Empowering Secondary Education: Strategies for Developing Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom

Potenciando la Educación Secundaria: Estrategias de desarrollo de inteligencia emocional en el aula

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Abstract

he article focuses on the importance of developing emotional intelligence in high school students. In this regard, it underscores the need for teachers to concentrate on the development of emotional skills in students, as this can enhance their academic performance and emotional well-being. It also provides a review of the literature on emotional intelligence and its relationship to learning, as well as a description of strategies that teachers can use to promote the development of emotional intelligence in the classroom. Additionally, it highlights the importance of teacher training on this subject and suggests its inclusion in initial and ongoing training programs.

Keyword: High school education, emotional intelligence, development, strategies, teacher training.

Resumen

El artículo se enfoca en la importancia de desarrollar la inteligencia emocional en los estudiantes de educación secundaria. En este propósito se destaca la necesidad que los docentes se enfoquen en el desarrollo de habilidades emocionales en los estudiantes, ya que esto puede mejorar su rendimiento académico y su bienestar emocional. Además presenta una revisión de la literatura sobre la inteligencia emocional y su relación con el aprendizaje, así como una descripción de las estrategias que los docentes pueden utilizar para fomentar el desarrollo de la inteligencia emocional en el aula. También destaca la importancia de la formación docente en este tema y sugiere que se incluya en los programas de formación inicial y continua.

Palabras clave: Educación secundaria, inteligencia emocional, desarrollo, estrategias, formación docente.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence is of utmost importance for learning and the emotional well-being of students. For this reason, this article offers a review of the literature on the subject. From the ideas presented, practical strategies are introduced that teachers can use to foster the development of emotional intelligence in the classroom. The importance of establishing a school environment where values such as respect, trust, love, solidarity, and empathy prevail is highlighted.

In fostering emotional intelligence in the classroom, it is important for the teacher to be eloquent, that is, to have the ability to communicate ideas and emotions clearly, effectively, and persuasively, both orally and in writing, in order to inspire students and encourage similar behavior in them. Likewise, the teacher must develop their empathetic capacity towards students, thereby establishing relationships based on trust and respect.

The article also reveals the importance of teacher training in emotional intelligence and suggests its inclusion in initial and ongoing training programs. In this sense, it serves as a useful guide
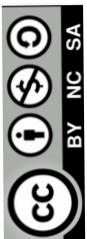
for any teacher wishing to enhance the academic performance and emotional well-being of their high school students. With valuable information and practical strategies, it is an essential tool for any educator looking to improve their educational practice and help their students develop important emotional skills.

Definition of Emotional Intelligence

The term "emotional intelligence" was first introduced into academic literature in 1985 by Wayne in a doctoral thesis titled "A study of emotion: developing emotional intelligence; self-integration; relating to fear, pain and desire (theory, structure of reality, problem-solving, contraction/expansion, tuning in/coming out/letting go)". According to Wayne (1985), it is a faculty of consciousness. Later, Salovey & Mayer (1990) published the emotional intelligence model in their article "Emotional Intelligence" which appeared in "Imagination, Cognition, and Personality". These authors referred to Howard Gardner's interpersonal intelligence as "emotional intelligence". Mayer and Salovey (1997), as cited by Mayer *et al.* (2012, para. 1), state: "we define emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in oneself and others."

However, it was Daniel Goleman who truly popularized the concept with the publication of his 1995 book "Emotional Intelligence". Although Goleman himself (1996, p. 11) acknowledges: *"A Peter Salovey, de Yale, le debo el concepto de Inteligencia emocional".*[1] Goleman (1996, p. 64) argues that emotional intelligence refers to the ability to *"Conocer sus propias emociones, manejar las emociones, la propia motivación, reconocer emociones en los demás y el arte manejar las relaciones"*[2]. Yet, more recently, Goleman (2021, p. 75) revises his definition, stating:

> *la inteligencia emocional es la capacidad de motivarnos a nosotros mismos, de perseverar en el empeño a pesar de las posibles frustraciones, de controlar nuestros impulsos, de diferir las gratificaciones, de regular nuestros propios estados de ánimo, de evitar que la angustia interfiera con nuestras facultades racionales y de empatizar y confiar en los demás*[3].

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[1] Our translation: I owe the concept of Emotional Intelligence to Peter Salovey of Yale.

[2] Our translation: know one's own emotions, manage emotions, self-motivation, recognize emotions in others, and the art of managing relationships".

[3] Our translation: Emotional intelligence is the ability to motivate ourselves, to persevere in our endeavors despite potential frustrations, to control our impulses, to delay gratification, to regulate our own moods, to prevent distress from interfering with our rational faculties, and to empathize and trust in others..

Meanwhile, Bisquerra (2012a, p. 8) contends that emotional intelligence *"es la habilidad para tomar conciencia de las propias emociones y de las demás personas y la capacidad para regularlas"[4]*. However, as early as 1920, Thorndike wrote an article in "Harper's Magazine" titled "Intelligence and its uses" where he introduced a specific element of emotional intelligence: social intelligence, "the ability to understand others and act wisely in human relationships". According to Thorndike, intelligence had three dimensions: (a) abstract intelligence, related to handling symbols (words, numbers, formulas, legal decisions, laws). (b) Mechanical intelligence, an ability to understand and handle objects and tools. (c) Social intelligence, the skill to understand and manage people (Molero, Saiz, and Esteban, 1998).

The Spheres of Emotional Intelligence in Secondary Education

This theory has had a significant impact in various areas, including education. In his work, Goleman argues that emotional intelligence is at least as important as cognitive intelligence for success in life. Emotional intelligence comprises several skills and competencies, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The first three dimensions pertain to the self and depend on the individual. However, the last two are related to social skills.

Regarding secondary education, it is a pivotal period in the development of young people. During this stage, adolescents face numerous challenges, both academic and emotional and social. Implementing Goleman's theory in this environment can have significant benefits if we closely look at the spheres of emotional intelligence mentioned by Salovey, from which we can deduce the following from Goleman:

Self-awareness. By fostering self-awareness, students can recognize their emotions and understand how they affect their behavior and decision-making. This is particularly useful during adolescence, a period of intense emotional fluctuation. Diligent self-reflection and introspection in the classroom are vital for a good school, social, and family climate. Goleman (1996, p. 68) states that *"esta conciencia de las emociones es la competencia emocional fundamental sobre la que se construyen las demás, como el autocontrol emocional"[5]* Mayer, quoted by Goleman (1996, p. 69), says that self-awareness is being *"consciente de nuestro humor y también de nuestras ideas sobre ese humor"[6]*. Bisquerra (2012b, p. 25) states it's *"conocer las propias emociones y las emociones de los demás"[7]*. This is no easy task because even when going through a tough time,

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[4] Our translation: It is the ability to become aware of one's own emotions and those of others, and the capacity to regulate them.

[5] Our translation: this awareness of emotions is the fundamental emotional competency upon which others are built, such as emotional self-control.

[6] Our translation: conscious of our mood and also of our ideas about that mood.

[7] Our translation: knowing one's own emotions and the emotions of others."
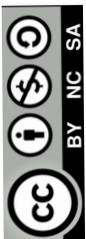
one has to be able to think positively and not dwell on the negative or disturbing thoughts.

In the classroom, our secondary education students present unique cultural, technological, and social characteristics because they have immediate access to information through their phones. Besides easily handling electronic media and different digital platforms, our secondary students have developed resilience and adaptability, having grown up in a time of rapid technological and social changes, as well as in a context of economic crises and global tensions.

Moreover, teachers need to understand that our young people have a global awareness of social and global issues (climate change, gender equality, and social justice issues) because they have had access to global information from an early age and, as a result, tend to be more aware of social and global problems. This partly explains their behaviors and opinions at times when they disagree with others who lack the same information.

Self-regulation. Goleman (1996, p. 64) describes it as *"La capacidad de serenarse, de librarse de la irritabilidad, la ansiedad y la melancolía excesivas... y las consecuencias del fracaso en esta destreza emocional básica".[8]* Bisquerra (2012b, p. 26) mentions it's "*dar una respuesta apropiada a las emociones que experimentamos"[9]*. From our perspective, it means that students must learn to control their emotions, as this can help them handle stress, pressure, and social tensions more effectively. This is vital for academic performance and mental health. But similarly, teachers must also act with self-regulation in stressful situations in the classroom or personal life, as this can influence their relationship with their students and other members of the community and coworkers.

Teachers must remember that the current generation of students is more open to discussing mental health than previous generations. However, higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression have been observed compared to previous generations, although the causes are complex and multifactorial.

Given this fact, classroom efforts should be focused on the self-regulation of young people. The classroom should be a space where emotional control exists between student-teacher and vice versa. Educators can model emotional intelligence through their behavior, showing how to handle stress, resolve conflicts, and communicate effectively. Incorporating mindfulness or relaxation techniques in the classroom can help students become more aware of their emotions and regulate their behavior. Bisquerra (2012b, p. 26) mentions techniques to achieve self-regu-

[8] Our translation: The ability to soothe oneself, to shake off rampant irritability, anxiety, and sadness... and the consequences of failure in this basic emotional skill.

[9] Our translation: giving an appropriate response to the emotions we experience.

lation, such as *"diálogo interno, control del estrés (relajación, meditación, respiración), autoafir-
maciones positivas; asertividad; reestructuración cognitiva, imaginación emotiva, atribución cau-
sal, etc."[10]* Furthermore, he states that it requires continuous practice and mentions regulating
emotions such as la *"ira, miedo, tristeza, vergüenza, timidez, envidia, alegría, amor, etc."* (p. 26)[11].

Motivation. By understanding the emotional triggers driving motivation, educators can create
more engaging and stimulating learning environments. Goleman (1996, p. 64) mentions the
*"necesidad de ordenar las emociones al servicio de un objetivo es esencial para prestar atención,
para la automotivación y el dominio, y para la creatividad"[12].* In this sense, emotional intelligence
can play a crucial role in creating more engaging and stimulating learning environments, espe-
cially in secondary education, where students are at a crucial stage of emotional and social de-
velopment.

In this context, it is crucial to recognize and celebrate students' achievements in academic, emo-
tional, and social areas, as this positively impacts their self-esteem and motivation levels. Ac-
cording to Schunk (2012, p. 346), motivation is a deep psychological phenomenon influencing
learning.*"Los estudiantes motivados para aprender prestan atención a la enseñanza y se invo-
lucran en actividades".[13]* Bain *et al*. (2010) also highlighted the correlation between student mo-
tivation and the effectiveness of their learning process. In line with this, Tella (2007) pointed out
that it's challenging to achieve satisfactory learning outcomes without adequate motivation to
learn.

Maintaining and stimulating student motivation can be a key element in ensuring effective learning.
Consider the words of Duchatelet and Donche (2019) from their research conducted in Holland:

> The results indicate that autonomy-supportive teacher behavior enhances self-efficacy
> for students who are autonomously motivated. Amotivated students might need other
> than autonomy-supportive teacher behavior to develop self-efficacy.

Additional studies conducted in Germany, such as that of Bürgermeister *et al. (2016)*, have ex-
plored how emotional factors are affected in environments that promote autonomy. Their con-

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[10] Our translation: internal dialogue, stress control (relaxation, meditation, breathing), positive self-affirmations; as-
sertiveness; cognitive restructuring, emotional imagination, causal attribution, etc.

[11] Our translation: anger, fear, sadness, shame, shyness, envy, joy, love, etc.

[12] Our translation: need to marshal emotions in the service of a goal is essential for paying attention, for self-mo-
tivation and mastery, and for creativity.

[13] Our translation: Motivated students pay attention to teaching and engage in activities.
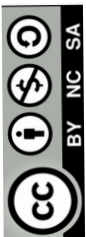
clusions show that when students feel they have adequate control over their environment (competence), they also experience a sense of social support from their teacher (relationship). In other words, an educational environment that supports autonomy is associated with a greater sense of competence and the perception of significant social support.

Recognizing Others' Emotions (Empathy). Goleman (1996, p. 123) tells us that empathy is *"esa capacidad –o la habilidad de saber lo que siente otro".* However, its foundation is self-awareness; if one is not open to oneself, one cannot understand the feelings of others. Karimi *et al.* (2014) and Vidyarthi *et al.* (2014) have determined that emotional intelligence refers to the understanding of ourselves and others, the self-control of immediate needs, people's empathy, and the positive exercise of emotions. It's a challenging task for teachers with their students and themselves. Nowadays, when people are more insensitive, teaching empathy from school is necessary, and secondary school can lead to more inclusive and tolerant environments.

Empathy aids in conflict resolution and improves students' social skills. The classroom should be a safe space for emotional expression, meaning that an environment where students feel safe expressing their emotions and opinions can foster more authentic and engaged learning. Teaching and modeling effective conflict resolution techniques can foster a more inclusive and harmonious environment. Taking the time to understand students' emotions and needs, without judging or making assumptions, is key to a positive teacher-student relationship.

Social Skills (managing relationships). Goleman (1996, p. 141) states, *"esta habilidades sociales le permiten a uno dar forma a un encuentro, movilizar o inspirar otros, prosperar en las relaciones íntimas, persuadir e influir, tranquilizar a los demás".* We believe that emotional intelligence promotes social skills that are crucial for teamwork, conflict resolution, and effective communication, competencies that are increasingly important in the workplace.

Case Studies and Successful Experiences

Research confirms a relationship between academic performance and emotional intelligence (Titrek *et al.,* 2018; Ashknasy & Dasborough, 2003; kbaribooreng, 2015; Martínez, *et al.* 2020, Fallahzadeh, 2011; Duchatelet & Donche, 2019). Others, like Song (2010), argue that emotional intelligence enables student academic performance and the quality of their social interactions with peers. Fallahzadeh (2011), while studying adolescents in Iran, found significant differences in emotional intelligence scores based on the students' habitat.

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[14] Our translation: that ability - or the skill to know what another feels.

[15] Our translation: these social skills allow one to shape an encounter, mobilize or inspire others, thrive in intimate relationships, persuade and influence, reassure others.

In their research, Llibre *et al.,* (2015) found that Cuban students with high levels of emotional intelligence tend to achieve higher academic performance, while those with lower levels of emotional intelligence tend to get lower grades. Thus, a predominance of favorable academic results was observed in students with high emotional intelligence.

Studies conducted in China by Chang & Tsai (2022) evaluated four dimensions of emotional intelligence, including the assessment of one's own emotions, emotional assessment of others, use of emotions, and regulation of emotions. The results showed that students' emotional intelligence had a positive effect on their motivation for learning and their self-efficacy.

Furthermore, the mediation analysis revealed that the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance was sequentially mediated by motivation for learning and self-efficacy. Buitrago & Herrera (2013) note that managing emotions in the school environment would represent a significant dynamic component in education, which would help improve interpersonal relationships and performance. Meanwhile *et al.,* (2022) in Riyadh, (Africa) have reported that students with excellent academic performance had a high level of emotional intelligence.

In the Valencian Community of Spain, a study conducted by Ordóñez *et al.* (2014) investigated the relationship between emotional awareness, moods, and academic performance. The analysis showed a significant correlation between these variables. Specifically, students with greater abilities to identify, communicate, and reflect on their emotions, pay attention to the emotions of others, and maintain bodily awareness, achieved higher academic performance. Additionally, these students exhibited higher levels of happiness. In contrast, those students who scored lower on emotions such as sadness, fear, and anger tended to perform worse academically. Based on these results, the researchers determined that students with more advanced emotional skills and positive moods tend to achieve better academic outcomes.

Kbaribooreng *et al.* (2015) found in Iran a significant correlation between all components of emotional intelligence and the academic performance of Zabol high school students. This suggests that integrating lessons with socio-emotional learning in schools could improve student performance. Kbaribooreng *et al.* (2015) state:

> In this regard, EI [emotional intelligence] can predict the performance because it shows how an individual can immediately apply his knowledge in different situations, a person who does not have the emotional skills will face problem in transforming their potential knowledge into observable performance.

In a project led by Postigo *et al. (*2019) and supported by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain in collaboration with the Universitat de València, a study was conducted to assess the perceived effects by adolescents participating in the Emotional Education Program. This innovative program is based on a model that emphasizes emotional intelligence skills and uses a dialogic approach aimed at fostering deep and meaningful learning. The study's results show significant advances in the four dimensions of emotional competence that the emotional

intelligence model describes, as well as progress in related areas.

In Spain, Carbonell *et al.* (2019) implemented a *Coexistence and Emotional Intelligence Program*[17] in Secondary Education with students between 11 and 15 years old to *"prevenir las situaciones de acoso escolar del centro a través del aprendizaje y la práctica de la Inteligencia Emocional"*[17] (Carbonell *et al.*, 2019, p. 9). The results showed an increase in emotional intelligence levels and a reduction in bullying behaviors, especially in Social Competence and empathy. Such research is a valuable indicator when seeking alternatives to address bullying issues among secondary education students.

Ezeiza *et al.* (2008), also in Spain, launched a project through the Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa aimed at the Gipuzkoan educational community, covering ages from 3 to 20 years. The primary purpose was to provide a practical and guiding program, of a cross-curricular nature, focused on the development of Emotional Intelligence through "tutorial action." The ultimate goal is that, upon completing their academic training, young people possess emotional competencies that enable them to promote and integrate into an emotionally intelligent and innovative territory. For this, the project has developed educational materials with practical exercises intended for both students and teachers of each proposed educational level.

Among the strategies and procedures to implement the emotional education project are: Occasional guidance, parallel programs, elective subjects, tutorial action, curricular integration, and education for citizenship. They also propose the phases of:

> (a) Context analysis: environmental context, structure, format (duration), resources, teacher situation, school climate, etc. (b) Needs identification: recipients, objectives, etc. (c) Design: justification, objective formulation, content to develop, selection of activities, resources, deadlines, recipients, evaluation criteria, and costs. (d) Execution: implementation of activities. Attention to possible variations. (e) Evaluation: it is not enough to offer evaluations, the evaluation consists of one of the basic elements (Ezeiza *et al.*, 2008, p. 11)[18].

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[16] Our translation: Coexistence and Emotional Intelligence Program.

[17] Our translation: prevent bullying situations in the school through learning and practicing Emotional Intelligence.

[18] Our translation: (a) Context analysis: environmental context, structure, format (duration), resources, teacher situation, school climate, etc. (b) Needs identification: recipients, objectives, etc. (c) Design: justification, objective formulation, content to develop, selection of activities, resources, deadlines, recipients, evaluation criteria, and costs. (d) Execution: implementation of activities. Attention to possible variations. (e) Evaluation: it is not enough to offer evaluations, the evaluation consists of one of the basic elements (Ezeiza *et al.*, 2008, p. 11).

Among the program's contents are: Emotional intelligence, knowledge of one's emotions and those of others, self-esteem, self-motivation, empathy, conflict resolution, life skills, social skills, understanding, and regulation of emotions. The thematic blocks are divided into two parts: (a) Intrapersonal competencies (directed at oneself): Emotional awareness, emotional regulation, emotional autonomy. (b) Interpersonal competencies (directed at others): Socio-emotional skills and life and well-being skills (Ezeiza *et al., 2008*).

The studies and examples presented underscore the relevance of emotions in the educational field. Dalai-Lama & Ekman (2009) argued that while knowledge in an educational system is valuable and can lead to happiness, achieving this happiness requires an intelligent understanding of emotions. In line with this, Shahzada *et al.* (2011) suggest including emotional development in school curricula, as there is a correlation between academic performance and emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, emotional development fosters relationships and, therefore, it is relevant to consider emotionally educating individuals to achieve emotional competence. In this regard, Landry (2019) states there are four basic competencies of emotional intelligence: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Integrating Emotional Intelligence in Secondary Education

López (2012, p. 45) states that emotional intelligence should be applied from childhood and at any age, yet he cautions that in adolescence it is necessary *"autoafirmarse, valorar sus capacidades y limitaciones, tomar sus propias decisiones, tener responsabilidades, sentirse aceptados por los demás, etc."[19]*. He, like Goleman (1996), Salovey & Mayer (1990), and Mayer, Salovey & Caruso (2012), agrees that emotional intelligence allows a person to better understand themselves and others. For this reason, López (2012) places great importance on the work that teachers do in the classroom with their students to build what he calls the "emotional and affective charge." He recommends starting with "their personal and social interests and needs and their direct experiences."[20] (p. 46). Among the didactic resources to use and how to set up the classroom, he mentions the following:

> *... (imágenes, fotografías, canciones, cuentos, literatura, juegos, vídeos, objetos, noticias de prensa, role- playing, etc.) que susciten la conciencia emocional y que ofrezcan la posibilidad de experimentar emociones. Conviene ofrecer espacios en el aula de reflexión y de introspección, fomentar la comunicación con los demás y trabajar en equipo.*

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[19] Our translation: to assert oneself, assess one's abilities and limitations, make one's own decisions, take on responsibilities, feel accepted by others, etc.

[20] Our translation: their personal and social interests and needs and their direct experiences.
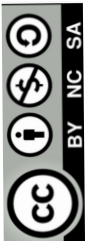
Es efectivo preparar espacios abiertos con sillas o cojines en los que, desde una cierta comodidad postural, se puedan exponer, compartir y vivenciar situaciones de aprendizaje emocional y favorezcan la comunicación visual y corporal de los alumnos. (p. 46).

In secondary education, the goal is to go beyond the classroom to foster learning that is meaningful, pedagogically valuable, and applicable in students' daily lives, in their social environment, and with the people they interact with. An effective strategy to achieve this goal is the cross-curricular incorporation of emotional education in various subjects, curricular units, or areas of learning, ideally in as many of them as possible. Teachers play a crucial role as role models, enabling students to learn to develop their emotional intelligence through imitation. For this approach to succeed, it is imperative to establish a school environment where values such as respect, trust, love, solidarity, and empathy prevail. It's crucial for the teacher to be eloquent, meaning they have the ability to communicate ideas and emotions clearly, effectively, and persuasively, both orally and in writing, to inspire students and promote similar behavior in them.

To foster a comprehensive and effective learning environment, it is essential that the teacher develops their empathetic capacity towards students, establishing relationships of trust and cordiality. Being receptive to human contact not only facilitates affectionate communication but also builds positive interpersonal relationships. This approach requires that the teacher trains and sensitizes in emotional competencies as an indispensable preliminary step to impart quality emotional education. Courses, readings, and the exchange of experiences are excellent resources for this training. The teacher's role is especially relevant in implementing emotional education programs, as they are often the most immediate and constant reference for students throughout the week.

Emotional education, in turn, should be a continuous focus throughout schooling and offer various opportunities for the practice and application of these learnings. This should not be limited only to the school environment but should extend to the family, extracurricular activities, and leisure time. Ultimately, the goal is for the student's entire life experience to become a stage for developing their emotional competencies, as life itself is the best school for this type of learning.

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[21] Our translation: ... (images, photographs, songs, stories, literature, games, videos, objects, press news, role-playing, etc.) that raise emotional awareness and offer the possibility to experience emotions. It is advisable to provide spaces in the classroom for reflection and introspection, promote communication with others, and work as a team.

It's effective to prepare open spaces with chairs or cushions where, from a certain postural comfort, you can expose, share, and experience emotional learning situations and favor students' visual and bodily communication. (p. 46).

Conclusions

From the foregoing, it is concluded that emotional education is fundamental for the well-being of students and their academic performance. Teachers can incorporate it into various subjects and areas of learning to promote a comprehensive and effective learning environment.

To truly achieve the goal of educating students for a more just society with a sense of respect for others, it is necessary to develop trust, love, solidarity, and empathy in the classroom; these are essential to establish an appropriate school climate. This implies the implementation of practical strategies to promote the development of emotional intelligence in the classroom.

Lastly, it is concluded that regarding strategies to develop emotional intelligence in secondary education, the cross-curricular incorporation of emotional education in various subjects and areas of learning is essential.

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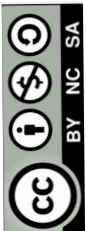
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