

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Emotional education: A critical review of the voices against its implementation in schools

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ABSTRACT

The uncertainty, constant changes and growing diversity that characterize the societies in which we live have a considerable impact on people's lives. Education is no stranger to this situation and, aware of its responsibility and social function of training for life, has echoed the recommendations to promote the development of emotional skills. However, there are voices critical of this initiative considering that they respond to the interest of maintaining a neoliberal economic-social order. The purpose of this article is to deepen our knowledge of these critical positions and to present a rationale for Emotional Education that includes and contextualises them, to conclude with a reflection on the need to reconcile the different views and perspectives for the benefit of the integral personal development of individuals and society. To meet the objective of this proposal a systematic literature review was carried out in the PsycInfo, Education database, Dialnet, ERIC and Scielo databases, and 14 scientific publications in specialized journals and 3 books that responded to the objective of the study were selected. As a result of the analyses of the literature we have made a categorisation of the criticisms into six areas: political, educational, psychological, sociological, philosophical, and, to a lesser extent, linguistic. The need to reconcile different perspectives for the implementation of EE in schools and the importance of teacher training for this purpose is discussed. Finally, the implications of the criticism are pointed out as well as future lines of research.

Keywords: emotional education; emotional intelligence; personal development; emotions

1. Introduction

As early as the 1930s, Thorndike^[1] introduced the term “social intelligence” as a form of intelligence involving the skills of understanding the emotions of others, empathy, cooperation, conflict resolution, and adaptability in social settings. Later, Payne^[2] coined the term Emotional Intelligence (EI) highlighting the role that emotions play in our lives and how the development of this type of intelligence favours the self-integration of the person. But it was not until 1993 when Mayer and Salovey^[3] published their article on EI research defining the areas that comprise it, that its study became of interest to the scientific community and influenced various fields such as education and psychology.

Despite these previous studies, the renewed interest in EI in psychology is usually associated with Goleman^[4] who, in a more popularizing than scientific way, maintains his central idea that the ability to identify,

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control, adapt and modify our emotions is more important than what we commonly understand as being intelligent. This argument is “particularly attractive for the educational field where it is very well received”^[5], and based on this success “emotional education (EE) appears as the solution to many of our personal and social problems”^[6] by stating that EI is a set of skills that can be developed.

However, despite this positive reception in education and the studies that support its relationship with various aspects of personal development and well-being^[7-9], some voices of opposition have emerged from the academic world in different countries. In general, they consider that the discourse on EE has a clear ideological stance. In this sense, they state that this type of education is a “control mechanism” towards the population with the sole purpose of promoting the development of uncritical people and favouring the neoliberal market policies prevailing in Western society.

As professionals committed for many years to initial teacher education and, especially, to the development of emotional competence, we are concerned about these critical voices. For this reason, our intention is to review these criticisms, systematise them and analyse them to understand their rationale and relevance to the field of education.

We consider this systematisation of the criticisms into areas of knowledge will allow to identify ways of educational action based on a humanistic and holistic vision that pursue the integral development of students, and, particularly their emotional competencies, reconciling the individual dimension with the social and community perspective. To this end, it is considered necessary to answer the following questions: What criticisms are made of EE? Do these criticisms focus on specific areas of knowledge? What should be the theoretical foundations for the design of EE programmes in schools? Is it possible to combine a competency-based approach with a humanistic approach to EE?

2. Method

To answer the research questions, a systematic review of the literature was performed without filtering by year of publication. The guidelines established in the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) statement for this type of studies were followed^[10].

2.1. Search process

For the search, the research questions were taken as a reference and the search criteria were defined following the PICO strategy^[11]. The articles and books reviewed were selected from: PsycInfo, the Education Database, Dialnet, ERIC and Scielo databases. For the documentary exploration the search descriptors used on the Internet were: (1) criticism AND/OR emotional education; (2) review AND/OR emotional education. The search did not include restrictions of year or type of publication. A total of 3719 were obtained, specifically: PsycInfo (12), Education database (2836), Dialnet (556), ERIC (192) and Scielo (123).

2.2. Article selection and data extraction

For the subsequent selection of articles consistent with the research questions posed, the following exclusion and inclusion criteria were established:

The exclusion criteria used afterwards were as follows: doctoral theses and publications based on therapies, autism, school inclusion, coexistence/bullying, questionnaires, creation of emotional programs or articles not related to the search criteria were discarded from the analysis. From this first filtering, 136 publications were obtained; in a second filtering, authors of reference in critiques of emotional education, authors cited in these publications and Spanish or Latin American background were used as inclusion criteria. Finally, 14 publications in scientific journals and 3 books published in Latin America were included in the

analysis. The authors of the publications analyzed work in Latin American or Spanish educational institutions, and only one of them in a British university.

2.3. Data analysis

To analyze the information from the selected publications, the full text of each was read and the results were recorded using two data extraction templates. The first one collected the main characteristics of the studies analyzed and had the following analysis categories: a) title, b) authors and year of publication, and c) methodology. The second template was used to categorize the criticisms, conclusions and proposals and included aspects associated with the research questions.

3. Results

Based on the reading of the texts opposing the EE, we grouped the criticisms into six types of arguments: political, educational, psychological, sociological, philosophical, and, to a lesser extent, linguistic, with the possibility of finding areas of intersection between two or more of them. Concerning the criticisms grouped around the political^[5,12-18], they underline the marked neoliberal-mercantilist character of the recommendations emanating from international organisations that seek to train individualistic citizens, concerned, and preoccupied with their own well-being and disengaged and uncommitted with contexts of social injustice.

In this way, they consider that educating people emotionally based on these proposals encourages them to focus on themselves (individualism) and lose sight of a sense of community, abandoning any attempt to fight and/or criticise the system. The classification of emotions into positive and negative, with a clear tendency to eliminate the latter and (self-)promote the former, would accentuate the development of an uncritical attitude towards the circumstances surrounding the person, which are, in the end, the triggers of these emotions, thus removing their awareness and the possibility of change. They state that:

“(…), it would not be appropriate to deny or ignore the importance of the learners’ appraisals in order to keep them as close as possible to the state of subjective well-being, since the function that the negative emotion is fulfilling for that well-being is to manifest the meaning that the person attaches to the situation and to warn the person of the need for the situation to be transformed”^[13].

Thus, if people eliminate negative emotions, a passive attitude towards the surrounding reality would be encouraged, creating uncritical people and at the same time a “moral and ethical problem is transformed into an emotional problem”^[5].

The arguments against EE included in the educational field^[16-18] are all those that state that this type of education is an extension of the neoliberal ideology that permeates the current society in which we live, where the aim is for people to be only productive members, losing sight of the sense and pedagogical commitment that the educational system should have with culture.

The design of emotional literacy programmes responds to this attempt to standardise and model people for the sole purpose of making them functional to the system that international organisations and governments seek to sustain. The educational practices that are promoted and the evaluation of their effectiveness are based on the corporate policies of measuring results to achieve quantifiable “quality” standards that are completely external to the field of education. Likewise, the emphasis on the development of certain skills (including socioemotional skills) in education, recommended by different international organisations (IOs) such as the World Bank, the OECD, the IDB, etc., suggests that “the discourse of emotional education has been hegemonised by visions that are akin to a competitive, individualistic and decontextualised view of education”^[17]. These authors, in an attempt to systematise the criticisms, make a detailed analysis of reports and specific training models such as the practice developed by the World Bank; the CASEL proposal^[19]

founded by Goleman; Bisquerra's proposals in Spain; and the promotion of an emotional law from the EE Foundation led by the psychologist Lucas Malaisi in Argentina. Finally, the attempts in Chile, based on the criterion of "classroom climate" as a quality factor, to develop educational and teacher training policies taking this indicator into account are not free from criticism either.

All of them show the appropriation and resignification of the educational discourse by neoliberalism, distorting the pedagogical aims of the school since "the EE seems to provide techniques of management (sic) of the soul that mark a difference between "competent" and "not competent" discourses when it comes to recognising, naming and expressing emotions (in the school and, later on, in the market)"^[16].

But it is not only the economy or business that has taken over education. The COVID-19 pandemic has given new impetus to the EE by reinforcing a psychological-therapeutic discourse in schools. According to Sorondo and Abramowski^[18]:

The hypothesis (...) is that the guidelines of the IOs in the face of the pandemic are based on an "emotionalization" and "therapeutization" of education. At the same time, we note a reinforcement of moral concerns not expressly stated as such and overlaid in psycho-emotional discourses [p. 66, inverted commas are ours].

From the psychological point of view, criticisms^[5,14,15,17,18] focus, on the one hand, on questioning the universality of the EI construct itself. They criticize the cognitive-constructivist theoretical framework and the neuroscience behind this conception of EI^[5]. On the other hand, they point directly to Goleman^[4] who, as we mentioned at the beginning, emphasizes individual responsibility for people's feelings. Likewise, critical voices are raised against positive psychology and its postulates on the "pursuit of happiness" Seligman^[20], and, also against coaching, self-help, etc., currents. They consider that they all pursue:

(...) increasing optimism by putting into practice the refutation of pessimistic or "irrational" thoughts, learning to argue with ourselves, and, in this way, reformulating beliefs in order to give a positive turn to life. The revitalisation of the psychologies of the self, positive or self-help, and of elements linked to them such as psychotherapy propose as a central topic the responsibility that the person must assume when designing or redefining his or her emotional conditions in particular, and his or her life project in general^[14].

In short, being happy, and learning to control ourselves and regulate our emotions is seen as the way to "shape the archetypal neoliberal citizen"^[15]. Opposition is also directed at the inclusion of certain contents, resources and methodologies of some EE programmes in schools, where the classification of emotions into positive, and negative, as already mentioned, presupposes that the division between good and bad emotions is promoted, and emotions are regulated by associating and identifying them with colours that symbolise, in a simple and subtle way, what should be felt, without the possibility of being able to choose the colour that each emotion evokes individually¹.

The idea that EE programmes promote a person's emotional well-being is also criticised^[13,21] as they consider it to be based on a hedonistic perspective of well-being and focus their criticisms on the EE proposals that emerged in Spain from the ideas of Bisquerra and Hernández^[22,23]. It is questioned, on the one hand, for being a way of "psychologising" education^[24] and, on the other, the intention to reinforce positive emotions to the detriment of negative ones without taking into account contextual elements:

The value of emotions in the aforementioned proposal is based on the positive and negative effects they produce on the well-being of learners (...) The main reason for this criticism would be the inappropriateness of valuing emotions in a standardised way in terms of the pleasure-displeasure binomial

because it would be ignoring the cultural, political and philosophical foundations that are immersed in pedagogical practices^[21].

Another contested aspect of the discourse of EE and EI that dominates the educational sphere is that which negatively affects people's identity. Appealing to Zembylas^[25], it is suggested that the EE standardises, points out a path to be followed, and ends up influencing the entire pedagogical process, from the configuration and organisation of classrooms to the relationships between the different members of the educational community, marking how they should live and feel:

These end up being a constitutive element on which teachers and students articulate their identity, based on a discourse that is presented to them as emancipatory and that seeks to restore to education its humanist character within a dehumanizing context^[5].

On the other hand, it is criticised that, from a social point of view, the approach to EE is promoted because of the way it deals with affective issues: "The use and abuse of emotions are characteristic of a society which (...) is defined as post-emotionalist, given its frivolous and relativistic way of dealing with affective issues"^[6]. This, at the same time, reinforces the criticism that this type of training is a control mechanism to achieve individual consumers and producers of consumer goods, a statement that several authors^[5,14], among others, share and which is summarised by Martínez^[14] when he states:

The management of emotions as a control mechanism is aimed at engendering the submission necessary to increase the productivity of an individual body. Under this pressure of performance and without the subject perceiving it as a prohibition, coercion, or sanction, any expression of criticism, discomfort or disagreement regarding decisions, content, or work situations in general is inhibited, and characterized as negative, irrational or pessimistic, in order to progressively eliminate the resistance that arises in a political context of a violation of rights and loss of working conditions for teachers [p. 121].

They also argue that this way of understanding emotions from an individual point of view does not promote collaborative work environments, since everything is taken and reduced to the realm of the individual, the private, where people are responsible (and guilty) for how they feel and, therefore, the solution never comes from the environment or the community but must be found within themselves. Some authors^[6,13] warn of this danger, and present an EE proposal to avoid it:

One problem is that emotional education transfers mainly the responsibility to learners to build positive emotions and the regulation of negative emotions for subjective well-being, forgetting that the educational environment has a great responsibility for the emotions they perceive (...) For that reason, an emotional education, (...), without a critical analysis that aims to transform reality, is overlooking the possibility of associating emotional education with moral education^[13].

This is in line with the criticism of the new subjectivities that the EE under neoliberal rationality promotes. They argue that the figure of the "entrepreneurial subject"^[15,16] or the message of "making oneself" are discourses that are not only constantly present through social networks, but also permeate the entire educational sphere. This criticism is based on the work of Foucault^[16]:

The entrepreneurial subject is a competitive subject—immersed in global competition—who thinks of himself as a company that must tend towards greater performance, efficiency and productivity in a context marked by the flexibilization of the labour market, the loss of rights and the weakening of democracies and of the very concept of the common. To achieve greater efficiency and adaptation to flexibilization, individuals internalise techniques of management (sic) (or governmentality) for the development of the person. This includes techniques of "management (sic) of the soul", for the mastery of the self. [p. 14]

These techniques, which aim to make people self-motivated and in control of their emotions (and their life projects), contribute to creating the illusion of freedom through a new form of subjugation or slavery and the formation of a “subject of modernity” in the words of the Korean philosopher Han^[26] to which many allude^[14]:

The subject of late modernity to whom performance is demanded does not perform any obligatory work. His maxims are not obedience, the law or the fulfilment of duty, but freedom and voluntariness. What he expects most from work is a gain in terms of pleasure. Nor does he act on the orders of others. Rather, he listens above all to himself. After all, he must be an entrepreneur of himself^[26].

This individualisation, accountability and blaming transferred to the teaching staff at any educational stage, in turn, undermines any attempt to build communities of collaborative work and mutual help because the assumption is that everyone is responsible not only for what they feel but also for how they manage to change their feelings.

In a field of intersection between the psychological and the sociological via the educational, we highlight one of Abramowski’s works^[27] about her criticisms of the current EE and, in particular, of emotional teacher education. Starting from a journey backwards in the history of teacher training in Argentina, she emphasises the moment of practice, when the (at that time mostly female) future teachers were in front of a classroom for the first time and were evaluated:

Based on the premise that the emotions related to the task of teaching are the object of cultivation and education, this paper analyses some aspects of the affective training of Argentine teachers between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, emphasising its practical nature and paying special attention to the corporal dimension^[27].

On the other hand, the choice of the moment in teacher training of the period of practice in which the EE previously took place does not seem to her to be a coincidence at all because “this fact allows us to understand a theoretical postulate about emotions which says that these, before being mere ideas that are in the mind, are practices”^[27]. The fact that emotions “are inscribed in the body and are learned with the body”^[27] leads her to introduce the concept of emotional habitus, a concept based on that of Bordieu and on which Sheer works^[28], understanding emotions as practices sustained or anchored in the habitus:

Emotions also follow this practical logic embedded in social relations. Like all practices, they are simultaneously spontaneous and conventional. The habitus specifies what is “feelable” in a specific setting, orients the mind/body in a certain direction without making the outcome fully predictable. Emotions can thus be viewed as acts executed by a mindful body, as cultural practices. [p. 205].

Another socio-political, but at the same time conciliatory, critique of EE tries to bring EE back from the field of psychology to the field of philosophy^[6,13,21] by pointing out that already in antiquity, philosophers expressed the need to educate emotions, but always linked to moral education.

It is also argued that these current approaches to EE or EI, even if they claim to do so, do not resolve the traditional emotion-reason duality since “EI discourse, despite its efforts to claim a new order between reason and emotion, does not present a break with dualistic thinking, but rather feeds it.”^[5] This way of accentuating dualism is given by distinguishing between personal and social skills for the development of EI and because access to emotions is proposed from a cognitivist and neurological approach, without giving room for the understanding of the emotional from other perspectives; dichotomies that^[28] also analyses when referring to the theory of emotional practice that confronts body with mind, expression with experience.

However, for Marina^[6], and in line with those who indicate that EE should be associated with moral education, they do seem to be skills that involve the personal and the social when he argues that:

Understanding one's own and other people's feelings, knowing what to do with them, resolving the conflicts they raise, regulating one's own behaviour, knowing how to cope with stress, learning to motivate oneself, are undoubtedly essential issues for intimate life and for living together. [p. 29].

About language, certain terminology that is used and identified with totalitarian regimes, as well as the business world, is criticised^[16]. In relation to the aforementioned criticism regarding the classification of emotions into positive and negative, it is interesting since it would be at an intersection between the field of language and that of psychology (an aspect already mentioned). From the point of view of language, some argue that this classification annihilates polysemy by imposing categories that give a hierarchical structure and exclude. They argue that there is a violent use of language that normalises feelings by means of vocabulary typical of "new age" currents. The discourse around the EE is marked by neoliberal logic and introduces terms and language that may seem innocuous, but "nevertheless entails the expulsion of polysemy from the single neoliberal thought"^[16]. This implies neoliberal domination through a managerial type of language that is introduced in schools:

The lexical field that runs through the discourse of EE, which includes terms such as "productive", "management", "adaptation" and "regulation", refers directly to managerial discourse and can be understood as a transposition of neoliberal logic into the way we conceive education and educational processes. This lexical field is also articulated with a set of "fashionable" commercial discourses that promise educational actors to "improve their practices"^[16].

In short, most of the criticisms are aligned in affirming that the EE understood in this way as it is proposed by international organisations would entail an intrusion of psychology, economics, and the business world into education, promoting the development of individualistic and uncritical people with respect to an unjust society and with the sole objective of favouring a neoliberal system.

4. Discussion

As we have already seen, there is a strong and growing body of research in EE. It is not just a concept; it is not even a practice that is booming in the educational world and that has been consolidating in educational institutions^[29]. Contrary to what some point out, it is also not just a buzzword, but a useful and well-founded construct^[30,31]. If there is one thing we have learned about EE over the last thirty years, it is that it is basically a continuous and permanent process aimed at developing emotional competences and contributing to people's personal and social development^[32,33], which evolves at the same time in different educational contexts and, uniquely, with the direct participation of professionals from different disciplinary fields (psychologists, pedagogues, teachers) and with the essential role of the students.

Nevertheless, such debates make sense. But the debate should not only focus on the accusatory and exclusionary discourse where EE is identified as a strategy for the formation of neoliberal subjectivity in the educational process and a process of endo-privatisation that shapes the meanings of educational practices^[12,16], but EE could also be conceived as a social responsibility.

To know if we have moved in the right direction, it is necessary to stop and delve into the contributions of other scientific fields that are linked to the EE, since it integrates contributions from other sciences that have a common quest: to delve into human nature.

We appreciate the possibility of a dialogue between different disciplines: psychology, pedagogy and philosophy. No single discipline is able of answering educational questions in isolation^[24,34].

From the field of psychology, it is not a question of thinking about education from psychology, it is a question of thinking about education with psychology. Significant references are humanistic psychology,

which contributes to generating a new explanation of human nature, emphasising the importance of personal growth, the potential of relationships between people and the importance of subjective experience in human development; also positive psychology, which focuses on the positive aspects of human experience such as happiness, gratitude, resilience and pays special attention to emotions and the search for meaning in life^[35–37].

These theories provide another way of conceiving the human mind and perceiving reality, emphasising the strengths of the person, individual well-being and lifestyles considered as positive or healthy^[31]. Although education must always consider the well-being of the person being educated, “the intention of education is not only limited to the individual but educates the person in relation to the world, to others”^[24]. There is no personal well-being without interaction with social well-being^[23].

Personal development is a continuous process of growth and change that involves the acquisition of new skills and the integration of all of them is always orchestrated by affect. The different skills interact together, enabling the person to act functionally in his or her environment, to convey his or her needs, ideas, thoughts, and emotions^[38]. EE should approach the goal of developing life skills, an education for reality, which allows to achieve greater well-being^[23]. That is, an education that allows each learner to discover, question and desire.

Psychology has raised awareness of the importance of subjectivity in educational processes and its relevance to human psychosocial development^[39]. Human emotions as subjective experiences are complex. Emotions should not only be conceptualized in psychic but also in social terms^[40]. Thinking about subjectivity in school is to think that educating is to sustain bonds, we do think that the EE also seeks to develop attitudes of empathy, to work collaboratively, proactively, and constructively with peers^[41,33], and not promote per se individualistic persons.

Pedagogy cannot ignore the emotional and affective aspects in teaching and learning^[40]. Education is expected to respond continuously to the changing developmental needs of society. Inevitably education must confront human beings with the present realities of humanity, provide answers to challenges, offer new possibilities, and help to achieve a healthy, rational human being, capable of leading a full, meaningful, and satisfying life^[42]. The pedagogical practice involves combining cognition, affect and behaviour so that people can thrive in diverse cultures and contexts and achieve positive developmental outcomes^[43]. Emotions are, in this sense, a support for reason^[40].

The work that has been developed in the European Union on EE has been inspired by scientific knowledge. In this sense, we can find essential recommendations to guide education, training and learning that emphasize the need to promote, in 21st-century education, the academic and intellectual side, but also the emotional and social side^[44]. These educational policy actions have been supportive of the cutting-edge line of EE, and we have studies that support the fact that socio-emotional development is an important part of the education of all students^[45,46].

Similarly, the pedagogical renewal movements (new school, active school, progressive education) and their main representatives sought intellectual, emotional, social, and ethical development at school. Their ideas point out the importance of the affective dimension of pupils and propose an education for life, where affectivity plays a relevant role^[47,48]. Learning is an emotional process because learning implies “affectivising” the world, and this is the complex combination of affect and pedagogy^[48]. The main task is not to teach how to feel but to enable understanding why certain emotions are felt in a particular social context^[40]. That is the way we think EE works, contrary to the opinion of its critics.

The task of teaching is doubly complicated; on the one hand, pedagogy has to take care of many elements of basic training for the primary socialisation of students, guaranteeing and promoting peaceful coexistence, respect, solidarity, tolerance, civic responsibility, moral and social awareness^[48] and, on the other hand,

building a new pedagogy where a curriculum for life is planned and developed^[47]. From the school curriculum, it is not only a question of approaching EE for the proper management of emotions, but from a profoundly humanistic approach that allows inner growth^[33,49]. EE can be approached as a cross-cutting theme in all academic subjects and in tutorials^[41]. Children have not only intellectual but also affective interests^[47].

In short, from the pedagogical point of view, there is a change in the teacher's perspective, who has to connect affectively and build bridges between desires, needs and knowledge in the teaching-learning process, where students are given another place, beyond productivity^[50].

It is also worth noting the links between EE and philosophy, which provides us with points of view that are linked to human nature, and its possibilities for development which are at its basis. Philosophy thinks and education executes^[47]. The great philosophers (Descartes, Spinoza, Hegel, Hobbes) were already proposing the need to educate in humanity and affectivity since this is what enables us to be happy^[22,41]. Education is a way of educating from within that aims to reach the deepest part of oneself, and this educating from within means understanding the process of thinking and feeling, because this is part of life^[29]. "Thinking requires handling reason and emotion equally"^[49].

From a philosophical point of view, to educate is to help the human being to understand the complexity of the totality of his being, it is to transform the human being internally^[42]. To educate is "to lead from outside"^[51], that is why "education always comes to us from another human being"^[48]. Education allows a human being to develop his capacities to be able to lead himself in life, that is what we are talking about, to be able to be and to lead himself or not to be able to be^[24].

Importance is also attached to the balance between intellect and sensitivity, it is key to harmonize, to have a clear, sensitive, precise mind^[42]. Education should focus on developing empathy and responsibility towards others, making us aware of the reality of our fellow human beings^[48]. EE, in this sense, does seek to foster an understanding of one's own and others' emotions, promoting greater care and consideration for others^[33].

The care and cultivation of oneself, "know thyself", "become who you are", without disregard for others, is a fundamental task, but self-knowledge does not have to be the final goal of life but the starting point^[49]. To educate for life is to help in self-knowledge^[42], but it is not only to focus on oneself but on what one shares with others^[48,52].

The World Health Organization^[53,54] proposes the development of "life skills", defining these skills as the ability to adopt adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. To live is to meet, to experience, and this is done in a human environment^[51,34]. What enables "life success" is "feeling reasonably comfortable being who you are, doing what you do and being with who you are"^[51].

Good health is a social issue that affects the school, it is the premise for students to have a better ability to learn. It is argued that EE represents a form of primary prevention^[22,55]. From this preventive approach, in the educational environment, social-emotional learning involves developing healthy relationships, making responsible decisions, handling challenges constructively and showing interest and concern for others^[39].

Having reviewed these basic pillars, we can state that we understand that the EE has opened a new path.

5. Conclusions

As we have seen, those who criticise EE consider that the way it is currently set out focuses on the marked neoliberal-mercantilist character, promoting individualism that permeates the current society in which we live^[12]. On the contrary, we consider, more than ever, that the EE could also be conceived as an opportunity

for social responsibility in which people have to be educated in a different way than before. But the most convincing reason to educate the emotional dimension is that education's main aim is the full development of the personality and capacities of students. Such training cannot be carried out without educating the emotional dimension since it would be impossible to fully develop the personality of the pupil without attending to his or her emotional development, because the emotional dimension is inherent to the personality^[39,40].

One of the main implications derived from this work is the need to review the aim of education. This purpose must be situated in a position that could be said to be one of "subtle balance" between maintenance and change. In this sense, the holistic development of individuals is a priority, without neglecting any area of development so that they can develop to their full potential. Fortunately, thanks to advances in educational research, the emphasis on intellectual capacities to the detriment of others has given way to a focus on the personal development of students in schools. And therein lies the clearest rationale for EE. In turn, education should aim to enable people to integrate into the society in which they live, taking into account the characteristics of their context and its demands, but at the same time fostering a critical spirit and reflection. In other words, it is not a matter of simply reproducing ways of being and doing in society without being aware of the injustice and problems present in the world. The EE gives people the possibility to know themselves better and also, to recognise their emotions, and at the same time to become aware of others in their emotional dimension. And it is in this importance given to others, to the quality of the bond that is established with them, that emotional regulation has its foundation. Learning emotional coping strategies that help to regulate the intensity and duration of an emotion allows difficulties, conflicts and problems that arise between people to be resolved in an assertive way. The individual knowledge of our emotions and the development of skills to manage them, understood in the relational framework we have mentioned, not only does not mean per se accentuating individualism, but, precisely, putting the relationship, the link with others, at the centre.

Evidently, another of the most direct implications of the review we have made of these criticisms is the need to train teachers to avoid, perhaps, EE practices that incur in these types of situations pointed out by the critics: invalidating the emotions felt by students; promoting individualism and annulling critical reflection; isolating emotions from the contexts in which they arise without giving the opportunity to develop the ability to analyse the environment, and the interactions between people that take place there as a way of achieving a deeper understanding of their emotions.

But to argue generally that EE is a "control mechanism" and that it tells us how we should feel is, in our view, reductionist. It is likely that, in school institutions and due to a lack of training, certain teaching practices are not the most appropriate. From our knowledge and our educational practice, on the contrary, we develop EE proposals for both teachers^[55,56] and students^[57] whose ultimate aim is to humanise education. As far as teacher training is concerned, our model of developing emotional competence^[55,56] in teaching seeks to give trainees the opportunity to introspect, to analyse themselves in their emotional responses in the context in which they arise. In our mentoring, we never question their emotions, but rather ask them questions that allow them to clearly define what they feel, what triggers them and help them to identify the ways in which they regulate the intensity and duration of those emotions. The goal is that, in emotionally charged situations, they can become aware of what is happening to them, take ownership of it and manage it appropriately, but not to simply "comply" with the demands of the environment; nor to blame themselves for what they feel or to disregard others. On the contrary, our intention is that, taking into account the context and the other people with whom they interact, they can collaborate, fundamentally, in the development of a good climate of interaction that is beneficial for all those involved.

A future line of research deriving from this work would be, then, to review the EE programmes in schools and, fundamentally, to investigate the results in terms of their impact on the personal development of students,

and to analyse the previous training that may have been provided to the teachers responsible for these programmes. We also consider important to include in future research the contributions of neuroscience. Dynamic neuroscience and EE complement each other^[50], neuroscience provides a scientific basis for understanding how mental states, emotions, cognition, and behaviour are generated, while EE benefits from this knowledge for pedagogical practices in educational settings.

In summary, although we do not agree with all the criticisms made of EE, we consider that its revision is a good starting point for adjusting EE approaches in schools and in teacher training so that we do not fall into certain educational practices that can harm the integral development of the person and be detrimental to the construction of a better and fairer world for all human beings.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, CMA, CdAV and GdPG; methodology, CMA and TBA; formal analysis, CMA and TBA; writing—original draft preparation, CMA, CdAV, GdPG and TBA; writing—review and editing, CMA, CdAV, GdPG and TBA; supervision, CMA and TBA. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ In the following video (in minutes 2:49 to 3:05 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gk-0o-Im55s&t=35s>) there is an allusion to “El monstruo de colores” by Anna Llenas Serra, 2012. It is pointed out as a danger in the case of a boy who refuses to wear red, for example, because he associates it with a negative emotion such as anger.

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