

Social and Emotional Education. An International Analysis

Fundación Marcelino Botín Report 2008

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Preface

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In 1964, Marcelino Botín and his wife, Carmen Yllera, created the Marcelino Botín Foundation (in Spanish: “Fundación Marcelino Botín”), a charitable foundation set up to work both in a national and international context, based in Santander. The principal objective of the Foundation is to develop and implement initiatives to promote a fairer, freer, more efficient, and more responsible society.

In 2004, in a move to adapt to the new realities and challenges of the 21st century, Fundación Marcelino Botín decided to adopt a policy of supporting development in society, by helping the people living in it to improve their capabilities – that is to say, by focusing on developing the human capital of which our society is composed. Accordingly, it set out to promote, encourage and support a lifelong, for people, thus contributing to the progress and well-being of each individual and of society as a whole.

Our understanding of the concept of well-rounded education in Fundación Marcelino Botín is that a process of intellectual and academic training should go hand in hand with healthy physical, psychological and social growth in order to achieve a sufficient level of well-being, balance, and personal and social contentment. We consider that Social and Emotional Education, of which a detailed discussion is provided in this Report, is an inseparable part of the well-rounded education of each individual.

In order to support and develop the ongoing applied educational work that has been developed by Fundación Marcelino Botín in Cantabria, known as “*Responsible Education*”, we are carrying out a global initiative (that embraces research, the setting up of the organization, project implementation, support and assessment), to gather together resources and educational techniques with a view to facilitating and encouraging emotional, cognitive and social development in children and young people – thus helping them to become self-motivating, competent, responsible and mutually supportive members of society.

The model for procedure that we have set up is directed and also shared by the three basic educational agents in society: the family, school and the community.

By means of this initiative it is also our intention to increase academic success among pupils and to develop in them certain protective elements to serve as a preventive strategy against the type of risks (violence, intolerance, failure, drugs, etc.) that are likely to present themselves nowadays at an increasingly early stage in life.

In 2007, after three years of contributing to educational work in Cantabria, working with 80 schools (which involves a total of 853 teachers and 16,000 pupils), Fundación Marcelino Botín recognized the need to:

- 1 | Acquire information about new developments, both in Spain and in other countries worldwide, in the field of well-rounded educational provision and emotional and social development;
- 2 | Initiate educational research with a view to identifying, sharing, incorporating and developing initiatives that would improve and reinforce the experience of the Foundation, and which could also prove useful to professionals working in other places and in different contexts.

Consequently, Fundación Marcelino Botín put forward, and set out to lead, the first international project in this field. The result to date is the Report you now have in your hands, and the Foundation's supporting website, <http://educacion.fundacionmbotin.org>.

For many years now, educational programmes to promote emotional and social development have been researched and applied in several countries around the world. The scientific progress made during the same period has made it possible to test and investigate in detail the importance of emotions for the positive growth of people and for their well-being.

We feel the need to take responsibility for setting up an organised, clearly-structured system that will make it possible to pool knowledge and any advances in research in this field. Fundación Marcelino Botín supports joint research initiatives and the exchange and publication of information about the different initiatives being taken in different parts of the world. We would like this Report to be the first stage on the road to creating a Joint International Platform to operate in the field of Social and Emotional Education.

For over a year now we have been holding a series of meetings at the Head Office of Fundación Marcelino Botín in Santander, with a team of experts from several European countries (Germany, Spain, Holland, Great Britain and Sweden) and the United States of America, all of whom come from different contexts and have varying perspectives. The work has been strictly organised and we have all given thought to the question of Social and Emotional Education (SEE) and pooled our knowledge and know-how.

The Introduction to this Report gives an initial presentation of the theme under consideration. It is important to point out that the terminology used in the field under dis-

cussion is extremely diverse. Terms such as Social and Emotional Learning, Emotional Education, Socio-Emotional Development, Emotional Intelligence, and many more, appear, chapter by chapter, in the different texts contained in the Report, and offer an overview of the educational situation in each of the countries under consideration – together with certain significant and particularly interesting initiatives developed there. Through the varied terminology that is used, the area of our common interest, which we have decided to call “Social and Emotional Education” – and which, as explained at the beginning of this prologue, is a key part of the well-rounded development of the individual (in academic, emotional, cognitive and social terms) – begins to take shape.

The last part of the Report relates to one of the challenges which still has to be confronted in this field: namely, the evaluation of the results obtained once the various different SEE programmes have been applied. Despite the fact that this last chapter may seem rather dry to non-specialists, we strongly recommend reading through it as it contributes greatly to an understanding of the benefits that SEE brings to children and young people – as shown by the results of scientific research.

Faced with the question that we have all asked ourselves, as to the impacts or positive effects that SEE might have on the development of children and young people, we decided to extend the initial project and to commission a team of experts to make a thorough study of the question, with a view to obtaining clear confirmation of the need to work specifically in this field. The conclusion reached is clear: research indicates that SEE has a positive effect on the well-rounded development of children and young people – and brings benefits in the area of emotional well-being, of academic achievement, and social relationships.

It is important to point out here that this Report is not intended to be a complete guide to all available experiences in the field of SEE worldwide. Many other experts, experiences and perspectives, both in the countries mentioned in our Report and in other countries worldwide, that we were unable to include in our report due to questions of time and space, have much of value to contribute.

With a view to achieving our long-term goal, we have prepared a website –<http://educacion.fundacionmbotin.org>– to encourage people to provide information about their own experiences, learn about the experiences of others, exchange ideas, make new contacts, communicate with different experts, etc. The idea is that this website will provide an *International Platform*, for those in the field to pool and share resources, research, knowledge... and to serve as a base for continuing to develop new initiatives and projects.

In reality, the aim of this Report, and the website that complements it, is to serve as a useful work tool, to facilitate the exchange of information and provide educational support – freely available to all those (educational centres, families, administrative units, experts...) who may have an interest in, and be concerned about, the question of providing well-rounded education – and regardless of whether their particular focus be academic or social and emotional, since these areas have recently been found to be inseparable.

Our aim is to look to the future and to work, as a united front, to meet the educational challenges presented by society in the 21st century. To provide Social and Emotional Education to individuals from childhood onwards may prove helpful to us all and will surely prove to be indispensable to our progress and well-being.

Lastly, we would like to make the following reflections, which have emerged as a result of the preparation of this Report, which could serve as a conclusion, and also indicate the way ahead for the future:

1 | Effectiveness of the programmes designed to promote social and emotional development in children and young people in the school context.

The promising results that we present in this Report, which are the fruit of scientific research, indicate that Social and Emotional Education at school facilitates well-rounded growth in children and young people, stimulates them towards academic achievements, serves as a preventive strategy in the event of possible difficulties during their development and, furthermore, contributes to the improvement and protection of physical and mental health in young people. We therefore undertake to continue our research work in this field, and to extend the work we have begun in the field of SEE and dig deeper, in order to provide educational centres, families and communities with initiatives and clear programmes which will fulfil the requirements and ensure emotional and social growth in our school pupils. As a result of the experience already acquired by Fundación Marcelino Botín, from working in many very different schools, with a range of educational agents, we can offer guidance and support, and help to adapt and integrate our initiatives and programmes into the specific context of each educational centre, so as to set them on their own particular paths in this educational process.

2 | Social and Emotional Education: integrated into and shared by the entire Educational Community.

The prime objective is that our work should be spread and coordinated among all

the different educational agents (in the contexts of school, the family, community and institutions, the public administration system, civil society, etc.), so that, step by step, SEE can become part of the daily curriculum and operate, without exception, at all levels and among all pupils – an interest completely accepted and shared by the entire educational community, as a basic and inseparable part of the system which develops academic achievement and well-being in people, not only as individuals but also as participants. In addition, Social and Emotional Education develops young people's abilities to become mutually supportive and responsible, active contributors to society.

3 | The importance of further training.

Social and Emotional Education is for everyone and is not just directed towards children and young people. To learn to identify, express and regulate our emotions, to continuously develop greater self-knowledge, to understand others by putting ourselves in their place, to learn how to care for our own bodies and minds, to take decisions responsibly, to relate sufficiently well to other people, to know how to say “no” without creating a situation of conflict, and to know how to solve problems, etc. – all these skills are necessary if we are to enjoy a balanced life that is happy and has meaning, and is the fundamental starting-point for developing in a positive manner any kind of work (including academic work). The training of adults (teachers, professors, parents, professionals, etc.) is therefore of fundamental importance, first of all for the improvement of our own well-being, and then in order to work towards developing the full potential of children and young people. With all our educational experience, we, at Fundación Marcelino Botín, are firm supporters of the training –both theoretical and practical– of teachers, families, and of society as a whole, and we are involved in a continual search for new approaches and new educational solutions in order to bring these new types of training to our society.

4 | Certain pre-requisites of success. As suggested in the different worldwide educational experiences which are included in this Report, and also taking our own experience in Cantabria (Spain) into account, we wish to underline the importance of a series of pre-requisites that need to be met if the emotional and social aspects of education are to be integrated into the school curriculum. (These pre-requisites are developed in greater detail in this Report, in the chapter on Spain, in which the experience of Fundación Marcelino Botín and the question of “**Responsible Education**” is included). The development of a Social and Emotional Education project will be more successful if the following pre-requisites are met:

- **The voluntary nature of this work:** it is a pre-requisite that everyone involved in initiating and/or developing this project will provide their services on a willing basis.
- **Involvement:** it is a pre-requisite that teachers will carry out the considerable task of creating and/or adapting the programmes and initiatives of the project to the specific contexts in which they work, and thus tailor the project to their own particular situations. The suggestions and contributions of teachers will therefore be indispensable if the project is to succeed.
- **An active and shared responsibility:** it is a pre-requisite that educational centres, families and local communities support each other and share objectives and tasks, so as to ensure the proper development of the project.
- **Planning:** it is a pre-requisite that all actions undertaken be carefully carried out, following an ordered procedure, and that they are formally recorded.
- **Close supervision and assistance:** it is a pre-requisite that all participants in the Project receive training, support, orientation, assistance and close supervision.
- **Long term:** it is a pre-requisite that the work of the project be planned as a long-term undertaking, so that the results can be assessed over a considerable period of time.
- **Evaluation:** it is a pre-requisite that a continual internal evaluation be carried out, so as to make it possible to reflect on the results obtained and to seek to improve them. A continual external evaluation should also be carried out, both of the process itself and of the psychological impact of the project's different initiatives and programmes.

There is still a long road ahead and we hope to make gradual progress step by step. We are entirely aware of the need to unite the efforts of everybody concerned. It is our hope that everybody who feels the need for, and wants to participate in, spreading and developing these initiatives, will do so – thus helping to create an education system that actively promotes emotional, cognitive and social development from early childhood onwards, and throughout the entire lifespan of each individual. In short, we aim to work with people who want to work towards creating a better future for everyone.

Fundación Marcelino Botín would like to express its gratitude to all the professionals who have worked to prepare this Report: for their efforts, their goodwill, and their time, and also, most particularly, for the enormous capacity for team work they have shown. Our thanks go to: Christopher Clouder, Bo Dahlin, René Dieskstra, Pablo Fernández Berrocal, Belinda Heys, Linda Lantieri, Mary Utne O'Brien, Raquel Palomera Martín, Harm Paschen, Elsa Punset Bannel, Fátima Sánchez Santiago and Roger Weissberg.

We trust that the overall content and the points of view expressed in this Report are sufficiently illustrative and also useful to you. We will look forward to receiving your ideas and experiences via our website: <http://educacion.fundacionmbotin.org>

Fundación Marcelino Botín
Santander, October 2008

“Not all people have the same opinion about what youth should learn in order to develop a good character or to enable them to lead the best life. There is also no consensus about whether education should mainly focus on acquisition of knowledge and understanding or character formation, whether the right type of education should consist of disciplines useful for life, to breed a pure character, or to enlarge knowledge”

Aristotle, Politika