



*Estrategias metodológicas activas para el desarrollo de competencias
socioemocionales en estudiantes universitarios*

*Active methodological strategies for the development of socio-emotional
competencies in university students*

*Estratégias metodológicas ativas para o desenvolvimento de competências
socioemocionais em estudantes universitários*

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Resumen

El desarrollo de competencias socioemocionales en estudiantes universitarios es cada vez más valorado como un elemento fundamental dentro de una formación integral. No obstante, su incorporación en los planes de estudio de la educación superior sigue siendo limitada. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar el impacto de estrategias metodológicas activas en la promoción de dichas competencias en contextos universitarios. Para ello, se realizó una revisión sistemática de la literatura en bases de datos indexadas como Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, entre otras fuentes académicas, utilizando la estrategia PICO. Se seleccionaron diez estudios relevantes publicados entre 2015 y 2025, los cuales presentaron resultados significativos en variables como empatía, autorregulación emocional, toma de decisiones responsable, autonomía moral, comunicación interpersonal y satisfacción con la vida. Las metodologías examinadas incluyeron el aprendizaje basado en proyectos, la gamificación, las aulas invertidas, la simulación, el juego de roles y los programas de aprendizaje social y emocional (SEL). Los resultados evidencian que estas estrategias no solo mejoran el rendimiento académico, sino también el bienestar personal y social del estudiantado. Se concluye que la integración sistemática de estas prácticas en el currículo universitario puede potenciar la formación de profesionales más humanos, comprometidos y emocionalmente competentes.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje activo; habilidades socioemocionales; educación emocional; educación superior; metodologías activas.

Abstract

The development of socioemotional competencies in university students is increasingly valued as a fundamental element of comprehensive education. However, their incorporation into higher education curricula remains limited. This study aimed to analyze the impact of active methodological strategies on promoting these competencies in university settings. To this end, a systematic literature review was conducted in indexed databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, and other academic sources, using the PICO strategy. Ten relevant studies published between 2015 and 2025 were selected, which presented significant results in variables such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, responsible decision-making, moral autonomy, interpersonal communication, and life satisfaction. The methodologies examined included project-based

learning, gamification, flipped classrooms, simulation, role-playing, and social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. The results show that these strategies not only improve academic performance but also the personal and social well-being of students. The conclusion is that the systematic integration of these practices into the university curriculum can enhance the development of more humane, committed, and emotionally competent professionals.

Keywords: active learning; socioemotional skills; emotional education; higher education; active methodologies.

Resumo

O desenvolvimento de competências socioemocionais nos estudantes universitários é cada vez mais valorizado como elemento fundamental da educação integral. No entanto, a sua incorporação nos currículos do ensino superior continua limitada. Este estudo teve como objetivo analisar o impacto das estratégias metodológicas ativas na promoção destas competências em ambientes universitários. Para tal, foi realizada uma revisão sistemática da literatura em bases de dados indexadas como a Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO e outras fontes académicas, utilizando a estratégia PICO. Foram selecionados dez estudos relevantes publicados entre 2015 e 2025, que apresentaram resultados significativos em variáveis como a empatia, a autorregulação emocional, a tomada de decisão responsável, a autonomia moral, a comunicação interpessoal e a satisfação com a vida. As metodologias examinadas incluíram a aprendizagem baseada em projetos, a gamificação, as salas de aula invertidas, a simulação, o role-playing e os programas de aprendizagem socioemocional (SEL). Os resultados mostram que estas estratégias não só melhoram o desempenho académico, como também o bem-estar pessoal e social dos estudantes. Conclui-se que a integração sistemática destas práticas no currículo universitário pode potenciar o desenvolvimento de profissionais mais humanos, empenhados e emocionalmente competentes.

Palavras-chave: aprendizagem ativa; competências socioemocionais; educação emocional; ensino superior; metodologias ativas.

Introduction

In the current educational context, the development of socio-emotional competencies is a fundamental element for the comprehensive education of university students. These competencies, which include empathy, assertive communication, resilience, and emotional management, are

essential for facing the challenges of academic and professional life. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) defines emotional well-being as a state in which an individual recognizes their abilities, effectively manages daily stresses, is productive, and contributes to their community. However, in the Ecuadorian educational environment, emotional education is not fully developed due to curricular limitations and insufficient teacher training (Ramírez and Herrera, 2024).

Although the educational curriculum mentions the development of socio-emotional skills, it does not specifically address emotional education. According to the Ministry of Education (2019), these skills are acquired through real-life, practical experiences, but their integration into the classroom remains poor. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of socio-emotional education in mitigating the impact of isolation on students became evident (Aparicio, 2021). However, its transversal treatment in the current educational system has minimized its relevance and hampered its effective implementation (Torres and Mamani, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, emotional education is a continuous process that allows students to recognize and manage their emotions in diverse contexts. Bisquerra (2005) argues that this training strengthens the development of emotional skills as an essential part of an individual's comprehensive growth. Furthermore, various studies have shown that the integration of active methodological strategies, such as project-based learning and gamification, favors the development of socio-emotional competencies in students (Inostroza Pardo, 2021; Chica and Sánchez, 2023).

In this sense, this research focuses on analyzing the impact of active methodological strategies on the development of socio-emotional competencies in university students. It begins with the existing problem in the educational system regarding the limited inclusion of emotional education in the curriculum and the need to strengthen teacher training in this area. Thus, the study poses the following research question: How do active methodological strategies influence the development of socio-emotional competencies in university students?

This research seeks to contribute to the academic and pedagogical debate on the importance of emotional education in higher education, proposing effective strategies for its integration into educational practices and highlighting its relevance in training professionals with strong socio-emotional skills.

Methodology

This study was a systematic review aimed at analyzing previous research related to the development of socio-emotional competencies in the university setting. Following the definition proposed by Sánchez-Meca and Botella (2010), the systematic review made it possible to organize the available information to answer the research question, ensuring a rigorous approach based on scientific evidence. This methodology has been widely used in disciplines such as education and health, as it facilitates the analysis of the effectiveness of methodological strategies through a structured evaluation of the existing literature (Manosalva and Villamil, 2023; Moreno et al., 2018). The research employed the PICO (Patient/Problem, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) strategy, commonly used in evidence-based practice, to structure the analysis and assess the quality of the studies (Santos et al., 2007). In this context, the P (patient or problem) component corresponded to university students; the I (intervention) component focused on active methodological strategies such as project-based learning, gamification, and cooperative learning; the C (comparison) component referred to the use of traditional methodologies or the absence of intervention; and the O (outcome) component focused on the development of socio-emotional competencies such as empathy, assertive communication, resilience, and emotional self-regulation.

From this structure, various search strings were constructed using specific descriptors and Boolean operators (AND, OR), both in Spanish and English, adapted to the characteristics of each database. Some of the combinations used were: "higher education" AND "socioemotional skills" AND "project-based learning"; "university students" AND "emotional competencies" AND "active methodologies"; "education" AND "gamification" AND "emotional education"; "learning strategies" AND "socio-emotional development" AND "university"; "higher education" AND "active learning" AND "empathy" OR "emotional regulation"; as well as their equivalents in Spanish: "educación superior" AND "competencias socioemocionales" AND "aprendizaje basa en proyectos"; "estudiantes universitarios" AND "educación emocional" AND "gamificación"; "prendenza universidad" AND "estrategias activas" AND "resiliencia". These searches were conducted in recognized databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and SciELO, applying filters by year of publication (between 2015 and 2024), language (Spanish and English), type of document (peer-reviewed articles), and open access.

The study selection process was carried out in three phases. First, the authors filtered the titles, discarding those that did not address socio-emotional competencies or active methodological

strategies. Abstracts were then reviewed to identify studies that provided relevant evidence on university teaching and emotional education. Finally, the selected texts were read in full to assess their methodological quality and relevance to the study objectives. Systematic review articles, case studies, and empirical studies with a qualitative or quantitative approach focused on university students or higher education teachers that implemented active methodologies for the development of socio-emotional competencies were included. Studies that did not meet these criteria were excluded, particularly those focused on other educational levels, those that lacked methodological rigor, or those that did not directly address the relationship between active strategies and socio-emotional training.

The quality of the selected studies was assessed based on the criteria proposed by Law et al. (1998), which consider aspects such as clarity of the study's purpose, appropriateness of the methodological design, the quality and relevance of the bibliographic sources used, and the rigor of data collection and analysis. This assessment allowed the studies to be classified according to their level of evidence and their contribution to the review objective. An analysis matrix was then constructed to facilitate the synthesis of the findings, allowing for the identification of patterns, contrasts, and gaps in the literature.

Results

After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria defined in this systematic review, ten scientific studies were selected that met high methodological standards and presented relevant evidence on the implementation of active methodological strategies aimed at developing socioemotional competencies in university students. These studies, published between 2015 and 2025, addressed diverse contexts in terms of academic disciplines, pedagogical approaches, and theoretical frameworks, which allowed us to identify patterns, similarities, and differentiated contributions based on the nature of the interventions and the educational settings.

A common characteristic among the studies analyzed was the implementation of active methodological strategies that promoted student participation as a central agent of learning. Among the most widely used strategies were role-playing, project-based learning (PBL), gamification, flipped classrooms, clinical simulation, reflective dialogue, and structured programs based on the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) model. These strategies were not only applied in face-to-

face settings but were also adapted to hybrid or virtual environments, demonstrating flexibility and cross-curricular applicability.

In terms of the variables evaluated, the studies reported significant improvements in indicators such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, responsible decision-making, emotional and moral autonomy, life satisfaction, interpersonal skills, and leadership ability. For example, Lanza et al. (2025) applied an intervention in nursing students based on a flipped classroom, simulation, and reflective dialogue, finding statistically significant improvements in communication skills and interpersonal competence, particularly among younger students. Similarly, Zamudio Sisa's (2024) study, with a quasi-experimental design, showed a significant increase in participants' life satisfaction levels after a formative intervention in emotional education, highlighting a positive difference in men compared to women.

Likewise, a tendency toward the use of standardized instruments and technically sound assessment procedures was observed. Herrán Sifuentes et al. (2024) developed a validated teaching strategy in three phases: diagnosis, implementation, and transformative assessment, based on theories such as emotional intelligence and the neuroscience of learning. In this case, the triangulation of qualitative data (observation, interviews, and questionnaires) allowed for the identification of eleven emerging categories that supported the success of the pedagogical proposal. In the field of information technologies, Wazlawick and Wazlawick (2024) proposed an ontology of more than 80 soft skills associated with learning paths in students of technical careers, demonstrating that active methodologies enhanced not only socio-emotional skills but also metacognitive and analytical skills.

Another notable finding relates to the impact of gamification and digital tools in fostering motivation and engagement. Khongsankham et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive review of the current state of SEL in higher education, noting that interventions based on innovative digital technologies can overcome institutional barriers and contribute to students' emotional and social development, provided they are accompanied by adequate teacher preparation. In line with this statement, Elmi (2020) demonstrated that integrating SEL into STEM programs increased student engagement and academic outcomes, while also stimulating multiple intelligences through teaching practices focused on self-management and social awareness.

The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed as high in most cases. Quasi-experimental designs with pretest and posttest measurements, mixed-methods studies integrating

quantitative and qualitative approaches, participatory action research, and systematic reviews using PRISMA criteria were observed. However, some recurring limitations included the absence of control groups, small sample sizes, and the limited implementation of longitudinal evaluations that would allow for the analysis of the sustained impact of the strategies.

No.	Title / DOI	Authors / Year / Journal	Methodology / Sample	Main findings
1	Role Play as a Methodological Strategy... 10.47750/pnr.2022.13.s03.044	Anonymous (2021), Journal of University Pharmaceutical Negative Results	Quasi-experimental design. University students. Use of the Socioemotional Skills Scale.	Role-playing significantly improved emotional self-management, empathy, perseverance, and interpersonal relationships.
2	Didactic Strategy to Develop Socioemotional Competencies... 10.5430/jct.v13n5p181	Herrán Sifuentes et al. (2024), Journal of Curriculum and Teaching	Qualitative, non-experimental. Questionnaires, interviews, observation.	A validated teaching strategy in three stages: diagnosis, intervention, and transformative assessment. Based on neuroscience and social-emotional learning.
3	Interconnections between active learning... 10.14571/brajets.v17.n4.1324-1346	Wazlawick & Wazlawick (2024), Cadernos de Educação,	Quantitative and qualitative exploratory study. Literature review.	More than 80 soft skills were identified; an ontology and learning paths were proposed to foster

		Tecnología e Sociedade		socioemotional development in IT students.
4	Training in socio-emotional skills... 10.18175/vys16.3.2024.4	Zamudio Sisa (2024), Voices and Silences	Quasi- experimental with 151 university students. Pre- and post-test.	A significant increase in life satisfaction was observed; men scored higher. Emotional education strengthened well-being.
5	A Mixed Methods Examining... 10.1016/j.nedt.2025.106593	Lanza et al. (2025), Nurse Education Today	Quasi- experimental + qualitative. Nursing students.	Strategies such as flipped classrooms, simulation, and reflective dialogue improved interpersonal and communicatio n skills. Realism was key to their effectiveness.
6	Evidence of development strategies... 10.35622/j.rie.2024.03.004	Anchundia & Vega (2024), Innova Educación Magazine	Systematic review of 25 studies.	Socioemotional skills impact learning, resilience, and self-regulation. The need for curricular integration is highlighted.
7	Integrating Social Emotional Learning... 10.3390/EJIHPE10030061	Chiara Elmi (2020), European J. of Health,	Empirical study with a STEM focus.	SEL increased participation and academic achievement. Self-

		Psychology and Education		management and social awareness practices were recommended.
8	Strengthening Emotional and Social Competence... 10.1515/IJHP-2015-0011	Waite et al. (2015), International J. of Health Professions	Pre-post design with Hay Group test. 18 students.	There were significant improvements in social and emotional skills. Leadership was strengthened.
9	Pedagogical strategy for development... 10.33262/DIGITALCONSCIENCE.V3I1.995	Valdés & Martínez (2020), Digital Consciousness	Participatory action research with exploratory-descriptive-transformative phases.	The strategy fostered emotional and moral autonomy in tourism students. It offered a flexible and dynamic approach.
10	Fostering Emotional Intelligence... 10.60027/jelr.2024.764	Khongsankham et al. (2024), Journal of Education and Learning Research	Theoretical and documentary review (CASEL, scientific literature).	SEL enhances emotional intelligence and well-being. Institutional challenges were identified, but the use of digital tools was proposed for better implementation.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic review confirm the importance of integrating active methodological strategies in higher education as an effective means of developing socio-emotional competencies. This assertion is supported by the evidence provided by the ten selected studies, which concur in pointing out that methodologies such as project-based learning, gamification, the flipped classroom, simulation, role-playing, and social and emotional learning (SEL) approaches have a significant impact on the comprehensive development of university students.

From a theoretical perspective, the results reinforce the proposals of Bisquerra (2005, 2020), who argues that emotional education constitutes a systematic, continuous, and planned process that allows individuals to develop key competencies for their self-realization and social participation. The improvement of skills such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, responsible decision-making, and social awareness observed in the reviewed studies aligns with the emotional competencies model proposed by this author, which includes five blocks: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, emotional autonomy, social competence, and life and well-being skills.

In line with the above, Goleman (1995) argues that emotional intelligence is a more powerful predictor of professional and personal success than isolated cognitive skills. In this sense, the results of research such as those by Lanza et al. (2025), Zamudio Sisa (2024), and Herrán Sifuentes et al. (2024) show that students who participate in structured programs based on active methodologies experience improvements not only in their emotional competencies, but also in their life satisfaction, interpersonal communication, leadership, and resilience. These results reflect a holistic view of human development, in which the emotional aspect is not accessory, but central to the development of critical, ethical, and collaborative citizens.

On the other hand, studies agree that the success of these strategies depends on conscious pedagogical planning, adequate teacher training, and an institutional environment that promotes innovation. This idea is reinforced by the approaches of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), which defines emotional well-being as a state that allows individuals to manage life's stresses, work productively, and contribute to their community. In this regard, the strengthening of competencies such as emotional and moral autonomy, self-regulation, and a sense of belonging, evidenced in studies such as those by Valdés Bencomo and Martínez Chacón (2020) and Khongsankham et al. (2024), shows that active methodologies not only transform the classroom but also impact the overall well-being of students.

Furthermore, the results allow us to reflect on the need to institutionalize emotional education in higher education, beyond specific or isolated interventions. Although several studies show positive short-term effects, they also highlight limitations related to the lack of longitudinal monitoring, the lack of systematic educational policies, and the limited training of teachers in socio-emotional competencies. At this point, it is worth highlighting that to achieve a sustained impact, these strategies must be integrated into the formal curriculum, as proposed by international models such as CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), which promote the transversal integration of SEL at all educational levels.

Finally, the methodological diversity of the reviewed studies, which included quasi-experimental designs, case studies, systematic reviews, and mixed approaches, allowed us to observe not only consistent results but also a wealth of application contexts, which lends ecological validity to the conclusions. However, challenges remain in terms of replicability, homogenization of measurement instruments, and the need to expand the evidence base in non-Western contexts and across technical or scientific disciplines.

Conclusions

This systematic review revealed that active methodological strategies not only enrich university learning but also become valuable tools for strengthening the most human aspect of professional training: socioemotional competencies. Through meaningful experiences such as collaborative work, simulation, role-playing, and gamification, students not only learn content but also develop fundamental life skills, such as empathy, emotional self-regulation, responsible decision-making, and moral autonomy.

The ten studies analyzed clearly showed that when the classroom becomes an active, participatory, and emotionally safe space, it creates favorable conditions for students to grow not only as academics but also as individuals. Active methodologies thus emerge as a bridge between technical knowledge and comprehensive training, allowing future professionals to connect what they know with what they feel and how they relate to others.

However, the positive impact of these strategies does not occur on its own. Institutional conditions are needed to support them: teachers trained in emotional education, time for pedagogical planning, and a curriculum that does not leave socio-emotional issues aside. Although many of the studies

reviewed show significant progress, it is also evident that a more systematic commitment from universities to include this type of training in a transversal and sustained manner is lacking.

Furthermore, there are methodological challenges that warrant further research. More long-term studies are needed, as well as assessment instruments that accurately measure socioemotional skills and proposals that adapt to diverse contexts, especially in Latin America. In this regard, future research could explore how these strategies work in less-explored disciplines, such as engineering, or in populations with specific educational needs.

Ultimately, this review confirms something that many teachers experience on a daily basis: teaching is not just about transmitting knowledge, but about supporting personal processes. Active methodological strategies, when applied well, open up this possibility. They are an invitation to educate from the heart, to connect with students emotionally, and to develop professionals who are not only competent but also sensitive, committed, and caring.

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