

**SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS IN SOCIAL EDUCATOR ACTIVITY:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL INCLUSION**

**COMPETÊNCIAS SOCIOEMOCIONAIS NA ATIVIDADE DO EDUCADOR SOCIAL:  
IMPLICAÇÕES À INCLUSÃO ESCOLAR**

**COMPETENCIAS SOCIOEMOCIONALES EN LA ACTIVIDAD DEL EDUCADOR  
SOCIAL: IMPLICACIONES PARA LA INCLUSIÓN ESCOLAR**

Sabina VALENTE<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The social educator is a social exchange agent that uses educational intervention strategies. Works mainly with groups and people at risk of social exclusion, which implies that the heterogeneity and complexity of realities are present, and where the emotional link between the professional and the individual in risk is fundamental for the development of this social process. Considering that current social contexts are progressively changing, it is important to analyze the importance of social-emotional skills in the professional activity of the social educator. In this sense, this manuscript had as objective to make a reflection approach on the value of the social educator and the social-emotional skills for the school inclusion. Projects are presented that show the relevance of these skills as training opportunities. Concluding that the social educator faces great challenges today and many success opportunities in resorting to social and emotional learning strategies to bridge racial asymmetries.

**KEYWORDS:** Social educator. Social-emotional skills. School inclusion.

**RESUMO:** O educador social é um agente de mudança social que utiliza estratégias de intervenção educativa. Na sua maioria trabalha com grupos e indivíduos em risco de exclusão social, o que implica um trabalho em que a heterogeneidade e complexidade das realidades estão presentes, e onde o vínculo emocional entre o profissional e o indivíduo em risco é essencial para o desenvolvimento do referido processo social. Considerando que os atuais contextos sociais são progressivamente mais mutantes, torna-se pertinente analisar a importância das competências socioemocionais na atividade profissional do educador social. Neste sentido, o presente artigo teve por objetivo fazer uma abordagem de reflexão sobre o valor do educador social e das competências socioemocionais à inclusão escolar. Apresentam-se projetos que evidenciam a relevância destas competências como oportunidades de capacitação. Concluindo que o trabalho do educador social enfrenta na atualidade grandes desafios e muitas oportunidades de sucesso se recorrer a estratégias de aprendizagem social e emocional para colmatar as assimetrias sociais.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educador social. Competências socioemocionais. Inclusão escolar.

<sup>1</sup> University of Évora (UE), Évora – Portugal. Researcher at the Research Center in Education and Psychology (CIEP-UE). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2314-3744>. E-mail: [sabinav@uevora.pt](mailto:sabinav@uevora.pt)

**RESUMEN:** *El educador social es un agente de cambio social que utiliza estrategias de intervención educativa. Se trabaja principalmente con grupos y personas en riesgo de exclusión social, lo que implica que la heterogeneidad y complejidad de las realidades están presentes, y donde el vínculo emocional entre el profesional y el individuo en riesgo es fundamental para el desarrollo de ese proceso social. Considerando que los contextos sociales actuales son progresivamente más cambiantes, es importante analizar la importancia de las competencias socioemocionales en la actividad profesional del educador social. En este sentido, el presente artículo tuvo como objetivo En este sentido, el presente artículo tuvo como objetivo realizar un acercamiento de reflexión sobre el valor del educador social y las competencias socioemocionales para la inclusión escolar. Se presentan proyectos que muestran la relevancia de estas habilidades como oportunidades de formación. Concluyendo que el trabajo del educador social enfrenta hoy grandes desafíos y muchas oportunidades de éxito si se recurre a estrategias de aprendizaje social y emocional para salvar asimetrías sociales.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Educador social. Competencias socioemocionales. Inclusión escolar.*

## Introduction

In a society marked by rapid change and globalization of information and knowledge, anticipating changes in education requires the interpretation of the necessary skills to be developed in social education professionals, for the benefit of a formation that meets social needs. To this challenge, others are added, such as the one currently experience with the Covid-19 pandemic, which causes changes at a personal, family, professional and social level. All of these changes require the social educator to be competent to face the demands of new contexts and guarantee personal and professional success, respectively.

The social educator is a professional who develops his practice in an action-reflection-action process, which struggles with problems, conflicts and ethical dilemmas (MATEUS, 2016). It should be noted that he works with individuals of different age groups, most of whom are at risk of social exclusion, which implies work in which the heterogeneity and complexity of realities are present, and where the emotional bond between the professional and the individual at risk is essential for the development of that social process. In this sequence, a formation that includes emotional education content is fundamental to the social educator. However, it is worth noting the absence of studies that relate the social educator's emotional or socio-emotional competences to their work effectiveness.

With the objective of making a reflection approach on the social educator and socio-emotional competences in school inclusion, this article systematizes available information and proceeds to a theoretical reflection, starting from a review of scientific publications and information available in official sources, with focus on the work of the social educator with

children and young people, due to its relevance in the inclusion process at school. In a first approach, there is a description of the social education professionals, and an incursion on the importance of emotional education in the initial formation of these professionals. Then, the relevance of social and emotional learning in young people is addressed, as well as some programs for the development of socio-emotional competences, which are assumed to be an essential tool for the work of the social educator. Finally, specific reference is made to the work of the social educator in the school context, specifically with regard to school inclusion in a Covid-19 pandemic situation.

### **The social education professional**

Social education must be conceptualized and explained according to certain factors such as the social context, the political conception, the predominant culture, the economic situation and the educational reality. To understand social education and its need, it is important to consider the changes that concern each of these factors and their consequences in a social context (PETRUS, 1994). According to Pérez Serrano (2010), social education can be related to the socialization process and the individual's life cycle, or focus on specialized education, with the purpose of intervention and treatment of some type of social inadequacy. Therefore, as understood, social education promotes and dynamizes a society that educates and an education that socializes, integrates and helps to avoid, balance and repair risk, difficulty or social conflict (DÍAZ, 2006). In the perspective of Parcerisa (1999), the educational dimension of social education is the one that brings quality of life and social well-being to the individual.

The social educator is the social education professional who works directly with socially disadvantaged and oppressed groups or individuals in their objective and subjective conditions, and exercises activity in the implementation of social policies that have social education as a social promotion practice (PEREIRA, 2019a). For Azevedo (2011), the duty of this professional consists in the empowerment, socialization and social integration of groups and individuals who are at risk of social exclusion or marginalization.

As Mateus (2016) alludes, a positive social integration depends on the social educator, since his work is guided by criteria of professional competence based on methodologies and techniques oriented to the social practice of intervention, which corresponds to a professional space designed in the “point of meeting, and crossing, between the areas of social work and education” (CARVALHO; BAPTISTA, 2004, p. 83, our translation). Thus, the work contexts of this professional can be very diverse, given that he can meet numerous social realities, and

age groups, where he is responsible for creating bridges between the individual, the family, institutions and society in general, and for pointing out ways to solve problems experienced and felt in the contexts that there is intervention (example, homes for the elderly, schools, prisons, hospitals, municipalities). For Valléz (2009), in agreement with the professional context of the social educator, there are three major groups: specialized social education (seeks to help social insertion), socio-cultural animation (supports socio-cultural needs and community development), and adult education. Regarding the problems in which the social educator works, three main groups are considered (VALLÉZ, 2009): population at social risk (example, individuals who were victims of abandonment, neglect and/or abuse), population in a situation of social maladjustment (example, people who are victims of delinquency and/or exclusion), and the general population (example, local development).

In this sequence, it can be said that the social education professional is an agent of social change that uses educational intervention strategies. He acts on social inclusion, social inadequacies and the promotion of autonomy and social well-being. He contributes to community development, to the construction of life projects, gets involved in the training needs of the population in different contexts and develops social and work adaptation. He intervenes particularly in social groups with risky experiences. As Pereira (2019b) indicates, the social educator acts in the implementation of social policies that have social education as one of the social promotion practices, in governmental and non-governmental organizations that help children, adolescents, adults and the elderly in situations of social vulnerability. In other words, they play a pivotal role in society, especially in the context currently experienced by the Covid-19 pandemic, which produces situations of high social vulnerability.

The formation of the social educator arises from the interception of various practices and professional identities, which have in common an educational intentionality and an intervention in and from the most varied contexts (MATEUS, 2016). Thus, he must have the skills to exercise professional activity in an inclusive perspective and promote the development of dynamization activities, using strategies that mobilize the socio-cultural framework of the community and the individual in which he intervenes. In this sense, the professional skills of social educators can be defined according to two dimensions (VALLÉZ, 2009): fundamental skills (encompassing different levels on how to act/intervene, reflect and evaluate in different contexts of their professional practice), and competencies central (which provide methodological tools for work and include the skills: relational and personal; social and communicative; organizational; systemic; learning and development; generated by the exercise of the profession; theoretical and methodological; conductive; cultural; and creative). In the

survey of skills and abilities of the social educator, elaborated by Pereira (2019), we observed that these are centered on the educational permeated by the social, which legitimizes the social educator to be an education professional. However, from the analysis made by Pereira (2019), we highlight the absence of emotional skills, fundamental to any professional, especially to education professionals. For Saarni (2000), emotional competence refers to the degree of an individual's awareness of his own and others' feelings, and whether he is able to act on this awareness, as well as the ability to regulate emotional experience in a effective way to navigate interpersonal relationships. As indicated by Nelson *et al.* (2006), emotional competence assumes a central role among competences, since the earliest forms of social learning are based on non-verbal communication, primarily through the contemplation of the human face. In this way, the recognition of emotions plays a fundamental role in the development of social competence (ROJAHN; ZAJA, 2007).

Mateus (2016) indicates that this professional is a dynamizer of groups, capable of dealing with the affections, emotions, anxieties, successes and disillusionments of individuals, an agent that promotes changes and the use of available human and material resources, either locally or regionally. As such, and being a professional who works directly with socially disadvantaged groups and individuals, at risk or in social exclusion, it implies that he develops a job in which emotional complexity is present. In this sequence, the emotional bond between the social educator and the individual at risk is fundamental for the correct professional performance, as well as the development of socioemotional skills of the individuals at risk are fundamental to a correct social inclusion, as these skills have a decisive importance in all learning and are crucial to human development (FERNÁNDEZ-BERROCAL; EXTREMERA, 2002). Thus, the relevance of formation in emotional education in the social educator is emphasized, with a focus on social and emotional learning programs. Since socio-emotional learning is defined as

the processes through which children and adults effectively acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand, manage emotions, establish, and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2012, p. 4, our translation).

### **Socio-emotional competences that promote student development**

The social educator works in inclusion, inadaptations and in favoring autonomy and well-being, with intervention in diverse and disadvantaged social contexts. In this sequence, the

development of socio-emotional skills at one's own level is an asset so that you can transmit and develop them with the children and young people with whom you work. Nevertheless, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development included in the Programme for International Student Assessment, the assessment of student well-being. This report discusses whether students are happy, whether they feel part of the school, and how much the quality of interpersonal relationships influences their academic performance (OECD, 2019). The evidence for such issues is centered on the understanding that students spend most of their time in a school context and that schools should not only be spaces for academic acquisition, but, above all, be conceived as favorable environments for the development of personal and socio-emotional abilities, essential for students to prosper and be happy.

Socio-emotional competences are organized into a group of five main domains, being of a cognitive, affective, and behavioral nature (CASEL, 2015): self-knowledge, social awareness, self-regulation, relationship management and responsible decision-making. These skills can be acquired, learned, and applied in the young person's day-to-day life, whether in a school context or in other contexts equally rich in experiences and opportunities for the development of personal and interpersonal skills (COELHO; SOUSA, 2018a; WEISSBERG *et al.*, 2015), with the support of the main agents involved in the education of young people, the family, the school, and the community (COSTA; FARIA, 2019). Weissberg *et al.* (2015) indicate that the development of socioemotional skills, in the approach of social and emotional learning, occurs inside and outside the classroom in the school context, but also at the family, community and political level.

If all development is aimed at autonomy, self-determination and self-realization, the skills provided by the school are not always the most empowering of this desirable and normative destiny. The school teaches Portuguese, mathematics, biology, and many other contents, however, the most necessary learning is not strongly present, such as knowing how to read emotions, knowing how to interpret what you feel and how you feel, knowing how to communicate and, particularly, knowing how to listen. Socioemotional skills essential to enhance the personal development of each student do not appear to be developed in a systematic and deliberate way. In addition, the school should not only instruct in academic content, but also give techniques and skills so that each student gets to know each other better and develop healthier interpersonal relationships (VALENTE *et al.*, 2019). Following this perspective, the essential skills to enhance students' personal development remain outside the curricula. As Cristóvão, Candeias and Verdasca (2017) indicate, each individual matters, and we will be

providing a terrible service to children if we do not orient educational practices to the individuality of each one, to their potential and needs.

It is important to mention that the discussion regarding the importance of socioemotional competences, that is, the demonstrative skills and attitudes of “knowing how to be” and “knowing how to manage” emotions in order to achieve goals, demonstrate empathy, maintain positive social relationships and make decisions in a way responsible, among others (OECD, 2015), gained prominence and relevance with the Human Development Paradigm, proposed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 1990), and with the Report of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (UNESCO, 1996). All these documents contributed to the debate on the need for a full education aimed at the integral development of the student in all its dimensions, including socioemotional (VALENTE, 2019).

In this sense, in Portugal the Profile of Students Leaving Mandatory Schooling was approved (ME / DGE, 2017), which establishes the matrix of principles, values and areas of competence, which must be followed by the development of the curriculum. From the competence areas presented, the following stand out: (a) interpersonal relationships (skills that allow recognizing, expressing and managing emotions, building relationships, establishing goals and responding to personal and social needs), and (b) autonomy and personal development (skills related to the processes through which students develop confidence in themselves, motivation to learn, self-regulation, initiative and informed decision making, learning to integrate thinking, emotion and behavior, for increasing autonomy). As Valente (2019) alludes, this contributes to the appreciation of the integral development of the student, enhancing a beneficial future to education, and enabling students to develop socio-emotional skills. It should be noted, however, that these skills are considered transversal, which implies not being worked on a single subject, in fact they may not depend on the subjects and, rather, take advantage of other educational opportunities in the school routine. In any case, the Profile of Students leaving Mandatory Schooling opens doors to the creation of the necessary measures so that in the future the discipline of emotional education is implemented for all students, including being a mandatory subject, as this is the only way to guarantee that learning in social and emotional skills they reach all children and young people.

Researchers working in this line of action (BARRANTES-ELIZONDO, 2016; BRACKETT *et al.*, 2019; COSTA; FARIA, 2017) defend several reasons for the inclusion of socioemotional competences in school curricula, indicating that they are a fundamental aspect of human development, in order to regulate emotions to prevent risky behaviors and also the need to prepare for the management of unpredictable and difficult to manage situations. The

development of these skills is a promoting factor in different areas, of which the following stand out: the increase in academic success, the ability to adapt to the external environment, and the ability to better deal with adversity and stress situations. These skills decrease aggressive behaviors and increase the ability to establish healthier relationships (COELHO; SOUSA, 2018b; GARCÍA-SANCHO; SALGUERO; FERNÁNDEZ-BERROCAL, 2014; MARQUES; CARVALHO, 2012).

Considering the benefits of socio-emotional skills in an educational context and the importance of the social educator working on them, some existing programs are presented. Of these programs, the following stand out at the international level: (a) *Social and Emotional Learning* (SEL): originally from the United States of America and developed with the aim of preventing school violence. It is based on the belief that academic skills are intrinsically related to the ability that children and young people must manage and control their emotions, as well as to communicate and resolve difficulties and interpersonal conflicts (DURLAK *et al.*, 2011). The SEL paradigm contemplates five areas of interconnected competences (self-knowledge, social awareness, self-management and organization, responsible problem solving and relationship management). Teaching these skills is vital for dealing with behavioral, academic, disciplinary and security problems, promoting self-awareness, managing emotions, and acquiring skills such as empathy, the ability to perceive different perspectives and points of view, respect for diversity and the ability to make the right decisions (ZINS *et al.*, 2004). SEL programs refer to processes of developing socio-emotional competencies, which depend on the individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions. These capabilities are the main building blocks for other outcomes that SEL programs include, such as the ability to persist in the face of challenges, stress management, the ability to develop healthy relationships, build trust in others, and to prosper both in the academic context, as in personal and social life. In a study carried out in more than 213 SEL programs, it was possible to conclude that a school that successfully applies a quality curriculum of the SEL program can obtain behavioral improvements and a positive increase in the results of evaluations (DURLAK *et al.*, 2011); (b) *Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, Regulating* (RULER): represents a systemic approach to SEL. It was created based on the model of emotional intelligence capabilities, by Mayer and Salovey (1997), and focuses on the development of emotional intelligence in children and adults, involving the school, parents, teachers and the entire educational community (BRACKETT *et al.*, 2012). RULER focuses on learning skills that deal with issues of interpersonal conflict and teach strategies for emotional regulation. Empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of RULER programs indicates that they enhance students



'academic performance, improve the quality of learning environments, improve teacher-student relationships and reduce students' behavior problems, being a success in reducing violence and abusive behavior in the classroom (BRACKETT *et al.*, 2019); and (c) *Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning* (CASEL): created with the objective of establishing social and emotional education in a school context and making it a reality in today's education. Its purpose is to apply high-quality, evidence based SEL programs, from pre-school to secondary education (CASEL, 2003). The results of the application of this program reveal significant changes in socio-emotional capacities, social interactions, and academic results on the part of the students who attended such programs. Among such results, these students show themselves to be better communicators, more collaborative in teamwork and more resistant to challenges or resilient in the face of difficulties (DURLAK; WEISSBERG; PACHAN, 2010).

It should be noted that the perspective of social and emotional learning emerged to face several problems felt in schools. In this sequence, these competencies hold tools that allow students to question established knowledge, aggregate emerging knowledge, understand the different perspectives that exist, communicate efficiently, and know how to solve complex problems (VALENTE, 2019). Thus, when they benefit from access to techniques that aim at socioemotional development, students find a more fulfilling sense of life, and become more cooperative with their surroundings (VALENTE *et al.*, 2019).

In Portugal, the specific promotion of social and emotional skills began in the 1990s, with the appearance of some intervention programs, often driven by local entities or associations (CRISTÓVÃO *et al.*, 2017), however only recently has priority been given the evaluation and promotion of these programs in a more systematic and empirically valid way (COSTA; FARIA, 2019).

The study by Cristóvão *et al.* (2017) identifies the scarcity of literature on the implementation of social and emotional learning programs in Portuguese schools. Of the 17 publications analyzed, seven belonged to the same initiative, the "Positive Attitude" project, implemented since 2004. Concluding that, in addition to the scarcity of research, there is also little diversity between the social and emotional learning programs. The authors also indicate that the first scientific publications referring to social and emotional learning programs appeared in 2008 and have been increasing in recent years. They add the importance of preparing education professionals in social and emotional learning programs.

It should be noted that in Portugal, the initiative developed by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which, since 2018, has promoted annually the Academies of Knowledge, with the aim of identifying, supporting, and disseminating projects that promote the social and emotional

competences of children and young people up to 25 years. In this way, it has supported several projects from public and private institutions and intends to be able to reach and include in these actions up to 10,000 young people in the next 5 years, creating opportunities to generate useful knowledge for the transformation of society and its future generations (COSTA; FARIA, 2019).

The development of these competences should not focus only on students with behavioral problems, but on all students, as they are fundamental skills for their integral formation. In addition, it is important to also implement social and emotional learning programs for parents and education professionals, as they are the models for student development. After the foregoing, it can be seen that the social and emotional learning programs are an excellent tool for the work of the social educator in the processes of school and social inclusion.

### **Social educator and its importance in the school inclusion process**

The social educator is an educator, working in the social area, with educational processes for individuals in situations of social marginality. Being his activity referenced in pedagogical issues in non-school and also school institutions, where he carries out pedagogical work with children and young people so that they can solve learning, relationship, perception of culture, art and body difficulties as human dimensions, among others (PEREIRA, 2019). In this way, it plays an essential role in the process of school inclusion.

The report for UNESCO prepared by the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century presents four pillars on which education must be established: learn to know; learn to do; learn to live together; and learn to be (UNESCO, 2010). Supporting inclusive education in these pillars is to ensure that the learning of all students happens through different possibilities of development in the school.

If there are children and young people who, due to social contingencies, are victims of the foreseeable increase in inequality, also in terms of education, those who have needs and lack measures to support learning and inclusion are undoubtedly the most penalized. In response to these inequalities, in Portugal, school inclusion concretizes the right of each student to an inclusive education that responds to their potential, expectations and needs within the scope of a common and plural educational project that provides everyone with participation and a sense of belonging to effective conditions of equity, thus contributing decisively to higher levels of social cohesion (Decree-Law No. 54/2018). In addition, for the integrated and continuous vision of school inclusion, a process of assessment of support for learning that considers academic, behavioral, social and emotional aspects of the student, but also environmental factors,

contributes decisively, since this process results in all sequencing and dynamics educational intervention.

In this sense, multidisciplinary teams exist in Portuguese schools, which include social educators, to implement measures centered on dimensions essential to educational success and inclusion, namely the improvement of social, emotional, and personal development skills, the deepening of the relationship between school and family and community involvement in the partnership for success (SANCHES, 2020). Thus, an integrated and continuous approach to each student's school path is ensured, guaranteeing quality education for all throughout compulsory schooling. Also noteworthy is the possibility that schools can develop partnerships with each other, with local authorities and with other institutions in the community that allow for the enhancement of synergies, skills, and local resources, promoting the articulation of responses necessary for the implementation of measures to support learning and inclusion (Decree-Law No. 54/2018).

Costa and Faria (2019) indicate that the progressively more demanding and competitive social and economic contexts in which we live affect societies and individuals in the most diverse spheres of achievement. This situation is compounded by the context experienced by the Covid-19 pandemic, with a strong impact on the families most in need, implying the risk of school exclusion, as they are families lacking literary knowledge and technological resources that enable them to effectively support their children.

These students who need support for learning and inclusion represent a vulnerable group that needs permanent help, in relation to their colleagues, who may also have difficulties, do not suffer as severely the consequences of these. The situation of the most vulnerable students was a problem whose dimension grew with online classes, as they encountered immense barriers and lack of support for quality education during social confinement. They are students who need increased support in order to minimize the difficulties experienced. Thus, the intervention of the social educator is essential and indispensable for these children and young people with more vulnerable social realities, as the pandemic situation will further deepen the different forms of exclusion. As Costa and Faria (2019) allude, in relation to students who have troubled academic paths, guided by indiscipline and absenteeism, disaffection, lack of family support or with a history of academic failure, it is crucial to involve, motivate and maintain these students through effective socioemotional development strategies that will allow for their progressive involvement and commitment to the school and enhance their opportunities in future professional life.

Worldwide, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization points out in the report “Inclusion and education: all, without exception” that the Covid-19 pandemic increased the number of students excluded from the education system, especially in the poorest countries, indicating that, during confinement, 258 million children were left without classes (UNESCO, 2020). In addition, the same report, about 40% of the countries with the lowest income did not provide the necessary support to the students most in need during the period when the schools closed due to the imposition of confinement, and that in countries with medium and low income the youngest rich people are three times more likely to finish secondary school than those from the most disadvantaged families. The report also warns that educational opportunities continue to be distributed unevenly, and that before the current pandemic, one in five adolescents, youth and children was totally excluded from education. In addition, the existence of stigmas, stereotypes and discrimination means that millions more are excluded in the classrooms themselves. The same report points out that more than two thirds of the countries define what inclusive education is, however only 57% of these definitions cover multiple forms of marginalization.

In this sequence, the director-general of Unesco indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted and deepened inequalities, as well as the fragility of society, arguing that, today, more than ever, there must be collective responsibility in supporting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Also indicating that the current crisis will further perpetuate these different forms of exclusion, as more than 90% of the world's student population has been affected by the closure of schools due to Covid-19, so the world is about to suffer a major disruption and unprecedented in the history of education, as social and digital differences place the most disadvantaged in a situation in which they run the risk of losing learning or dropping out of school (UNESCO, 2020).

Bearing in mind that education is a universal right, in a society with such acute social gaps, not all students have access to quality education. Gaps that deepen with the Covid-19 pandemic. In this way, the work of the social educator faces great challenges and opportunities to reduce social asymmetries, namely regarding the support given to children and young people. Indeed, and considering that society is constantly changing, we are instructing for an unknown future, as indicated by Lemos and Almeida (2019), it is important to create opportunities to promote the development of capacities that are relevant to a life in a responsible and quality society. Likewise, education must provide and encourage students' personal development, with the knowledge that everyone is different and has innate talents. Identifying these differences and talents, and acting accordingly, is the only way to prevent problems, regardless of their

origin. It is important to value what everyone feels, what they think, and what they want. It is important not to exalt having, *per se*, but also being and feeling being, to promote the emotional and social development of children and young people.

In this sequence, and in accordance with the recommendation by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which indicates that education should place greater emphasis on the development of socio-emotional skills, considered vital in reducing school dropout and improving quality and equity in schools (OECD, 2015), the social educator must have in these a successful tool for school inclusion.

### **Final considerations**

This article aimed to take a reflection approach on the social educator and socio-emotional competences to the school inclusion of children and young people from vulnerable and most disadvantaged realities. In a society where everyone has access to education, we draw attention to the different problems in contemporary society, deepened by the Covid-19 pandemic, a consequence of having neglected the most important education, emotional education, so that students learn to manage emotions, to live in emotional balance, getting to know oneself and the other, knowing how to resolve conflicts, and knowing how to communicate.

Researchers working in this line of action indicate that social and emotional learning is a promoting factor in different areas, of which they highlight: better results in school evaluation, reduction of problems with disruptive behaviors and violence, and increase the ability to establish healthier relationships (COELHO; SOUSA, 2018b; BRACKETT *et al.*, 2019; DURLAK *et al.*, 2010; DURLAK *et al.*, 2011). It is verified that the changes that result from social and emotional learning contribute to the inclusion at school and social level in the lives of students.

In this sequence, it is essential to develop socio-emotional skills for correct and effective school inclusion, as it is important to educate emotions and behaviors, to know how to feel and to know how to be, for the benefit of a healthier future society, with oneself and with the social ecosystem that surrounds you. Thus, and considering the work performed by the social educator, it is essential that they hold these same skills, as they have the responsibility to support and direct the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, while also giving them life and life skills, in a way to reduce and eliminate social gaps. However, the initial formation of these professionals does not include emotional education, in order to enhance the development of emotional skills

as an essential element for the integral development (personal and professional) of the future social educator. As such, the promotion and reinforcement of these learning in the social educator is of particular relevance through the intense and emotional intervention that their work activity requires.

From the above, it can be concluded that before the other, the changes and social uncertainties, it is important that students make social and emotional learnings, and that these learnings are also transmitted to them by the social educator, contributing to their development integral, through tools that allow them to effectively manage the challenges of daily life and to thrive both in the academic context, as well as in personal and social life. If they are important learning in the life of any student, they become paramount in the lives of vulnerable and socially discriminated students. Concluding, in this way, that the work of the social educator faces great challenges today and many opportunities for success if resorting to social and emotional learning strategies to bridge social asymmetries.

## REFERENCES

AZEVEDO, S. **Técnicos superiores de educação social**. Necessidade e pertinência de um estatuto profissional. Porto: Fronteira do caos Editores, 2011.

BARRANTES-ELIZONDO, L. Educación emocional: el elemento perdido de la justicia social. **Revista Electrónica Educare**, v. 20, n. 2, p. 1-10, maio/ago. 2016.

BRACKETT, M. A.; BAILEY, C. S.; HOFFMANN, J. D.; SIMMONS, D. N. RULER: A Theory-Driven, Systemic Approach to Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning. **Educational Psychologist**, v. 54, n. 3, p. 144-161, jun. 2019.

BRACKETT, M. A.; RIVERS, S. E.; REYES, M. R.; SALOVEY, P. Enhancing academic performance and social and emotional competence with the RULER Feeling Words Curriculum. **Learning and Individual Differences**, v. 22, n. 2, p. 218-224, abr. 2012.

CARVALHO, A. D.; BAPTISTA, I. **Educação social: fundamentos e estratégias**. Porto: Porto Editora, 2004.

CASEL. Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning. **Safe and sound: an educational leader's guide to evidence-based Social and Emotional Learning SEL programs**. Chicago: CASEL, 2003.

CASEL. Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. **Guide: effective social and emotional learning programs – Middle and high school edition**. Chicago: CASEL, 2015. Available: <http://secondaryguide.casel.org/casel-secondary-guide.pdf>. Access: 16 Aug. 2020.

CASEL. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. **2013 CASEL guide: Effective social and emotional learning programs** (Preschool and elementary school edition). Chicago, IL: Authors, 2012.

COELHO, V. A.; SOUSA, V. A Multilevel Analysis of the Relation Between Bullying Roles and Social and Emotional Competencies. **Journal of Interpersonal Violence**, p. 1-23, out. 2018b.

COELHO, V. A.; SOUSA, V. Differential Effectiveness of a Middle School Social and Emotional Learning Program: Does Setting Matter? **Journal of Youth Adolescence**, v. 47, p. 1978-1991, jul. 2018a.

COSTA, A.; FARIA, L. Educação social y emocional revisitada: perspectivas sobre la práctica en la escuela portuguesa. **Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado**, v. 88, n. 31.1, p. 65-76, 2017.

COSTA, A.; FARIA, L. Programas de educação social e emocional na escola: Importância e perspectivas no contexto português. **Revista Diversidades**, n. 55, p. 6-9, dez. 2019.

CRISTÓVÃO, A. M.; CANDEIAS, A. A.; VERDASCA, J. Social and Emotional Learning and Academic Achievement in Portuguese Schools: A Bibliometric Study. **Frontiers in Psychology**, v. 8, n. 1913, p. 1-12, nov. 2017.

DÍAZ, A. S. Uma Aproximação à Pedagogia-Educação Social. **Revista Lusófona de Educação**, v. 7, n. 7, p. 91-104, 2006.

DURLAK, J. A.; WEISSBERG, R. P.; DYMNIKI, A. A.; TAYLOR, R. D.; SCHELLINGER, K. B. The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. **Child Development**, v. 82, n. 1, p. 405-432, fev. 2011.

DURLAK, J.; WEISSBERG, R.; PACHAN, M. A meta-analysis of afterschool programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. **American Journal of Community Psychology**, v. 45, n. 3-4, p. 294-309, jun. 2010.

FERNÁNDEZ-BERROCAL, P.; EXTREMERA, N. La inteligencia emocional como una habilidad esencial en las escuelas. **Revista Iberoamericana de Educación**, v. 29, n. 1, p. 1-6, jan. 2002.

GARCÍA-SANCHO, E.; SALGUERO, J.M.; FERNÁNDEZ-BERROCAL, P. Relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression: a systematic review. **Aggressive and Violent Behavior**, v. 19, p. 584-591, ago. 2014.

LEMOS, G. C.; ALMEIDA, L. S. Compreender, raciocinar e resolver problemas: Novo instrumento de avaliação cognitiva. **Análise psicológica**, v. 37, n. 2, p. 119-133, 2019.

MARQUES, S. D.; CARVALHO, D. J. Sucesso escolar e inteligência emocional. **Millenium**, v. 42, n. 17, p. 67-84, jun. 2012.

- MATEUS, M. N. O educador social na construção de pontes socioeducativas contextualizadas. **EDUSER: Revista de educação**, v. 4, n. 1, p. 60-71, dez. 2016.
- MAYER, J. D.; SALOVEY, P. What is Emotional Intelligence? *In*: SALOVEY, P.; SLUYTER, J. (Ed.). **Emotional development and emotional intelligence: educational implications**. New York: Basic Books, 1997. p. 3-31.
- NELSON, C. A.; PARKER, S. W., GUTHRIE, D.; BUCHAREST EARLY INTERVENTION PROJECT CORE GROUP. The discrimination of facial expressions by typically developing infants and toddlers and those experiencing early institutional care. **Infant Behavior and Development**, v. 29, n. 2, p. 210-219, abr. 2006.
- OECD. **PISA 2018 Assessment and Analytical Framework**. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/b25efab8-en>
- OECD. **Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report Executive Summary Portugal**. 2015. Available: <https://www.oecd.org/portugal/oecd-skills-strategy-diagnostic-report-portugal-2015-9789264300279-en.htm>. Access: 20 Aug. 2020.
- PARCERISA, A. **Didáctica en la educación social**. Barcelona: Graó, 1999.
- PEREIRA, A. O educador social e suas competências de atuação profissional: um trabalhador da educação pela LDBEN N. 9.394/96? **Debates em Educação**, v. 11, n. 23, p. 312-332, jan./abr. 2019b.
- PEREIRA, A. Os sujeitos da eja e da educação social: as pessoas em situação de vulnerabilidade social. **Práxis Educacional**, v. 15, n. 31, p. 273-294, jan. 2019a.
- PÉREZ SERRANO, G. **Investigación cualitativa: retos y interrogantes. Métodos**. Madrid: Editorial La Muralha, 1994.
- PETRUS, A. Educación social y perfil del educador social. *In*: CARRERAS, S. (Coord.). **El educador social**. Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1994.
- PORTUGAL. DECRETO-LEI n. 54, de 6 de julho de 2018. Ministério da Educação. **Diário da República**: série 1, Lisboa, n. 129. 6 jul. 2018. Available <https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/115652961/details/maximized>. Access: 18 Aug. 2020.
- PORTUGAL. Ministério da Educação/Direção-Geral da Educação [ME/DGE]. **Perfil dos alunos à saída da escolaridade obrigatória**. Lisboa: Autor, 2017. Available: [https://dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto\\_Autonomia\\_e\\_Flexibilidade/perfil\\_dos\\_alunos.pdf](https://dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/Curriculo/Projeto_Autonomia_e_Flexibilidade/perfil_dos_alunos.pdf) Access: 20 Aug. 2020.
- ROJAHN, J.; ZAJA, R. H. The emotion specificity hypothesis in intellectual disabilities. **Psychology in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**, v. 33, n. 2, p. 4-6, 2007.
- SAARNI, C. The social context of emotional development. *In*: LEWIS M.; HAVILAND J. (Eds.). **Handbook of emotions**. New York: Guilford Press, 2000. p. 306-322.



SANCHES, A. Escolas têm até 24 de Agosto para se candidatarem à contratação de psicólogos e mediadores. **Jornal Público**, Lisboa, 6 ago. 2020. Available: <https://www.publico.pt/2020/08/06/sociedade/noticia/escolas-ate-24-agosto-candidatarem-contratacao-psicologos-mediadores-1927335?fbclid=IwAR0ygFyLsgX918AD1RtroFf7XxI2-YmVxl69pyk89Xk1U5x1bra7oecfud4>. Access: 12 Aug. 2020.

UNDP. **Human Development Report 1990**. Concept and measurement of Human Development. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. Available: [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/219/hdr\\_1990\\_en\\_complete\\_nostats.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/219/hdr_1990_en_complete_nostats.pdf) Access: 21 Aug. 2020.

UNESCO. **Educação: um tesouro a descobrir**, relatório para a UNESCO da Comissão Internacional sobre Educação para o Século XXI. Paris: UNESCO. 1996. Available: [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000109590\\_por](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000109590_por) Access: 21 Aug. 2020.

UNESCO. **Educação: um tesouro a descobrir**, relatório para a UNESCO da Comissão Internacional sobre Educação para o Século XXI. Paris: UNESCO. 2010. Julho 2010. Available [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000109590\\_por](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000109590_por) Access: 21 Aug. 2020.

UNESCO. **Resumo do Relatório de Monitoramento Global da Educação 2020: inclusão e educação para todos**. Paris: UNESCO, jun. 2020. Available: [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373721\\_por](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373721_por) Access: 21 Aug. 2020.

VALENTE, S. Competências socioemocionais: O emergir da mudança necessária, **Revista Diversidades**, n. 55, p. 10-15, dez. 2019.

VALENTE, S.; KLOSE, P.; CARVALHEIRO, A.; ESTARREJA, A.; LOUREIRO, P. M. A importância das dinâmicas de desenvolvimento pessoal na escola. *In*: PERALBO, M.; RISSO, A.; BARCA, A.; DUARTE, B.; ALMEIDA, L.; BRENLLA, J. C. (Eds.). CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL GALLEGO-PORTUGUÉS DE PSICOPEDAGOGÍA, 15., 2019, Coruña. Anais [...]. Coruña, 2019. p. 1683-1694.

VALLÉZ HERRERO, J. **Manual del educador social**. Intervención en Servicios Sociales. Madrid: Pirâmide, 2009.

WEISSBERG, R. P.; DURLAK, J. A.; DOMITROVICH, C. E.; GULLOTTA, T. P. Social and emotional learning: Past, present and future. *In*: DURLAK, J. A.; DOMITROVICH, C. E.; WEISSBERG, R. P.; GULLOTTA T. P. (Eds.). **Handbook of social and emotional learning: research and practice**. New York: The Guilford Press, 2015. p. 3-19.

ZINS, J. E.; WEISSBERG, R. P.; WANG, M. C.; WALBERG, H. J. **Building school success though social and emotional learning**. New York: Teachers College Press, 2004.

## How to reference this article

VALENTE, S. Social-emotional skills in social educator activity: implications for school inclusion. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 15, n. esp. 3, p. 2332-2349, Nov., 2020. E-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riace.v15iesp3.14441>

**Submitted:** 20/07/2020

**Required revisions:** 30/08/2020

**Approved:** 29/09/2020

**Published:** 30/10/2020