



Review article



Socio-emotional education from the pedagogy of death: a space for insurgency in the educational context

Educación socioemocional desde la pedagogía de la muerte: espacio de insurgencia en el contexto educativo

Educação socioemocional a partir da pedagogia da morte: um espaço de insurgência no contexto educacional

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ABSTRACT

Socio-emotional education is presented in the field of formal education as an element that, despite the existence of evidence of its application, has been relegated to the discursive plane and to the voluntary nature of teaching practices, which have traditionally been characterized by adhering to Cartesian rationalism. The objective of this article was to argue that the pedagogy of death constitutes a possible approach to strengthening socio-emotional education in Chile, and that both represent a space of insurgency against the hegemony of Cartesian reason in education. To this end, a documentary and bibliographic review was carried out, from which concepts related to socio-emotional education in formal education were addressed, to subsequently establish links with the pedagogy of death based on its definitions and development in the Ibero-American context in the period 2022-2023, culminating with a critical analysis of its disruptive nature in formal education. As

a result, tensions and critical reflections relevant to the contemporary formal educational context are exposed. As part of the conclusions, it was established that the pedagogy of death and socio-emotional education are presented as necessary insurgencies in education, enabling the recognition, visibility, and attention to those human dimensions that have been denied, annulled, or marginalized in the traditional educational context.

Keywords: teaching; emotions; affection; death; decolonization.

RESUMEN

La educación socioemocional se presenta en el campo de la educación formal como un elemento que, pese a existir evidencias de su aplicación, ha quedado relegado al plano de lo discursivo y a la voluntariedad de las prácticas docentes, las que tradicionalmente se han caracterizado por adherir el racionalismo cartesiano. Para el presente artículo se estableció como objetivo: argumentar que la pedagogía de la muerte constituye un posible enfoque para el fortalecimiento de la educación socioemocional en Chile, y que ambas representan un espacio de insurgencia frente a la hegemonía de la razón cartesiana en la educación. Para ello, se realizó una revisión documental y bibliográfica a partir de la cual se abordaron conceptos relacionados con la educación socioemocional en la educación formal, para posteriormente establecer vínculos con la pedagogía de la muerte partiendo desde sus definiciones y desarrollo en el contexto iberoamericano en el periodo 2022-2023, culminando con un análisis crítico sobre su carácter disruptivo en la educación formal. Como resultado, se exponen tensiones y reflexiones críticas pertinentes para el contexto educativo formal contemporáneo. Como parte de las conclusiones, se estableció que la pedagogía de la muerte y la educación socioemocional se presentan como insurgencias necesarias de la educación, al posibilitar el reconocimiento, la visibilidad y la atención de aquellas dimensiones humanas que han sido negadas, anuladas o minorizadas en el contexto educativo tradicional.

Palabras clave: enseñanza; emociones; afecto; muerte; decolonización.

RESUMO

A educação socioemocional é apresentada no campo da educação formal como um elemento que, apesar das evidências de sua aplicação, tem sido relegado ao nível do discurso e da voluntariedade

das práticas pedagógicas, tradicionalmente caracterizadas pela construção do conhecimento com base no racionalismo cartesiano. O objetivo deste artigo é argumentar que a pedagogia da morte constitui um cenário possível para o fortalecimento da educação socioemocional, e que ambas representam um campo de insurgência contra a hegemonia da razão cartesiana na educação. Para tanto, foi realizada uma revisão documental e bibliográfica, a partir da qual foram abordados conceitos relacionados à educação socioemocional na educação formal, para posteriormente estabelecer vínculos com a pedagogia da morte como alternativa para sua aplicação, com base em suas definições e desenvolvimento no contexto ibero-americano no período 2022-2023, finalizando com a argumentação a respeito da proposta insurgente. Como resultado, são apresentadas tensões e reflexões críticas relevantes para o contexto educacional formal contemporâneo. Como parte das conclusões, foi estabelecido que a pedagogia da morte e a educação socioemocional são apresentadas como insurgências necessárias da educação, pois permitem o reconhecimento, a visibilidade e a atenção das dimensões humanas que foram negadas, anuladas ou minimizadas no contexto educacional tradicional.

Palavras-chave: ensino; emoções; afeto; morte; descolonização.

INTRODUCTION

The General Education Law in Chile establishes that "(...) education is the permanent learning process that covers the different stages of people's lives and whose purpose is to achieve their spiritual, ethical, moral, and emotional development (...)" (Chile, Ministry of Education, 2009), a vision that in Latin America is also shared with the legislation of other countries such as Colombia and Peru.

Despite the efforts of some states to recognize the opportunity to integrate other spheres of knowledge into formal education, it is difficult to identify everyday and sustained pedagogical practices that reflect their development. When applied to competencies, these practices present radical differences compared to those that foster knowledge and action.

Aspects of spiritual and emotional development, for example, are included in Chilean ministerial guidelines, aligning with the concept of socioemotional education (SES) promoted by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.); however, there is uncertainty

regarding its application in educational institutions. Therefore, it is worth asking: Are these areas of training being integrated into everyday teaching practices?

Although there are documented teaching experiences in relation to ESE, which could support public policies at the national level (Milicic Müller *et al.*, 2024; Poblete Christie *et al.*, 2016; Sánchez Duque, 2022), they are not yet sufficient to position socio-emotional education as an important element in initial teacher training or to conceive it from a transversal perspective to formal education.

The problem seems to be the fragmentation of its approaches, added to the difficulties in its implementation, due to the lack of knowledge regarding socio-emotional strategies, and the scarce relationship with this subject from the teachers' own training experiences (Bächler Silva *et al.*, 2020; Loubiès Valdés *et al.*, 2020; Navarro Navarrete *et al.*, 2022; Valenzuela-Zambrano *et al.*, 2021).

Despite the above, in an almost isolated and succinct way, ESE is successfully worked on in current pedagogical experiences, in which sensitive, intimate and even feared aspects such as death are allowed to be considered, capable of generating the much desired experiential convergence, as this is a normative and universal phenomenon that is part of the course of life (De La Herrán Gascón & Rodríguez Herrero, 2020).

Although death in the Latin American context is mostly linked to negative aspects such as pain, suffering and the consequent generation of taboos that can overshadow its contributions to training (Alves & Kovács, 2016; Molina-Fernández & Moreno Vilches, 2022; Morales Ramón *et al.*, 2020), it is essential to recognize that, as an educational subject, it allows us to make explicit socio-emotional aspects, and with it the importance of promoting a reflective exercise that, starting from individual development, recognizes human existence from an ecological and, therefore, relational complexity.

The pedagogy of death is presented as an opportunity to incorporate empathy, compassion, spirituality, among other aspects of ESE, key to human formation, and which correspond to the social significance of education (Sierra Gutiérrez, 2022).

Positioning these themes as relevant in education implies considering the value of the subjective and the situated, representing an insurgent position against educational systems and practices focused on the construction of knowledge from purely rational aspects, which refer to Cartesian traditions.

In accordance with the above, this review presents concepts, tensions, and reflections related to socio-emotional education in formal education, to subsequently establish links with the pedagogy of death based on its definitions and development in the Ibero-American context, concluding with the argument regarding its insurgent potential.

In its development, the text will reveal analyses and reflections related to discourses originating from decolonial epistemologies.

DEVELOPMENT

Socio-emotional education (ESE)

Socio-emotional education (SES) is defined as a "process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and supportive decisions" (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

The above, inserted in the formal educational context through the competency-based training model, and recognized in the General Education Law in Chile (Chile, Ministry of Education, 2009; EducarChile, 2019), acquires a deontological character in the context of teaching practices.

However, the usual approach to training leads to giving importance to aspects linked to knowing and doing, which reflect the historical legacy of the Cartesian tradition and are reinforced by the pursuit of standards, concentrating the efforts of educational institutions on achieving them.

Some of the tensions in this regard are evident in the following fragment written by Catherine Walsh:

(...) the effort has been to build, position and procreate pedagogies that point to thinking "from" and "with", encouraging "praxistic" processes and practices of theorization (...), which radically challenge theoretical-conceptual and methodological-academic pretensions, including their assumptions of objectivity, neutrality, distance and rigor (Walsh, 2014, pp. 69-70).

From a scientific perspective, emotionality has established its foundations based on proposals from different traditions, both positivist and phenomenological (Scarantino, 2016); despite this, it has not achieved sufficient appreciation and recognition in the educational field.

Research such as that conducted by Fried *et al.* (2015), show that emotions have had little interest in the past, since the term was taken from colloquial language to develop it in the academic field, mainly by researchers and philosophers, highlighting problems to be analyzed from gender aspects, such as the patriarchal and hegemonic characteristics present in the educational system.

Jacqui Alexander reinforces this idea from specific perspectives, stating that aspects such as spirituality have been rejected in academia for being considered superstitious: "There is a tacit understanding that no self-respecting postmodernist would want to align themselves (at least publicly) with a category such as the spiritual, which seems to be so fixed, so immutable, so steeped in tradition. Many, I suspect, have been forced into a spiritual closet" (Alexander, 2005).

In addition to these difficulties, the lack of knowledge among teachers regarding its application (Bächler Silva *et al.*, 2020; Loubiès Valdés *et al.*, 2020; Navarro Navarrete *et al.*, 2022; Valenzuela-Zambrano *et al.*, 2021) represents a major challenge for the educational field today, inviting the establishment of critical positions regarding existing public policies on the matter, in relation to possible utilitarian interpretations, in which there may also be a place for an erroneous representational vision in relation to the affective issue, which distances it from its phenomenological basis.

Achieving the strengthening of the ESE represents the recognition of affective and feeling-thinking aspects (González-Grandón & Suárez-Gómez, 2023) by teachers, and with it, awareness of the contribution made in the teaching-learning process in relation to the individual dimension, which in turn recognizes and contributes to the construction of collectivity and distances teaching practice from instrumental and transmissionist visions.

The recent SARS-COV2 pandemic can be considered one of the greatest justifications for providing maximum attention and priority to socio-emotional education. This global event generated negative emotional effects on human beings in a residual way, and which, at the level of educational institutions, led to giving greater visibility to aspects such as violence, mental well-being (Paricio Del Castillo & Pando Velasco, 2020; Ubiidxa Rios Peña & Furlán, 2024), and to giving concrete responses

such as the Comprehensive Educational Reactivation Policy, promoted in Chile since 2022, which included coexistence, well-being and mental health as one of its main axes.

This policy evolved into the Educational Reactivation Plan, which currently emphasizes the strengthening of socio-emotional aspects, school coexistence, and gender equity (Chile, Ministry of Education, 2022, 2025), finding its greatest weaknesses in the voluntary nature of its application, and the lack of mechanisms that guarantee its continuity in the training course.

To remedy the above, transdisciplinary work proposals are required with a holistic approach, in which all the people who make up the educational communities are linked (Fried *et al.*, 2015), an aspect that is crucial, if we keep in mind that, traditionally, the implementation of ESE in the Chilean context has been characterized by being focused exclusively on the student population.

Furthermore, the state must guarantee the incorporation of ESE, which facilitates reflective spaces for self-inspection in the educational context, ensuring the vital and transcendent meaning of the learning process.

In order to enhance these aspects, it is also necessary to develop training programs for those who are in teaching practice, and to preventively review and adapt undergraduate curricula, ensuring the incorporation of this perspective from the beginning of pedagogical training (Calderón Calderón, 2024; Ricardo Gato *et al.*, 2023).

In this context, it is pertinent to seek alternatives that facilitate the incorporation of ESE. Therefore, the emerging pedagogy of death becomes a proposal worth considering, since, despite the existing taboos surrounding death in the social context, it represents a point of convergence for socioemotional education, broadening the perspectives for its implementation.

Pedagogy of death

To approach its definition, the work carried out by De la Herrán Gascón y Rodríguez Herrero (2020) will be taken as a reference, who classify it as a "pedagogy applied to the study of the inclusion of death in education and teaching, as well as education and teaching, which include death, and everything related to them" (De La Herrán Gascón & Rodríguez Herrero, 2020, p. 39).

Based on these authors, González Collado interprets it as "the area of Pedagogy responsible for investigating everything related to the inclusion of death and its awareness in education and teaching. It includes two didactic approaches: the prior and the palliative" (González Collado, 2021).

The above invites us to consider death in education as an opportunity that allows us to anticipate the phenomenon of dying itself, by enhancing awareness of existence and the expression of emotions linked to being and feeling present.

At the same time, recognizing death as a constitutive part of being human allows us to explain and embrace aspects such as pain and suffering, which, as experiences that generate vital knowledge, make pedagogical support pertinent, enabling intentional reflective and thoughtful processes.

The concept of the pedagogy of death was incorporated around 1920 in the United States, presenting an important development in Spain (Rodríguez Herrero *et al.*, 2019); while for Latin America, Gascón mentions that: "(...) the new challenges are formulated, for Spain, by researchers from the Anglo-Saxon sphere and, for Latin America, by Spanish researchers. The result is not research based on voices, but on echoes, more externalizing than internalizing" (De la Herrán Gascón, 2015, p. 26).

This can be interpreted as a possibility for Latin America, in terms of a situated appropriation that, without ignoring the contributions made in other countries, facilitates the construction of a pedagogy of death in which critical, dialogical, and collective positions are linked, thus avoiding neocolonialisms in the educational context, and which, for the purposes of the central theme, would allow greater visibility to ESE.

If it is considered the publications that appeared between 2022 and 2023 on the pedagogy of death in Latin America, it is seen that Spain presents predominantly qualitative works. (Agrelo Costas & Mociño-González, 2023; Martínez-Heredia *et al.*, 2023; Martínez-Heredia & Santaella Rodríguez, 2023; Rodríguez Herrero, De La Herrán Gascón, & Poveda García-Noblejas, 2023; Sánchez-Huete *et al.*, 2022; Trujillo Vargas *et al.*, 2023) in relation to people adults (Ramos-Pla *et al.*, 2023; Rodríguez Herrero, De La Herrán Gascón, & García Sempere, 2023; Trujillo Vargas *et al.*, 2023), older people (Martínez-Heredia *et al.*, 2023; Martínez-Heredia & Santaella Rodríguez, 2023) and infants (Agrelo Costas & Mociño-González, 2023; 2022; Rodríguez Herrero, De La Herrán Gascón, & Poveda García-Noblejas, 2023), and as a cross-cutting theme in education (Molina-Fernández & Moreno Vilches, 2022; Sánchez-Huete *et al.*, 2022).

In Latin America, on the contrary, the subject is little explored (Almeida-Santos *et al.*, 2022; Almonacid & Burgos, 2023; Gomes Lopes *et al.*, 2022; Ow & Montenegro, 2022; Pacheco Senejoa *et al.*, 2023; Barros dos Santos *et al.*, 2022), presenting a greater link with undergraduate training in the health area, specifically from nursing, and addressing training experiences in relation to suicide prevention.

Another line of publications exposes social vulnerabilities from which teaching practice is developed, such as the experiences of drug trafficking, which imply -among others- a close relationship with death, giving indications of a situated interpretation and, therefore, pertinent in relation to the pedagogy of death that, in turn, distances itself from and marks the difference with Spanish productions.

From these contexts, it must be kept in mind that, for Latin America, this type of pedagogy may encounter multiple resistances, especially if it is taken into account the cultural aspects from which taboos have been evidenced in relation to death (Fernández-Silva *et al.*, 2024; Mazzetti Latini, 2017); among them, that of cultures that, mostly, overvalue aspects such as youth and beauty, preventing us from seeing in pain and suffering, both real and potential, possibilities of socio-emotional knowledge that, based on individual human experiences, enable a collective sense.

Faced with these issues, could taboos surrounding death alone be the only way to introduce death as a learning topic? Or could it be considered a symptomatic aspect related to the unconscious rejection of other forms of knowledge unrelated to rationality, as is the case with socioemotional education?

Regardless of the answer to these questions, both ESE and the pedagogy of death pursue the same educational intention: to contribute to the development of human beings from a holistic perspective.

It is pertinent at this point to make a comparison between the curricular guidelines for the school environment at the country level in relation to ESE, and which take as reference the foundations of CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.; EducarChile, 2019), and some characteristics of the pedagogy of death (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison between socio-emotional education and the pedagogy of death

	Socio-emotional education	Pedagogy of death
Orientation	Student-centered	Consider the entire educational community
Skills - Competency-based training model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-knowledge • Self-esteem • Self-control • Self-acceptance • Autonomy • Growth mindset • Determination • Perseverance • Self-care • Perspective taking • decision making • Empathy • Respectful relationships • Communication • Valuing diversity • Conflict resolution • Communication • Teamwork • Stress management 	It enhances all the skills described in the competency-based training model.
Innovative aspects		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with spiritual aspects. • Recognition of pain as a life experience. • It highlights transdisciplinary work. • Transgenerational perspective.

Source: own elaboration

Based on these characteristics, it can be seen that the pedagogy of death enables a broader understanding of socio-emotional aspects, which, when considered by each member of the educational community, recognizes their complexity and favors the implementation of more robust educational actions, with a greater likelihood of being sustained over time as lifelong learning.

In relation to transdisciplinary work, this is a relevant characteristic, as it highlights the need for diverse perspectives in the face of the complexity of the socio-emotional phenomenon. The transgenerational perspective allows for consideration of binding aspects among those who make up educational communities, recognizing their age differences and exploring common interests.

In Chile, ESE is presented as linked to and oriented exclusively to the school environment, leaving aside university and technical-professional training contexts, which, although based on competencies that include those of "being", generate a field of greater uncertainty regarding their application, and in which the additional difficulty that training represents from an andragogical perspective must be taken into account.

Despite the difficulties of the sociopolitical environment in relation to the implementation of the ESE, one of the most important aspects in relation to the subject cannot be ignored, and that is the individual context, since its approach involves facing emotional deficiencies, belief systems and uncertainties, as well as individual traumas, grief and the complexity of vulnerabilities (Valdez Fernández *et al.*, 2022); work that is more comfortable to adopt from evasive positions, keeping the training exercise focused on the transmission of knowledge.

From this perspective, it's worth asking: What about pedagogy as a political act, and therefore, the critical stance of educators? Could such evasion be considered a deontological breach in the pedagogical context? Does positioning oneself based on the recognition of the importance of subjectivities in education constitute an insurgent and necessary act in today's education?

In relation to the insurgency

Mentioning insurgencies in pedagogy can add to the existing resistance to issues such as death and affectivity; however, if it is considered the hegemony of rationalism and the patriarchal vision of education, bringing them into the training field must, in and of itself, be considered an insurgent act that must be incorporated.

In this regard, Naranjo (2007), one of the main exponents of socio-emotional education in Chile, mentions that:

(...) Patriarchal education, which is the one we have always known, is a predominantly intellectual education in which other aspects of the human being are dismissed. This is clearly the case with the inner maternal function, which has to do with that limbic brain, linked to love, that we share with our mammalian ancestors. (Naranjo, 2007, p. 15).

The question that arises is whether educational institutions provide training by recognizing transcendental aspects for humanity, such as love, spirituality, or the purpose of life, to name a few examples.

Contreras Islas and Gonzáles-Grandón referring to this aspect indicate:

Let's imagine a world in which learning to listen to others, to embrace them, and to communicate with them through their gaze are part of the curricula and curriculum designs. What implications would this have for pedagogical work? A society that aspires to supportive well-being requires human beings cultivated in the practical knowledge of feeling-thinking, pre-reflective consciousness, affective and interaffective habits, and attentive listening to others to regulate learning, which cannot be imposed from the outside, reproducing colonial practices. On the contrary, it must emerge in the specific, situated, and contextual dynamics of each community (Contreras Islas & González Grandón, 2024, p. 296).

Without a doubt, taking a stand from this perspective requires insurgency and, therefore, political stance. Pedagogy conceived as a political act motivates us to consider it necessary to promote changes in education at all levels that, in relation to the topic being addressed, position the recognition of emotionality as a fundamental aspect.

For Catherine Walsh, pedagogy as a political act, particularly in Latin America, implies recognizing that reason guides the construction of knowledge, and its origin lies in colonizing ways of thinking, which invite critical analysis. She uses the analogy of "cracking to sow", understanding that teaching's work consists of cracking the educational system, to sow concerns and critical thinking, in relation to rationalism, recognizing education as a transformative act that even transcends

educational establishments, as they are inserted in a social environment to which they are not alien (Walsh, 2014; Walsh & Monarca, 2020).

From meso- and macro-contextual perspectives, insurgencies are also linked to demands on the state regarding the creation of public policies that guarantee permanent training and support systems, in which appropriate leadership in relation to these issues is essential. This is to avoid considering them as a focus of interest for the educational market and/or as an aspect added to the list of tasks required of teachers, which are carried out under functionalist logic, thereby losing their value.

It is disturbing to note that teachers in schools are currently evaluated for their performance in ESE activities, without having sufficient training to carry them out.

However, concern is generated by the apparent lack of interest in requesting their strengthening, and by their more vehement expression when it comes to demonstrating on other issues that call them together, such as, for example, salary.

Insurgency, then, from the present perspective, implies the development of creative acts that lead to proposing, implementing, and demonstrating that other forms of knowledge are possible, that subjective experiences are fundamental, that they enable dialogical acts, and, therefore, promote aspects such as citizenship, in which leadership from formal education institutions is crucial in their role of connecting with the environment.

With the arguments presented, the importance of ESE in the course of formal education would be unquestionable, as would the possibilities presented by the pedagogy of death, leading to the recognition that the omission of these aspects in training constitutes a failure to fulfill the requisite teaching standards. While this does not necessarily entail legal consequences, it creates the possibility of negative impact -or, worse still, non-impact- and thus promotes the development of indifferent educational communities and, therefore, dehumanizing behavior.

As final reflections, it is posed the following questions: Does socioemotional education currently allow us to recognize and cope with the effects of the death of any member of the educational community? Is death recognized as part of educational realities, with emotional consequences for individuals and communities? As educators, and at all educational levels, do we have the necessary knowledge to

develop a pedagogical practice that explicitly links socioemotional education? If any of the responses reveal weaknesses, do they not justify the development of insurgent pedagogical practices?

CONCLUSIONS

The pedagogy of death and socioemotional education are presented as necessary in today's education, enabling the recognition, visibility, and attention to those human dimensions that have been denied, annulled, or marginalized in traditional educational contexts. They take on particular relevance in today's society, characterized by a crisis of subjectivity and the resulting need for educational alternatives that remedy the historical reductionism of education to the mere cognitive dimension.

In this sense, the pedagogy of death enables the construction of new educational scenarios that address finitude as a constitutive dimension of the human, as well as grief and suffering as processes inherent to life and that, therefore, require pedagogical attention and support.

This involves developing socio-emotional, ethical, and spiritual competencies that enable educational communities to navigate the inevitable losses in a dignified, resilient, and supportive manner, fostering pedagogical practices as political actions in contrast to traditional educational frameworks.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

Authors' contribution

The authors participated in the design and writing of the article, in the search and analysis of the information contained in the consulted bibliography.



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