Education: competences, emotions and humor, perspectives and research*

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Abstract

Objective: To demonstrate the importance of emotions during the teaching-learning process. In this regard, based on theoretical approaches and the results of the empirical studies outlined herein, emotions and, especially, humor and laughter, are significant for education in general. **Method:** Mixed, involving the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches through the application of information collection techniques; the information and data used were obtained by the authors themselves, resulting from several specific studies. **Results:** Students are aware of their emotions but ignore those of their peers. Laughter is joy and happiness; teachers use laughter intentionally, and its use brings benefits, among others. **Conclusion:** The theoretical revision and the empirical studies presented show the need for emotional education, in addition to highlighting the importance of humor and laughter in education, especially their benefits.

Keywords: Emotions; Laughter; Humor; Benefits; Educational competences.

*Article translated to English

Introduction

Despite the significance of emotions, humor, and laughter in the educational process, settings, and relationships, these have not always been considered. In fact, regardless of the current educational paradigms or perspectives, emotions, humor, and laughter are key elements for life and health in general and for the teaching-learning process in particular.

Focused on this topic, this study first includes a brief and general reflection of several theoretical works, revolving around empirical research in a concise and specific manner and showing the key role of laughter in the teaching-learning process. It also highlights the importance of students' overall emotional states. Finally, to confirm and verify these findings, the study presents the results of several approaches from case studies on this matter based on a survey about laughter and humor conducted in the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM, for its Spanish acronym)/(Xochimilco, 2010) and carried out again in 2018. Furthermore, it gives an account of different questionnaires and focus groups (2014), of which several refer to emotions in the classroom, whereas others deal with humor and laughter in class among students at the graduate level, in the same university. All of them are empirical studies conducted personally in terms of their design, implementation, and analysis; as previously stated, they serve as an example of several key aspects on this issue worth mentioning and highlighting. Each section describes the features of said studies, alongside the reporting of significant details.

It begins by including some general reflections on education by contemporary authors for contextualization purposes. Clearly, we are facing a paradigmatic, epistemological, political, and social crisis today that absolutely affects academia and education in general, as several experts have indicated, given the latter struggle between global economic interests and neoliberal social models (González, 2001; De Sousa, 2007; Nussbaum, 2012). Notwithstanding that, other perspectives aim at its change and humanization (De Sousa, 2009, 2013).

Continuing with the overall social framework, the market and society are the alternatives, sometimes considered opposed to current education and other times complementary to it. It is important, however, for education to preserve its theoretical social function and the task of thinking, rethinking, and reflecting on the major current issues worldwide and in the future. But, in fact, where does this leave freedom of thought and nurturing of reflexivity? (Ibarra, 2006) This is in addition to the emotional scope and the importance of laughter and good humor. The inclusion of these issues and perspectives contributes not only to the enlivenment and humanization of education but also to the continuous reflection on it, its potential, and its path to the future.

From a perspective of chaos and despair, new projects that explore the educational process from interactions in the classroom emerge (Casassus, 2009), especially based on a self-critical vision of teacher performance, curricula, and academic management (Acosta,

cited in Porter, n.d.), up to the change of model itself. All emphasize a new pedagogical paradigm, moving from instrumentalism to the humanities, as indicated by several authors (Moreno, 2010).

Similarly, Porter (2007a) highlighted the relevance of art and emotions in education, in pursuit of integrating knowledge, as well as considering it something creative and recreational that informs and educates with social commitment and creativity. Dreaming, wishing, imagining a better future, bringing analyses, feelings, explanations, and reflections together; in brief, education should teach us to be happy too.

Current challenges are presented, as well as ideas and proposals, either new or old, which advocate for a more human education at the service of people and society, rather than at the service of the market, an increasingly inhumane system.

But as old paradigms just left and the new ones arrived and have just been enthroned, some current realities can be approached, implementing a new sensitivity and human awareness in the daily educational practice of our country. To cite an example, we are now discussing educational competences in general and the emotional educational competences in particular, which seem to be part of the instrumental model with a seemingly more human face. Furthermore, it is possible to approach several practical possibilities beyond theoretical discussions, to change old habits, both in terms of modalities and content, in the daily and current educational experience, and to promote a teaching-learning process that goes beyond information and formality. A more holistic, creative, and especially human experience: with sensitivity and awareness, joy, and humor.

Hence, this work focuses on what is known and what can be learned about the emotional competences of students in the teaching-learning process, as well as the importance of good humor and laughter for this purpose. Moreover, students' perceptions and experiences, thoughts and feelings, opinions and views are described herein based on their expressions. In other words, the theory and empirical results of the case study are brought together, completing and supplementing each other.

Educational and emotional competences

Educational competences

Educational competences involve theoretical and practical knowledge, reasoning, assessments, activities, experiences and behaviors, abilities, values, skills, relational abilities, and behavioral schemes. In general, as can be seen, everything is presented from the cognitive and behavioral point of view, although with other approaches that also consider the emotional aspect, as will be shown later.

According to the Latin America Tuning Project, the most renowned and popular project on competences, this deals with "skills that every human being needs to address different life situations in an efficient and autonomous way, based on a thorough knowledge, not

only about what to do and how to do it, but to know how to be a person in a changing, complex and competitive world" (p.45, 2007). Skills that contribute to the responsible development of personal and collective life, by assessing and choosing alternatives, for the purposes of the know-how-to-see and acting in the most convenient way according to each specific circumstance.

As a consequence, the above should be understood as part of the comprehensive education to achieve social and cultural, cognitive, and affective skills. Nonetheless, emphasis is usually placed on learning to learn and on the know-how, rather than on the savoir-faire and savoir-vivre (Moreno, 2010), or, in other words, on being creative and happy (Porter, 2007b), just being people (Rogers, 2007) or a change at the awareness level (Marquier, 2006). For the time being, we make reference to these ideas to get inside the world of the emotional educational competences.

Emotional educational competences

The new education has been the focus of thought of many institutions, ranging from international bodies, such as UNESCO, to specific academic studies, and even governments and specialized institutions. This reflection acknowledges the importance of emotions alongside the cognitive approach of learning. Indeed, emotions in general, and the benefits of laughter and humor in particular, are increasingly considered during the teaching-learning process (Fernández, 2016).

Specifically, emotional competences entail the capacity to mobilize the attitudes, skills, abilities, and knowledge required to perform specific activities with quality and efficiency in an appropriate manner (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007). These competences include self-control, responsibility, cooperation, assertiveness, and empathy (Salovey & Sluyter, as cited in Bisquerra & Pérez,2007), highlighting the so-called emotional self-awareness and emotion management as a social skill and including empathy toward others and self-motivation (Goleman, 1999). Furthermore, being emotionally competent means being aware of one's own emotional state and the ability to distinguish the emotional state of fellow human beings, the successful expression of emotions, empathic involvement, regulation and self-control, and emotional self-efficacy (Saarni, as cited in Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007).

All these include emotional management in self-awareness (assertiveness and responsibility) and emotional awareness toward others (cooperation and empathy). Notably, the efficacy and quality of this emotional work is regarded as an assessable competence; in any case, this is an advance with regard to the traditional model of education or educational competences focusing on behavioral and cognitive aspects aimed at social adaptation and productive efficiency, the market, and the established socio-economic system, issues that have led some authors to re-name the educational process as domestication.

Emotional education
According to Bisquerra (2007), emotional education makes reference to the following:

> The development of emotional competences, which are understood as the body of knowledge, capacities, skills and attitudes necessary to become aware, understand, express and control emotional phenomena in an appropriate way. Emotional competences include emotional awareness and regulation, emotional autonomy, social competences, life skills and wellbeing (Bisquerra, 2007:11).

In view of the above, it is possible to consider emotional competences as the ability to have and mobilize resources through the identification of one's own emotions and those of others to solve problems under specific situations. These include emotional awareness, emotional regulation, emotional autonomy, socio-emotional skills, and competences for a healthy coexistence. In line with this, emotional education is basically the process to reach emotional competences.

In short, Bisquerra (2000) suggested that the main objectives of emotional education entail the following:

- A better awareness of one's own emotions
- The identification of the emotions of others
- The ability to control one's own emotions
- The prevention of the adverse effects of negative emotions
- The ability to generate positive emotions
- An increased emotional competence
- The ability to self-motivate
- A positive attitude towards life
- Fluidity

In addition, the specific objectives considered by Bisquerra (2000) must be added:

- The ability to control stress, anxiety, and depression
- The awareness of the factors that contribute to subjective well-being
- The ability to be happy
- Sense of humor
- The ability to defer immediate rewards in favor of other greater ones, although in the long term
- Tolerance to frustration

As for sense of humor and laughter in the educational setting, the reported benefits have been highlighted, both in theoretical reflections and empirical research (Fernández, 2016). Several ideas and studies on this topic are described below.

Humor and laughter in the teaching-learning process

As seen in the list above, humor is considered a specific goal of emotional education (Bisquerra, 2007), but humor is far more than this: it is a mood, an attitude towards life, a state, as will be discussed later, and even a state of being an attitude towards life.

Different lists include the benefits of humor and laughter in education, such as those by Fernández (2008) and Tamblym (2007). Overall, these authors have acknowledged the importance of aspects such as fun, which favors the assimilation of learning experiences and the creation of satisfying relationships and trust. It also promotes creativity and problem-solving, besides being beneficial for attention and memory and letting their minds rest. In general, humor comes along with energizing emotions and moods, both for students and teachers, and the healthy relationship between them.

This topic is enriched by students' opinions and assessments in this regard; i.e., what students experience when humor is used in class, besides their personal and collective assessment of the matter.

Students' emotional knowledge

As seen earlier, emotions are important, and the emotional competences seem to confirm that. In this sense, they have become the path to healthy self-awareness and an optimal social coexistence. But what do we know about students' emotions and emotional competences? Because the theory previously outlined and the daily practice in the classroom in our country and in our time are quite different. To that end, self-awareness and emotional knowledge are reviewed herein, not from a theoretical perspective but from students' practical experiences and their views, as in the case of the three studies whose methods and results are presented below:

Research No. 1: Emotional self-awareness and the emotional knowledge of others

Method

This first study on emotional self-knowledge and emotional knowledge about others, in life, and especially in class, was applied to undergraduate students of UAM/X in 2014. The study was divided into two focus groups, including 31 participants whose age ranged from 19 to 29 years, with slightly more men than women. This was an exploratory descriptive work of mixed focus, as it implemented both quantitative and qualitative methods, the latter being characteristic of the focus group. However, some quantitative trends have been selected through closed questions in a questionnaire applied before the groups were made up, conducted for the sole purpose of self-reflection. It also included data collection on the topic by the person who designed, applied, and assessed the technique in question, that is, the author of this text.

Results

As for the most striking findings, and according to the trends of the preliminary questionnaire applied to the focus group, the students claim to be aware of their emotions in their life and in general (77.42%). Furthermore, they find it more difficult to be aware of others' emotions, as 38.71% of them reported not being aware of them, 32-36% stated they do not always know about them, or that it depends, and only 29.03% declared being aware of them. During the group discussion, one youth explained: "I am aware of my emotions; I know what makes me feel good, bad, or dissatisfied, but I am incapable of knowing what others are feeling; they may be expressing something, but on the inside, this may actually be different." This opinion was highlighted as it characterized the trend of other participants, in the fact that they are aware of their emotions, but not those of others.

In terms of the awareness of emotions in the classroom, most declared being aware of them (80.65%), even a little bit more than in general, whereas 48.39% said they neither understood nor were aware of the emotions of others in class. Furthermore, 29.03% stated they are not always are aware of them, or that it depends, and 22.58% reported being aware of them (See Table 1). During the focus group, a girl noted the following:

> It is difficult to know which emotion is behind each individual… and even their circumstances, as we will never be aware of them 100% of the time, or the individual may show an emotion, and the reality is different. It depends on many variables… but it is okay to try to identify them and at least empathize, right?

Another student said,

> I mostly believe that the teacher should be empathetic or motivate us in the classroom, to try not to bore us and turn it into a dynamic activity. Teachers should have some points; they should know how to please the people before them, and how to catch their attention. In my opinion, I feel comfortable with teachers when they are real pedagogues.

In this case, beyond self-awareness and emotional knowledge (Goleman, 1999), the responsibility of the teacher to create a good emotional setting in the classroom is also noted. Because this, as almost everything in life, deals with an inter-relational and intergroup co-creation or co-construction (Robine, 2005), which is necessary, rather than clear, in the educational setting.

Table 1
Emotional knowledge

	Do you know and are you aware of your emotions when you are in class?	Do you know and are you aware of the emotions of others when you are in class?
Yes	80.65%	22.58%
No	9.68%	48.39%
Not always/It depends	9.68%	29.03%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on the questionnaire on Emotions in the classroom with a focus group (2014).

This way, as per this first approach to this issue, students are considered to have emotional self-awareness; however, this is not the case of the people they relate to in their life, and especially in the classroom, the focus of our study. The reasons given generally revolve around the difficulty of perceiving somebody else's emotions, or understanding them, from the lack of expression of the other, up to the ambiguous expression and, finally, one's own perception. This is why, when emotional educational competences and emotional education are discussed, we should consider what is already available, what actually exists regarding knowledge and emotional self-awareness. As seen in this approximate exercise, the second element is available, rather than the first one, as indicated by the students that were part of this questionnaire. That said, although this work was limited to the university level, it is possible to consider that the situation may remain much the same in other education levels, and this is due to the fact that we need emotional education to know each other better and to feel better in our lives and at school (Bisquerra, 2000).

Research No.2: Humor and laughter from the students' perception

Special emphasis is also given to humor and laughter. It aims to describe and highlight the importance of good humor and laughter in the teaching-learning process, as part of the emotional competences in education, either for the purposes of improving the prevailing model of learning to learn, and learning to do, as part of a new model, or maybe a not so new one, but something forgotten, what was part of learning to live and learning to be (Moreno, 2010), among others. And, just like in the previous section, this highlights the importance of laughter and good humor in the teaching-learning process, beyond the theories and advice from experts, based on the students' vision and perspectives; i.e., in their own voice and direct experience, in this case based on two university surveys.

Method

Below are some details on this topic, first regarding laughter in general, through a survey conducted in UAM/X in 2010, and its reapplication eight years later (2018). Some of its results are presented below. Unlike the previous one, this is a quantitative work, representative of the university community of this higher education institution.

The 2010 survey involved 504 cases, of which 44.05% were men and 55.95% were women; the UAMX students were divided into three departments: 47.42% belonging to the Life and Health Sciences (LHS) field, 35.12% to the Social Science and Humanities (SSH) discipline, and 17.46% to the Arts and Science for Design (CyAD, for its Spanish acronym) department. In addition, 29.02% of the sample was actively working, 95.04% were urban residents, and their ages ranged from 18 to 29 years, with an average age of 23 years. Finally, reliability was 95%, and the margin of error was +/-4.5. For its part, the 2018 survey included 458 cases, half men, half women, of whom 17.69% were CyAD students, 46.72% were part of the LHS department, and 35.59% of them attended SSH

classes. Furthermore, 24.67% of them reported being actively working; 88.21% were urban residents; their age ranged from 18 to 29 years, with an average age of 23. Reliability was 95%, with an error margin of +/-4.5. To obtain the opinion trends from both surveys, these were analyzed at the same time, so the text omitted percentages, which can be checked in detail in the tables.

Results

To begin, definitions and explanations about laughter in general are suggested by the students. First, laughter is joy and happiness; next, it is healthy and pleasant, including, in both surveys, emotions, needs, and positive moods. Everything lies in the body and soul. It mostly relaxes, de-stresses, at first, and then, it cheers us up, again alluding to emotions and also to feelings and physical needs, leading to an enhanced well-being, calm, and delight in the body, among others (Tables 2 and 3). Questions in the survey were completely open-ended, subsequently closed at the time of analysis, according to the semantic field criterion, for obtaining information that is more faithful to the view of participants. Praise was then given to laughter and laughing, acknowledging their importance in producing joy and a healthy state, as this favors the body and soul and leads to happiness. In short, and as already pointed out, laughter contributes to the fulfillment of the physical and psychological needs of the human being (Maslow, 1982) as well as to pleasant and satisfying emotions (Muñoz, 2009).

Table 2
Laughter in life

Laughter is joy and happiness	37%
Laughter is healthy and pleasant	19%
Laughter is everywhere	21%
Laughter is in our body and soul	23%
Laughter helps us relax and de-stress	60%
Laughter helps us feel joyful	14%
When we laugh, our body is relaxed, in comfort, calm and delighted	52%
When we laugh, our mind is calm and happy	54%
The prevailing emotion when we laugh is happiness and joy	63%

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on the Laughter Survey, 2010.

Table3
Laughter in life

Laughter is joy and happiness	46%
Laughter is healthy and pleasant	22%
Laughter is everywhere	37%
Laughter is in our body and soul	19%
Laughter helps us relax and de-stress	55%
Laughter helps us feel joyful	20%
When we laugh, our body is relaxed, in comfort, calm and delighted	67%
When we laugh, our mind is calm and happy	54%
The prevailing emotion when we laugh is happiness and joy	82%

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on the Laughter Survey, 2018.

To delve into the educational context, reference is made to data regarding humor and laughter in the teaching-learning process in class based on the abovementioned surveys. Thus, overall, the use of humor and laughter is employed by teachers in class, although with different purposes, such as intentionally or because of their character. This use is of different types, including the hostile one through teachers' jokes and mockery of students, among other expressions. In general, it is considered to benefit the teaching-learning process in a clear, straightforward and, especially, predominant manner, although some individuals believe it has no benefits at all (Tables 4 and 5). Reference is also made to the fact that these questions were close-ended.

Table 4
Laughter in education

Teachers generally use humor or laughter in class	71%
Those using humor or laughter intentionally in the learning process	44%
Those using it due to their character	31%
Those using it to mock others	28%
Those making white jokes	19%
Those using humor through gameplay	19%
Those employing humor through anecdotes	14%
Those using it in their comments	11%
Humor and laughter produce beneficial effects for the teaching-learning process	69%
No beneficial effects observed	13%

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on the Laughter Survey, 2010

Table 5
Laughter in education

Teachers generally use humor or laughter in class	88%
Those using humor or laughter intentionally in the learning process	42%
Those using it due to their character	35%
Those using it to mock others	28%
Those making white jokes	19%
Those using humor through gameplay	19%
Those employing humor through anecdotes	14%
Those using it in comments	11%
Humor and laughter produce beneficial effects for the teaching-learning process	69%
No beneficial effects observed	13%

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on the Laughter Survey, 2018.

Undoubtedly, humor and laughter play a crucial role in education both for students and teachers for their physical and mental health due to every reason pointed out earlier and later in this text. Nonetheless, not everything is so clear for everyone, although at first, it is something affordable and beneficial for the educational group (Fernández, 2016).

To extend the information above, the two surveys also used an open question about the benefits of humor, asked to both those answering "yes" and "no." The first answer reports the following benefits: decreased stress, a more enjoyable class, confidence building, stress reduction, a clear and sharper mind, improved attention, enhanced creativity, better memory, enriched understanding, and motivation. As for the second option, students stated as a main complaint that humor distracts them, followed by the fact that its use is not serious, besides preventing them from remembering or just being uncomfortable.

Research No. 3: The benefits of humor

Method

Finally, information is displayed about students' perception of the educational use of humor in class through a study carried out with students of UAM/X in 2014, which involved the application of 52 questionnaires. Questions were open-ended and also close-ended according to the semantic field; however, in view of its characteristics, some of them were quantitative. This is a merely descriptive approach; unlike the above survey, it was not representative, although presenting an overall view rich in meaning, explanation, and trends on the use of laughter in class.

Results

The results of the study indicated that humor is beneficial and that the use of humor and laughter in class is absolutely advisable. Once again, it reconfirms that laughter and humor are used intentionally by the teacher, favoring many aspects, such as "their bond," "helping to learn," "a more enjoyable lesson," "relaxing," "building confidence," and "improving memory and learning." Besides, it is "a little bit distracting" for others, and the majority considers that "it does not conflict with the academic level." Thus, it is feasible to state that the predominant view considers it to be a positive factor, although including some exceptions, since around 12% of them find its use "detrimental" (Table 6). As can be seen, these answers are similar and are in line with what has been reported previously.

Table 6
The benefits of using humor in class

Humor is beneficial	100%
Using humor and laughter in class is highly advisable	100%
The intentional use by teachers can be perceived	61%
Students claiming it does not diminish the academic thoroughness	80%
Students claiming it forges a community bond	98%
Students claiming it helps them learn better	100%
It is beneficial as the lesson becomes more enjoyable	29%
It is beneficial as it relaxes students	27%
It is beneficial since it builds confidence	17%
It is beneficial because it improves memory skills	13%
It is beneficial because it enhances the learning experience	13%
It is not detrimental at all	71%
It is detrimental as it distracts students	12%

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on a questionnaire applied to students, 2014.

Below is our selection of the statements on humor and its benefits:

"Because you loosen up, relax, feel at ease, and time goes by less slowly during the lesson" (participant, 23-year-old woman). "Because it can help shyer students to better interact with others in class" (participant, 29-year-old woman). "Releasing stress helps make the lesson more enjoyable and create a trustworthy environment. The more confident we feel when speaking in front of the group, the more you know that the teacher will not call you

down, but explain and correct you if you are wrong" (participant, 22-year-old man). "The lesson becomes more enjoyable, and I can better withhold the information to learn" (participant, 27-year-old man). "The lesson is funny; I do not get bored, and that prevents me from getting distracted and helps me learn" (participant, 20-year-old woman). "You learn in a better, non-tedious way" (participant, 20-year-old man). "I often get bored, but now I just imagine fun stuff, and do not get bored anymore" (20-year-old woman). "It makes you remember what you learned in class over time" (participant, 20-year old man).

As for those students not considering humor to be positive:

"It annoys and distracts me" (participant, 19-year-old man). "I lose concentration" (20-year-old man). "Some peers aren't careful with their words" (25-year-old woman).

Without going into details, it is possible to note that both the quantitative part of this exercise (Table 6) and the transcript of experiences gathered from students with regard to humor fulfill certain roles in the teaching-learning process: the motivating function, the camaraderie and friendship role, the relaxation, fun, intellectual, creative, and pedagogical roles, and the aggressive function (Fernández, 2008). In short, humor is an educational and didactic resource, necessary and advisable as a pro-positive response to a pessimistic, apathetic, and disenchanted society, as rated by students, providing that it constitutes an element for understanding reality. It also helps students think and stimulate their creativity. It can even be regarded as a generator of a teaching-learning style (Fernández, 2003).

Conclusions

Educational emotional competences are part of a prevailing discourse today, as they seem to give cognitive-behavioral educational competences a more sensitive and human face. Undoubtedly, it is worth knowing and balancing our emotional states to be more creative, humane, and happy, rather than to be more productive and efficient at the service of the markets' interests and needs. In other words, based on the awareness of being something greater than the structured practice of current emotional knowledge, always consider adaptation to the system and the achievement of an alleged material or symbolic success. In any case, both considerations are feasible and may supplement each other.

The emotional competence is part of the so-called emotional education, presented as a personal and social need that is not always part of the school curricula. This entails or would entail maximizing the professional functions and satisfying the individual and collective well-being, in addition to the development of a more adjusted, participating, and responsible citizenship (Bisquerra, 2007). Naturally, humor and enjoyment are part of it, as education is supposed to be fun and entertaining (Porter, 2007a). Humor is an attitude and mindset to life in general or to something in particular (Vigara, 1994), a disruptive, sacred, and magical moment (Berger, 1999). Laughter is an expressive response to the humorous appreciation of comedy, an interlude in daily life (Berger, 1999) that makes us

stop thinking for a while, leaving our ego behind for a short time (Osho, 2006).

Thus, humor and its result, laughter, are emotional competences in terms of skills and abilities, but they are even more significant: they entail attitudes and stances towards life itself so, beyond competence, it entails a certain degree of awareness and state of being (Marquier, 2010). Something to learn or to extend and deepen, to practice and experience, as it minimizes a situation, it is enjoyable and, as we expect to make clear throughout these pages, it optimizes education and is a balm for the soil. It relaxes, calms down, enlivens, cheers up, animates, and pacifies students, as stated by authors, works, and even by students, as per the empirical material presented herein. This is a valuable detail since although there is information available about the significance of emotions in class and the use of humor for the teaching-learning process, its confirmation through the students' involvement, sharing their own perspective and experience, doubles its value.

As pointed out in the introduction of this text, if the current education-related errors and problems are clear, we must think and act to change it. In the meantime, more accessible and regular matters can be implemented in parallel, such as emotional awareness and self-awareness, sense of humor and laughter in the classroom and throughout the entire teaching-learning process, either considering this instrumental emotional competence or a question of consciousness of self from a humanistic approach. This is what the research study aims to highlight through the experiences of the students interviewed, who report being aware of their emotions, although they fail to understand those of other individuals or peer groups, as described throughout this paper. Therefore, the latter is pending further research, either as part of emotional education or as the development of social empathy. Students are also aware of the benefits of humor and laughter in the classroom and in their lives, so they have to preserve or encourage them, only as a type of harmless and respectful humor.

All the above is part of the emotional competence approach from and toward recreational and creative education, with a critical spirit and social commitment: to learn to live and be happy. Sometimes, even education itself restricts said emotional competence, but now is time to do the opposite, for education to be visible and emotional awareness to be promoted, just as laughter and humor are part of our life and its meaning. This leads to a holistic education as a pedagogy of this 21st century for the full realization of groups and individuals, multiple intelligences and the existential and spiritual intelligence (González, 2009). As seen in these pages, emotional awareness and self-awareness, as well as humor and laughter, should be part of the teaching-learning process at school and throughout life.

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