible thanks to the fact that the positive emotions of each individual forming the community resonates through others, creating links that mutually reinforce each other (Fredrickson, 2003; Vecina, 2006). It should be considered that assertiveness emerges as a social competence that is inherent to all of the above and that this implies expression of individual rights, opinions and feelings, without denying the rights, opinions or feelings of others.

This describes, therefore, the creation of collaborative structures that join people together in the pursuit of shared goals. This reduces hostility, fear, frustration, etc.

Particular experiences bring benefits to the group. For example, sharing your opinion assertively, resolving conflicts in a group, receiving support from others.

One of the main elements required to cope with adversity is use of positive emotions and laughter (Bonanno, 1997; Rascón, 2017). Different research studies conducted in this ambit have demonstrated that positive emotions, in addition to a suitable social setting, support and ongoing contact with important others, may help to reduce distress following adverse situations (Bonanno, 2004; Rascón, 2017). Likewise, maintaining a positive attitude improves cognitive performance and increases creative problem solving and correct decision making (Pérez-Escoda & López-Cassà, 2022; Seligman, 2018).

With regards to the practical application of that discussed above, activities are recommended that promote the following conditions:

- Verbalisation of experiences with groups of individuals.
- Spaces for debate and the sharing of opinions.
- Problem solving and conflict resolution in groups.
- Seeking assistance from professionals or individuals from within the support network.
- Experiencing positive emotions (better when shared with other individuals).

These types of practices provide opportunities for individuals to share, know each other and learn more about personal and social identities. In addition, stronger links are forged between individuals.

5. *Promotion of personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of others*

Wellbeing is a complex and broad concept that is formed based on environmental factors and individual self-assessment. Indeed, some authors argue that there is no single concept of

wellbeing, as there are different ways in which it can be understood. Bisquerra (2013) proposes five types of wellbeing, namely, physical (health-related), material (emotional and technological development), social (interpersonal and community relationships), emotional (personal and subjective experiences) and professional (related with job satisfaction). In this sense, it is recommended that all five types of wellbeing are addressed and taken care of, given that each one contributes to general wellbeing.

From a positive psychology standpoint, the need is emphasised for individuals to be actively and continuously involved in a set of elements that contribute to wellbeing (Seligman, 2011, 2018). Increasing evidence is available that suggests that to achieve wellbeing, certain attitudes and skills are needed that, by nature, are often not possessed making it necessary to learn and develop them. Seligman (2011) conceived the PERMA model, which proposes the existence of five components of wellbeing: 1) *positive emotions*); 2) *engagement*; 3) *positive relationships*; 4) m*eaning*; and 5) *accomplishments*.

The experience of positive emotions is key for wellbeing. Seligman recommends cultivating optimism, maintaining focus on positive aspects for developing hope and looking for the positive side of things. At the same time, they argue that it is essential to learn how to enjoy and value tasks and daily events as a source of satisfaction. Engaging in a given activity, hobby or project because one believes that it is worth the effort, allows them to put their own strengths into action, clear their mind and recharge their energy and motivation. Sometimes, being committed to something leads to formation of a link that is so strong it causes one to lose the notion of space and time. In such cases, individuals may enter into a state of mental activation that has been denominated by Csikszentmihalyi (2010) as flow or optimal functioning. Engaging to the point of flow, brings three aspects into play, specifically, skill, concentration and perseverance.

It is important to maintain healthy, close and genuine relationships that are characterised by cooperation, accompaniment, a sense of belonging, love, respect, etc.

Having a sense of purpose in life is another element of satisfaction. This concerns the search to attribute meaning to one's own existence. It acts as a long-term incentive that motivates and bestows value on one's life. When someone asks about the meaning of life and finds it, every effort makes sense. Viktor Frankl, in their book *Man's Search for Sense* illustrates that capacity of humans to overcome the most horrendous challenges and restore hope by using their free will to choose their own path or purpose.

Accomplishments are also important in life. People need to set realistic goals which, once reached, allow them to experience success and feel competent. Goal achievement strengthens intrinsic motivation, furthers personal growth and supports the development of personal autonomy to continue posing new challenges to which individuals can invest effort and dedicate themselves.

It is also important to recognise the value of individuals. Individuals who truly value themselves, value others and are aware that the world in which they live must be preserved for future generations. To this end, it is necessary to develop empathy, search for common ground, and show compassion and tolerance (Hué, 2007).

Some activities designed to promote these aspects are listed below:

- Elaboration of a list of human virtues and strengths.
- Experience emotions through artistic language (literature, theatre, cinema, music, etc.).
- Design of personal life projects.
- Volunteering.
- Performance of successful and satisfactory tasks.

All individuals are capable of contributing to personal and social wellbeing but, aside from this, organisations and governments must ensure that the ideal conditions are in place to make this learning possible (Pérez-Escoda & López-Cassà, 2022).

Conclusions

As a result of the literature review and analysis performed in the present study, the following conclusions are made. Firstly, it can be concluded that present society is subjected to permanent crises that affect mental health and require educational interventions that oblige it to think and act accordingly. Secondly, present findings highlight the importance and need of development emotional competencies in the general population as a requisite to be able to tackle crises with as little impact as possible on mental health, supporting wellbeing as much as possible. Thirdly, emotional education emerges as a key factor for strengthening emotional competencies and preventing or minimising mental health issues. Fourthly, emotional education represents an essential challenge for wellbeing in the general population. Fifthly, to emotionally educate the population is to equip them with resources to overcome difficulties, open up new inroads and persist in the pursuit of their goals. Sixthly, it is recommended to promote effective projects and practices that develop emotional competencies in the educational community and plant them into the training of future education professionals.

In summary, it is important to implement action strategies and policies before crises arise. Emotional education emerges as an efficient proposal with the potential to contribute towards the transformation of the current status quo, promote the search for personal and social wellbeing and prepare new generations to face both present and future challenges with greater probabilities of success.

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Authors / Autores
López-Cassà, Èlia (elialopez@ub.edu) 0000-0003-3870-8533

López-Cassà, Èlia (elialopez@ub.edu) 0000-0003-3870-8533

Associate professor in the Department of Didactics and Educational Organization at the Universidad de Barcelona. She belongs to the Psychopedagogical Guidance Research Group (GROP) of this university. Her research focuses on emotional education and the development of emotional competencies. She has published books, chapters, and articles in indexed journals, and has participated in several competitive research projects funded by Spain's Ministry of Science and Innovation. She is currently the principal researcher at an international project on the implementation and assessment of socioemotional competencies in teachers and primary and secondary education students, financed by the European Commission.

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Bisquerra-Alzina, Rafael (rbisquerra@ub.edu) 0000-0002-2264-0653

Is president of the RIEEB (International Network of Emotional Education and Wellbeing, rieeb.com), emeritus professor at the University of Barcelona, Doctor in Educational Sciences, Graduate in Pedagogy and Psychology. Some of his publications: *Psicopedagogía de las emociones* (2009), *Cuestiones sobre bienestar* (2013), *La inteligencia emocional en la educación* (2015), *Universo de emociones* (2015), *10 ideas clave. Educación emocional* (Graó, 2016), *Competencias emocionales para un cambio de paradigma en educación* (2019, Horsori), *Emoción: instrumentos de medición y evaluación* (2020), etc.

Author Contribution: RBA has contributed to the conceptualisation, methodology, research, analysis, review, and writing.

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