

Towards School Transformation. Evaluation of a Coexistence Program from the Voice of Students and Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Learning to coexist continues to be one of the challenges faced by the current educational system, especially for those schools located in contexts at risk of social exclusion where the violence rate increases on a daily basis. The main aim sought by the present study consists in assessing the impact of a program developed at an educational center located in a vulnerable neighborhood of the city of Valencia (Spain). It is a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest research with a control group that involved a total of 109 teachers and students. It deserves to be highlighted that this paper forms part of a broader research initiative, for which reason the results obtained in the qualitative part through the implementation of a content analysis are presented. The results show the success of the program applied in accordance with the perceptions of the teachers and students involved, who state that all the program strategies have significantly improved school coexistence.

KEYWORDS: SCHOOL, INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, DEMOCRATIC VALUES, CONFLICT RESOLUTION

1 INTRODUCTION

School coexistence has been and still remains a challenge for educational centers, especially for those which find themselves in environments at risk of social exclusion where violence, conflicts and clashes are frequent. Their educational professionals require a revision of the ways to manage coexistence and cope with conflicts for the purpose of improving interpersonal relationships and promoting competences that can go beyond the school limits and be extended to society as a whole. Without a doubt, betting on an education that encourages social inclusion constitutes a goal of the present-day educational system (Callado, Molina, Pérez, & Rodríguez, 2015) and learning to live together is still one of the

main aims of education at an international level (UNESCO, 2015). From this perspective, a need exists to train teachers in strategies that advocate peaceful and stereotype-free coexistence (Harbera & Sakade 2009; Herrera & Bravo, 2012; Puig & Morales 2015).

In our view, the school –together with the family, the context, and the society in general– is responsible for the educational and social development of those who start their compulsory studies. The school can help to build a fair citizenship through an education in and for democracy, teaching to participate, to listen, to talk, and to share (Silbert & Jacklin 2015). Nevertheless, we are fully aware of the difficulty involved in this task, which requires the development of strategies favoring dialogue, participation, respect, and tolerance. The main purpose is to build spaces where feelings, emotions, life experiences, worries, and difficulties can be shared, which seems essential to us within the educational model that we believe in. Along these same lines, Fisher & Kettl (2003) state that 76% of teachers consider that educational centers need to put in practice preventive strategies, ultimately seeking to create spaces where both sharing and learning to coexist are possible.

Offering a response to the challenge of school coexistence, authors such as Boqué (2005), Fernández (2008), Ortega & Del Rey (2003), Torrego (2012), Valls, Soler, & Flecha (2008), Naylor & Cowie (1999), Pellegrini & Bjorklund (1996) and Durán & Blanch (2015), to quote but a few, have carried out a variety of research works related to this topic, presenting strategies which can undoubtedly prove of interest to deal with coexistence learning and to improve the atmosphere at our educational centers. Amongst them, it is our intention to highlight those placed within the context of the so-called ‘peer support,’ for the purpose of fostering the acquisition of responsibilities and autonomy in the different aspects that shape school coexistence.

Furthermore, and complementarily, more and more relevance is being gained by what has come to be known as artistic mediation, which basically consists in the utilization of art as an educational tool by means of which spaces devoted to learning, culture, and social relationships can be created. It must be the artists themselves, hand in hand with teachers, who directly develop the workshops, playing the role of mediators between art and students. Moreno (2010, p. 5) reflects on its benefits, amongst which stand out the following ones:

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Table 2. Teachers' features

Sex	Contr	Exp	First year at the center	Contr	Exp	Tutor	Contr	Exp	Teaching experience	Contr	Exp
Female	10	7	Yes	2	4	Yes	7	5	0-5 years	1	1
Male	2	4	No	10	7	No	5	6	6-10 years	4	1
									11-15 yrs	2	2
									16-20 yrs	1	3
Total	12	11							+ 20 years	4	4

- Overall personal development
- Rescuing the healthy parts of the subject, his/her potential
- Symbolic elaboration and, therefore, coping with unconscious conflicts
- Becoming aware of the current situation and starting a transformation and re-insertion process

A large number of artistic mediation practices are already being carried out internationally (Rodrigo-Montero, 2015) which confirm the power that art can have as a tool for social cohesion and expression.

Three peer support strategies and three artistic mediation workshops were selected for the research presented here, designing, applying, and evaluating a program at a specific educational center. The choice of strategies was based on an analysis of the specific educational environment where the program had to be developed, according to its needs and educational stages. Nonetheless, it is our evaluation that will provide us with an assessment of the program and make it possible to work along the same lines or to make improvements.

2 OBJECTIVES

This research has as its overall objective to evaluate the impact of a program developed at an educational center located in a vulnerable neighborhood of the city of Valencia (Spain).

A set of specific objectives were accordingly established:

- Carrying out a diagnostic evaluation prior to the configuration of the framework study program
- Designing an intervention program with the aim of meeting the detected needs
- Suggesting initiatives to improve the evaluated program
- Comparing the results with the center where the intervention program was not developed

A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design with a group control was utilized to perform the present study, randomly administering the instrument which is described in subsequent sections, both in the initial and the final evaluation at both centers, seeking to avoid adverse effects.

Table 1. Students' features

Sex	Contr	Exp	Grade	Contr	Exp	Age	Contr	Exp
Boy	16	22	3st	8	12	8 years	7	11
Girl	23	24	4th	10	10	9 years	10	9
			5th	11	8	10 years	9	7
			6th	10	16	11 years	9	13
Total	40	46				12 years	4	6

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample

The research developed in two school centers of infant and primary education (from 3 to 12 years of age) which have similar characteristics, since they are both located in vulnerable neighborhoods on the outskirts of Valencia (Spain) where poverty, addictions, and drug trafficking form part of the everyday life. Work was exclusively focused on the students of 2nd and 3rd grades of Primary School (8-to-12-year-olds) and with the teachers of both centers, because of the difficulty in the process of completion of the survey by pupils from Infant Education (3 to 6 years of age) and the 1st cycle of Primary Education (6 to 8 years of age).

A total of 109 people took place in the study, including 86 students –40 in the control group and 46 in the experimental one– and 23 teachers –12 in the control group and 11 belonging to the experimental one. Below can be found two tables (Tables 1 and 2) which list the most important sample features. Sex, age, and grade were described with regard to students and, as for teachers, the variables analyzed were sex, experience, and teaching function. In both cases, the sample was distributed depending on whether the subjects belonged to the control group (Contr) or to the experimental one (Exp).

3.2 Instrument

This research focuses on the qualitative part of two broader questionnaires. Both instruments (teachers and students) evaluate school coexistence and were elaborated by Ortega & Del Rey (2004) and developed at an international level (Cangas et al. 2007; Gázquez et al. 2009). The initial evaluation questionnaires consist of 12 items, of which 8 are closed and 4 open; the final ones have 13 items, 8 closed and 5 open.

It deserves to be highlighted that the results shown below are the ones corresponding to the open questionnaire items. Below can be found the items selected for their subsequent analysis (Tables 3 and 4). It becomes visible that some questions are the same for students and teachers, whereas others incorporate modifications meant to adapt to our addressees.

Table 3. Open questions in the initial evaluation of students and teachers

Items	
Students	Teachers
9. Of the previous situations (item 8), which ones affect you personally (and how)? (Situations described in item 8)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clashes between groups of students and the teacher • Swearwords in class • Rules are not respected. • Students insult each other. • Students fight. • Some small groups (cliques) do not get on well. • Some children are not integrated and feel lonely. • Each teacher goes their own way. • Students think that teachers do not understand them. • Students are demotivated; they get bored. 	
10. What proposals or activities would you suggest carrying out at the school in order to improve relationships between everybody?	
11. Who must do those activities?	11. Who would perform them?
12. What do you think you can do by yourself?	12. What activities would you become personally involved in?

Source: Adapted from Ortega & Del Rey (2003)

Table 4. Open questions in the evaluation of students and teachers

Items	
Students	Teachers
9. Of the previous situations (item 8), which ones affect you personally (and how)? (Situations described in item 8)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clashes between groups of students and the teacher • Swearwords in class • Rules are not respected. • Students insult each other. • Students fight. • Some small groups (cliques) do not get on well. • Some children are not integrated and feel lonely. • Each teacher goes their own way. • Students think that teachers do not understand them. • Students are demotivated; they are bored. 	
10. In your opinion, what proposals or activities have served to improve relationships between everybody?	10. What proposals or activities would you suggest carrying out at the school in order to improve relationships between everybody?
11. Which aspects that go wrong could be improved?	11. In your view, which of the activities that have been developed lately have been the most effective?
12. Who must do those activities?	12. Which ones do you think were useless?
13. What do you think you can do by yourself?	13. What new initiatives do you think we could carry out? Would you become involved?

Source: Adapted from Ortega & Del Rey (2003)

3.3 Procedure and results analysis

The research developed in three stages which are described in detail below. It is worth highlighting that they were carried out during the 2014-2015 academic year, which means that the program lasted 8 months, thus guaranteeing the perdurability and stability of the strategies put into practice.

a) Stage 1. Diagnostic evaluation

The implementation of the initial questionnaire, along with the observation carried out, made it possible to collect information from both study groups with regard to the theme of interest (school coexistence) for the purpose of identifying the starting point and the needs of the participant population.

b) Stage 2. Program design and implementation

A socio-educational program was designed with the aim of giving a response to the detected needs. That program is divided into two parts, as shown in Figure 1, after training teachers.

The first one of them incorporates three strategies –Classroom Assembly; Pair Reading; and Play Classroom– located within the framework of the already mentioned ‘Peer support’ and selected because they were considered the most suitable ones according to the characteristics of the population.

The second part of the program includes workshops that belong in the context of the so-called ‘artistic mediation,’ promoting education through art as a form of social inclusion. More precisely, work is done with Graffiti, Break Dance, and Shadow Theater. In our opinion, these strategies not only promote other educational objectives but also encourage social cohesion and prevent the emergence of conflicts. Their implementation was possible thanks to the collaboration of artists linked to the NGO Amnesty International, through the *Red de Escuelas por los Derechos Humanos* [Networks of Schools for Human Rights] of Valencia (Spain).

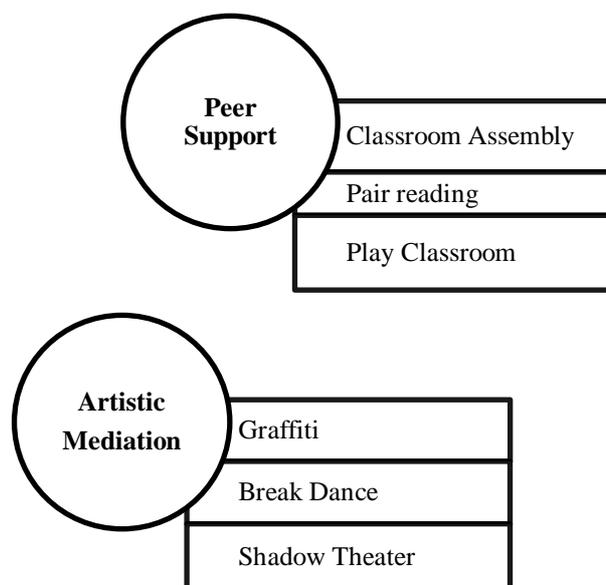


Figure 1. Strategies of the socio-educational program for social coexistence improvement

c) Stage 3. Results analysis and evaluation

The results obtained from the qualitative part were examined by means of a *deductive content analysis* (Bardín, 1986), establishing analytical categories derived from the open questionnaire items, looking for related meanings, and organizing the information gathered for its subsequent examination. It was deemed appropriate to quantify some of the items evaluated, grouping together the answers obtained and arranging the information in a quantitative manner, so that the aforesaid items could be properly analyzed. Furthermore, the item “What do you think you can do by yourself?” aimed at both students and teachers, was treated more specifically rescuing the most interesting discourses of both groups, which are provided in the following section, along with the information collected at the different evaluation times.

It is additionally worthy of mention that the program as a whole was assessed after the data had been processed and analyzed, highlighting both its strengths and its weaknesses, advocating the continuity of work along the same lines, and proposing new initiatives meant to improve the current program. The main goal of this process is to ensure that this same program can work in other educational centers located in vulnerable environments.

4 RESULTS

Below can be found an analysis of the results obtained through the implementation of the program described above. These results are organized according to the participant population (students and teachers), as well as their distribution by center (control and experimental) for each one of the evaluation times (pretest and posttest).

4.1 Results obtained from students regarding the assessment of school coexistence

As can be seen in the two graphs shown below (Figures 2 and 3), both groups referred during the initial evaluation to a high level of impact caused by all the conflict situations occurred at the center, especially stressing fights, insults, swearwords in the classroom, and students’ demotivation.

Instead, once the intervention program has come to an end, an improvement is observed in the experimental group, with a significantly lower impact of the problems examined. It deserves to be stressed that insults and fights are present all the same, their disappearance being complicated, insofar as we are dealing with conflict from a natural perspective –our aim does not consist in making them disappear but on learning to manage them suitably.

As for item 10 of the Initial Evaluation (Initial Ev.) “What proposals or activities would you suggest carrying out at the school in order to improve relationships between everybody?” and of the Final Evaluation (Final Ev.), “In your opinion, what proposals or activities have served to improve relationships between everybody?” it needs to be stressed that the results obtained in both groups differ to a large extent.

As shown by Table 7 (experimental group), the program meets the needs demanded by the students of the center during the diagnostic evaluation process. Both the strategies implemented and the artistic mediation workshops carried out were very positively valued by students, most of whom considered that these activities have improved the relationships between students, despite not appearing in the questionnaire item. It could hence be stated that the participant population belonging to the experimental group think that the program improves school coexistence.

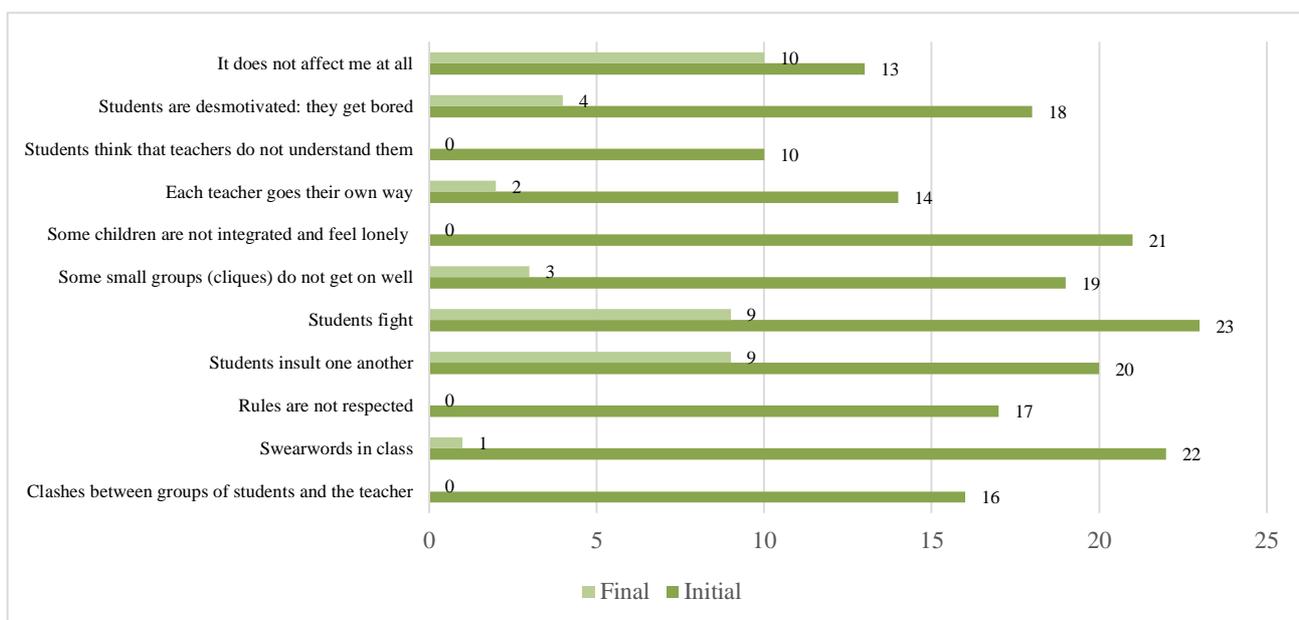


Figure 2. Results obtained about item 9, “Of the previous situations (item 8), which ones affect you personally (and how)?” (Experimental Group)

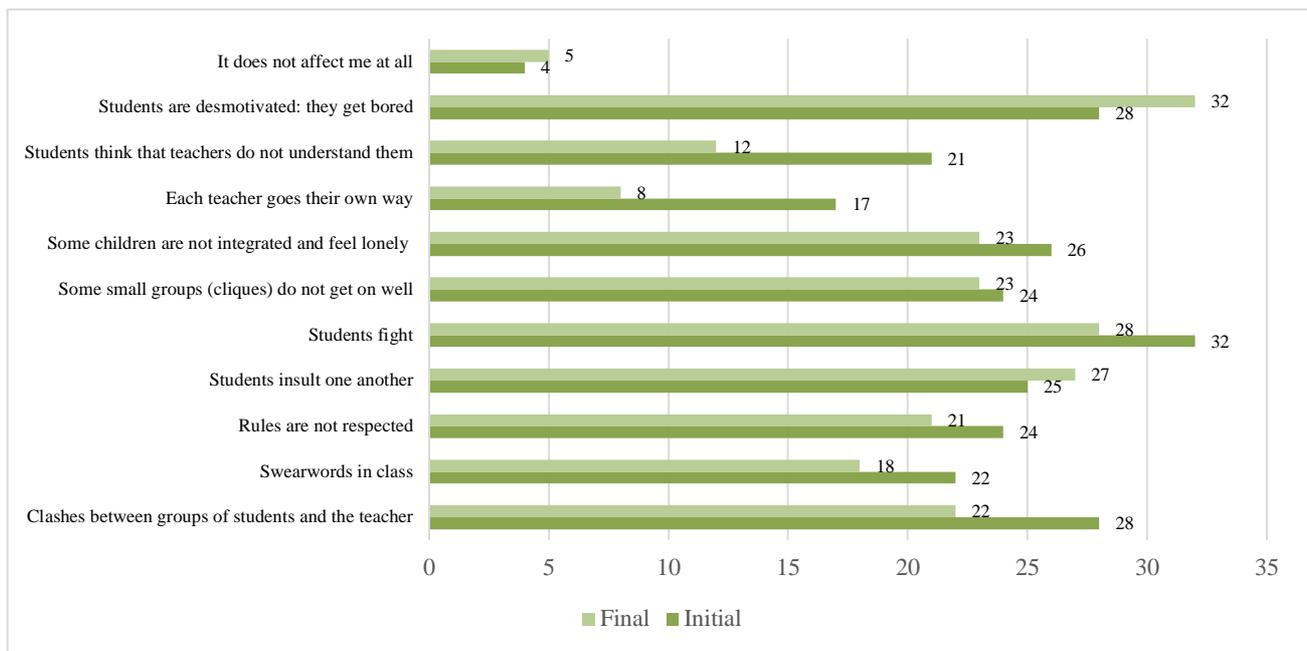


Figure 3. Results obtained about item 9, “Of the previous situations (item 8), which ones affect you personally (and how)?” (Control Group)

Table 5. Result distribution between the initial and final evaluation of Item 10 (Experimental Group)

Initial Ev. Activities suggested to improve coexistence at the center		Final Ev. Activities considered to have succeeded in improving coexistence	
Activities	Frequency	Activities	Frequency
Joint activities of the whole school	19	Classroom Assembly	29
Excursions	10	Excursions	20
Parties	9	Play Classroom	26
None	11	Break Dance	25
		Workshop	
		Graffiti Workshop	23
		Shadow Theater	21
		Workshop	

In turn, the control group students who have not enjoyed the program under study, highlight batucada, parties, and music lessons as three activities helping to improve school coexistence. Therefore, meeting the needs suggested by students at the beginning of the year becomes a priority –complementing the activities that the center already performs at present. Many children especially stress the need to carry out initiatives which allow them to calm down and relax as well as, less frequently, to respect and love each other. They equally refer to the possibility of developing activities that imply the participation of all the students enrolled at the center, the organization of teamwork projects, guided games at the playground, and work on values. All this collected information surprised the research team in charge of the field work, since it shows these school-children’s ability to observe the needs of which they are fully aware, even suggesting activities and strategies that form part of programs developed by experts in pedagogy and in the field of social and educational intervention.

With regard to item 11 of the students’ final evaluation, “Which aspects that go wrong could be improved?” a large proportion of the students in the experimental group claim that insults and fights are still common, which is why it becomes essential to work along these same lines, insofar as they have been reduced to a great extent through the application of peer support strategies and those referring to artistic mediation. They also insist on the need to help children with problems or difficulties when it comes to socializing, as well as those belonging to troublesome groups.

However, control group students stress the convenience of performing more actions oriented to improving situations such as: fights, insults, misconduct, clashes with teachers as well as with classmates, lack of academic involvement, situations of discrimination for different reasons, and inappropriate use of the material supplied by the center.

Moreover, outstanding differences appear between the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG)– and also between stages –pretest and posttest– if the results for items 11 (Initial Ev.) and 12 (Final Ev.) are analyzed.

Table 6. Result distribution between the initial and final evaluation of Item 10 (Control Group)

Initial Ev. Activities suggested to improve coexistence at the center		Final Ev. Activities considered to have succeeded in improving coexistence	
Activities	Frequency	Activities	Frequency
Different activities about various topics	25	Batucada	22
Playing together	13	Parties	16
Gatherings	4	Music lessons	18
Excursions	1		

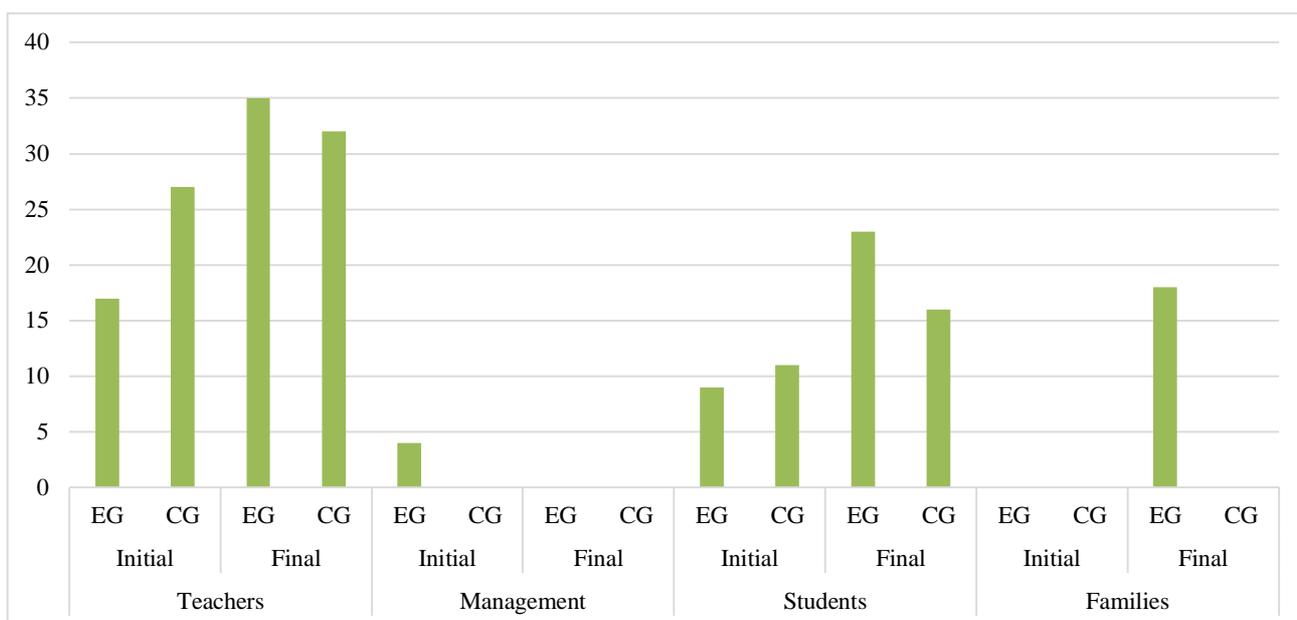


Figure 4. Results obtained about items 11 (Initial Ev.) and 12 (Final Ev.), “Who must do those activities? (experimental group and control group).”

It becomes obvious that the experimental group has evolved in a highly positive way since, on the whole, students considered in their final evaluation that the responsibility for the improvement of coexistence does not only fall upon teachers, but also upon students and families, albeit to a lesser extent. Instead, the control group places a special emphasis on teachers, granting them nearly all the responsibility.

Finally, the most relevant reflections of both groups of students –at both research evaluation periods– were selected in relation to the results for the last questionnaire item, “What do you think you can do by yourself?” (item 12 in the initial evaluation and 13 in the final one). The main purpose consists in highlighting the reflection capacity that some of the participants in this research have proved to own.

As for the initial evaluation, both experimental group students and those belonging to the control group have repeatedly referred to the need to speak, to talk, and to make sure that there are neither fights nor conflicts, uttering statements such as those listed below.

Experimental Group

- To try not to fight, not to insult one another, and to talk as the best way to sort things out. (Boy, 8 years old, 3rd).
- To talk things over when problems arise. To behave better towards one another and, above all, to be kinder to all the children at the school (Girl, 9 years old, 4th).
- To consider that I should participate more and I should not complain so much about things which are not worth it. I should use time in a more fruitful way and study harder (Girl, 12 years old, 6th).

Control Group

- To talk to the children at the school so that they will behave better and love one another to a greater extent. We all should be good friends because we live in the same neighborhood (Girl, 8 years old, 3rd).
- To help those children who fight more to convince them to talk before starting to hit one another; in that way, they will never end up fighting (Girl, 8 years old, 4th).

- I could play with all the children instead of playing always with the same ones; that would allow me to tell them not to fight. (Girl, 10 years, 5th).

Perceptions change in the final evaluation, though, and differences can easily be seen between control group students and their experimental group counterparts, possibly derived from program operation aspects. Amongst these differences stand out the ones referring to strategies, such as the classroom assembly in the case of experimental group students.

Experimental Group

- The most important thing is to be able to help those children who have problems. To talk to them, in assemblies and individually, so that they can explain what is wrong with them and everything can be solved (Boy, 10 years old, 3rd).
- I think I should be more patient in everything, become less nervous, and respect my classmates to a greater extent (Girl, 11 years old, 4th).
- I think I must participate and propose more things during assemblies. In that way, my classmates and the teacher will listen to me and ideas that I have can come true (Boy, 12 years old, 6th).
- I could try and spend time with boys and girls that I am not usually with, to open myself to meet more people and to make sure that nobody has to play alone (Girl, 12 years old, 6th).

Control Group

- I should pay more attention to teachers and show my classmates that I love them (Boy, 9 years old, 4th).
- To help teachers so that they can feel happier. To help them to make us students behave better (Boy, 12 years old, 6th).
- If I make an effort, I could respect everyone and behave properly (Girl, 12 years old, 6th).

4.2 Results obtained from teachers regarding the assessment of school coexistence

Differences arise depending on the center and the evaluation time when it comes to the results collected from open questions.

As for item 9, both in the initial evaluation and in the final one, it can be observed that experimental group teachers largely reduce their concern and the extent to which they are affected by certain student behaviors at the center compared to the initial evaluation. Boredom and demotivation amongst students, as well as insults and fights, appear much less frequently, and teachers bear witness to that.

Instead, control group teachers show a completely different picture, since their concerns grow and they are affected to a greater extent by most of the items associated with school coexistence, amongst which especially stand out student demotivation, lack of integration, insults, fights, and lack of compliance with the rules of the educational center.

It is additionally worth highlighting the results obtained in item 9, which refers to the activities and proposals which, in the teachers' opinion, might be interesting to develop at the center for the purpose of improving relationships inside the educational community as a whole.

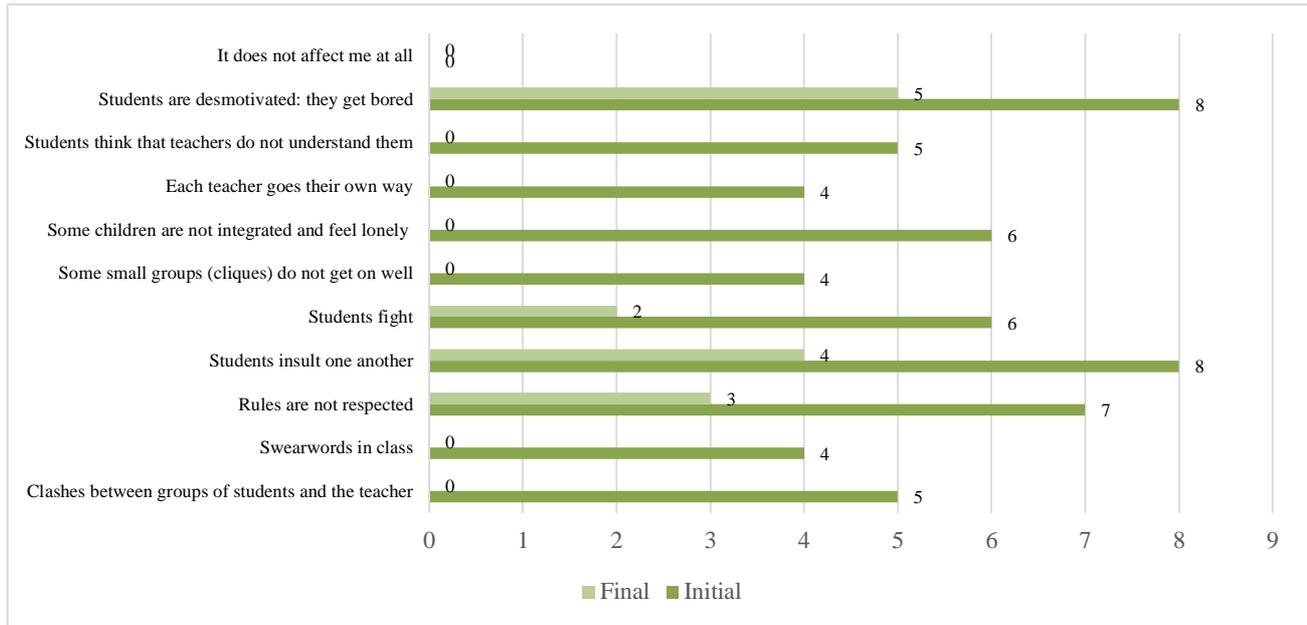


Figure 5. Results obtained about item 9, "Of the previous situations (item 8) which ones affect you personally (and how)?" (Experimental Group)

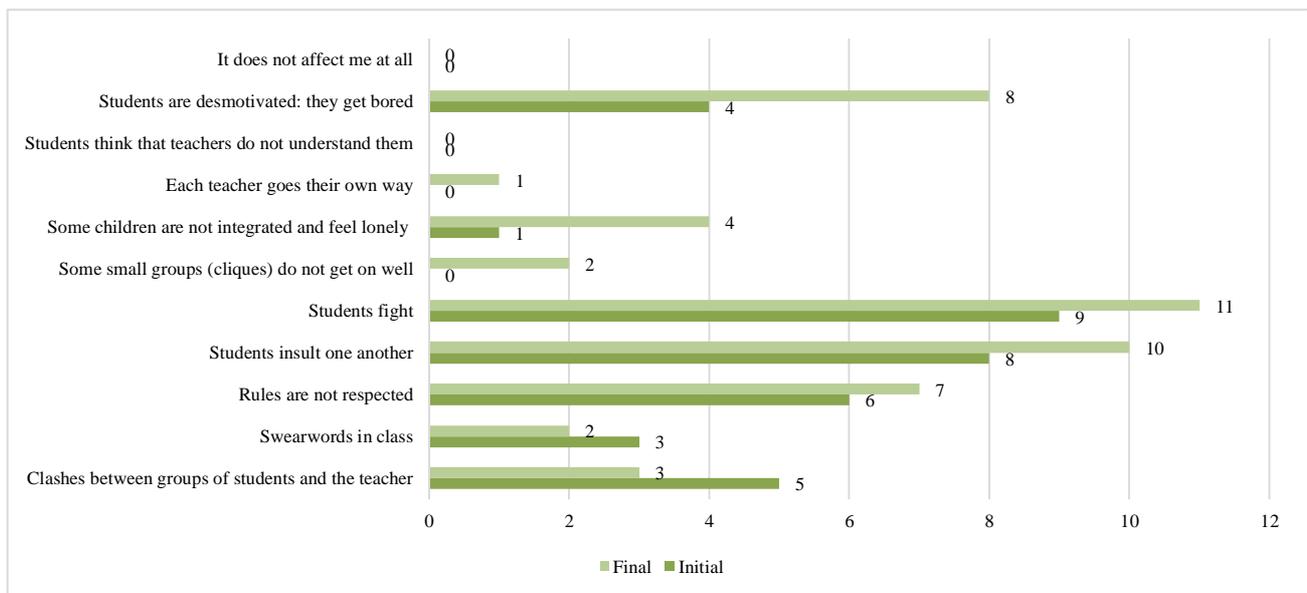


Figure 6. Results obtained about item 9, "Of the previous situations (item 8) which ones affect you personally (and how)?" (Control Group).

In relation to the experimental group, below are listed some of the proposals made by the teachers of the center (Table 9), amongst which stands out the interest shown by most of them in continuing to work with the program implemented –because the results were very positive in their opinion– and also in including new proposals that favor the active involvement of families, as well as any others which can help to carry on working towards an improved coexistence.

Table 7. Results obtained about item 10 (initial and final ev.) “What proposals or activities would you suggest carrying out to improve relationships between everybody?” (Experimental Group)

Initial	Final
Inter-cycle activities and workshops	Maintaining the actions of this academic year
Interactive groups	Activities related to creativity
Dialogue gatherings	Group dynamics to bring teachers closer together
New dynamics and strategies to work on coexistence	Inter-cycle workshops
Strategies encouraging participation at the center	Cooperative games to reinforce the strategies initiated during this academic year
Participation of families in school life	Involvement of families
Coordination and collaboration with NGOs and entities based in the neighborhood	More strategies linked to school coexistence
Strategies encouraging participation at the center (¿REPETIDO?)	

As for the control group (Table 10), one can check the need to implement a coexistence improvement program through strategies which can satisfy the needs detected during the initial evaluation. It becomes clear that teachers know strategies and activities to improve the current situation on the basis of the responses obtained but, even so, they insist on the lack of external support to initiate the path towards the improvement of relationships across the whole educational community.

When it comes to who must perform the activities suggested above (item 11 of the initial evaluation), as well as regarding the degree of involvement in those activities (item 12 of the final evaluation), all teachers believe that it is them that have to play the starring role, motivating the rest of the educational community both in terms of participation and in the development of initiatives to improve school coexistence.

In item 11 (final evaluation), with respect to the activities developed throughout the academic year, the experimental group considers that the most effective ones were those which make up the program, amongst which particularly stands out the classroom assembly as a tool which gave a boost to learning as well as to the value of dialogue not only in conflict prevention and resolution but also when it comes to improving the level of participation shown by all the students enrolled at the center. As for the control group, the same as students, they think that batucada, the activities where the whole center takes part (celebration of festivities or commemorative days), and the workshops or seminars related to work on values were the most effective to improve social relationships within the educational community. Both groups claim that none of the initiatives

developed was useless (item 12 of the final evaluation) because, despite being more or less effective, they all were enriching in some way.

Table 8. Results obtained about item 10 (initial and final ev.) “What proposals or activities would you suggest carrying out to improve relationships between everybody?” (Control Group)

Initial	Final
Action Plan which can be revised every academic year	Guided playground games
Training of teachers in aspects related to school coexistence	Collaborative and cooperative activities
Work with families	Strategies to improve coexistence
Teamwork by teachers	Conflict resolution (mediation) strategies
Assigning more responsibility to students	Emotional intelligence
Tutorial planning	Classroom assemblies
Activities about conflict resolution	Social skills workshops
Social skills	Strategies associated with learning communities
Activities against racism	Tutorial Plan
	Teamwork by teachers

Finally, regarding new activities or initiatives that both groups would suggest for the next academic year (item 13 of the final evaluation), a summary of them is provided in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Results obtained about item 13 (final ev.) “What new initiatives do you think we could carry out? Would you become involved?”

Experimental Group	Control Group
Continuing with the relationship with the University and with Amnesty International to keep on working along the same lines	Emotional intelligence
Plastic and stage activities	Strategies in conflict resolution
Continuing work on teacher training in school participation strategies	Training in learning communities
Emotional intelligence	Creation of a compensatory education group
Workshops implying the participation of all students	Involvement of families with the center
Extracurricular activities	

5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

It has already been highlighted in previous sections that the coexistence program designed worked favorably, since it was possible to check that, according to the perceptions of both teachers and students, the aims set were satisfactorily achieved.

Similar results were obtained in other research works such as those of Cowie et al. (2002) and Naylor & Cowie (1999), since the implementation of coexistence improvement programs shaped by putting into practice a variety of peer support strategies contributed to improve both the atmosphere at the center as a whole and that existing in each specific classroom.

Overall, the students of the experimental center consider that the applied strategies improved interpersonal relationships as well as the school climate. Furthermore, and most strikingly, they stress the advantages even when they are not directly asked about them. In this regard, they claim that the classroom assembly was a good practice which allowed them to participate directly, thus feeling that they actively belong to the educational community, making decisions and suggesting ideas which have been developed. Without a doubt, it becomes essential to encourage students' involvement if we want to increase their responsibility, along with their integration into the educational center, and ultimately, school coexistence.

In relation to experimental group teachers, it was detected that they strongly advocate continuing along the same lines of the implemented program because the results unquestionably show that the school violence rate has decreased to a large extent. These effects were equally identified after the implementation of other coexistence programs, as highlighted by Turnuklu et al. (2010) and Akgun & Araz (2014). Nevertheless, it must be stressed that they mention the need to increase the degree of participation of families as a proposal for improvement in the coming academic years. Emphasis is additionally placed on the fact that cohesion amongst teachers has improved because supporting the program brought them especially close to one another, and working together has undoubtedly allowed them to achieve better coexistence levels at their center. Comparable outcomes can be found in the studies undertaken by Hakvoort & Olsson (2014) and Peñalva-Vélez et al. (2015) as well.

As for the results obtained from the control group, attention focuses on the need to carry out actions which can favor coexistence, contributing to achieve a more relaxed climate. They claim that the atmosphere at the school is tense and, therefore, suggestions are made to develop activities related to emotional intelligence learning. This could definitely arise as an aspect to be taken into account when it comes to improving the proposed program.

Another essential aspect which deserves to be highlighted in our opinion is that of training as a *condition sine qua non* to work on school coexistence. This is directly stated by the actual control group teachers, who demand training in conflict prevention and resolution strategies so that they can properly deal with the increase that school violence levels have been experiencing in recent years. In relation to this, it is worth highlighting that both centers clearly stressed the need to count on experts in school coexistence who can train and support the implementation of strategies to improve coexistence, helping them to keep making progress and to prevent them from succumbing to demotivation.

The need to increase the participation, both of students and of families, has been verified as well. Therefore, in our opinion – and so that future research works can follow the same lines– it would be interesting to improve and boost the participation of students and families at the center, for the purpose of giving them more say as well as greater chances to form part of the institution. Another topic that will need to be taken into account is demotivation, since the teachers at the control center refer to

demotivation as an important concern because it entails an increased school absenteeism rate. For us, the implementation of strategies such as those placed within artistic mediation could motivate students and prevent these problems, in addition to promoting all the already highlighted benefits.

In short, all the assessments obtained must lead us to reflect on the operation of this program, thinking about the possibility not only to improve it but also to incorporate new proposals and initiatives. Amongst other aspects, initiatives to promote participation will be developed, because emphasis has been placed on the need to enhance students' participation and to open the school to families, to the community, and to the neighborhood, seeking the ultimate aim of transforming schools into places of reference and identity. On another note, it would be interesting to enrich the program with strategies that directly deal with the prevention and resolution of conflicts between peers, since this appears in the study as an essential topic that would additionally make it easier to achieve less tense atmospheres. By way of example, the proposal made by Torrego (2012) on the implementation of 'Assistant Students' may constitute a good initiative meant to enhance coexistence learning, acquiring a strong responsibility in topics associated with conflict prevention and resolution. Summing up, what really matters is to develop actions which promote students' inclusion and cohesion, relying on each member of the educational community and strongly believing in the need to transform the school in a space of education created in democracy and for democracy.

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