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# Theoretical foundation on emotional intelligence and its management through theatre in primary basic education

Fundamentación teórica sobre inteligencia emocional y su gestión a través del teatro en educación básica primaria

Fundamentação teórica sobre inteligênciã emocional e sua gestão através do teatro no ensino fundamental

## Abstract

The present study addresses the theoretical foundation of emotional intelligence and its management through theater education from an early age. This text contextualizes the importance of knowledge, handling, and management of emotions. Likewise, it identifies the importance of education in emotions for primary school children and its relationship with the appropriate management of everyday situations. In addition, it refers to the statements and theories about the importance of education in the performing arts, particularly theater, in school environments, as well as its relationship with the management of emotions. The study of these topics aims to identify the possibilities that education in emotional intelligence through theater can offer to children in elementary school. The research found that there is a relationship between the purposes of teaching emotional intelligence and theater that converges on the recognition and management of emotions. Finally, it is evident that the recognition, management, and practice of emotions are fundamental elements for the comprehensive development of children in basic primary education and that through theater, spaces for appropriation, channeling, and management of these emotions can be generated, thus strengthening social aspects of the individual.

**Keywords:** emotional development, socio-emotional learning, social relationships, social skills, theater

## Resumen

El presente estudio aborda la fundamentación teórica alrededor de la inteligencia emocional y su manejo a través de la educación teatral desde edades tempranas. Este texto contextualiza la importancia del conocimiento, el manejo y la gestión de las emociones. Asimismo, identifica la importancia de la educación en las emociones de los niños y niñas de edad primaria y su relación con el manejo apropiado de situaciones presentes en la cotidianidad. Además, se remite a las afirmaciones y teorías alrededor de la importancia de la educación en las artes escénicas, particularmente del teatro, en los entornos escolares, así como su relación con el manejo de las emociones. El estudio de estos temas pretende identificar las posibilidades que puede brindar la educación sobre la inteligencia emocional a través del teatro en niños en los años de educación básica primaria. La investigación encontró que existe una relación entre los fines de la enseñanza de la inteligencia emocional y del teatro que convergen en el reconocimiento y gestión de las emociones. Finalmente, se evidencia que el reconocimiento, el manejo y la práctica de las emociones son elementos fundamentales para el desarrollo integral de los niños en educación básica primaria y que a través del teatro se pueden generar espacios de apropiación, canalización y manejo de estas, fortaleciendo aspectos sociales del individuo.

**Palabras clave:** aprendizaje socioemocional, competencias sociales, desarrollo emocional, relaciones sociales, teatro.

## Resumo

O presente estudo aborda a fundamentação teórica em torno da inteligência emocional e da sua gestão através da educação teatral desde a mais tenra idade. Este texto contextualiza a importância do conhecimento, do manuseio e da gestão das emoções. Também identifica a importância da educação em emoções nas crianças do ensino básico e a sua relação com a gestão adequada das situações presentes no cotidiano. Além disso, remetemos para as afirmações e teorias em torno da importância da educação nas artes performativas, em particular do teatro, nos ambientes escolares, bem como a sua relação com a gestão das emoções. O estudo desses temas visa identificar as possibilidades que a educação em inteligência emocional por meio do teatro pode proporcionar às crianças do ensino fundamental. A pesquisa constatou que existe uma relação entre os objetivos do ensino da inteligência emocional e do teatro que convergem para o reconhecimento e gestão das emoções. Finalmente, fica evidente que o reconhecimento, a gestão e a prática das emoções são elementos fundamentais para o desenvolvimento integral das crianças no ensino básico e que, através do teatro, podem ser gerados espaços de apropriação, canalização e gestão destas, fortalecendo assim os aspectos sociais. o indivíduo.

**Palavras-chave:** aprendizagem socioemocional, desenvolvimento emocional, habilidades sociais, relações sociais, teatro.

## Introduction and Backgrounds

Due to the growing concern for the comprehensive development of individuals, recent studies have focused on Emotional Intelligence (hereafter EI). Goleman (1998) with his work on Multiple Intelligences, Gardner (1994) on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), McCallops et al. (2019), and others such as Cejudo and López Delgado (2017) and Tareke Gebregergis et al. (2020) have explored EI in various educational and professional environments. The study of EI emphasizes its significance in developing multiple aspects of life, including the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions to make positive decisions and foster healthy interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1998).

This study is centered on emotions and their importance for the holistic development of students' personalities. As Reyes Cabrera and Zamora Cruz (2017, p. 10) state, "In this regard, besides contributing to the development of emotional capacities, it is proposed to create an optimal emotional climate not only in the classroom but also throughout the educational institution to enhance learning and well-being," which is crucial for new generations. To this end, the study considers strengthening emotional skills through theater to promote healthy coexistence. Interpersonal aspects such as receiving criticism, public speaking, expressing opinions, and confronting situations of harassment, mockery, abuse, bullying, and mistreatment can be managed through emotional competencies. These are the areas that theatrical practice aims to address to identify opportunities for enhancing the emotional skills of primary school children.

Research on education through theater has highlighted the importance of the arts not only in childhood and adolescence but also at the professional level, including the medical, psychological, and therapeutic fields. Briones et al. (2022), Del Vecchio et al. (2019), Jarus et al. (2022), Khanlou et al. (2022), and Wong et al. (2021) indicate that theater is used as a tool to enhance knowledge, professional practice, empathy, performance in healthcare, and awareness of professional conflicts, among other aspects crucial for comprehensive development.

According to Arheim (1993), the study and application of emotional education should be approached consciously from various contexts, emphasizing the importance of developing children's skills to handle diverse social situations. In the educational context, children face daily adversities; their emotional and psychological states are influenced by their relationships at school and within the family environment. These states, in turn, can affect their academic performance and social interactions.

Some situations that students encounter hinder their social development. These issues include fears, shyness, intolerance, verbal and physical aggression, depression, and the lack of knowledge to respond to or confront instances of harassment, bullying, mistreatment, or sexual abuse. Such challenges impede the children's proper behavior and academic performance. Therefore, it is essential to gather as much information as possible to address the most critical aspects of emotional intelligence education from an early age. Additionally, the use of performing arts as a tool to strengthen emotional life skills is considered vital.

In "Considerations on Art Education," Rudolf Arheim suggests that the arts develop skills necessary for other fields, such as using and interpreting images to understand phenomena not easily perceived by the naked eye. He also notes that through theatrical practice, the artist uses their own body to interpret emotions and mental states, and that artworks serve as visual symbols of life experiences. These assertions highlight the potential for exploring the mind, emotions, and aspects of the human condition that could strengthen emotional intelligence in children through theater.

## **Methodology**

This research focuses on the study of theories surrounding emotional intelligence and the teaching of theater in primary education. A descriptive research methodology is employed to detail the potential of theater as a tool for enhancing emotional intelligence and to underscore the importance of studying EI from an early age, based on the concepts and theories of experts in the field. Additionally, the study adopts a documentary approach by reviewing and analyzing the necessary theoretical and bibliographic references to support the content. This

process involves the analysis and reflection on the specifics of each topic and their effective relationship in strengthening emotional intelligence in primary school children. Furthermore, it aims to serve as a reference for future pedagogical projects aligned with the themes studied here.

## **Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences**

Howard Gardner defines intelligence as the ability to solve problems or create products that are valuable in one or more cultural settings. This definition is considered crucial for the comprehensive development of any individual. Intelligence is:

a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated within a cultural framework to solve problems or create products that are valuable to a culture (Gardner, 1999, p. 45) [...] some individuals develop certain intelligences to a greater degree than others; however, every normal individual should develop each intelligence to some extent, even if only given a modest opportunity to do so (Gardner, 1994, p. 216)

The author proposes eight types of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, naturalistic, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The latter three are the most pertinent to the present study and are explained in general terms below.

1. **Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence:** This involves skills in physical expression, body movement, speed, balance, flexibility, coordination, and strength.
2. **Interpersonal Intelligence:** This encompasses the ability to maintain effective relationships, characterized by understanding others and appreciating differences. It includes identifying reactions to facial expressions, body language, voice, gestures, and individual opinions to relate appropriately.
3. **Intrapersonal Intelligence:** This involves the skills necessary for individuals to achieve a high level of self-awareness, recognizing their abilities, potentials, and aptitudes, and managing them effectively in life.

Interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences are the two types of intelligence related to the theory of emotional intelligence. They help individuals distinguish their own feelings, construct

appropriate mental models, and use this knowledge in decision-making. These intelligences involve the capacity for introspection, forming an accurate self-image, and understanding one's behavior (Jaime Buriticá, 2021, p. 60) .

Almost all fields require skill in a set of intelligences; and every intelligence can be applied across a wide range of cultural domains" (Gardner, 1993, p. 9). Therefore, it can be asserted that specific skills and talents are of utmost importance and can be complemented by other intelligences, as well as applied in a variety of cultural areas.

### **Daniel Goleman's studies**

"The concept of emotional intelligence encompasses the disposition that enables us, for instance, to take control of our emotional impulses, understand the deepest feelings of others, and manage our relationships with kindness" (Goleman, 1998, p. 31). This concept facilitates the analysis of the capacities that individuals should develop, extending beyond mere awareness of emotions and feelings or adept management of relationships. It is crucial for individuals not only to identify but also to comprehend the importance of recognizing emotions and feelings expressed, both within themselves and in others. Such awareness channels human relationships more effectively.

These skills are important for personal growth and successful interpersonal relationships.

Among these emotional skills are self-awareness; the ability to identify, express, and regulate feelings; the capacity to control impulses and delay gratification, and the ability to manage sensations of tension and anxiety" (Goleman, 1998, p. 515).

In general terms, the elements of emotional intelligence proposed by the author are described below.

- Self-awareness: It is the ability of individuals to recognize themselves, to identify, express, and control their feelings.
- Emotional self-regulation: It is the capacity to manage emotions, both negative and positive, as well as to control sensations of tension, anxiety, and delay gratification.
- Motivation: It is the maintenance of personal drive to achieve goals in human endeavors, while preserving enthusiasm, optimism, and persistence.

- **Empathy:** It is the unique ability to understand the feelings of others, their inadequacies, the perspectives others hold, and their reactions to situations.
- **Social skills:** It is the ability to interact with one's environment in a manner that fosters the establishment of strong friendships, encourages cooperation and kindness, as well as resolves conflicts positively and effectively.

Many of these skills are markedly interpersonal: the ability to accurately interpret emotional and social cues, to listen, to resist negative influences, to take on the perspective of others, and to understand behavior that is most appropriate for a given situation" (Goleman, 1998, p. 515).

### **Mayer and Salovey studies**

According to Mayer & Salovey (1990) in their text "Emotional Intelligence: Imagination, Cognition, and Personality," emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, discriminate among them, and utilize this information to guide thinking (Mayer & Salovey, 1990, p. 189).

The following are the branches of Mayer and Salovey's (1990) model:

1. **Emotional perception:** It involves the abilities to accurately perceive emotions in oneself and others, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand emotional meanings, and to manage emotions.
2. **Emotional facilitation or assimilation:** Using emotions to facilitate thinking, guide the cognitive system, and promote thought.
3. **Understanding emotions:** Emotions convey information, with each emotion conveying its own pattern of potential messages and associated actions.
4. **Emotion management:** An individual needs to understand that emotions convey information. To the extent that it is under voluntary control, one may wish to remain open to emotional signals as long as they are not too painful and block those that are overwhelming.

Here, various skills for the development and identification of emotional intelligence are addressed. John D. Mayer, in his article "What is Emotional Intelligence?" mentions:

In general terms, emotional intelligence enhances an individual's social effectiveness. The higher the emotional intelligence, the better the social relationships [...] Individuals with high emotional intelligence, more centrally, can perceive emotions better, use them in thinking, understand their meanings, and manage emotions better than others" (Mayer, 2004, p. 8).

Emotions are a fundamental part of human communication; they strengthen or enrich it. 'Emotional information is crucial [...] We all need emotional intelligence to help us through our emotionally demanding days'" (Mayer, 2004, p. 9).

### **Emotional development at an early age**

According to Bisquerra (2011), emotional education should commence from "the earliest moments of life and should be present throughout the entire lifespan. Therefore, it should be integrated into early childhood education, primary and secondary education, adult education, sociocommunity environments, organizations, elderly individuals, etc." (p. 18).

Following this perspective, emotional skills and their development are not confined to a particular stage, as both children and adults face various emotional moments that will shape their lives. However, "emotional education should begin in the early stages of life when there is a greater likelihood of it being effective" (Bisquerra, 2011, p. 7). It is during childhood that students are constantly experimenting with their environment, displaying greater receptivity to education. They observe closely the examples set by their teachers, parents, and friends, which is why

This is the best time for adults to help children express their emotions and understand their feelings. Through imitation, children learn to express their emotions; they do it just as they have seen adults, especially their parents and educators, express them" (Bisquerra, 2011, p. 71).

However, in order to develop children with emotional skills, "the adult, teacher, or educator must become aware and train themselves in emotional competencies as a preliminary step to the education of the younger generation" (Bisquerra, 2011, p.



72). Therefore, it is imperative "[...] and definitively a priority to reformulate the socializing function based on emotional intelligence directed at schools, where school coexistence becomes a task undertaken with seriousness, creating and solving realities for all those who participate in these spaces" (Buriticá & Jannerys, 2021, p. 66).

In this sense, it represents a challenge

Educating so that today's children become independent and confident adults, capable of managing their own lives, with their joys and challenges. But also adults capable of efficiently cooperating and positively interacting with others to solve various problems or undertake different life, personal, or professional projects" (D'Ornano, 2010, p. 13).

In connection with this, Emotional Intelligence (EI) permeates every moment of life, as evidenced by recent studies by Gunasekera et al. (2021) on emotional intelligence in the relationships between students and their advisors. In this study, the authors analyze the role of emotional intelligence in international doctoral students. The research found that psychological safety (PS) became a critical factor in developing a healthy relationship between student and supervisor. Their findings suggest that psychological safety could be influenced by emotional intelligence (Gunasekera et al., 2021). This analysis affirms the importance and presence of EI in various stages and environments of life.

Furthermore, previous studies highlight the particular significance of EI in academic performance, "specifically in the educational context, as the adequate management of emotions is essential for students' development within the school" (Valenzuela-Santoyo & Portillo-Peñuelas, 2018, p. 12). However, it is evident from other studies that "the emotional well-being of students [...] is a fundamental objective of the educational level. Therefore, it is indispensable to have a solid conceptual framework to guide the actions of professional educators" (Fragoso-Luzuriaga, 2015, pp. 113-114). This perspective underscores the importance of educating on emotions from an early age, a viewpoint that is pursued and justified.

To the extent that students are able to manage their emotions, understand the causes, scenarios, and circumstances that promote the generation of multiple feelings, they can modify their thinking and enhance their proper development through

making good decisions, seeking alternatives in problem-solving, fostering healthy coexistence, translating into sound judgment and behavior" (Valenzuela-Santoyo & Portillo-Peñuelas, 2018, p. 13).

Likewise, "the acquisition of these emotional competencies contributes positively to the integration and inclusion of all students, especially those with biological, functional, sexual, and cultural diversity, as it helps combat discrimination and bullying in schools" (Mora Miranda et al., 2022, p. 70).

## **Performing arts in the educational environment**

Theater, one of the most inclusive forms of artistic expression, integrates various areas of knowledge and art in its execution. It serves as a powerful medium for emotional-transformational development; through role-playing and empathetic engagement with characters, it enables changes in thinking and consequently impacts the social relationships established within and beyond the theatrical context" (García & Palomera, 2012, p. 5).

Theater as an artistic endeavor participates in evaluative criteria and maximizes its expressive possibilities. It mobilizes explicit and implicit values in human relationships' (Chapato et al., 2002, p. 92). Additionally, 'theater is an efficient form that provides a positive contribution to the process of personality development-evolution as an educational method' (Guner & Nami Guner, 2012, p. 330), and according to Tapaloglu (2015), theater is the staging of feelings and thoughts through space and the body, based on different themes and patterns of events.

In this context, elementary-aged children who are in a stage of recognizing and developing their artistic and academic skills, as well as their abilities in social and school coexistence, which involve emotions, explore personal, cultural, and ideological relationships, and

Theater, which is primarily dialogue, represents a challenge, a stimulus, a transformation... and applause. Today's child needs all of that and much more to overcome [...] their own issues, such as shyness, clumsiness, laziness, absent-mindedness, confusion, insecurity, or fear" (Blanco Rubio, 2001, para. 9).

Likewise, in order to overcome common problems and conditions in the school environment, so that

[...] we must seek an artistic activity that respects and enhances the expressiveness of our students but also lets them know that, in addition to their own, there are other equally respectable opinions. The artistic activity that combines these two stances (listening and expressing), which are the axis of coexistence and citizenship, is Theater" (Blanco Rubio, 2001, para. 8).

## Why? The Children's Question

Children in elementary education are receptive to a whole world of possibilities, and they ask about everything; they need to be stimulated to learn, to face their challenges, to understand how their environment works. Cepeda (2008) in his text, "Theater: A Worldview," states that

Learning to read the world is learning to understand myself, to locate myself within it. Here we speak not only of learning a technique or an art form, which in itself leads to knowledge that opens up many possibilities. We also refer to the very way art acts, the way art accesses its own knowledge, as a path that enriches those who use its possibilities. (p. 12)

Dramatization is essentially social [...] the group needs to develop a sense of cooperation when sharing ideas and making decisions about the work. [...] Through dramatization, the student can explore their social relationships and an unlimited number of hypothetical roles and attitudes on a symbolic level. [...] Teaching through theater focuses on a series of behavioral and artistic activities aimed at learning to express oneself, improving communication, overcoming inhibitions, developing expressive creativity, discovery, and personal development. (Ruiz de Velasco, 2000, pp. 194-195)

These aspects and possibilities provided by theater align with the teaching of EI, which stands out for the recognition, handling, and management of emotions. Its orientation would allow for the resolution of multiple issues that concern children in various environments. In this regard, Magos (2018) in their article "Does theater-in-education promote early childhood development?" mentions that theater and educational drama provide playful and non-threatening environments where children are encouraged to actively participate in the action while practicing and refining their language, perspective-taking, and imaginative skills, as well as experiencing everyday situations.

It is worth highlighting the great influence that teachers exert on students, considering them as role models for behavior. One of the fundamental aspects for the successful development of emotional education is the relationship between students and teachers, from which good results are derived. (Reyes Cabrera and Zamora Cruz, 2017, p. 11)

It is of utmost importance, then, to recognize the relationship that must be built between teachers and students, healthy relationships based on the joint construction of knowledge, to leverage children's innate exploratory nature to inquire about what they do not know in order to develop their emotional capacities. It is for this reason and from this perspective that

The child should be given the opportunity to observe, organize, and propose lines for the staging of a work. [...] In these processes, students experience an enrichment of their language, confidence in their proposals, a particular vision of the themes addressed in the work, and critical judgment [...]. [Additionally], In body expression exercises, situations, psychological states, and stories can be imagined. (Garzón, 2015, pp. 43-45)

The theatrical representation in its characters portrays the occupations of human beings [...] In the dramatic exercises of the classroom, games are played where different professions are represented. [...] [and] occupations that are carried out in groups, strengthening cooperative spirit. (Garzón, 2015, p. 46)

Play, the appropriation of different trades, positions, and responsibilities allow for the practice of healthy coexistence. Theater "promotes a humanistic, geohistorical vision, focused on ethical values, respect for the environment, popular knowledge, with the valuation of collective work" (Garzón, 2015, p. 47). Eduardo Villapando Macías also proposes that theater could be a

Theater is envisioned as a "testing ground" where children can experience various social situations through their most varied expressions, thus equipping them with an adequate repertoire to face the challenges that life in society will present them. In this context, theater represents a simulation of adult life, where fundamental aspects of human coexistence, such as expressing ideas, debating, listening, and empathizing with others, become elements that are explored and recreated from childhood through theatrical representation (Villalpando, 2010, p. 12).

All these possibilities could establish a skill regarding emotional management in their current stage, as well as in their future life. Dramatic expression "[...] stimulates the needs and abilities to adopt and adapt to different roles and situations, constituting independent individuals who, valuing their own differences, participate in an integrated education" (García-Huidobro, 1996, p. 11). Therefore, a close relationship between artistic skills and human conditions could serve to strengthen their performance in everyday life.

The dramatic expression session is the cornerstone methodological resource of theatrical pedagogy and encompasses all levels of expression and creativity, from spontaneous play to the most elaborate individual and collective artistic creations. Its inclusion as a pedagogical tool in traditional teaching [...] Aims to promote, through dramatic play, the development of the affective area in human beings. (García-Huidobro, 1996, p. 10)

The aforementioned by García-Huidobro is precisely what this study aims to substantiate.

In connection with these aspects, Ruiz de Velasco (2000, p. 195) mentions that "dramatic activities are directly related to human behavior and its consequences. Their content is the representation of human situations. Their general technique is always human interaction, interpersonal responses in social situations." Therefore, it is possible to mention that dramatization and emotional intelligence use the same techniques and pursue common goals in their respective works, such as self-recognition and recognition of one's emotions, as well as those of others; exploration and management in the expression of emotions and feelings, and the ability to develop solid relationships.

In the following Table 1, the relevant aspects and the common relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Theater, as well as the existing similarity with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, are detailed.

**Table 1.** Relationship of EI Teaching and Theater.

<b>Relationship of teaching EI, Theater and Multiple Intelligences.</b>		
<b>Teaching Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences</b>	<b>Theater Education</b>
Development of emotional skills such as self-awareness, emotional self-regulation, empathy, and social skills.	Interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence are essential for understanding and managing emotions, as well as for building effective relationships.	The theater provides a powerful medium for emotive-transformative development, fostering role exchange, empathy with characters, and impact on social relationships (García & Palomera, 2012, p. 5).
It enhances emotional awareness and the ability to identify, express, and control feelings.	Kinesthetic-body intelligence relates to body expression and the ability to represent emotions through movement.	The performing arts provide a playful and non-threatening environment to explore and express emotions through the body and space, allowing the experimentation of everyday situations.
Promotion of empathy and the ability to understand the feelings of others.	Interpersonal intelligence is essential for understanding the perspectives and reactions of others, facilitating social interaction.	The theater promotes the representation of different roles and social situations, strengthening cooperative spirit and understanding of human diversity.
Development of social skills to establish healthy relationships and resolve conflicts effectively.	Social skills are fundamental for effective communication and teamwork, central aspects in theater.	The theater provides a space to practice communication, collaboration, and problem-solving through the representation of human and social situations.
Use of emotions to facilitate thinking and decision-making.	Multiple intelligences can complement each other to use emotions in problem-solving and decision-making.	The theater provides a means to explore and understand the complexity of human emotions, allowing students to practice using emotions in thought and action.

Source: own.

## Results

Based on the aforementioned assertions, it can be highlighted that both the teaching of emotional intelligence and theater are necessary and suitable for enhancing emotional skills in primary school children, considering that both aspects are aimed at similar purposes, such as: the study, exploration, and experimentation of emotions, the recognition of emotions, the development of social skills, the promotion of empathy, expressiveness, affective relationships, conflict resolution, and the recognition and understanding of human diversity. These elements are important for the development of primary school children and are relevant for strengthening their coexistence, as at these ages children face the situations typical of the educational community, the day-to-day in the classroom, in the playground, in places where they regularly test their emotions.

Theater can be recognized as a tool that allows the construction of spaces for communication, management, and emotional management, so engaging in theatrical exercises involves the initial exploration of situations through role-playing, dramatizations, improvisation exercises, among other acts. The controlled development of these exercises can foster empathy, self-awareness, body awareness, the identification of specific situations in the school, family, and social environment; it also allows for the approach to one's own emotions, the identification and understanding of different perspectives, which generates environments of controlled discussion that channel the development of emotional skills.

On the other hand, but not far from theater, education in emotional intelligence aims to identify, recognize, control, manage, and generate emotions, both positive and negative; for the latter, it aims to prevent and manage them in the most appropriate way, as their management can contribute to the effective integration of students and the educational community. Similarly, it is analyzed from the position of Mora Miranda et al (2002) where it is proposed that it is necessary to strengthen emotional competencies in children because this would allow combating discrimination, harassment, bullying, which are negative situations typical of the current educational environment.

These situations regularly occur in schools, and as educators, the aim is to reduce the generation of these human conditions

by seeking alternative solutions to problems, promoting healthy coexistence, as well as facing relevant events with the greatest likelihood of making good decisions, as proposed by Valenzuela-Santoyo and Portillo-Peñuelas (2018). The general purpose is for individuals to develop their emotional intelligence to cope with life's coexistence situations, to manage their emotions in the best possible way, achieving greater fulfillment in their daily lives. Regarding these shared characteristics of both theater and EI, it is possible to assert that they can be highlighted as suitable tools for emotional strengthening in the education of primary school children.

## Discussion

The educational context is filled with coexistence situations that allow the experimentation of relationship skills and ways of dealing with events that influence children's emotions. These situations can also be experienced through theatrical acts during the creation and interpretation of the staging. Theater enables the exploration of both everyday and hypothetical situations that lead to experiencing different and perhaps unexplored emotions; it also allows for practice in reacting to situations inherent to the human condition, which would facilitate the strengthening of emotional intelligence. In this sense, it was mentioned earlier that

Theater [...] is a powerful means for emotional-transformative development; through role-playing and empathetic engagement with the character, it enables changes in thinking and consequently impacts the social relationships established within and outside the theatrical context. (García & Palomera, 2012, p. 5)

Regarding emotional intelligence, it is recalled from the perspective of Mayer and Salovey (1990) in their article "Emotional Intelligence," that it entails skills to "understand and express one's own emotions, recognize emotions in others, regulate affect, and utilize moods and emotions to motivate adaptive behaviors" (Mayer & Salovey, 1990, p.200). Likewise, it is observed that humans are in constant recognition of their emotions, from childhood to death, experiencing day-to-day events characteristic of life stages, thus emphasizing the importance of strengthening EI and commencing its teaching at early ages.



In this regard, an effective relationship between theater practice and the development of emotional skills has been identified, as both emotional intelligence (EI) and theater explore the recognition, management, and understanding of emotional impulses, both our own and those of others. It is reiterated that "theater is the artistic activity that respects and enhances expressiveness [...] and acknowledges that, in addition to one's own, there are equally respectable alternative opinions" (Blanco Rubio, 2001, para. 8). From the perspective of EI, it allows us to take control of our emotional impulses, understand the deepest feelings of others, and manage our relationships kindly (Goleman, 1998); thus, through theater and EI, the exploration of free emotional expression is facilitated, along with the recognition of existing differences.

Significantly, EI and theatrical practice converge on several elements. First, self-recognition to explore expressive possibilities and recognize emotions and feelings, which can serve as an interpretation tool. Second, it is essential to recognize the other, identify and acknowledge their emotions, movements, and reactions to a specific action or expression. Third, confrontation is possible, where emotions come into play, allowing the exploration of feelings and the emergence of various human reactions. In general terms, theater explores these elements in the staging of situations, typically based on real events that conflict with a person's experiences, akin to the study and enhancement of an individual's emotional intelligence during communicative and social interaction processes in their real context.

Mayer (2004) in "What is Emotional Intelligence" mentions that "having a good system of emotional information should help direct thought towards matters that are truly important" (Mayer, 2004, p.5). However, the crucial point is not what emotions children may experience, but how they are prepared to face them, how they recognize, understand, and manage them; in this sense, theater could be the tool that allows controlled exploration of emotions, thereby strengthening the emotional competencies of primary school children.

By contrasting the aforementioned statements, the existing relationship between emotional intelligence and theater emerges. While certain aspects of theater focus on artistic production, working simultaneously on different human aspects through theater could enhance these skills alongside

the recognition and management of emotions. This is supported by assertions such as those of Valenzuela-Santoyo and Portillo-Peñuelas (2018), who state that theater alone is a valuable tool for handling communal, social, and personal situations.

Finally, it is not intended to suggest that theater is the solution for children to face life's daily challenges, but its practice would indeed strengthen EI by recognizing emotions, feelings, as well as their understanding and management, all of which are part of the human social condition. Theater allows the experimentation of situations where emotionality is a fundamental part of resolving issues or facing moments of difficult comprehension, providing prior experience of possible future events. This would lead to the ability to successfully confront various situations in the social context and, consequently, to the enhancement of emotional intelligence.

## Conclusions

The journey and analysis of theories surrounding theater and EI provided the foundation for the idea of theater as a valuable tool for the emotional development of primary school children. Furthermore, it enables an effective approach to addressing communal situations present in the academic environment, similarly allowing exploration into how certain social events are faced and overcome.

Everyday life naturally allows for the exploration and expression of emotions, and theater, in turn, facilitates controlled experiences that strengthen emotional intelligence from an early age. This stance is crucial for the holistic development of children, both to enhance social relationships, school coexistence, and their performance in the educational setting.

If school is perceived as an environment for experimentation and practice where various social, scientific, and cultural phenomena can be explored, then it becomes possible to view theatrical practice as the means by which empathy, emotional self-regulation, and understanding of one's own and others' emotions are fostered. Theater provides a space to strengthen fundamental conflict resolution skills and promote a more harmonious and collaborative school environment. Similarly, the opportunities theater offers children are vast, as they have the chance to experience different roles and perspectives;

theater teaches them to respect the opinions and experiences of others, as highlighted by Petra Blanco (2001), creating spaces for practicing good coexistence habits.

Ultimately, integrating theater and emotional education into school programs would contribute to the comprehensive development of students, providing practical tools for addressing the challenges of school coexistence that can also extend beyond academic environments to the home and future professional life. It is hoped that this study will encourage further research and prompt educators, government entities, and private institutions to recognize that new generations require conscious guidance in the appropriation, recognition, management, and practice of emotions as a precise element for comprehensive development in more inclusive, respectful, and empathetic school environments.

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## Declaraciones

- **Reconocimientos:** A nuestro Tutor de trabajo de grado Cesar Augusto Cepeda, Docente y Coordinador de la línea de Investigación en Educación Artística de la Licenciatura en Educación Básica Primaria de la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, expresamos nuestro más sincero agradecimiento al profesor Cesar por su dedicación, paciencia y por guiarnos en este proceso tan importante para nuestras vidas académicas.
- **Financiamiento:** conceptualización del potenciamiento de las habilidades emocionales en niños de educación básica primaria desde el teatro, no tuvo financiamiento.
- **Disponibilidad de datos y materiales:** contactar a Yasmin Liliana Pinto Lara, Diana Marcela Rodríguez Castro y Wendy Natalia Sarmiento Sanabria.
- **Contribución de autores:** cada una de las autoras contribuyó en la búsqueda de información, escritura y consolidación del proyecto.
- **Aprobación ética y consentimiento de los participantes:** el proyecto no ha sido aprobado por ningún comité de ética.
- **Conflicto de intereses:** las autoras del presente artículo no presentan conflicto de interés de ningún tipo.