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Review article

Active methodologies for strengthening empathy in primary education students. A systematic review

Metodologías activas para el fortalecimiento de la empatía en estudiantes de educación primaria. Una revisión sistemática

Metodologias ativas para o fortalecimento da empatia em estudantes do ensino fundamental. Uma revisão sistemática

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ABSTRACT

Empathy is an essential socio-emotional competence for school coexistence, learning, and citizenship education in primary schools; however, its systematic development showed limitations in contemporary school contexts still dominated by pedagogical practices focused on content transmission. The aim of this article was to systematize recent scientific production regarding the contribution of active methodologies to strengthening empathy in primary education students. A systematic review with narrative synthesis was carried out, based on searches in the SciELO, Dialnet, Redalyc, Latindex, and Google Scholar databases between 2020 and 2025. Inclusion criteria were applied related to the primary education level, the active pedagogical approach, the development of empathic competencies, and publication in peer-reviewed sources. The results showed that strategies such as cooperative learning, values education, children's literature reading, mindfulness, humane education programs, and technological mediation produced improvements in emotional

Translated from the original in Spanish

understanding, cognitive and affective empathy, and prosocial behavior, although effects varied according to the design, duration, and context of each intervention. It was concluded that active methodologies constituted a pertinent pedagogical device for cultivating empathy from an early age, although gaps persisted regarding the duration of interventions, the size and representativeness of samples, and the cultural adaptation of proposals. The review provided theoretical and practical references useful for designing educational intervention programs oriented toward comprehensive socio-emotional development at the primary level.

Keywords: cooperative learning; socio-emotional skills; school coexistence; primary education; empathy; active methodologies.

RESUMEN

La empatía constituye una competencia socioemocional esencial para la convivencia, el aprendizaje y la formación ciudadana en la educación primaria; sin embargo, su desarrollo sistemático presentó limitaciones en los contextos escolares contemporáneos, dominados aún por prácticas pedagógicas centradas en la transmisión de contenidos. El presente artículo tuvo como objetivo sistematizar la producción científica reciente acerca del aporte de las metodologías activas al fortalecimiento de la empatía en estudiantes de educación primaria. Se realizó una revisión sistemática con síntesis narrativa, basada en la búsqueda en las bases de datos SciELO, Dialnet, Redalyc, Latindex y Google Scholar, durante el período 2020-2025. Se aplicaron criterios de inclusión vinculados al nivel educativo primario, al enfoque pedagógico activo, al desarrollo de competencias empáticas y a la publicación en fuentes arbitradas. Los resultados evidenciaron que estrategias como el aprendizaje cooperativo, la educación en valores, la lectura de literatura infantil, la atención plena, los programas de educación humanitaria y la mediación tecnológica propiciaron mejoras en la comprensión emocional, la empatía cognitiva y afectiva y las conductas prosociales, aunque con efectos heterogéneos según el diseño, la duración y el contexto de cada intervención. Se concluyó que las metodologías activas constituyeron un dispositivo pedagógico pertinente para cultivar la empatía desde edades tempranas, aunque persistieron vacíos asociados a la duración de las intervenciones, al tamaño y representatividad de las muestras y a la adaptación cultural de las propuestas. La revisión aportó referentes teóricos y prácticos útiles para diseñar programas de intervención educativa orientados al desarrollo socioemocional integral en el nivel primario.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje cooperativo; competencias socioemocionales; convivencia escolar; educación primaria; empatía; metodologías activas.

RESUMO

A empatia constitui uma competência socioemocional essencial para a convivência, a aprendizagem e a formação cidadã na educação primária; contudo, seu desenvolvimento sistemático apresentou limitações nos contextos escolares contemporâneos, ainda dominados por práticas pedagógicas centradas na transmissão de conteúdos. O presente artigo teve como objetivo sistematizar a produção científica recente sobre a contribuição das metodologias ativas para o fortalecimento da empatia em estudantes da educação primária. Realizou-se uma revisão sistemática com síntese narrativa, baseada na busca nas bases de dados SciELO, Dialnet, Redalyc, Latindex e Google Scholar, durante o período de 2020 a 2025. Aplicaram-se critérios de inclusão vinculados ao nível educativo primário, ao enfoque pedagógico ativo, ao desenvolvimento de competências empáticas e à publicação em fontes arbitradas. Os resultados evidenciaram que estratégias como a aprendizagem cooperativa, a educação em valores, a leitura de literatura infantil, a atenção plena, os programas de educação humanitária e a mediação tecnológica propiciaram melhorias na compreensão emocional, na empatia cognitiva e afetiva e nos comportamentos pró-sociais, embora com efeitos heterogêneos segundo o desenho, a duração e o contexto de cada intervenção. Concluiu-se que as metodologias ativas constituíram um dispositivo pedagógico pertinente para cultivar a empatia desde idades precoces, embora persistissem lacunas associadas à duração das intervenções, ao tamanho e à representatividade das amostras e à adaptação cultural das propostas. A revisão aportou referenciais teóricos e práticos úteis para projetar programas de intervenção educativa orientados ao desenvolvimento socioemocional integral no nível primário.

Palavras-chave: aprendizagem cooperativa; competências socioemocionais; convivência escolar; educação primária; empatia; metodologias ativas.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational context, characterized by social, cultural and technological dynamics in permanent transformation, primary education institutions face the challenge of overcoming the traditional emphasis on the transmission of cognitive content in order to embrace a comprehensive education that articulates, with equal standing, the development of socio-emotional competences (Mosquera Aguilar, 2025). Among these competences, empathy occupies a central place as the capacity to recognize, understand and respond appropriately to the emotions, perspectives and needs of others, which is the foundation of democratic coexistence, solidarity and citizenship education.

The educational relevance of empathy has been underlined by international organizations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2024), based on the results of the Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (ERCE 2019) applied to sixth-grade students in Latin America and the Caribbean, stated that empathy, openness to diversity and school self-regulation are also learned in the classroom and require explicit teaching, in which the role of teachers is decisive. Along the same lines, Sangacha Aroca et al. (2025) warned that the development of these competences has a direct impact on coexistence, learning and student well-being. In Peru, the Survey on Social and Emotional Skills of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2024), in which Peru participated for the first time in 2023 with 15-year-old students, showed that female students reported lower levels than their male peers in several emotional regulation skills and in trust, a dimension that, together with empathy, makes up collaboration skills, which reaffirms the urgency of incorporating pedagogical approaches that promote these dimensions from basic education onwards.

Despite this normative consensus, the pedagogical practices in force in many primary education institutions continue to favor teacher-centered models in which the emotional dimension is relegated to a secondary level (Calderón Calderón, 2024). The immediate consequence is deteriorated school climates, manifestations of indifference, difficulties in collaborative work, episodes of teasing and conflicts that are not resolved assertively, all of them indicators of a limited manifestation of empathic behavior among students (Sangacha Aroca et al., 2025). This situation worsened after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, which restricted direct social interaction and, with it, the opportunities to consider the perspective of others (Vergara Flores & Figueroa Céspedes, 2024).

In view of this scenario, active methodologies have become a relevant pedagogical alternative for strengthening empathy. Defined as sets of teaching strategies that place students as protagonists of their own learning, they promote participation, cooperation, reflection and the situated experience of meaningful activities (Escarbajal Frutos & Martínez Galera, 2023; Rodríguez Flores, 2025). Among their most studied modalities are cooperative learning, project-based learning, role-playing, service-learning, experiential activities and the incorporation of narrative and playful resources. Several recent studies have documented improvements in social and empathic skills after their systematic implementation (Samuels & Onuoha-Jackson, 2023; Vergara Flores & Figueroa Céspedes, 2024; Zapata Cervantes et al., 2025).

However, the available evidence is scattered, covers heterogeneous contexts and presents methodological and conceptual gaps that make it difficult to formulate consistent guidelines for teaching practice. It is therefore necessary to critically systematize recent scientific production in order to identify trends, convergent findings, limitations and lines for further research.

In light of the above, the objective of this article was to systematize the scientific production of the 2020-2025 period on the contribution of active methodologies to strengthening empathy in primary education students. The review focused its analysis on three questions: What theoretical foundations support the relationship between active methodologies and the development of empathy? Which modalities have shown the greatest effectiveness in strengthening empathy? What gaps and perspectives derive from the state of the art to guide future interventions?

DEVELOPMENT

This research was carried out using the approach of a systematic review with narrative synthesis, a suitable modality for integrating heterogeneous evidence from quantitative, qualitative and mixed studies in the educational field. The PRISMA guidelines were adopted, in an adapted form, for the search, selection and reporting of the included studies.

The bibliographic search was carried out between February and May 2025 in the SciELO, Dialnet, Redalyc, Latindex and Google Scholar databases, complemented by the portals of international organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD. Descriptors in Spanish and English were combined using Boolean operators, namely: ("metodologías activas" OR "active methodologies" OR

"aprendizaje cooperativo") AND ("empatía" OR "empathy" OR "habilidades socioemocionales") AND ("educación primaria" OR "primary education").

The following inclusion criteria were established: peer-reviewed scientific articles, peer-reviewed conference proceedings, meta-analyses and reports from international organizations published between 2020 and 2025; studies carried out in primary education or with participants between six and twelve years of age, exceptionally admitting studies in early childhood or secondary education when they provided evidence transferable to the object of study; studies focused on strengthening empathy or other associated socio-emotional competences; and publications in Spanish, English or Portuguese. Undergraduate and graduate theses not published in scientific journals, regulatory documents from government entities, press releases and documents without empirical support or explicit theoretical review were excluded.

The selection process comprised four phases: initial identification of records, removal of duplicates, title and abstract screening, and full-text reading to verify compliance with the criteria. Data on authorship, year, country, theoretical basis, methodological approach, sample, instruments, findings and conclusions were extracted from the final corpus and organized in an analytical matrix that allowed thematic categorization. To guarantee the quality of the process, rigor criteria were applied: triangulation of sources, an auditable record of searches and comparative analysis between convergent and divergent studies.

The analysis was structured around three thematic axes: the conceptualization of empathy in the educational field; the foundations of active methodologies; and empirical evidence on their impact on the development of empathy in primary education.

Empathy as an educational competence. Conceptual approaches

Empathy has been conceptualized from multiple disciplinary traditions. From the classical psychological perspective, it has been understood as an affective response more congruent with the situation of the other than with one's own, which integrates cognitive components, such as perspective-taking, and affective components, such as emotional resonance. This duality has been taken up by contemporary approaches that incorporate a third component, of a behavioral or motivational nature, oriented towards prosocial action (Núñez et al., 2021; Zapata Cervantes et al., 2025).

In the educational field, empathy falls within the broader framework of socio-emotional competences, a model developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which articulates five dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Mahoney et al., 2021). Empathy is located mainly in social awareness, although it cuts across the other dimensions (Vergara Flores & Figueroa Céspedes, 2024). Sangacha Aroca et al. (2025) argued that the articulated development of these competences in childhood has a direct impact on emotional regulation, the prevention of aggressive behavior and the construction of healthy interpersonal relationships.

The primary education stage, between six and twelve years of age, is a sensitive period for cultivating empathy. Children in this age range progressively consolidate their capacity for cognitive decentering and the incorporation of more complex moral frameworks, which opens a relevant window of pedagogical opportunity (Núñez et al., 2021). Systematic support during this period facilitates the transition towards sustained prosocial behavior in adolescence and adulthood.

However, several authors warned that the mere presence of empathy in official curricular frameworks does not guarantee its effective development. Calderón Calderón (2024) argued that initial and in-service teacher training in the socio-emotional field remains a critical issue, since teachers do not always have teaching tools to mobilize these competences in the classroom. In the same vein, Escarbajal Frutos and Martínez Galera (2023) found that a large proportion of teachers are not prepared for the methodological change that these competences demand. For its part, the systemic approach to social and emotional learning emphasizes that the development of self-regulation and social awareness requires the coordinated support of teachers, families and other significant adults in safe and caring learning environments (Mahoney et al., 2021), which demands transformations in pedagogical practices.

Consequently, the literature reviewed draws attention to the importance of creating school environments rich in interaction, play, inclusive dynamics and secure affective bonds as a condition of possibility for cultivating empathy (Mahoney et al., 2021; Vergara Flores & Figueroa Céspedes, 2024). These approaches pave the way for considering active methodologies as devices consistent with such requirements.

Active methodologies

Active methodologies constitute a set of teaching approaches that share a common core: the centrality of students in their learning process, the articulation between theory and practice, the promotion of cooperation and openness to the emotional and experiential dimension (Escarbajal Frutos & Martínez Galera, 2023). Their theoretical roots go back to John Dewey's progressive pedagogy, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Piagetian constructivism and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, whose influence is particularly relevant for a humanizing and dialogical education.

From an operational perspective, Escarbajal Frutos and Martínez Galera (2023) and Rodríguez Flores (2025) identified cooperative learning, project-based learning, the flipped classroom and gamification among the most frequent modalities, to which the literature on socio-emotional development adds role-playing, service-learning, experiential activities, dialogic reading and, more recently, proposals that integrate digital technologies, empathy games and social robotics (Muravevskaia et al., 2023; Pu et al., 2024). Table 1 summarizes the main modalities identified and their specific potential for cultivating empathy.

Table 1. Main modalities of active methodologies and their potential for empathy

Modality	Description	Specific contribution to empathy
Cooperative learning	Work in small groups with positive interdependence and individual accountability.	Coordination of perspectives, active listening and shared emotional regulation.
Project-based learning	Sustained inquiry into authentic problems with final products that are shared.	Collective decision-making and commitment to problems in the environment.
Role-playing and dramatization	Representation of situations from perspectives different from one's own.	Cognitive decentering and identification with the emotional states of others.

Dialogic children's literature	Reading, storytelling and dramatization of stories with spaces for reflective dialogue.	Moral imagination, identification with characters and emotional understanding.
Mindfulness	Breathing, visualization and present-moment awareness practices.	Emotional self-awareness as the basis for sensitivity towards others.
Service-learning	Articulation of curricular learning with community service actions.	Civic commitment, solidarity and situated prosocial behavior.
Technological mediation and social robotics	Use of interactive devices to mediate emotional and dialogic experiences.	Stimulation of empathic reasoning in response to aesthetic and affective stimuli.

Note: Own elaboration based on Ciesielska et al. (2025), Escarbajal Frutos and Martínez Galera (2023), Jalón et al. (2022), Pu et al. (2024), Rodríguez Flores (2025) and Vergara Flores and Figueroa Céspedes (2024).

What is distinctive about these methodologies is their capacity to transform the classroom into a setting of meaningful interaction, where knowledge is built collectively on the basis of authentic problems, situated tasks and shared experiences. Escarbajal Frutos and Martínez Galera (2023) found that, compared with traditional methodology, which tends to demotivate students and disconnect what is learned from everyday problems, these proposals favor motivation, autonomy and the application of knowledge to real situations.

As for their relevance to the development of empathy, the literature reviewed supports the claim that active methodologies create favorable conditions for the emergence of empathic behavior: cooperation requires the coordination of perspectives (Vergara Flores & Figueroa Céspedes, 2024); role-playing invites cognitive decentering; group dynamics call for shared emotional regulation; and narrative experiences stimulate emotional understanding and prosocial behavior (Ciesielska et al., 2025). Taken together, these modalities offer repeated opportunities for students to "put themselves in someone else's shoes" as an everyday learning practice.

It should also be noted that the effectiveness of these methodologies is neither automatic nor neutral: it depends on pedagogical mediation, careful planning of learning situations and teacher training in affective strategies (Escarbajal Frutos & Martínez Galera, 2023). The experience of Pinzón et al. (2023), carried out at the secondary level but transferable in this respect, shows that the pedagogy of empathy was implemented through curricular adaptations built by teachers through reflective, critical and group cohesion processes, with tools such as autobiographical deconstruction, narratives and dialogic round tables. In the Cuban context, Valdés et al. (2020), in *Mendive. Revista de Educación*, showed that intentionally planned learning situations and teaching procedures in Spanish Language classes favor the development of social interaction skills in schoolchildren with special educational needs, which reaffirms the weight of teacher mediation in socio-emotional learning. A poorly mediated active methodology can reproduce competitive, hierarchical or exclusionary dynamics; therefore, the literature insists on the articulation between teaching devices and pedagogical approaches of humanistic, dialogical and inclusive inspiration.

Empirical evidence on the impact of active methodologies on strengthening empathy

The systematic review made it possible to identify a set of recent studies that have documented the effects of different active methodologies on strengthening empathy and related socio-emotional competences in primary education students, as well as a meta-analysis on the role of storybook reading. The findings are summarized in table 2 and discussed below, organized by methodological line.

Table 2. Summary of the studies reviewed on active methodologies and empathy in primary education (2020-2025)

Author (year)	Country	Modality	Design/sample	Key findings
Torrego-Seijo et al. (2021)	Spain	Cooperative learning	Quasi-experimental with control group; 692 students	Improvement in achievement and adaptability (emotional intelligence); limited effects on the other dimensions.
Jalón et al. (2022)	Spain	Mindfulness integrated	Non-randomized quasi-experimental; 25	Medium-sized improvements in cognitive empathy and considerate social style.

		into the curriculum	students (10-12 years) and control group	
Muravevskaia et al. (2023)	India	Participatory design of empathy games	Qualitative; 18 children (7-11 years)	Cultural and linguistic barriers; difficulty focusing the design on emotions without adult mediation.
Samuels and Onuoha-Jackson (2023)	China	Humane education program	Randomized trial; ~600 first-grade students over one school year	Improvements in cognitive (medium effect) and affective (large effect) empathy.
Palacios Becerra et al. (2024)	Ecuador	Values education	Mixed; 7th-grade students of basic general education	System of activities that contributed to cultivating empathy.
Pu et al. (2024)	United States	Social robotics and reflection on art	Experimental; 11 children (7-11 years)	Greater empathic reasoning in response to artworks with emotional content.
Vergara Flores and Figueroa Céspedes (2024)	Chile	Interactional cooperative learning	Teaching intervention in 2nd grade	Improvements in perspective-taking and emotional understanding; challenges in empathic distress.

Note: Own elaboration based on the studies consulted

Cooperative learning and interactional dynamics. Vergara Flores and Figueroa Céspedes (2024), in a teaching intervention with second-grade students from a highly vulnerable context, showed significant improvements in perspective-taking and in understanding the emotions of others after applying an interactional-cooperative proposal, although challenges persisted in the response to empathic distress. With a considerably larger sample, Torrego-Seijo et al. (2021) compared, using a quasi-experimental design with a control group, 692 students from eight public schools in Madrid

and found that cooperative learning improved academic achievement but that its effects on emotional intelligence were limited to a single dimension, adaptability to change; this suggests that cooperation alone does not guarantee broad socio-emotional progress unless it is accompanied by explicit work on emotions.

Learning based on narrative and children's literature. The meta-analysis by Ciesielska et al. (2025), which integrated 21 studies with a control group and 2,293 children aged between two and ten, found an overall effect of storybook reading on empathy that, however, was only significant for prosocial behavior; in addition, individual or one-to-one reading predicted outcomes better than group reading. These findings qualify the idea that narrative promotes empathy automatically and suggest that its potential depends on the format of mediation, so that dialogic and individualized reading is more promising than reading aimed at the whole group.

Values education and experiential strategies. Palacios Becerra et al. (2024), using a mixed design with seventh-grade students of basic general education in Ecuador, diagnosed the needs for promoting empathy through interviews with teachers and experts and focus groups with students, and designed a system of activities and teaching materials focused on values education whose evaluation, through classroom observations, questionnaires and performance analysis, confirmed its contribution to cultivating empathy.

Mindfulness. Jalón et al. (2022) integrated a brief mindfulness program into the curriculum of a class of students aged between ten and twelve, with three five-minute sessions per week for four months, and, compared with a control group, observed medium-sized improvements in cognitive empathy and in considerate social style, as well as large effects on mindfulness skills. The authors themselves warned that the non-randomized nature of the design calls for more robust studies to confirm the scope of these results.

Social robotics and technological mediation. Pu et al. (2024) examined the role of a social robot as a mediator of emotional reflection on works of art with eleven children aged between seven and eleven. Conversations about works with emotional content generated higher rates of empathic reasoning than those focused on neutral works, and the interaction with the robot helped reduce the children's discomfort when sharing deep or vulnerable emotions, which suggests that technological mediation, when anchored in aesthetic and dialogic experiences, can enhance empathic sensitivity.

Participatory design and cultural relevance. Muravevskaia et al. (2023) replicated in India, with eighteen children aged between seven and eleven, a participatory design study of empathy games previously carried out in the United States. Their findings showed that the children found it difficult to focus the design on emotions without repeated insistence from adults, that the use of English was a barrier for children under nine and that cultural hierarchies between adults and children conditioned participation, which reaffirms the need for situated mediations that recognize the heterogeneity of school contexts, including Latin American ones.

Structured and sustained programs. Samuels and Onuoha-Jackson (2023) provided some of the most robust evidence in the corpus: through a one-school-year randomized trial with about 600 first-grade students from six schools in eastern China, they found that a school humane education program, based on content about caring for animals and nature, improved cognitive empathy, with a medium effect, and affective empathy, with a large effect, compared with the control group. This result converges with the meta-analysis by Cipriano et al. (2023), which brought together 424 studies from 53 countries and confirmed that students who participate in universal school-based social and emotional learning interventions improve their skills, attitudes, behaviors, peer relationships and school climate compared with control groups.

In short, the body of evidence reviewed converged on four main theses. First, active methodologies, in their various forms, have positive effects on empathy and associated socio-emotional competences when they are implemented systematically and with adequate pedagogical mediation, although the magnitude of these effects varies considerably between studies. Second, structured and sustained interventions that combine cooperation, narrative and emotional reflection tend to show broader effects than one-off experiences, although the available evidence does not yet allow a direct comparison of the two options. Third, teacher training and intentional planning are critical moderating factors: the methodology is not effective in itself but depending on the mediation that supports it. Fourth, the cultural and contextual adaptation of interventions is a condition of possibility for their effectiveness, particularly in diverse Latin American contexts.

The review also made it possible to identify relevant limitations and gaps in the field. Large-scale randomized trials are still exceptional (Samuels & Onuoha-Jackson, 2023); designs without random assignment, qualitative studies and interventions with small samples predominate, which limits causal attribution and the generalization of results (Jalón et al., 2022; Pu et al., 2024; Vergara Flores

& Figueroa Céspedes, 2024). Few studies included longitudinal follow-ups that would make it possible to assess the persistence of effects in the medium and long term.

Sample sizes are often small, between eleven and twenty-five participants in several cases (Jalón et al., 2022; Muravevskaia et al., 2023; Pu et al., 2024), and selected by convenience, which restricts statistical representativeness. The instruments for measuring empathy are heterogeneous: standardized questionnaires, self-report scales, classroom observations, discourse analysis and interviews coexist, which makes systematic comparisons between studies difficult (Ciesielska et al., 2025).

The duration and intensity of the interventions vary widely, from one-off interactions with a social robot (Pu et al., 2024) to programs lasting a school year (Samuels & Onuoha-Jackson, 2023), which calls into question the sustainability of the changes observed in the briefer proposals. The literature on socio-emotional development suggests that deep empathic learning requires prolonged cycles of practice, feedback and modeling (Sangacha Aroca et al., 2025).

Theoretical gaps persist regarding the articulation between the cognitive, affective and behavioral components of empathy. Some studies favor the affective dimension without sufficiently addressing perspective-taking or prosocial behavior, while others reverse this logic. A future agenda requires integrative models to guide multidimensional assessment.

Finally, a gap is identified regarding the articulation between school, family and community. Most of the interventions reviewed are confined to the classroom, without systematically involving families or the community environment, dimensions that, according to the systemic approach to social and emotional learning, are decisive in consolidating empathic competences (Mahoney et al., 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

The systematic review made it possible to confirm that active methodologies constitute a relevant and potentially effective pedagogical device for strengthening empathy in primary education students. The evidence available for the 2020-2025 period, from studies carried out in Ibero-American, Asian and North American contexts, showed convergence regarding the positive effects of cooperative learning, values education, children's literature reading, mindfulness, structured humane education programs and situated technological mediation, although with heterogeneous magnitudes between studies.

First, empathy needs to be assumed as a socio-emotional competence that cuts across the primary education curriculum, and not as an isolated content, which implies transforming teaching practices towards approaches that combine cooperation, experience, reflection and affective mediation.

Second, the effectiveness of active methodologies does not derive from the mere choice of a teaching device but from the coherence between the methodology, pedagogical mediation, teacher training and the cultural relevance of the intervention. A pedagogical proposal aimed at cultivating empathy requires intentional planning, sustainability over time and articulation between school, family and community.

The review revealed research gaps that suggest lines for further work: the need for quasi-experimental designs with control groups and longitudinal follow-ups; the construction of integrative instruments that assess the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of empathy; the systematic involvement of families and the community; and the development of pedagogical proposals adapted to Latin American realities.

Finally, the systematization presented here provides useful theoretical and practical references for the design of educational intervention programs, as well as for in-service teacher training in socio-emotional competences. The sustained incorporation of active methodologies in primary education, from a humanizing and transformative perspective, can contribute significantly to building school communities that are more empathic, cohesive and oriented towards a culture of peace, thus addressing one of the central challenges of contemporary education.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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

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