

Results of training program in emotional competences for primary school teachers

Resultados de un programa de formación en competencias emocionales para profesorado de Educación Primaria

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Abstract

The aim of this work is to assess the effectiveness of a teacher's training program in Emotional Intelligence for Primary Education teachers. The intervention aims to improve five teacher dimensions: intrapersonal (AI) and interpersonal intelligence (EI), stress management (S), adaptation (A) and mood (M). A total of 141 primary school teachers participated in the study (54.6 % female and 45.4 % male), with an average age of 38.4 years and an average teaching experience of 13.1 years. Randomly, 70 were assigned to the experimental group and 71 to the control group. The first group underwent the training program for 14 weeks. The 51-item Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) was used to assess the dimensions. Cronbach's alpha values are: 0.75 (AI), 0.77 (EI), 0.83 (S), 0.84 (A) and 0.88 (M). Pre-test measures were collected two weeks before the start of the program, and post-test measures were collected two weeks after the end of the program. SPSS version 22 was used for data analysis, where we performed Student's t-test, MANOVA and ANOVA. The results indicated that all dimensions improved in the intervention group, highlighting the one corresponding to teacher mood.

Keywords: Emotional competences, Emotional intelligence, program, primary education, teachers.

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Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo es valorar la eficacia de un programa de formación docente en Inteligencia Emocional para maestros y maestras de Educación Primaria. La intervención persigue mejorar cinco dimensiones del profesorado: inteligencia intrapersonal (IA) e interpersonal (IE), manejo del estrés (E), adaptación (A) y humor (H). En este estudio han participado 141 maestros de Educación Primaria (54,6 % mujeres y 45,4 % hombres), con una edad media de 38,4 años y una experiencia docente de 13,1 años de promedio. Aleatoriamente, 70 fueron asignados al grupo experimental y 71 al grupo control. El primer grupo fue el que se sometió al programa de formación durante 14 semanas. Para evaluar las dimensiones se utilizó el inventario del Cociente Emocional (EQ-i), de 51 ítems, cuyos valores del alfa de Cronbach son: 0,75 (IA), 0,77 (IE), 0,83 (E), 0,84 (A) y 0,88 (H). Las medidas del pre-test se recopilaron dos semanas antes de iniciar el programa, y las medidas del post-test dos semanas después de concluirlo. Para el análisis de los datos se empleó la versión 22 del SPSS, donde realizamos la prueba t de Student, MANOVA y ANOVA. Los resultados indicaron que todas las dimensiones mejoraron en el grupo de intervención, destacando aquella que corresponde al humor del profesorado.

Palabras clave: competencias emocionales, inteligencia emocional, programa, educación primaria, profesorado.

INTRODUCTION

The Spanish educational system is defined by the achievement of an integral education in the curriculum of all stages, including in each of them the development of people on the emotional level (Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2006; Ley Orgánica por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2020).

Already the Delors report (1996) pointed out for the education of the 21st century four fundamental pillars, among which are learning to be and learning to live together, both “linked to integral and emotional development” (Bisquerra *et al.*, 2015, p. 258).

Now, for this to exist in the educational system, the presence of a teaching team well trained in emotional competences is key, understanding these as a “set of knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to understand, express and regulate emotional phenomena appropriately” (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007, p. 69).

Thus, more emotionally intelligent teachers will show greater general well-being (Cabanach *et al.*, 2010), less exhaustion (Pena *et al.*, 2012), better stress management (Cabello *et al.*, 2010; Mearns & Cain, 2003), as well as a reduction in the possibility of suffering burnout due to workload, which results in greater job satisfaction (Pena & Extremera, 2012; Rey *et al.*, 2012).

In general, it implies that teachers are prepared to relate positively with the educational community and, consequently, improve the effectiveness of education (Bisquerra, 2005).

Some studies indicate the relationship between teachers' social and emotional competences, the quality of teaching in the classroom, and the development of prosocial behaviors among students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Likewise, there are studies that show that including emotional intelligence in teaching practice has positive effects on different aspects of students, such as: mental and physical health (Martins *et al.*, 2010), decision-making (Li *et al.*, 2020), conflict resolution (Slovev *et al.*, 2002) and academic performance (Corcoran *et al.*, 2018; Johnson *et al.*, 2014; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Sánchez-Álvarez *et al.*, 2020).

For all these reasons, it is important to foster emotional skills in teachers so that they can then help their students to become more emotionally competent (Bisquerra *et al.*, 2015). In turn, having this training generates resources and strategies to know to manage the day-to-day emotions of students in the classroom.

However, the reality of the European education system is very different. Despite considering emotional competences as a basic pillar in initial teacher training, there is a lack of curricula in which they are included (López-Goñi & Goñi, 2012). As in many other aspects related to education, Finland stands out for its interest in training future teachers in socioemotional competences (Klemola *et al.*, 2013).

Teacher training program

Although we have already pointed out that in practice there is very little presence of teacher training programs in social and emotional competences, we ratify their importance because, by promoting greater well-being among teachers, teaching can be improved (Liang *et al.*, 2020).

Certain research indicate that the design of interventions aimed at promoting psychological well-being improves the overall effectiveness of education. Also, programs that provide social and motivational skills facilitate self-acceptance and self-actualization (Salami, 2010). For example, there is evidence that emotional education programs that implement techniques such as Mindfulness manage to improve the personal and academic development of the educational community (López-Hernández, 2015).

In general, teachers are aware of the positive effects of working in emotions in the classroom. Sánchez (2019) indicates in her study that female university professors assure that they prioritize the emotional aspect daily in the classroom, creating spaces for students to express what they feel. However, this arises more from the initiative of the teachers or by the students rather than being programmed in the curriculum.

To this end, due to the reciprocity that exists between the university and the school, a transformation of both at the same time is desirable, with teacher training being key in this process (Ibáñez *et al.*, 2008).

In our case, we focus on a program that proposes to work five dimensions: intrapersonal intelligence (ability to know one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions), interpersonal intelligence (ability to communicate with other people and recognize their emotions and needs), stress management (knowing how to control emotions), adaptation (ability to cope with problems) and mood (ability to generate positive emotions). In detail, the objectives of the teacher training program we present are:

- Update teacher training in the most innovative methodological approaches, providing new resources for their application in the classroom.
- Analyze the didactic approaches used in the classroom and their contribution to the development of key competences.
- Develop a training process that allows to learn about innovative methodologies so that each teacher can incorporate them into his or her professional life.
- Discover one's own strengths and work on personal and professional skills.
- Identify and develop specific skills and talents in teachers.
- Encourage teamwork among teachers.
- Facilitate resources for the positive resolution of conflicts.
- Develop strategies for the emotional development of teachers.
- Understand the need to organize work and time.
- Acquire competences to develop strategies to improve our technological skills.
- Develop a practical program in which teachers can observe their own personal evolution throughout the course.
- Know the characteristics that define each evolutionary and educational stage.
- Awaken concerns, to sow the seed of entrepreneurship in the participants.
- Share personal and professional experiences that generate reference.

In relation to the contents, we refer to:

- Innovation, calculated risk-taking, and strategic direction.
- Communication and leadership.
- Conflict resolution skills in educational contexts.
- Network building.
- Ability to organize and plan one's own work.
- Detection of opportunities in the center and in the classroom.

Objectives

The main objective of this work is to evaluate, against a control group, the effectiveness of a training program on Emotional Intelligence in Primary Education teachers. Likewise, the intervention aims specifically to improve teachers in five dimensions: intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence, stress management, adaptation, and humor.

Hypothesis

Taking into account the central objective of our study, the hypothesis we hope to demonstrate is that the teacher training program improves the scores of intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, stress management, adaptation and humor in the participating teachers.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were 141 primary school teachers, 54.6% female and 45.4% male, with a mean age of 38.4 years (standard deviation = 6.98 years). In addition, the average teaching experience was 13.1 years (standard deviation = 6.84 years). Randomly, of the 141 teachers, 70 were assigned to the experimental group. It was the one that underwent a teacher training program aimed at improving their emotional intelligence. The remainder, 71 teachers, were assigned to the control group.

Instruments

In the present study, the 51-item Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) (Castejón *et al.*, 2017) was used to measure the participants' Emotional Intelligence. It is a self-report instrument about social and emotional behavior, through the evaluation of five dimensions: intrapersonal intelligence (AI), interpersonal intelligence (EI), stress management (S), adaptability (A) and mood (M). In turn, each dimension is composed of a series of items that are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha values are: 0.75 (AI), 0.77 (EI), 0.83 (S), 0.84 (A), and 0.88 (M).

Procedures

Once the participants had been selected, they were informed in detail about the study and were guaranteed the confidentiality of the data collected. Likewise, the entire procedure was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Alicante (UA-2015-07-06).

Then, they were randomly assigned to each group (experimental or control), being the participants of the experimental group who, for 14 weeks, received the intervention of a teacher training program.

Emotional Intelligence scores were collected in both groups using Moodle, an e-learning platform. Specifically, pre-test measures were collected two weeks before starting the program, and post-test measures were collected two weeks after the end of the program.

Data analysis

In this work, to respond to our objectives, we conducted an experimental study with two groups: experimental and control, whose evaluation was performed in two periods: before and after the training. In addition, we used a generalized linear model.

SPSS version 22 was used for the analyses. On the one hand, before starting the intervention, Student's t-test was performed to ensure the equivalence of both groups. On the other hand, the scores of the emotional dimensions were analyzed by multivariate analysis (MANOVA) and univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA), taking the dependent variable (time of evaluation: before and after the program) as an intra-subject variable and belonging to one group or another (experimental/control) as an inter-subject variable. In the multivariate analysis we also included years of teaching experience as a covariate.

RESULTS

First, using the independent samples t-test, we analyzed the differences in each of the dimensions of emotional intelligence studied in our study.

Table 1 shows the pre-test phase. It shows that there are no significant differences between the control and experimental groups before the intervention with the participants.

Table 1
Student's t-test for the Difference in Mean Scores. Pre-test Phase.

Variables	t	gl	Sig.	Difference	SD
Intrapersonal intelligence	1.23	139	0.22	2.13	1.73
Interpersonal intelligence	0.72	139	0.47	1.25	1.73
Stress management	1.03	139	0.31	1.41	1.37
Adaptability	1.24	139	0.22	1.47	1.19
Mood	1.05	139	0.29	1.84	1.74
Total EQ-i	1.09	139	0.28	1.62	1.49

On the other hand, we applied Box's M test and obtained in all variables that there is no homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrix: intrapersonal intelligence ($M = 180.93$; $F = 59.37$; $p = 0.00$), interpersonal intelligence ($M = 169.06$; $F = 55.47$; $p = 0.00$), stress management ($M = 171.94$; $F = 56.42$; $p = 0.00$), adaptability ($M = 149.51$; $F = 49.06$; $p = 0.00$), mood ($M = 195.47$; $F = 64.14$; $p = 0.00$), and total EQ-i ($M = 275.32$; $F = 90.34$; $p = 0.00$). However, violating this assumption if the groups are approximately equal in size has little impact (Hair *et al.*, 1999).

As for the results after the intervention in the experimental group, all dimensions showed significant variations. This is shown by Wilks' Lambda test: AI ($F = 133.79$; h^2 partial = 0.49), EI ($F = 134.05$; h^2 partial = 0.49), S ($F = 264.36$; h^2 partial = 0.65), A ($F = 258.80$; h^2 partial = 0.65), M ($F = 258.99$; h^2 partial = 0.65) and total EQ-i ($F = 223.87$; h^2 partial = 0.62).

Table 2
Intra-Inter Subject Univariate ANOVA Results

Dimension	Source	SC	gl	MC	F	p	b ²	Power
Intrapersonal intelligence (IA)	Intra	1972.74	1	1972.74	60.27	0.00	0.30	1.00
	Intra* Inter	4379.09	1	4379.09	133.79	0.00	0.49	1.00
	Error Intra	4549.55	139	32.73				
	Inter	2332.50	1	2332.50	22.49	0.00	0.14	1.00
	Error Inter	14415.99	139	103.71				
Interpersonal intelligence (IE)	Intra	2083.50	1	2083.50	69.78	0.00	0.33	1.00
	Intra* Inter	4002.53	1	4002.53	134.06	0.00	0.49	1.00
	Error Intra	4150.13	139	29.86				
	Inter	2786.40	1	2786.40	25.06	0.00	0.15	1.00
	Error Inter	15456.67	139	111.20				
Stress management (S)	Intra	3244.44	1	3244.44	166.65	0.00	0.55	1.00
	Intra* Inter	5146.92	1	5146.92	264.37	0.00	0.66	1.00
	Error Intra	2706.19	139	19.47				
	Inter	3587.34	1	3587.34	57.05	0.00	0.29	1.00
	Error Inter	8741.03	139	62.89				
Adaptability (A)	Intra	2181.24	1	2181.24	149.90	0.00	0.52	1.00
	Intra* Inter	3765.98	1	3765.98	258.81	0.00	0.65	1.00
	Error Intra	2022.64	139	14.55				
	Inter	2399.97	1	2399.97	49.87	0.00	0.26	1.00
	Error Inter	6689.02	139	48.12				

Dimension	Source	SC	gl	MC	F	p	h ²	Power
Mood (M)	Intra	4565.04	1	4565.04	148.18	0.00	0.52	1.00
	Intra* Inter	7978.82	1	7978.82	259.00	0.00	0.65	1.00
	Error Intra	4282.12	139	30.81				
	Inter	5459.25	1	5459.25	52.88	0.00	0.28	1.00
	Error Inter	14349.40	139	103.23				
Total EQ-I (T)	Intra	2730.89	1	2730.89	123.44	0.00	0.47	1.00
	Intra* Inter	4952.62	1	4952.62	223.87	0.00	0.62	1.00
	Error Intra	3075.04	139	22.12				
	Inter	3222.90	1	3222.90	42.62	0.00	0.24	1.00
	Error Inter	10512.43	139	75.63				

Also, by means of the univariate analysis shown in Table 2, we found that the scores in all the dimensions of emotional intelligence assessed in the present study improved in the experimental group after the implementation of the program.

A multivariate analysis was also performed including years of teaching experience as a covariate. The results indicated that the effect of the covariate is significant in all cases (IA: F = 31.18, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.18; IE: F = 20.06, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.13; S: F = 20.87, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.13; A: F = 13.54, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.089; M: F = 22.54, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.14; T: F = 25.08, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.15), but after controlling with the covariate, all the effects of the interaction are still maintained in all the variables despite the fact that the covariate is related to the dependent variable (IA: F = 171.31, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.55; IE: F = 158.99, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.54; S: F = 311.07, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.69; A: F = 288.87, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.67; M: F = 308.40, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.69; T: F = 271.95, p= <0.001, h² partial = 0.166). That is, the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variables does not affect the effect of the intervention program.

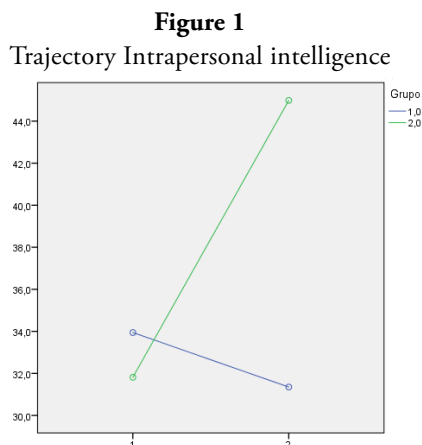
Table 3 shows the means of each group (experimental/control) before and after the training program in each of the dimensions measured by the EQ-i, as well as in the total.

In the pre-test, the control and experimental groups start from similar scores. On the other hand, in the post-test the scores remain in the control group, and in the experimental group the scores are higher in all dimensions.

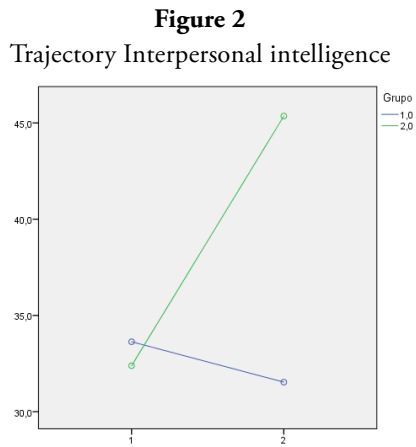
Table 3
Mean and Standard Deviation. Pre-test and Post-test

	Control		Experimental	
	M	SD	M	SD
Pre-test				
Intrapersonal intelligence	33.94	10.04	31.81	10.46
Interpersonal intelligence	33.63	10.45	32.39	10.04
Stress management	22.23	8.46	20.81	7.84
Adaptability	19.80	7.47	18.33	6.65
Mood	28.30	10.71	26.46	9.97
Total EQ-i	27.58	9.05	25.96	8.64
Post-test				
Intrapersonal intelligence	31.35	7.74	44.99	1.51
Interpersonal intelligence	31.54	8.31	45.36	1.61
Stress management	20.47	5.42	36.14	1.42
Adaptability	18.06	4.85	31.20	1.30
Mood	25.70	7.14	45.14	1.54
Total EQ-i	25.42	6.17	40.57	0.66

Finally, the interaction of the trajectory of the differences between the experimental and control groups in each dimension of the EQ-i is shown graphically (Figure 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), as well as in their total (Figure 6). Thus, the results show that, after 14 weeks of training, the scores in each of the dimensions measured by the EQ-i have improved significantly in the group submitted to the program.

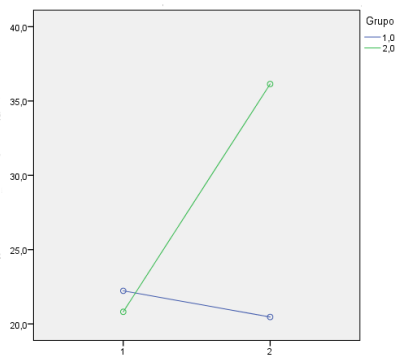


Note. Group 1 = control; group 2 = experimental.



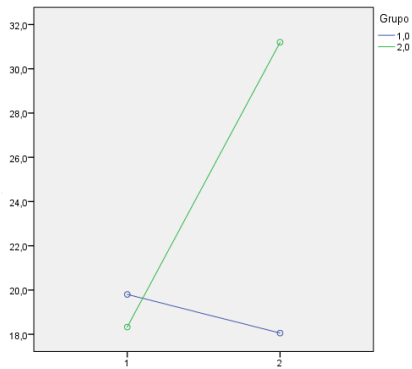
Note. Group 1 = control; group 2 = experimental.

Figure 3
Trajectory Stress management



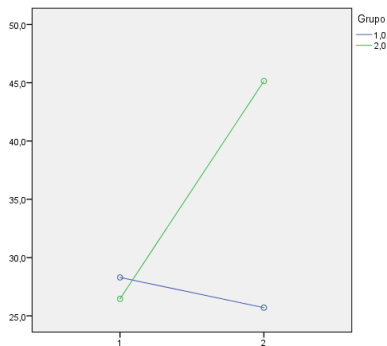
Note. Group 1 = control; group 2 = experimental.

Figure 4
Trajectory Adaptability



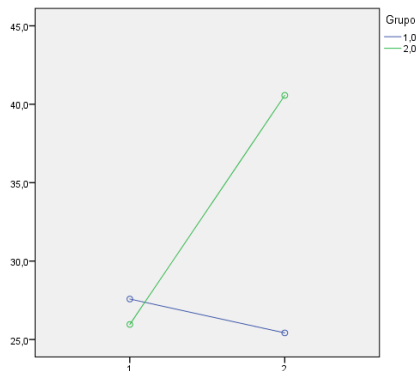
Note. Group 1 = control; group 2 = experimental.

Figure 5
Trajectory Mood



Note. Group 1 = control; group 2 = experimental.

Figure 6
Trajectory Total EQ-i



Note. Group 1 = control; group 2 = experimental.

DISCUSSION

This study is interesting because of the impact it can have on the overall functioning of a classroom, since teaching practice would be improved with training such as the one shown here. A program based on improving social and emotional skills in teachers allows, in addition to developing them among students (De la Cueva & Montero, 2018). In this way, the integral development of students would be achieved, considering that academic success is not defined solely by the acquisition of academic intelligence. As Goleman (1996) and Ruiz *et al.* (2013) state, emotional intelligence is necessary to achieve success.

Following Ibarrola (2013) emotions are at the center of the teaching and learning process, since “emotions predispose to action” (Bisquerra *et al.*, 2015, p. 135).

Now, are there any benefits after a training program based on social and emotional skills? Considering our results, these indicate that all the dimensions that have been worked on (intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence, stress management, adaptability, and mood) have improved in the intervention group, highlighting the dimension that corresponds to the teachers’ mood, which predisposes to face with much more positive attitude the different scenarios that are generated during the school day. Mood, generally, can contribute to create a more positive and healthier educational environment in which “a more compassionate, joyful, satisfied, understanding and empathetic society” (Bisquerra *et al.*, 2015, p. 259).

However, all the dimensions that have been worked on in the training program are important for their contribution to classroom well-being. In the present study, we have

been able to verify that all of them have improved significantly in the participating teachers after completing the training, thus confirming our hypothesis.

In addition, the effect of the variable years of experience of the teacher was also verified, including it in the analyzes as a covariate, and finding that although the experience has an effect on the study variables, the effect of the training program achieved an improvement in the emotional variables even controlling for the effect of the covariate years of experience.

Let us see in detail what the factors that have been measured are capable of, since the proper management of each of them would have an impact in one way or another on daily teaching practice:

- Intrapersonal intelligence includes competences such as emotional self-awareness (skill to recognize one's emotions), assertiveness (skill to address our thoughts and feelings in a non-aggressive way and respecting those of others), independence (absence of emotional dependence in our thoughts and way of acting), self-concept (skill to know and accept oneself) and self-actualization (skill to achieve our purposes).
- Interpersonal intelligence encompasses empathy (skill to put oneself in another person's place), social responsibility (commitment, either as a group or individually, to the benefit of society) and the management of interpersonal relationships, that is to say, the skill to make friends.
- Stress management refers to both the ability to handle stressful situations and the ability to control an impulsive way of acting without regulating our emotions.
- Adaptation to different situations includes: the skill to identify problems and generate resolution strategies, the skill to assess the correspondence between one's thoughts and feelings and the objective context, and the skill to make one's thoughts, feelings, and actions more flexible, depending on reality.
- Mood is related to a positive outlook on various life situations and the pursuit of happiness, understood as the achievement of personal well-being (Extremera *et al.*, 2011; Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2009).

In short, we can affirm that the skills related to emotional intelligence can be improved with educational intervention. It would be important to begin any intervention proposal with the teaching staff, since it is counterproductive to propose that the skills mentioned above be transmitted to the students if the teachers have not been trained in them beforehand (Palomera *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, it is very useful, in the first place, to promote programs that involve working on social and emotional competences among teachers themselves.

The ongoing training of teachers is essential for them to recycle their practices and methodologies in order to grow professionally.

Limitations and future lines of research

Finally, certain limitations of this research should be pointed out. On the one hand, the sample size could have been larger to be able to generalize the results, as well as to include different educational levels, and not only to primary education.

On the other hand, the study could include a follow-up of the participants to check whether the competences acquired last over time. In turn, it would be revealing to evaluate their impact on the students after the teachers undergo the training program, both in academic performance and in the acquisition of socioemotional competences.

These questions can be raised as future lines of research, with the aim of deepening them and generating a different vision in society in terms of academic and life success.

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