

# EDUCATOR'S REFLECTION ON PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES CHANGES<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This study investigates early childhood educators' perception about changes generated in their pedagogical practice in the dimensions of knowing, being and doing, after participating in a training process focused on emotional education and psychoaffective child development in Colombia. In order to understand how pedagogical practices had changed after their participation in the Program's training, a qualitative research was conducted, applying qualitative questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 50 educators participating in the training. Results indicate positive changes in theoretical and didactical knowledge, sensitivity to children, as well as professional and personal satisfaction. Participants appreciated especially the training's focus on their own emotional dimension and the recognition of their history, since they feel a high emotional charge considering the combination of the

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children's situations they experience during their work, as well as their own personal background. The results of the study show the need to keep in mind the dimensions being, knowing and doing during the training process of educators, in order to allow a profound understanding of theoretical concepts and practical implications. At the same time, the results raise the question of an ongoing psychological and educational support for educators, in order to allow a permanent reflection of their own emotional reactions to the difficult situations they face in their work, and thus achieve an improvement in their teaching practice.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education; Emotional Education; Pedagogical Practice; Teacher Training; Early Childhood

### **Reflection of educators on their pedagogical practices changes**

Since 2006 in Colombia, social construction of public politics contributing to guarantee comprehensive care (Care, attention, nutrition and early childhood education) for children younger than 6 years of age has strengthened (Law 1098 of 2006, CONPES 109 of 2007, CONPES 123 of 2009). The Ministry of National Education (MEN) has led the formulation and the practical implementation of early childhood educational policy, which seeks to generate the required capacity in order for vulnerable children younger than 5 years of age to exercise their right to an opportune, pertinent and quality early childhood education, in order to assure a comprehensive development for the children in the country (MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION, 2012).

Human talent training in early childhood field represents one of the strategies taken by the Ministry of National Education to assure a comprehensive attention in Early Childhood Education. Through the construction of dialogue and the creation of consciousness build on new knowledge in early childhood field, this strategy seeks to build a permanent process of reconstruction and reorientation in the way of connecting with children (MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION, 2014).

The program of Psychoactive Development and Emotional Education represents one of the initiatives that seek to attend the need of training among early childhood educators. To the current study, the Program, which is owned by the University Del Norte, was carried out in the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 in agreement

with the Department of National Education – MEN, and in 2015- 2016 was carried out with Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF).

The program's teacher training qualifies educators in children's development and emotional education in order to promote emotional health and comprehensive development in childhood through the expression of emotions and the resolution of conflicts inherent to its evolutionary moment. The methodology of the program's training process is mainly based on the professional and personal reflection through theoretical concepts to get to a resignification of knowledge and practices. Additionally, the Program guarantees close psychologist counseling during the training process that directly orientates and advises on educators' tasks and professional and personal reflection processes.

Early education professorship's training in the development of emotional competences is justified not only from educators' need to learn facing and handling diverse complicated emotional situations with their students, but also from the need to encourage emotional capacities among children. In terms of early childhood educator's needs, studies have shown this job brings high stress levels (DEL VALLE LÓPEZ & BRAVO, 2007; GUPTA & BLEWETT, 2007; JACK & DONNELLAN, 2010; PADILLA ET AL., 2009). Some professionals reported psychosomatic symptoms such as strong back pains, insomnia or frequent headaches. Feelings of huge responsibility like the children's lives and difficult situations are considered as the main factors that affect professionals' health. Other factors mentioned are the lack of support from institutions, colleagues or superiors, and other factors related to work conditions such as contractual instability, excessive bureaucracy, lack of resources, schedules and shifts (DEL VALLE ET AL., 2007; JACK & DONNELLAN, 2009).

Regarding children's needs, the educator's importance for their healthy development and a quality education is clearly evidenced (ANCHETA, 2013; GARNER MAHATMYA, MOSES, & BOLT, 2014; GiaLAMANS, SAWYER, MITTINTY, ZUBRICK, & LYNCH 2014). The educator is considered a fundamental actor in educative process through his pedagogical practices, which fundamentally contribute to learning process and children's development. In Colombia, early

childhood educators have various professional profiles; evidenced by the different level of professional education. During their daily work they have to deal with complex emotional problems, resulting of the social environments in which they work, often characterized by severe social issues such as extreme poverty, domestic and social violence, substance abuse, malnutrition and basic education shortage. In many cases it is to add that the majority of educators are originally from similar social backgrounds, which creates a double emotional charge: the own they might bring from their own history and from which they haven't recovered most of the time, and the own resulting from the work with children living in vulnerable situations (PROGRAM OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHO-AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT, PISOTÓN, 2013; SANTOS & DIAS 2013). Another aspect, reported by Morales, Quilanqueo and Uribe (2010), is a lack of educative intentionality among educators when taking over on pedagogical tasks.

The diversity of professional profiles among early childhood educators in Colombia (professional teacher, teacher assistant, community mother, psychologist, pedagogue, etc.) and social context of vulnerability lead to the need of train educators in emotional education to strengthen their pedagogical methods, in order to assure not only their well-being but also the children's one.

The question "how to improve educators' pedagogical practices?" leads us to reflect and inquire about which are the aspects that determine their professional practice. In this context, Dall'Alba and Sandberg (2006) argue the fact that professional development, in case of educators and pedagogical practices, is not only based in the acquisition of knowledge: although new knowledge can open the path toward learning and development, it does not necessarily lead to them. To generate learning process that stimulates professional development or transformation, a reflection process as connector between theory and practice is necessary (RIOJAS-CORTEZ, ALANIS, & BUSTOS FLORES, 2013). In this way, several studies showed that the best learning process during educators training is produced through reflection, both on proper practice as well as on others practice. (BAKKENES,

VERMUNT, & WUBBELS, 2010; LYNCH, MCNAMARA, & SEERY, 2012; SELKRIG & KEAMY 2015).

Hoekstra y Korthagen (2011) extended the concept of reflection toward personal and internal reflection; they say that change in practice is not only based on rational processes but also on emotional and motivational aspects. The authors suggest a professional development model that implies internal factors such as a better awareness of personal cognitive and affective processes and reflection on frustrations and motivations.

Following this approach, Timstsuk and Ugaste (2012) look into the importance of positive and negative emotions in an educator's professional identity development and suggest a mutual relation between emotions and practices. Authors recommend training educators to recognize and express their own emotions in order to identify them in others. In this way several authors recommend to include internal and external appraisal in form of auto-evaluation, peer-coaching or coaching in professional development processes (SON, KWON, JEON, & HONG, 2013; LYNCH, MANNIX MCNAMARA, & SEERY, 2012; WARFORD 2011).

The discussion around professional development concept through literature shows different formative components linked with this development process: knew knowledge, professional reflection, personal reflection and practical application. These components are consistent with the definition of the pedagogical practices concept suggested by the Psycho-affective Development and Emotional Education Program (Pisotón), focused in the dimensions Knowing, Being and Doing, which result from an understanding of educator's pedagogical practices based on relational dimension more than on technological dimension (GIESECKE, 1987; LA PARO, PIANITA & STUHLMAN, 2004; VAN MANEN, 2008). In this way, pedagogical practices are built on knowledge (Knowing), personality and personal background (Being) and pedagogue's daily work (Doing), as it describes an intentional relation based on theoretical reflection. In this way, the intentionality requires a reflection of acts and activities, using theoretical concepts, which together with the experience

acquired during work life, shape the professional knowledge of the pedagogue and form a fundamental pillar of his practice.

Understanding pedagogical practice as a social interaction between educator and educated shows how the pedagogue's Being influences his practice. His personality as much as his personal background shape his interaction skills since human actions are never based only on rationality but are mainly the product of non-rational emotions, generationally inherited and culturally and socially influenced. These two dimensions, Knowing and Being, determinate at once the educator's Doing, understood as the interactions and activities conducted by the him during his working day.

In this framework, the Program's training pretended to create a change in pedagogical practices among participating educators, by the integration of new knowledge, professional and personal reflection and practical application. From that perspective, it was understood that analyze of pedagogical practices would involve all three dimensions. As a consequence, the research question focuses on the results of the training in the participant's pedagogical, taking into account their knowledge, being and doing, leading by that to a deeper understanding of the aspects that contribute to the transformation of pedagogical practice. Therefore the question that guided this study was: What are the changes that educative agents perceive in the dimensions of Being, Knowing and Doing in their pedagogical practices after taking part of the graduate diploma?

## Method

The present study has a qualitative design based on the Research, Action and Participation (IAP) perspective, which aims to solve everyday problems and improve specific practices by promoting social changes in the participants. According to Hernandez Sampieri (2014), this type of design not only allows the production of new knowledge, but aims to make the participants aware of their daily practices and

the need to optimize them. This way, they can improve the mode their actions impact the lives of others.

The data in the study was gathered through a semi-structured interview and a qualitative questionnaire that analyzed the pedagogical practices of teachers who participated in the Psycho-affective Development and Emotional Education Program (Pisotón). The idea was to understand the way their pedagogical practices changed after participating in the Program's training.

During the first phase of this study, the participants filled out the qualitative questionnaire in which their personal and professional experiences as educative agents were reflected. This survey explored specifically the emotional impact their daily work has on themselves. Additionally, the interviews explored dimensions of Being, Knowing and Doing of pedagogical practice, from the educator's perspective (see instruments categories table 1). In the second phase, all educative agents shaping the study population participated in a second interview with extensive questions, to analyze the changes resulting from the training that participants had underwent as part of this research study.

Table 1. Axis of investigation

<b>Di mension</b>	<b>Category</b>
<b>Knowing</b>	Concept: Early childhood and Child development
	Concept: Psycho-affective Development
	Role Perception as educator
	Concept: Early education
<b>Being</b>	Type of motivation for being educator
	Type of frustration as educator
	Personal strengths to help children
	Significant moments in the career
	Adverse moments in the career
	Most striking situations with children
	Other achievements in personal environment
<b>Doing</b>	Activities, tools and strategies
	Changes in the interaction agents-children

Own elaboration

During the data collection process the Program's research team developed information analysis guides. Atlas ti software 6.0 supported the qualitative analyze. Content analyze technic (BARDIN, 2002) was used and completed with descriptive matrices (QUESADA, 2010) in order to conduct the comparison before and after.

### **a) Population and sample**

From a total population of 3076 educative agents, 50 participated in this study, spread over 16 states of the country. The sample was selected from the 31 training groups in the different states of the country (Amazonas, Antioquia, Armenia, Bolívar, Boyacá, Caldas, Casanare, Cundinamarca, Guaviare, Huila, Magdalena, Nariño, Putumayo, Santander, Sucre and Tolima). All the participants took the qualitative survey individually before and after the qualification process. The selection criteria were: participation in the Psycho-affective Development and Emotional Education Program training, agents type variety (Community Mothers, preschool teacher, etc.) and being in charge of groups of children between 4 and 6 years old.

Women represented 98,4% of the participants. The majority of the agents were between 31 and 50 years old. Among the participants, 4,5% belong to the Afro community, 3,3% belong to the native community. The majority did not belong to any ethnic group. Regarding the type of educator, the majority were part of the modality "*De Cero a Siempre*" (43,4%), followed by community mothers (*Madres Comunitarias*) (17,6%) and the transitional educators of state institutions (*Docentes Transición de Entidades Estatales*) as well as the teachers of children homes (*Hogares Infantiles*) (12,3%). Most of the participants worked in urban zones (93%).

Most of the agents work with groups of 10 to 29 children and have extended experience in early childhood work; more than half (54,5%) indicated to have worked in this field for more than 7 years, 13,9% count with experience between 5 and 7 years.



## Results

Results are divided in two parts according to dimensions Being and Knowing. In each part educator's pedagogical practices perspective is presented before and after the course, and in association with the implications on its Doing.

### a) Changes in the dimension Being and implications on the Doing

In the dimension Being, categories related to educator's frustrations and motivations as well as significant situations during their career, skills to help with children and most striking situations during their career (see table 3).

During interviews conducted before the training course, the most notable educator's frustrations were impotence regarding the children's difficult situations and parents' lack of interest. Some agents mentioned lack of career advancement and a missing learning process of children.

On the other hand, a need of professional recognition was observed, as well as a low professional self-esteem. Educators expressed the fact that sometimes they lose motivation for their work when they feel their efforts are not recognized: "When my work is not recognized I feel that I am doing nothing; but then my conscience speaks to me and makes me feel like a hero" (TEACHER, CASANARE, 45 YEARS OLD).

As far as their motivation to be educators almost half of them answer that they feel this profession is their vocation; to be teacher has always been a dream for these educators, they played to be teacher since they were kids, they love working with children and it was simply the right decision to finally follow their wish. Others would answer that they chose to be teacher after a changing life experience, or the birth of their child, since being an educator allows them to be with their child during working.

Regarding their skills to help children, a large number answered that these are based on their personal and emotional qualities. Several mentioned their affection and love towards children as their main skill: "My love, support, comprehension, trust, make them feel I am their friend and the defender of their rights" (TEACHER,

CALDAS, 34 YEARS OLD). As personal attributes they mentioned patience and tolerance.

With regard to the question about work situations that impacts them most; they mentioned situations of child abuse and neglect they witness.

Table 2. Results for dimension Being

Category	Statement before	Statement after
Frustration as educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Helplessness regarding children situations</li> <li>-Absence or lack of interest from children's parents</li> <li>-Lack of career advancement.</li> <li>- Lack of improvement in children's situations / not achieving goals</li> <li>- Lack of support from institution</li> <li>- Lack of recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-After statements evidence educator's changed perspective regarding the possibilities to achieve their goals regarding the children and their parents:</li> <li>- More support from the parents. Better relation parents-agents.</li> <li>- Professional confidence increased</li> <li>- Agents feel more capable to face difficult situations of children</li> <li>- More satisfaction at work</li> </ul>
Most impacting situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Child abuse</li> <li>-Negligence situations</li> <li>-Children's sadness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Empowerment and greater knowledge to face complicated situations with children</li> </ul>
Other achievement in personal environment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflection on their own positive and negative experiences. They expressed a better attitude toward changes.</li> </ul>

Own elaboration

Interviews performed in the second stage of the investigation, show that the training affects educator's Being in various ways; in their personal life, in their frustrations, in their aspirations, in their happiness and sadness. Some educators expressed to have started a personal reflection. They explained that, through the reflection on their personal experiences and on the influence of educators in their own life, they came to understand their own influence in a child's life. They understood that their actions have an impact on children's life and development:

“What strikes us the most is the eternal memory an educator leaves in another human being, as a print. This was the most significant for us (COMMUNITY MOTHER, HUILA, 48 YEARS OLD).”

Some educators state they have reflected on sad events or traumas they have carried around all their life. In this process they mentioned the importance of the psychologists' counseling. By experiencing the benefit of expressing feelings for their own emotional well-being, increased their willingness to listen attentiveness to children, to know their feelings and their family situations. Asking what was their main learning during this training process, one educator said:

The importance of listening. Children must be listened and we must try to put ourselves in their shoes, what do children really want, it is very important to listen to children. Because they might be telling us something that is very important to them, so it is not only to listen but also to understand what we listen from them. (TEACHER MODALITY “DE CERO A SIEMPRE”, ANTIOQUIA, 22 YEARS OLD).

On the other hand educators explained they are more confident at work: “Now I received more bases, more confidence” (FOSTER HOME TEACHER, TOLIMA, 45 YEARS OLD)”. The clarity they gained on different pedagogical and psychological concepts from the training, contributed to make them feel more capable in their daily work and when facing parents' doubts and questions.

A group of teachers highlighted that this empowerment gave them more satisfaction at work: “Thanks to that today I understood the importance of my work, I learnt to enjoy it and it gave me a lot of satisfaction being part of these children's early development and being able to build a better relation with their parents” (TEACHER MODALITY “DE CERO A SIEMPRE”, HUILA, 43 YEARS OLD). In this way they reported feeling more empowered and more capable to handle the frustrations their work brings:

One can count on a good methodology, a good planning, there is no room for fights, conflicts, bad temper, bad situations that make you think: ‘That's it, I'm tired. I had enough’. No. For me it has been like fresh air to carry on. (Transitional State Institution Teacher, Boyacá, 42 years old).

### b) Changes in the dimension Knowing and their implications in Doing

In this dimension, concepts of early childhood, child development, psycho-affective development and early education are investigated, based on educator's knowledge. Educators' role in the child's process was also questioned in this area (see table 2 results summary for this dimension).

Table 3. Results in dimension Knowing

Category	Statement before	Statement after
Concept: Early Childhood and Child Development	Early childhood: - Stage of life - Chronological moment - Naive perspective - Educator's action toward the child  Child development: - Stage - Evolutionary development - Process/Change - Educator's action toward the child	- They expressed to have learnt a lot about child development - They realized that children are integrated Beings  -They understand each child's singularity -They understand that children are capable, active Beings with their own background
Concept: Psycho-affective Development	- Emotional - Relational activity - Bound	- They acknowledge the importance and understand that the child's behavior reflects his psychological and emotional dimension  -They understand the importance to express feelings  - They understand that psycho-affective development is linked to other dimension of the child's development
Educator's perception on his role	- Guide, support and facilitate - Foster - Comprehensive care - Madre/Padre	-Importance of supporting and guiding the child in his development process
Concept: early education	- A stage that prepares children for school in order to ease reading and writing before entering it.  - Stage perceived as indispensable for childhood development	- Generate significant experiences that stimulate their interest and make them capable to interact in the world that surrounds them (exploration, expression)  -They identify playing and ludic activities as main tools

	- They still see Early Education as a preparation for a better future or for school entry
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Own elaboration

Though content analyze it was observed that before the training little certainty existed on pedagogical and psychological concepts currently discussed in Colombia. Educator's tendency was to explain concepts through their own perspective and through their actions with the children. The understanding of Early Education through traditional concepts was brought to light, where educator's role consists in knowledge transmission and in preparing children for their scholar life.

Answers of second stage surveys evidence that educators still don't have a complete clarity about the official definition of investigated concepts; however, changes in educators' statements and approaches have been observed. Learning about child development and psycho-affective processes had a great impact on educators. They expressed to have learnt a lot on child development in general and psycho-affective in especially: "I have been able to understand a lot of concepts that sometimes I might have understood wrong or mistaken" (COMMUNITY MOTHER, NARIÑO, 41 YEARS OLD)

It is to highlight that they manage to recognize the importance of psycho-affective dimension in their work. Some educators reported to not have had any knowledge about children psycho-affective development or their role in it. After participating in the training they understood that the most important part of their job is to support children in their development process, identifying possible difficulties and situations they live and that might have an impact on their emotional and general development. They acknowledge the importance to be attentive to any changing behavior or state of mood, in order to find out causes through dialogue with children.

In this context educative agents explained that their participation in the training and the new knowledge acquired contributed to understand that the children's behavior reflects their psychological dimension, which depends mainly on

their social and family environment: “We realized that the problem is not in the child but in the environment surrounding him” (TRANSITIONAL STATE INSTITUTION TEACHER, HUILA, 38 YEARS OLD). Additionally, they managed to understand that there is a relationship between the different development dimensions, and they mentioned to have understood that they cannot approach only one aspect of development without taking into account the others, since children must be considered as integral Beings:

Yes. Children must be handled as integral Beings, because the child must not only come to school to be filled with cognitive learning but also because he needs to come and be happy, to talk about things that are happening at home, to talk about his neighborhood, his community, things that worry him, things he wonders about, things that are problematic for him. (TRANSITIONAL STATE INSTITUTION TEACHER, SANTANDER, 62 YEARS OLD).

Having a much deeper understanding of development processes allows a better sensibility to face children’s situations. Educators indicated to pay more attention to mood states and to be able to identify them in a better way. Additionally, they explained that the tools they learned during the training helped them a lot to identify children’s feelings and experiences.

The children’s experiences, the stories they tell about their day to day life, through the Program’s tales I could tell, or I could realize things that happened to them at home. Yes, communicate and express the necessities they have in their family life. (MODALITY “DE CERO A SIEMPRE” TEACHER, 29 YEARS OLD).

Educator’s statements makes clear that participating in the training allowed them to change their approach to the child and childhood. They understood that “each child is one world”, each child has a story and a particular context that must be taken into account in order to deal with them. They also realized that children arrive at the educative institution not only with their own personality but also with their background and experiences in mind. They understand that they come with prior knowledge that must be taken into account when teaching them: “I have learnt that I must do everything based on the child’s experience, his prior knowledge, the needs he has” (MODALITY “DE CERO A SIEMPRE” TEACHER, HUILA, 43 YEARS OLD).

They explained to have understood that children have an opinion and are able to think on different subjects and on their lives. They acknowledged that children often know what they want, they know what they like and what they don't, and that it is necessary to keep in mind their opinion in day-to-day activities planning and execution: "We asked them what they wanted to do, how they wanted to work, how they want to paint, and from what they express we built the class, we take into account their opinion" (MODALITY "DE CERO A SIEMPRE" PEDAGOGICAL ASSISTANT, HUILA 38 YEARS OLD).

By recognizing that children already come with knowledge, that kids are active and participative beings, educators have changed their approach on early education from a traditional approach, based on school knowledge transmission as well as norms and values inculcation, to a concept of interactive, participative and varied education that promotes exploration and expression: "Many times we had it wrong because we were worried to teach them how to read and how to write without taking into account their psycho-affective development" (TRANSITIONAL STATE INSTITUTION, HUILA, 54 YEARS OLD). They reach to identify game and ludic activities as main tools in this process. Likewise, many educators understood that activities must be conducted with a pedagogical purpose: "I realize that through ludic method children can express all their feelings" (PEDAGOGICAL COORDINATOR MODALITY "DE CERO A SIEMPRE", TOLIMA, 38 YEARS OLD).

Some educators explained that the new approach to early education and childhood development contributed to consolidate their daily practices. They mentioned they included new strategies and new tools that made their daily activity more varied and participative. They explained to have understood that children need to explore and that significant learning process is reached by own experiences. Some educators added that the participation in the training process brought them to reflect on their own practices, realizing what they were doing wrong: "I have been able to change the things I was doing wrong, because I learnt that I was mistaken in not having enough contact with the children" (TEACHER MODALITY "DE CERO A SIEMPRE", SANTANDER, 37 YEARS OLD).

One aspect that was hard to understand for educators even after their participation in the training process, was the idea that Early Education cannot be approached as a “preparation for...”. Many educators mentioned that the Early Education importance is based on its preparatory function to school life and adult life.

## Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to identify changes in the educators' perception on pedagogical practices through their participation in the Psycho-affective Development and Emotional Education training process. To this end, pedagogical practices were associated to the dimensions of Knowing, Being and Doing. The results found in this study indicate that their participation in the training process in fact brings changes to the educators' perception on their work, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of their day-to-day practice, and positioning the emotional support and guidance at the center of their relationship with the children. These findings support research that affirms the effectiveness of teacher training focusing children's emotional development (DOLEV & LESHEM, 2016).

Results evidence a wider knowledge of emotional education concepts and a change in educators' approaches of early childhood, child development and psycho-affective development. However, educators' statements reveal that despite the change of perspective the lack of clarity around some theoretical concepts persist, which could suggest that is important to keep training the educators in those aspects. Knowledge expansion is mainly explained by personal and professional reflection processes they performed during the training, not only individually but also collectively, leading to a reflection on their role in children's development process.

Educators reported that their participation in the training allowed them to begin a reflection on their work and their educative role. They achieved to understand that their role is to support the child in all the different areas that



influence his development, and that their pedagogical practices must be focused in the construction of a relationship based on the child's trust, drawn from listening and expression more than knowledge transmission. The reflection on their own experiences during their childhood helped them to understand their actions' possible impact on children (positive and negatives) resulting in a better sensibility regarding the children's situations and behavior.

Changes perceived by educators in their pedagogical practices indicate that the methodology used in the training process, based on personal and professional reflection on the dimensions Knowing, Doing and Being, led them to change perception on their pedagogical practices. The results show that it is important to recognize educators in their professional dimension but also, and more importantly, in their personal dimension related to their emotions and their background. In this sense, findings support previous research emphasizing a holistic approach to teachers' professional identity, including their personal biography (AMAYA DE REBOLLEDO & AMAYA, 2010; BUKOR, 2015; HSIEH, 2015).

Teaching practice has been related with high emotional charge, resulting out of working with children and their emotional situations as well as high workload and perceived injustice (CHEN, 2015; DEL VALLE ET AL., 2007; ESTEVES-FERREIRAS, SANTOS & RIGOLON, 2014; GUPTA & BLEWETT, 2007; JACK & DONNELLAN, 2010; SASSON & SOMECH, 2015). High emotional charge was also evidenced in this study, both in the professional as well as in the personal scope, suggesting the importance of personal reflection in order to understand the educator's reactions to children's behavior or situations on the background of its own life situation and history. Through this reflection educators gained awareness of their own emotions and emotional reactions, a process that has shown to have a positive impact in emotion regulation processes (MESA, GÓMEZ 2013). Riojas- Cortes et al., (2013) recommend that this reflection process must be realized in a safe environment to enable the questioning of own beliefs, theories and conflictive practice.

Another important aspect of pedagogical practice found in the present study, is the feeling of frustration and impotence, especially in conditions of vulnerability.

Earlier research has already drawn attention to educator's moral dilemmas and frustrations (COLNERUD, 2015; PILLEN, BEIJAARD & BROCK, 2013). External restrictions as well as internal moral imperatives can cause conflicts accompanied by negative emotions. Pillen, Beijaard and Brock (2013) suggest paying more attention to educators' moral dilemmas and frustrations to help them in developing their professional identity as well as manage ambiguity and feelings of guilt related to their practice.

The proposal of a professional development model including the different aspects of pedagogical practices is based on the assumption that a change in knowledge only does not necessarily lead to a change in practice. Professional development cannot be reduced to a learning dimension such as theoretical knowledge. In this way Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) developed an Interconnected Model for teacher's professional development programs, describing professional development as a learning process in which the different mechanisms leading to this learning must be identified. In accordance with the results of the present study, the authors emphasize the importance of personal and contextual aspects in the development of pedagogical practices, describing this development as a personal mix of practice, meanings and context (CLARKE & HOLLINGSWORTH, 2002, p. 965).

The results of the present study confirm the importance of the personal and emotional dimension in pedagogical practices transformation. Changes observed in educator's perspectives on pedagogical practices are not only based on required knowledge but also, and more importantly, on personal reflection. It shows that professional development must be supported by internal changes that have an effect on pedagogical practices.

Additionally, the results are in line with the current discussion about the importance of an emotional education. The study suggests that the same emotional education principles must be applied to educators training, most of all in vulnerability contexts. In this way a training approach must include the educator as an integral being whom personal experience and emotional state significantly

influence his pedagogical practice and his satisfaction at work (YIN, 2015). To this end, educators' training must incentivize and provide a safe space for reflection and expression of emotion and personal experiences related to work. These reflection processes should be accompanied by theoretical understanding of child development. At the same time, personal reflection allows a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts and their implications on education. As an example, learning about human development processes helps the educator to understand his own history and experiences from a theoretical point of view, concurrently, the reflection on his background through the theoretical concepts allow a deeper understanding of these as well as their implications in practice.

Educators' needs of psychological and pedagogical support during the training as evidenced in this study raise the question of an ongoing and permanent support for these professionals, since they are often facing heavy emotional situations. To be able to answer adequately to these situations educators need to be conscious of their emotional reactions and be able to reflect on them, in order to avoid a negative impact on their practices.

From a qualitative point of view, this study presents an approximation in educators' pedagogical practices changes and the positive effects of a training focused on the professional knowing, doing and being dimensions. Results indicate that such approach can produce a changing impact on educators and their practices. However, this study is focused on changes achieved by the training from the educators' perceptions. Further investigations will need to corroborate the effect of perspective changes in long term. Additionally, it is necessary to get a deeper understanding of each dimension's effects within participants' professional development.

# REFLEXIÓN DE AGENTES EDUCATIVOS SOBRE CAMBIOS EN SUS PRÁCTICAS PEDAGÓGICAS

**Resumen:** En este estudio se indagó por la percepción de agentes educativos de la primera infancia sobre los cambios generados en su práctica pedagógica en las dimensiones del saber, ser y hacer a partir del diplomado del Programa de Educación y Desarrollo Psicoafectivo en Colombia. Con el fin de comprender cómo las prácticas pedagógicas cambiaron después de la participación en el diplomado del Programa, se realizó una investigación cualitativa en la que se aplicaron una encuesta cualitativa y una entrevista semi-estructurada de forma individual a 202 agentes educativos que participaron en el diplomado. Los resultados indicaron cambios positivos en cuanto al conocimiento teórico y didáctico, la sensibilidad hacia los niños, la satisfacción laboral y personal. Los participantes valoraron como fundamental el enfoque en la dimensión emocional y en el reconocimiento de su historia, ya que sienten una carga emocional alta durante su labor, tanto relacionada con las situaciones que presencian en los niños y niñas como también relacionada con su propio pasado. Los resultados del estudio evidencian la necesidad de tener presente las dimensiones ser, saber y hacer durante una cualificación de agentes educativos, para permitir una comprensión profunda de los conceptos teóricos y sus implicaciones en la práctica. Al mismo tiempo, los resultados plantean la pregunta por un acompañamiento psicológico y pedagógico continuo para los agentes educativos, con el fin de permitir una reflexión permanente de las propias reacciones emocionales frente a las situaciones difíciles con las cuales se enfrentan en su labor, y lograr de esta forma un mejoramiento de sus prácticas pedagógicas.

**Palabras-Claves:** Educación inicial; Educación Emocional; Prácticas Pedagógicas; Formación de Profesores; Primera Infancia.

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