Assessment of socioemotional skills among children and teenagers of Latin America

Framework for the ERCE 2019 module work

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Summary

Social-emotional skills are very relevant for the development of students, the strengthening of educational communities and 21st century societies. They contribute to a better exercise of citizenship, act as a protective factor against violence, favor the establishment of positive relationships with adults and peers, contribute to a sense of purpose, benefit permanence in school and are associated with better school results.

There are still many gaps in the empirical evidence on these skills, their impact and the pathways to develop them. There are different approaches that can serve as a framework for conceptualizing HSE. This paper seeks to disseminate the results of an extensive review of some of the prevailing frameworks to encourage discussion and the construction of a Latin American perspective on social-emotional education. It also highlights the social and individual benefits of working on socioemotional skills in the classroom, and reviews initiatives to promote and evaluate them in Latin America and the Caribbean.

UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.

The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.

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1   Introduction

Socioemotional (SE) skills are the set of knowledge, dexterities and attitudes that allow people to relate to themselves and others in a healthy way, navigating in an interconnected social world as autonomous, responsible and motivated individuals. Thus, and despite the fact that for a long time they were not taken into account in traditional educational settings, today they are considered one of the key issues to address in order to achieve quality education (Elias et al., 1997; Hollingsworth et al. , 2003; Malti and Noam, 2016).

The importance of developing SE skills was recognized and strengthened by its inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda[1]. There, SDG 4.7 commits to "ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including through education for sustainable development and the adoption of sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and valuing cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development, among other means" (ECLAC, 2015). From this perspective, socioemotional skills such as empathy, tolerance, respect and appreciation of diversity are essential to form citizens who understand that they inhabit a shared world, and can work in a consensual search for the common good, with a focus on respect for human rights and care for the environment.

In addition to their role in the construction of a sustainable and cooperative world, socioemotional skills are very relevant for students' positive development. Through self-knowledge, perseverance and the reinforcement of self-esteem, children and young people obtain the foundations that will allow them to build a meaningful life, fulfill themselves, and participate as active citizens of the 21st century, building healthy and meaningful relationships with others. This is particularly important in Latin America, where problems such as inequality, violence and marginalization persist; it is also, as research increasingly shows, an important element for academic success and working life. Again, the regional picture enhances the need to strengthen these types of skills, since, despite improved access to education, it is observed that workers show significant disadvantages in terms of soft skills, such as leadership, teamwork or time organization, compared to their counterparts in more developed regions (Cunningham et al., 2016; Fiszbein and Stanton, 2018).

There are still many gaps in terms of empirical evidence on these skills, their impact and on how to develop them (UNESCO, 2016; UNICEF, 2017). Tools for SE skill assessment are scattered and often associated with particular interventions, which makes comparability difficult. Moreover, they are often non-existent depending on the school grade or country being analyzed (Coryn et al., 2009; Denham et al., 2010; Morán and Olaz, 2014). Latin America is no exception, and although there are some socioemotional assessments, they are incipient and country-specific.

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[1] General Assembly Resolution 70/1 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" A/RES/70/1 (Sept. 25, 2015), available at: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ares70d1_es.pdf

The challenge of bringing together the enormous variety of existing frameworks into one that encompasses them all, or choosing one within them, is immeasurable. Cultural diversity in and of itself means that certain attitudes and dispositions are more relevant in certain contexts than in others, making it difficult to think of a single, universal framework. In addition to this, every framework comes from particular visions of education and of the world. These influence the decisions that researchers make when deciding which elements to include and which to exclude. Despite this, when reviewing various perspectives on social-emotional education, it is clear that there are more common factors than divergent ones: themes such as the importance of self-knowledge, empathy and valuing others, and the ability to face the world with a critical and problem-solving mentality, are repeated over and over again. Compiling these common points contributes to the task of promoting their teaching to children and adolescents.

This document by no means seeks to exhaust the discussion on socioemotional education in our continent, but rather to disseminate the results of an extensive task of reviewing some prevailing frameworks. The aim is to encourage discussion, and the construction of a Latin American perspective on socioemotional education. This conversation will be essential in the context of the launching of the results of the ERCE 2019, the first regional experience of evaluation of socioemotional skills among students. With this in mind, some relevant aspects are presented to address the challenges of HSE assessment, inquiring about its importance in the individual and social development of students and providing some conceptual definitions in this regard.

2 Definition of socioemotional skills: conceptual approaches.

There are different approaches that have established a referential framework for the conceptualization of SE skills. Many of them refer to very similar competencies, so there is a large list that tends to generate confusion when defining what exactly we mean when we talk about these skills. This chapter will attempt to address some of the main approaches in this discussion.

2.1 National Research Council

A first approach to be taken into account is the one proposed by the National Research Council of the United States, which states that 21st century skills include **cognitive**, **intrapersonal** and **interpersonal domains**.

The **cognitive domain** is considered to involve thinking and skills related to reasoning, problem solving, memory, critical thinking, decision-making, creativity and innovation. In this domain, knowledge and skills are generally measured with tests of general cognitive ability or with more specific tests, focused on performance in academic subjects or work-related content.

The **intrapersonal domain** incorporates one's emotions, feelings, emotional regulation and the ability to set and achieve goals, and includes skills such as openness, adaptability, personal and social responsibility, curiosity, perseverance, citizenship and emotional stability.

Finally, the **interpersonal domain** refers to competencies aimed at adequately expressing and interpreting information to and from others. These include collaboration, teamwork, empathy, conflict resolution, extraversion and leadership.

2.2 Collaboration for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning

The approach proposed by the Collaborative Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) project has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies: **self-awareness**, **self-management**, **responsible decision-making**, **social awareness** and **relationship skills**.

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize one's emotions and thoughts accurately and to know how they influence personal behavior. This includes correctly assessing one's advantages, strengths and limitations in order to act in the different dimensions of life. Therefore, self-awareness involves identifying emotions, having a correct self-perception, self-confidence, recognizing strengths and personal efficiency.

Self-management is the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts and behaviors effectively in different situations and contexts. This includes managing stress, impulse control, self-motivation, and working toward personal and academic goals. Self-management also includes emotional self-regulation, personal discipline and organizational skills.

Responsible decision-making refers to the ability to make constructive and respectful decisions regarding personal behavior and social interaction. It is a process at the individual and social level, so it can be considered among both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

Social awareness relates to the ability to understand and respect the point of view of others and to apply this to social interactions with people with different lifestyles, including taking the subjective perspective of the other. Therefore, the pillars of social awareness are empathy, respect for others and appreciation of diversity.

Finally, **relationship skills** are directed towards the ability to establish and maintain rewarding relationships with friends, family, partners and others belonging to different environments. Communication, social commitment, motivation for relationship building and teamwork are essential for this.

CASEL proposes that these competencies should be worked on beginning in preschool stage and continuing through secondary school, stressing the importance of providing evidence-based programs to all students at all levels.

2.3 Big Five Factor Model

Roberts, Martin, and Olaru (2015) note that this model is based on the Big Five personality factors of **extraversion**, **agreeableness**, **conscientiousness**, **emotional stability**, and **openness**, which have been shown to be relatively universal across different ages and consistent across countries and cultures.

Extraversion is associated with a person's ability to approach others or to engage in social interaction, either initiating or maintaining social connections. It refers to the capacity to express opinions, needs, and feelings in a confident manner and to approach daily life with enthusiasm and spontaneity. Thus, extraversion includes skills such as assertiveness, cheerfulness, communication, sympathy, leadership, liveliness, and sociability.

Agreeableness is a trait that primarily influences interaction with others. A pleasant person can be described as friendly, helpful, and empathetic, which implies a tendency toward collaboration, collegiality, generosity, honesty, integrity, kindness, and trustworthiness. Thus, it includes concern for others and their well-being, and implies trusting the good intentions of others and an attempt to live in harmony with others and to value the interconnectedness of all people.

Meticulousness describes traits related to accomplishment, goals, responsibility, and task performance. A person with high meticulousness tends toward organization, persistence, planning, punctuality, responsibility and diligence. Therefore, this skill includes the ability to follow through on commitments, to avoid distractions, and to focus on a specific task and persevere until it is completed.

Emotional stability is the ability to cope with stressful situations and emotions, managing to maintain equilibrium despite an upset. Emotional stability includes the effectiveness to modulate anxiety and stress when resolving conflicts, the deployment of effective strategies to regulate temper and anger in the face of frustrations, along with the maintenance of optimistic expectations for oneself and life in general.

Finally, **openness** can be defined as a person's interest in new ideas, intellectual understanding and exploration, openness to different points of view and appreciation of diversity. It also includes generating new ways of doing and/or thinking about things through exploration, reflection and planning. Therefore, when we speak of openness we are referring to an open-mindedness or openness to experience, based on global awareness, growth mindset, imagination and innovation.

It is important to note that this approach has been taken as a reference for the OECD's *Social and Emotional Skills Survey*, an international survey that aims to assess the SE skills of students between 10 and 15 years of age in several cities and countries around the world and that will begin its implementation in 2019 (OECD, 2015).

2.4 MGIEP, UNESCO

A fourth approach to be highlighted is from UNESCO's Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), a project whose main objective is to promote a curriculum based on the concept of Global Citizenship, SE skills learning and Sustainable Development. The skills addressed by this project are **empathy**, **compassion**, *mindfulness* and **critical thinking.**

Empathy includes sharing the emotional state or feeling of the other, as well as accessing executive control to regulate the emotional experience that accompanies this connection.

Therefore, executive control or cognitive perspective taking is important in differentiating oneself from another in the process of emotional resonance (UNESCO-MGIEP, 2018).

Compassion is a complex multidimensional construct comprising four key components: 1) an awareness of suffering (cognitive component), 2) a sympathetic concern related to being emotionally mobilized by the suffering of another (affective component or empathy), 3) a desire to see the alleviation of that suffering (intentional component), and 4) a responsiveness or willingness to help alleviate that suffering.

The *mindfulness* methodology is a technique that aims at attention and emotional regulation. From the MGIEP perspective, it aims to work on five facets of mindfulness: observing, describing, acting with awareness, not judging the inner experience and not reactivating the inner experience.

Finally, **critical thinking** involves broadening children's access to literature, giving free rein to their capacity for self-expression and the creation of new solutions, thus enabling the development of an autonomous and engaged citizenship required by sustainable societies**.**

2.5 UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the idea that schools should provide tools for children and adolescents to face the situations and challenges they will face throughout their lives. In this way, education is promoted based on the development of life skills, a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope and manage their lives in a healthy and productive way (UNICEF, 2019).

UNICEF proposes that there is no definitive list of all the knowledge and attitudes that should be considered life skills, and rather it is advisable to adapt to each context and social and cultural circumstances. However, it establishes three dimensions of skills as a guide: **ability to make decisions and maintain critical thinking**, **ability to self-manage and cope with problems**, and **interpersonal communication skills** (UNICEF, 2019).

Decision-making is related to the ability to obtain information, the evaluation of the future consequences that present actions may have for oneself and others, being able to decide on alternative solutions to problems, and the ability to analyze the influence that one's own and others' values and attitudes have on motivation. **Critical thinking** involves analyzing peer and media influences, analyzing attitudes, values, social norms and beliefs and the factors that affect them, and identifying relevant information and sources of information.

Self-management refers to the ability to acquire self-esteem, self-confidence, self-awareness, goal setting, self-worth, self-evaluation and self-monitoring. It involves the ability to take charge of one's feelings; that is, to control anger adequately, the ability to cope with pain and anxiety, cope with loss, abuse and traumatic situations.

Finally, appropriate **interpersonal communication** skills involve knowledge of conflict negotiation and knowledge of rejection; empathy, i.e., the ability to listen to and understand

the needs of others and to express that understanding; expressing respect for the contributions and lifestyles of others; assessing one's own ability and contributing to the team; persuading and influencing others; establishing and leveraging networks; and motivating others.

Table 1. Reference frameworks: Suggested dimensions and skills

Frame of reference	Institution / Organization	Dimension	Skills
21st century skills	National Research Council	Cognitive	Critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, creativity, innovation, and innovation.
		Intrapersonal	openness, adaptability, personal and social responsibility, curiosity, perseverance, citizenship, emotional stability, self-regulation
		Interpersonal	Collaboration, teamwork, empathy, conflict resolution, extraversion, leadership
Social-emotional learning	CASEL	Self-awareness	Identification of emotions, self-confidence, self-efficacy, accurate self-perception, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-confidence, self-confidence, self-efficacy, accurate self-perception
		Self-management	Impulse control, stress management, focus on achievement, self-motivation
		Responsible decision making	
		Social awareness	Problem identification, evaluation, ethical responsibility
		Relationship skills	Perspective-taking, empathy, appreciation for diversity, respect for others

			Communication, social commitment, cooperation, conflict resolution, teamwork, etc.
Big Five Factors		Extraversion	Sociability, assertiveness, energy
		Pleasantness	Empathy, trust, collaboration
		Meticulousness	Achievement orientation, responsibility, self-control and persistence.
		Emotional stability	Resistance to stress, optimism, emotional control
		Opening	Curiosity, tolerance and creativity
Peace Education, Global Citizenship and Social-Emotional Learning	Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development	Global Citizenship	Empathy
			Compassion
		Sustainability	*Mindfulness*
			Critical thinking
Life skills	UNICEF	Make decisions and maintain critical thinking	Evaluate situations
			Determine problems and their causes
			Reflection and analysis
		Self-management and coping with problems	Confidence, self-esteem, goal setting, self-assessment and self-awareness.
			Responsibility for one's own feelings
			Stress management

		Interpersonal communication	Negotiation, rejection management, empathy, cooperation and teamwork, persuasion, establishing and maintaining networks.

3 Importance of the SE skills in the education of children and adolescents

Evidence has shown that when students build positive relationships with both peers and teachers, they are more motivated to participate in school and achieve academic goals (Bresciani & Lea, 2018). Likewise, when students are able to pay attention, manage and regulate their emotions, establish positive relationships with their peers and their teachers, and face challenges with resilience, academic outcomes tend to be more positive and they obtain better grades (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Raver, 2005, in Bresciani & Lea, 2018).

Thus, socioemotional learning involves processes at the individual and social levels, which are understood as complementary processes insofar as learning is relational.

3.1 Social benefits

SDG 4.7 of the 2030 Agenda reinforces the concepts of Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development. From the perspective of UNESCO (2015), education in these subjects includes characteristics such as awareness, tolerance, openness, respect for diversity, interculturality, understanding, conflict resolution skills, civic and political participation and respect for the environment. Thus, there is a clear link between SE skills and the formation of 21st century citizens committed to the creation of global citizenship and sustainable societies.

The development of cognitive and attitudinal aspects that consider the various frameworks mentioned above play a fundamental role in promoting environmental care and healthy lifestyles, and fostering more tolerant, democratic and safe societies (OECD, 2016). These are essential for the proper functioning of society, as they facilitate citizen participation, social cohesion, a sense of citizenship and the solution to the problems of the 21st century. For example, it has been observed that socioemotional learning leads to a better exercise of citizenship, as well as functioning as a protective factor against violence (Swartz, 1999; OECD, 2016).

When thinking about the social impact of social-emotional learning, it should be kept in mind that the efficacy and valuation of a particular set of SE skills may vary by culture. Thus, more than the construction of a "social-emotional curriculum" that prescribes and trains a particular set of soft skills, what is fundamental is the creation of social-emotional learning environments. That is, to think of schools as communities of practice for social learning, given the fact that they generate bonds that provide the opportunity to exercise active listening, empathy, companionship and respect. Thus, the acquisition and training of social competencies should be a priority to be proposed from an explicit pedagogical focus, arising

from the reflection of the actors of the educational community, to favor flexibility and relevance to the context.

One of the main goals of social-emotional learning is the establishment of positive peer relationships. It has been found that those children who enjoy positive peer relationships have experienced high levels of emotional well-being, are more self-confident and generally value prosocial behavior in their social interactions (Lacunza, 2010).

In the case of adolescents, research suggests that at this stage friendships are perceived to provide similar or even greater support than parents (Scharf and Mayseless, 2007). Peers play an important role in providing security in difficult times and assisting in emotional regulation. Consequently, adolescents feel more confident to explore the world in the company of their friends.

Positive relationships with the adults with whom students share in school are also very important for greater socioemotional well-being, as well as for better academic performance. In this regard, it has been observed that teachers who establish close, respectful and trusting relationships with their students obtain better teaching results (Malecki and Eliot, 2002).. In this sense, it has been observed that secure relationships between teachers and students predict increased social competence in children and adolescents, greater knowledge, greater academic motivation and higher test scores (Bergin and Bergin, 2009).

3.2 Benefits at the individual level

The first and most relevant experiences of socioemotional education during development occur in the family. A child's relationship with his or her parents or primary caregivers and the way they are treated by them have been shown to be vitally important elements in emotional development throughout childhood (Di Bártolo, 2005). Attachment styles developed within the family are fundamental to one's own emotional well-being, which includes aspects of the SE skills such as extraversion, self-awareness, and openness. They are also considered important for the establishment of positive relationships with adults and peers (Karreman and Vingerhoets, 2012).

Children's relational experiences expand as they advance in their development, so that entry into the school system becomes fundamental for their integral formation. It is at school where children usually establish their first relationships with peers outside their family circle, and where they learn to internalize norms, which are fundamental aspects for socialization and personality development.

Experience shows that it is relevant to have social-emotional learning programs in the school. These have a fundamental role in achieving positive attitudes towards oneself and others, task performance that includes greater self-efficacy, confidence, persistence, empathy, connection and commitment to school, and a greater sense of purpose. Additionally, these programs have been associated with more positive social behaviors and better relationships with peers and adults, reduced conduct problems and risky behaviors, decreased emotional distress, and improved test scores, grades, and school attendance (Durlak et al., 2011; Malecki and Elliot, 2002).

For these programs to be successful, it is necessary that social-emotional learning be framed within a comprehensive school reform that includes individual differences and needs (McCombs, 2004; Greenberg, Kusché and Riggs, 2015). This implies attending to the experiences, perspectives, identity aspects, gender, talents, interests, abilities and particular needs in the learning process of each student.

Likewise, it is important that standardized assessments do more than document students' cognitive abilities, providing clues about how is their learning taking place (Darling-Hammond, 2013). In this way, observing learning progress is fundamental to a comprehensive process (McCombs, 2004).

Social-emotional learning can act as a protective factor for different risk behaviors and negative behaviors. For example, it can be an important tool to eradicate high numbers of child abuse and different types of violence in the future. Thus, socioemotional education can be of great help for families that require a stronger support network, in addition to being a protective factor for an adequate relationship both with those with whom a significant bond is established and with society in general.

4   SE skills in child and adolescent education in Latin America and the Caribbean

Based on the growing evidence showing the importance of the SE skills in the development of children and adolescents, current teaching standards require the inclusion of social-emotional learning in curricula at the international level (Zins et al. , 2004; Durlak et al. , 2011). Social-emotional learning enables children and adolescents to develop skills that will allow them to face the different challenges of life, in addition to having positive effects on academic performance. However, most of the evidence on social and emotional learning programs is concentrated outside Latin America and the Caribbean.

The last 20 years have seen a considerable improvement in the levels of education among people in the region. Nevertheless, the general picture shows that there still is a significant gap between skills taught in the educational systems and those required to perform in the current reality, there being consistent evidence on the inadequate development of socioemotional, citizenship and labor competencies in Latin America (UNESCO, 2017; Fiszbein, Cosentino and Cumsille, 2016).

In this regard, certain evaluations point to a growing devaluation of democracy. In ICCS, for example, the largest and only international study devoted entirely to citizenship and civic education, an average of over 70% of students in the region considered that a dictatorship is justifiable if it provides security and economic growth. There are also some alarming findings regarding school violence, with, for example, percentages of over 50% of students reporting that they have been called an offensive nickname in all countries of the region. This data contrasts with high proportions of students who value peace and dialogue, or tolerance of diversity, suggesting the need to strengthen the links between the cognitive and attitudinal aspects of socioemotional education, favoring a focus on unrestricted respect for human rights, and a deep emphasis on empathy and appropriate conflict management. At the labor level, global employer surveys, such as the one conducted by Manpower in 2015 and the

Survey of Professional Competencies in2014, suggest that the widespread lack of SE skills among applicants is a key factor explaining the difficulties in filling vacancies in companies (Fiszbein, Cosentino and Cumsille, 2016).

The above context indicates that education systems in Latin America in general do not address in sufficient depth the development of the SE skills in primary and secondary education, focusing mostly on cognitive skills and academic success. Despite the latter, results in standardized international assessment tests show that all countries in the region are at least one year of schooling behind countries that make up the OECD that do dedicate part of the curriculum to socioemotional learning, and that 51% of students present low performance (Bos, Viteri and Zoido, 2019).

Some countries, such as Brazil, Chile and Mexico, include the development of SE skills as an objective in their education systems, although only Chile and Mexico incorporate them in their curricula (Fiszbein, Cosentino and Cumsille, 2016). Nevertheless, progress is being made in recognizing the importance of promoting SE skills in the region, also called "soft competencies", "non-cognitive competencies" or "transversal and socioemotional competencies" (CTSE).

At the public policy level, the development of CTSE has been promoted, mainly with the aim of overcoming the previously mentioned skill gap, and expanding opportunities for labor inclusion between secondary school and the labor market. In general, there are programs that promote the development, strengthening and certification of competencies for vocational training with a comprehensive approach. Some examples of these are the National System for the Certification of Labor Competencies in Chile; the Intersectoral Roundtable on Labor Competencies in Colombia; the Youth with Everything Program in El Salvador; the Empléate Program in Costa Rica; and Programs with more and better jobs in Argentina.

4.1 Assessment of achievements and processes beyond cognitive skills

Along with the widely accepted incorporation of 21st century skills in the current educational system, and the consequent need to include them in the national curricular content, there is also the need to monitor them. In this regard, in some Latin American countries the assessment of learning outcomes has been progressively accompanied by the measurement of other variables that indicate the quality of education.

In Chile, for example, the General Education Law establishes the evaluation of the Personal and Social Development Indicators, previously called Other Educational Quality Indicators. These are a set of indexes that provide schools with relevant information on the social and personal development of students that goes beyond academic knowledge, with the aim of delivering clues about the importance of implementing systematic actions for comprehensive education (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2017).

Regarding other countries in the region that are also in the process of incorporating the evaluation of SE skills in their education systems, another case is that of Argentina. Since 2016, through the context questionnaires of the national assessment test *Aprender*, they have explored conditions and perceptions around teaching and learning, delving into aspects such

as emotional development and learning climate (INEEd, 2018). In the case of Uruguay, the *Aristas* test is conducted, which is an evaluation of the educational system with a multidimensional character that not only seeks to produce information on students' performance in reading and mathematics, but also to know their SE skills and their opinions on school climate, coexistence and participation (Berganza, Mercedes and Rucci, 2019). In turn, in Colombia, the Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education evaluates students' citizenship competencies based on the actions and attitudes questionnaire, which is aligned with the Basic Standards of Citizenship Competencies, including elements such as empathy and the ability to regulate and express emotions in a constructive way for oneself and society (Berganza, Mercedes, & Rucci, 2019).

At the regional level, the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education (LLECE) measured socioemotional skills for the first time in the ERCE 2019. There, sixth grade students were consulted about situations in their school life to measure their empathy, appreciation of diversity and self-regulation. The inclusion of these aspects will not only provide the first comparable data in Latin America on these dimensions of learning, but also reflects the commitment of member countries to move towards a more comprehensive education model. The information will provide evidence-based recommendations to guide public policy on social-emotional learning and provide teachers with didactic tools to work on social-emotional skills in the classroom.

4.2 Challenges for curricula in Latin America and the Caribbean

The Education 2030 Agenda proposes a shift in the definition of fundamental learning in current curricula, guided by the idea that currently the acquisition of basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills is not enough to define quality education (UNESCO, 2017). It is necessary to review and update the current curriculum, including contents and learning objectives of vital importance, such as 21st century skills and the approaches of Education for Global Citizenship and Education for Sustainable Development.

The above aims to develop a sense of belonging and political, economic, social and cultural interdependence with all humanity, and to employ actions aimed at caring for the environment (UNESCO, 2015). In this way, promoted learning must be transformative and favor social inclusion, especially gender equity and acceptance of diversity, even considering the challenge of these contents being added as one more content to an already overloaded academic curriculum (UNESCO, 2017).

Other challenges facing curricula within the framework of the 2030 Agenda are to promote a comprehensive vision of knowledge and its connection with the new meanings and demands of students. In this sense, UNESCO states that learning should be understood as a process that develops throughout life, in multiple learning structures, including both formal and informal settings. Therefore, it is important to recognize the knowledge that is eventually acquired outside of school for its articulation with formal education.

Finally, it is important that teachers in the region prepare themselves in didactics and work methodologies that respond to a broad and global vision of education for coexistence and citizenship, since they play a key role in the formation of 21st century skills.

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