

Applied Research Partnerships with Developing and Transition Countries

Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education

Project title

Building Citizenship on Skills. An applied research on peace building skills and social and emotional learning skills.

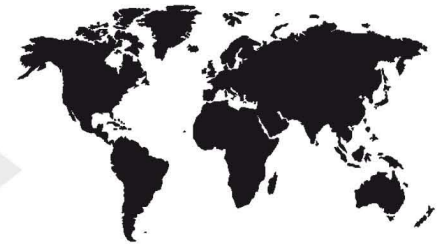
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Thematic focus

Education, social and emotional learning, peace building

Year

'12-'13



Project location

Managua, Nicaragua and Locarno, Switzerland

Swiss Institution

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Partner Institution

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Description

Because the history of war and confrontation to which Nicaragua has been subjected, the shift towards a Culture of Peace is urgent and necessary. Although there is a law addressed to the integration of human rights into the curriculum of primary and secondary education, there is still much work to do on a series of values linked to the Culture of Peace, such as environmental education, gender, communication and development among others. In Switzerland, awareness is growing on the importance of social and emotional learning skills for the future lives of children and young people. According to the present research on this topic, the introduction of such contents in school

education shows positive results both for the academic performance of pupils and for their attitude towards others and the society in general. The project aimed to a sharing of expertise on these two related areas, both central for the development of a positive and active citizenship. By introducing social and emotional learning skills and peace building skills in school education, we proposed a concrete way to use the educational system in order to increase a more active and positive attitude towards citizenship, to build a more caring society and to reduce aggression and disruption.

Development relevance

The project belongs to the aims of Millennium Development Goal number 8: "Develop a global partnership for development".

We focused on the basic importance of school education for the development of citizenship. The school system has to be sensitive to some crucial themes, like peace building and social and emotional learning, which represent the roots for

the change we want to promote in our societies, in order to achieve a better life standard everywhere in the world. Moreover, since the two institutions play a significant role by fostering and regulating public education in the society, this project is although to see as a contribution to Millennium Development Goal number 2: "Achieve universal primary education".



Nicaraguan teachers who participated in the training on social and emotional learning.



Image 2

Swiss teachers who participated in the training on peace building.

Main features of the project

The sharing of expertise was carried out through an application-oriented research which had two main goals:

- To increase the knowledge of the two institutions both in the teacher training on the above-mentioned topics and in the research capacities in those fields.
- To evaluate the implementation of the learned topics in the everyday work in class in the two countries. The evaluation process focused on how teachers in the two countries learned about the proposed topics, how they applied the learned contents to their classes and the level of learning of their pupils.

Two groups of teachers were created, one in each country. Nicaraguan experts on peace building skills trained the Swiss group, and Swiss experts on social and emotional learning skills trained the Nicaraguan group. The two training experiences were monitored by an external research staff in each country. Research staffs met to exchange their knowledge and instruments, since in each country they would collect data in a new field (peace education for Switzerland and social and emotional learning for Nicaragua). Data were collected on how teachers in the two countries learned about the proposed topics, how they applied the learned contents in class and on level of learning of their pupils. Moreover, final meetings with participant teachers were organized after four months, for the purpose to enrich their practice by sharing new activities and materials.

Besides that, the institutional networks of the two institutions were explored and strategic relationships were created, in order to disclose the project's activities and to share results through scientific communications, media communications, meetings with important stakeholders, and teacher continuing education activities.

Summary of final results:

- Steps were taken for both institutions towards providing with opportunities for international experience and collaboration.
- Several opportunities were created for both institutions to present and discuss project results in influential international forums.
- A good partnership was strengthened between two institutions that have a strong position in their regions, which enhanced North-South dialogue and collaboration.
- Materials were created to spread awareness about social and emotional learning and peace building skills' methods and practices in both Nicaragua and Switzerland, in order to affect the field of teacher education in both countries.
- The knowledge in both institutions was increased by acquiring expertise on a new topic.
- The involved teachers in both countries have won awareness on new educational topics, which they consider as very important for their everyday work in class.
- Innovative curriculum ideas and a new field in teacher education were proposed as part of the official continuing education offering of both Institutions.

Future directions:

Both staffs have won awareness on the theoretical arguments behind, the socio-cultural implications, and the potentialities not only of the new theme they got to know, but above all of the combination of both of them as an essential milestone for the promotion of caring and active citizenship in young people. The interest shown by the involved teachers leads to think about possible extensions to the project, taking into consideration other interlocutors and other working environments.

The identification of the most relevant practices in training teachers in social and emotional learning and peace building skills and the collection of materials, which begun with this project, need to be deepened and carried on for more time in order to allow the creation of concrete and cultural adapted proposals for the further promotion of both themes in the basic and continuing education in the two countries. This aim will be proposed to several strategic partners, with whom the two institutions have established interesting relations thanks to the project.



A model made by teachers during the training on peace building.



A drawing made by a 6 year old during a class activity on the topic of respect.