

# School Intervention: An experience focused on Initial Education Teachers

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## Abstract

This study describes a project for and research on the implementation of program to strengthen socio-cognitive and emotional abilities in initial-level education of children (PHSCE), focused on training teachers on its implementation in the classroom. This work had two objectives: first, to explore the grade of acceptance of teachers regarding the training process both before and during the pandemic; and, second, to analyse the teachers' perceptions of the socio-cognitive and emotional performance of their students after they implemented the PHSCE. The results indicate that, before the pandemic, the degree of acceptance of teachers on the PHSCE was 79.1%. However, during the pandemic period, this percentage increased to 96.9%. The greatest improvements in children were in attentional performance, working memory, and peer relationships. The foundation for these psycho-educational programs is that socio-cognitive and emotional skills can be enhanced in early educational settings by providing supportive educational contexts.

**Keywords:** school intervention; teacher; initial-level; socio-cognitive and emotional skills; children

## Introduction

Generally, the damage that these two years of the pandemic have had on people's daily lives is evident, affecting health, work, routines, care, emotions, and bonds, deepening social gaps and inequalities. In particular, school continuity and the educational trajectories of children and young people were deeply affected by the suspension of face-to-face classes in schools. Changes have been observed in students at an emotional level, in the configuration of study routines, in interpersonal relationships, and in performance levels in school learning, among others. In order to guarantee the continuity of the teaching-learning processes, government school institutions have had to reorient, organize and plan curricular content and the activities of obligatory school trajectory, using alternative means of presential classes or virtual educational platforms. This has generated significant changes both in families and in the educational system. Families have had to generate major reorganization due to the suspension of face-to-face classes. The phenomenon of "schooling of domestic life" has resulted in the domestic space-time

organization turning into school space-time. Thus, school structure has been recreated in the domestic sphere. Families that have had more time and school knowledge have had advantages over others. The role of teachers has also been reconfigured. They have had to face multiple challenges, such as rapid appropriation of the use of technologies, reorganizing their teaching modality, prioritizing curricular content and school activities, and having adequate devices with access to connectivity, among others. The initial level is the first step within the Argentine educational system that, among other functions, tries to reduce inequalities at the beginning, favour interaction experiences, contributes to the autonomy of the student and promotes the development of motor, linguistic, cognitive and socio-emotional abilities. Under this atypical situation, accompanying and supporting the teacher has become even more relevant. Therefore, the work presented here is a part of a larger project and is focused on analysing the perception of teachers after having received training on the stimulation of socio-cognitive and affective functions aimed at children at initial level, at two moments:

prior to the pandemic in 2019 and during the pandemic in 2020 to 2021.

### Teachers as mediators of knowledge

During childhood, the role of significant adults is fundamental for the learning and development of all children's capacities. They occupy a preponderant place as they are the transmitters and mediators of knowledge. Thus, children learn from their interactions with significant others and the possibilities offered by the social context in which these learning experiences occur (Vygotsky, 1986; Bruner 2008, Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Surely, teachers are one of the significant adults in the academic and socio-cognitive-effective life of children. Within the school context, they play an important role, so that learning is accessible and for the deployment of enriching teaching-learning experiences within the classroom. Teachers use a variety of strategies in the classroom to seek learning. However, they do not always achieve the expected learning results in their students. Although this aspect depends on a multiplicity of factors, one of them is the teacher training regarding how to provide this support and to teach the curricular content effectively to facilitate learning in their students. Following Vygotsky's postulations expressed in the constructs of the "Law of double formation of psychological functions" and the "Zone of proximal development", interaction with adults or more qualified peers facilitates the understanding of new knowledge and favour the deployment of skills. For their part, Wood et al. (1976) developed the term "scaffolding" as a metaphor to describe the role played by the interactional conversation between students and other experts. Effective scaffolding fits the needs of students and constantly adjusts in response to what they can do. Both Vygotsky and Bruner have recognized the importance of language in the mediation of learning and the need for effective support from significant adults to favour the level of potential development of students. This requires that teachers be able to develop teaching sequences that provide students with appropriate levels of support, and that this support is only withdrawn when students are able to perform tasks independently. Given that young children who attend the initial level of education present a varied pace of learning, in addition to diverse socio-cultural experiences, it is necessary for teachers to adopt "effective teaching scaffolds". This means seeking

support and accompaniment strategies that promote the acquisition of skills and knowledge in their students.

Bruner (2008) argued that spaces for new learning are found within events that are familiar to the learner. Thus, presenting the activities in a playful way, exemplifying everyday life, and adapting the level of complexity and magnitude of a task, are strategies that collaborate so that children are successful in carrying out the proposed activities.

The initial level of education represents, in Argentina, the beginning of formal schooling in which children learn new rules of coexistence different from those existing in the home environment. This represents a challenge and an opportunity both in terms of establishing new interpersonal relationships with peers and of unfolding the potential of cognitive, affective, and social capacities. During the early years, the rudiments of cognitive, affective, and social abilities emerge. Then, between the ages of 3 and 6, important achievements are recorded, characterized by a process of integration and coordination of basic capacities. Consequently, it is observed that children begin to develop the skills to hold more than one representation in their mind, flexibly change their attentional focus, inhibit a dominant response tendency, and regulate their emotions (Ison & Espósito, 2022). Favouring the development of these capacities makes it possible to enhance the school trajectories of children at an early age. Family and school have a preponderant role in this task.

Within the school context, the role of teachers as mediators of knowledge is essential to promote and enrich the learning potential of children. For this, it is necessary for the teacher to diversify, expand and enrich their own practices and pedagogical experiences that make it possible to generate facilitating conditions and opportunities for learning in children. Our research team has been working for years on the application of socio-cognitive and emotional intervention programs in schoolchildren aged 7 to 12 years (Ison, 2009, 2010, 2015, 2020; Espósito, 2017; Korzeniowski, et al., 2020; Morelato, et al., 2019). Based on this, we were summoned by the Directorate of Initial Education, dependent on the General Directorate of Schools (DGE), of the province of Mendoza, Argentina, to design and implement a program to strengthen socio-cognitive and emotional capacities in early childhood.

This is how the Initial Level Pilot Project (PINI) arose, the objective being to promote successful educational trajectories in children aged 4 and 5 through the training of classroom, physical education, and music education teachers. The ultimate goal was to provide them with theoretical-practical tools on socio-cognitive and affective functioning in childhood so that they could implement stimulation strategies with their students. Under this conceptual framework, this work had two objectives. The first was to explore the grade of acceptance of teachers regarding the training process on socio-cognitive and emotional skills (PHSCE) carried out by our team both before and during the pandemic. The second was to analyse the teachers' perception of the socio-cognitive and emotional performance of their students after they implemented the PHSCE. For this, an anonymous online survey was administered, answered by teachers before the COVID-19 pandemic, and during the pandemic.

## Method

### Design

The design was non-experimental and cross-sectional, with a descriptive scope (Hernandez-Sampieri et al., 2014).

**Table 1:** Distribution of teachers, according to evaluation times (prior to the pandemic and during the pandemic)

	2019	2020-2021	Total
	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)
Classes, 4 years	11 (45.8)	16 (47.06)	27 (46.55)
Classes, 5 years	13 (54.2)	16 (52.94)	31 (53.45)
<i>Total teachers</i>	24 (100)	32 (100)	56 (100)

What did the teacher training consist of? A program for the strengthening of socio-cognitive and emotional skills (PHSCE).

The program described has the purpose of strengthening the socio-cognitive and emotional functioning in children aged 4 and 5 (Ison & Espósito, 2022), directly involving teachers and indirectly engaging parents. Previous research carried out by our group and the experience of the initial education teachers contributed to its development (Ison, 2009, 2010, 2015; Ison, et al., 2020; Morelato et al., 2019). This proposal, developed for the schools that participated in PINI, has 3 lines of action: children, teachers, and parents, with the purpose of:

a) Optimizing the socio-cognitive-affective performance of schoolchildren;

### Participants

The total sample consisted of 56 initial-level teachers, that is, in charge of 4-year-old classrooms and 5-year-old classrooms. In 2019, 24 teachers responded to the survey: 17 from urban schools and 7 from schools in socially-vulnerable sectors of Greater Mendoza.

During the pandemic (2020-2021), 32 teachers responded to the survey: 18 teachers from urban schools and 14 teachers from schools located in socially-vulnerable sectors. Teaching experience ranged from 5-to-20 years.

In the province of Mendoza, public schools are classified according to areas: urban, urban-marginalized, rural, rural-marginalized, and rural-border (General Directorate of Schools, 2014). The classification takes into account factors, such as habitat conditions and services, environmental conditions with or without limitations to access to goods and services, and some social aspects, like schooling and occupation of parents or caregivers.

Table 1 shows the distribution of teachers by room, according to the evaluation carried out before the pandemic or during it.

b) Promoting cooperative work between classroom, physical education, and music education teachers, in order to articulate activities to promote socio-cognitive and emotional functioning in early childhood; and,

c) Promoting teamwork among professionals, teachers, and parents in order to foster an interpersonal climate favouring cooperative relationships in the school context.

PHSCE consists of 8 theoretical-practical modules, each of which addresses different themes: 1. Perceptual Organization, 2. Attention, 3. Inhibitory Control, 4. Cognitive Flexibility, 5. Working Memory, 6. Recognition of Emotions, 7. Resilient Attitude, and 8. Strengthening Socio-Emotional Resources in School Contexts.

Each module has a theoretical foundation that supports a series of practical activities described in a stimulation booklet entitled “Strategies to strengthen cognitive and socio-emotional functioning in initial education” (Ison & Espósito, 2022). This booklet works as a working guide for the teacher, in order to stimulate the socio-cognitive and emotional functions in their students through playful activities. The preschool teachers learned about the development of socio-cognitive and emotional

**Table 2:** Stimulation Program: degrees of difficulty of the activity

Level	Degrees of Difficulty of the Activity
A	Low
B	Medium
C	High

Level A refers to any activity that is easy for and known to the child being able to perform this task. Level B requires greater cognitive effort for the age, but still able to perform the activity with minimal outside help. At level C, the child may require the teacher's assistance and help to achieve the proposed task. The teachers began to work with the activities of level A, a low degree of difficulty, and once the child had successfully carried out these activities, they went to the next level, and so on. If for some reason the child could not perform an exercise, in any of the proposed levels, the teacher helped the child to understand and later perform it.

The activities of the modules on Recognition of emotions, Resilient attitude, and Strengthening socio-emotional resources in school contexts were organized by the teachers, taking as a guide the activities proposed in the booklet, but creatively incorporating activities according to the characteristics of their groups of students. The program lasted 4 months and was incorporated as part of the activities of the school curriculum, working daily on the socio-cognitive and emotional functions through recreational activities based on the activities described in a stimulation booklet.

For their part, the teachers guided and monitored the development of the activities, "scaffolding that knowledge", giving positive feedback, trying to maintain the motivation of the group, and promoting emotional self-regulation in their students. The teachers functioned as a support structure, or guide, for the execution of the children's tasks, such as helping them to think about how they did the activities, why they did them that way, and what other activities they could think about or do.

functions of children and their importance for social and academic abilities.

In the modules of Perceptual Organization, Attention, Inhibitory Control, Cognitive Flexibility, and Working Memory, the activities were organized in an order of increasing difficulty, from level A to level C. The intention was to generate cognitive challenges in the children, but, at the same time, to respect the development of individual trajectories in each of them.

Although the teacher training program had a defined structure with specific content, the teachers could creatively incorporate other activities, allowing their work to be adjusted to the characteristics of the group of children. The focus was on stimulating group function for strengthening effective action.

### Instruments

#### Online survey for teachers on the implementation of PHSCE

After the stimulation program, an online survey was carried out for teachers, in order to explore the grade of acceptance of teachers regarding the training process on socio-cognitive and emotional skills (PHSCE) carried out by our team and whether the training program stimulation contributed to the strengthening of these functions in children.

This survey was organized into 3 blocks of questions. The first block was made up of 7 items, which referred to: whether the work material was clear, precise and relevant to the objectives of the PINI project; whether significant improvements in student performance were observed with the implementation of PHSCE; whether the teacher training was useful and relevant to the objectives of the PINI project; whether the management by the professionals in charge of the project was satisfactory; whether the work of evaluation and accompaniment of the professionals has been satisfactory; whether it was considered important and pertinent to give continuity to the PINI project in their educational institution; and, finally, whether the families of the students received the PINI project with enthusiasm and positive predisposition. The second block consisted of inquiring about which process or set of



processes that the teachers perceived or noticed improvements on. In the third block, teachers could suggest aspects to improve on the implementation of the PINI project. Thus, they could make suggestions related to the extension of the project, to the evaluation modality of the processes in children, to the amount of teacher training, to the days and times of the training and to the accompaniment of the professionals in charge of PINI.

## Procedure

The work was developed in 3 stages

*Stage 1- Teacher Training:* consisted of 8 theoretical-practical meetings of 2 hours each. The topics of perceptive organization, attention, inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility, working memory, recognition of emotions, resilient attitude, and strengthening of socio-emotional resources in school contexts were addressed. Each meeting analysed each of the functions and skills involved, their evolutionary development, and why it is important to promote their development. Thus, teachers learned about children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, as well as its importance for social and academic skills. They also learned to find creative solutions to exercise socio-cognitive and emotional functions. In the meetings, ideas were proposed on how to incorporate the contents of the stimulation program into the school curriculum and into the daily routines of the grade. With the physical education teachers and music teachers, they discussed and practised different activities that they could implement in their classes to encourage the development of socio-cognitive and emotional functions in their students. Associated with these training sessions, our research team produced a booklet with different exercises and strategies for teachers to consult about providing ideas on how to transfer what they learned into practice in their school group. In 2019, the training was face-to-face, but virtual during 2020-2021.

*Stage 2- Pre-assessment:* In 2019, before the application of the stimulation program by the teachers, a team of psychologists evaluated the following functions in children: maturity indicators, sustained attention, perceptual organization, visuo-spatial skills, working memory and identification of emotions. This aspect could not be carried out during the pandemic period (2020-2021). Subsequently, the implementation of the stimulation program designed to strengthen socio-cognitive functioning in kindergarten children

began. This program was applied by the teachers for 4 months, working daily on socio-cognitive functions with playful activities based on those described in the stimulation booklet (Ison & Espósito, 2020). During the pandemic, the stimulation program was applied by teachers through online meetings with groups of students or by sending exercises to be done at home. These activities were suggested and reviewed by the researchers of our group based on materials accessible to families in preventive isolation. Feedback was obtained from the families through videos and audio, where the children were recorded doing the activities.

*Stage 3- Post-evaluation:* After the application of the intervention program, an online survey was applied to teachers to explore both the grade of acceptance of teachers regarding the training process on socio-cognitive and emotional skills (PHSCE) carried out by our team and whether the stimulation program contributed to the strengthening of these functions in children.

## Data analysis

The frequencies obtained by both groups of teachers, pre-pandemic and during the pandemic, were compared in each of the items of the online survey, a result that is expressed in percentages.

## Ethics statement

All investigation procedures and the evaluation instrument applied were reviewed and approved by the DGE. The teachers had to give their informed consent to participate in this study. The online survey was anonymous and voluntary. The informed consent notice, as well as the administration of this study, complied with CONICET guidelines on ethical behaviour in the Social Sciences and Humanities (2857/06), as well as the code of ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki) for experiments involving humans and the ethical norms of the participating institutions.

## Results

In order to analyse the evaluation carried out by the teachers in relation to the training process on socio-cognitive and emotional skills, PHSCE, before the pandemic and during it, the percentages corresponding to the items considered in the online survey were obtained. Before the pandemic, 24 teachers participated in the program and answered

the opinion survey. It was found that 17 teachers, 70.8%, worked in urban schools and 7, 29.2%, in socially-vulnerable institutions. During the

pandemic, 32 teachers participated in the training, of which 20, 62.5%, worked in urban schools and 12, 37.5%, in socially-vulnerable institutions.

**Table 3:** Teachers participating in PHSCE, according to school, before and after the pandemic

	Type of school	2019	2020-2021	Total
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
Teachers	Urban	17 (70.8)	20 (62.5)	37 (66.07)
	Socially-vulnerable	7 (29.2)	12 (37.5)	19 (33.93)
n		24 (100)	32 (100)	56 (100)

Before the pandemic, 19 teachers, 79.1%, were satisfied or very satisfied with the training process on socio-cognitive and emotional skills, PHSCE.

They reported that the families of their students had received the project with enthusiasm, that the work material was clear, precise and pertinent to the proposed objectives, that the training was useful, that the management and support by professionals and students of the Faculty of Psychology, University of Aconcagua, were satisfactory and that it was important to continue in the project in their institutions. However, 5 teachers, 20.8%, disagreed with the training process. During the pandemic period, 31 teachers, 96.9%, indicated that they were satisfied with the training program received. This same percentage indicated that the families of their students had received the project with enthusiasm and good predisposition and that the management by the researchers was satisfactory. 28 teachers, 87.5%, were satisfied with the work material and the accompaniment by the advanced students who had

collaborated with the project. The training sessions were considered purposeful by 30 teachers, 93.8%. Moreover, all the teachers, 100%, confirmed both that they had observed significant improvements in their students' performance and that they considered leading the project to continue in the coming years. Concerning the second objective, the teachers' perception of their students' socio-cognitive and emotional performance after they had implemented PHSCE was examined. The teachers' report was the available instrument during the pandemic that was implemented to investigate the socio-cognitive and emotional performance in initial level students.

In 2019, 20, 83.3%, teachers observed progress in their students' attentional performance, 19, 79.2%, in working memory and peer relationships, 17, 70.8%, in inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility; 8, 33.3%, in planning; and, 10, 41.7%, in organisation. No improvements were observed in the recognition and control of emotions.

**Table 4:** Frequencies according to the improvements observed in executive performance of students before the pandemic

Improvements in performance	Yes	No
	f (%)	f (%)
Attention	20 (83.3)	4 (16.7)
Working Memory	19 (79.2)	5 (20.8)
Cognitive Flexibility	17 (70.8)	7 (29.2)
Inhibitory Control	17 (70.8)	7 (29.2)
Planning	8 (33.3)	16 (66.7)
Organisation	10 (41.7)	14 (58.3)
Peer Relations	19 (79.2)	5 (20.8)
Recognition of own emotions of children	-	24(100)
Recognition of emotions of student peers	-	24(100)
Emotional control	-	24(100)

During the pandemic period, 31 teachers, 96.9%, observed that their students made significant progress in attention, 24, 75%, observed improvements in working memory, 21, 65.6%, in cognitive flexibility, 20, 62.5%, in inhibitory control,

17, 53.1%, in planning, 16, 50%, in organisation, 18, 56.3%, in relations with their peers, 25, 78.1%, in the recognition of their own emotions, 14, 43.8%, in recognizing the emotions of their peers, and 23, 71.9%, observed progress in emotional control.

**Table 5:** Frequencies according to the improvements observed in executive performance of students during the pandemic

Improvements in performance	Yes	No
	f (%)	f (%)
Attention	31 (96.9)	1 (3.1)
Working Memory	24 (75)	8 (25)
Cognitive Flexibility	21 (65.6)	11 (34.4)
Inhibitory Control	20 (62.5)	12 (37.5)
Planning	17 (53.1)	15 (46.9)
Organisation	15 (50)	15 (50)
Relations with peers	18 (53.3)	14 (43.8)
Recognition of own emotions in students	25 (78.1)	7 (21.9)
Recognition of emotions of student peers	14 (43.8)	18 (53.3)
Emotional Control	23 (71.9)	9 (28.1)

Finally, the percentage of teachers who suggested improvements in certain aspects of the program was analysed.

Before the pandemic, of 24 teachers who responded to the survey, 5, 20.8%, indicated that it was necessary to modify the time extension of the day and the accompaniment by professionals and students from Psychology college. 10, 41.7%, suggested modifying the assessment modality for children. 6, 25%, suggested increasing the number of teacher training sessions, and the days and times in which they are offered. 4, 16.7%, suggested improving the work material offered to them.

During the pandemic period, 32 teachers responded to the online survey. Just 2 of them, 6.3%, indicated that they would modify the temporary extension of the project. 11, 34.4%, would improve the evaluation modality of executive functions. 6, 18.8%, suggested the number of training sessions, and the time they are given. 7, 21.9% would improve the accompaniment by the research team. 5, 15.6%, suggested improving the work material offered by the project.

## Discussion

In the current study, we first examined the grade of acceptance of teachers in relation to the training process for the strengthening of socio-cognitive and emotional skills carried out by our team. The results obtained before the pandemic showed that 79.1% of teachers were satisfied with the training received, while 20.8% were dissatisfied.

Despite the difficulties experienced during the pandemic, 96.9% of the teachers indicated that they were satisfied with the training process received, and only one teacher expressed her disagreement, 3.1%.

It could be asked: what aspects intervened, in the context of the pandemic, to have a greater number of teachers who satisfactorily perceived the training received for implementing the socio-cognitive and emotional stimulation program with their students? It could be believed that several aspects converged. One of them was the Comprehensive Initial Level Project (PINI), in which the Socio-cognitive and Emotional Skills Program (PHSCE) was inserted. It had been developing since 2018 in the schools selected by the Directorate of Initial Education of the province of Mendoza.

This allowed the teachers to appropriate the PHSCE and the suggested activities, which were gradually articulated by the teachers to the school curriculum. Thus, they creatively incorporated activities proposed by themselves, adapting and enriching the PHSCE, according to the needs of their students. Interventions in the medium- and long-term require extensive teacher training and a constant review of materials for the implementation of socio-cognitive and emotional strengthening programs. The ultimate goal of these programs is to optimize and promote the development of other skills necessary for school, such as self-regulation, social skills, and literacy. The basis for these programs is that socio-cognitive and emotional skills could be enhanced in early educational settings by promoting quality teacher-child interactions through appropriate scaffolding and support practices (Bardack & Obradović, 2019; Ison et al., 2020, Poulou et al., 2022; Traverso et al., 2019). Likewise, knowing the theoretical foundation that supports the teachers' practice collaborates not only in the systematic application of these stimulation devices but also in the teachers' conviction in their implementation. In response to the situation of isolation, our team held monthly

online meetings with teachers, through which the implementation of the strengthening program was monitored. In these meetings, not only cognitive and emotional aspects of their students were addressed, but also other emerging issues such as the emotional situation and the concerns of the teachers. In other words, these meetings also collaborated to help teachers manage their own emotions, fears, insecurities, and situations shared by all the actors in the educational community: families, students, teachers and professionals from our team. When comparing the answers given by the teachers before and during the pandemic, it was observed that, during the pandemic, the teachers valued the work material for training, support, accompaniment and supervision provided by the members of the research team and the efforts and predisposition of the families to collaborate in the application of the program. Thus, all the teachers considered it important to continue with this project in the schools. Furthermore, the perception of teachers in relation to the socio-cognitive and emotional performance of their students was compared after the implementation of the PHSCE, before and during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, teachers did not perceive improvements in their students in Recognition of their own emotions, Recognition of the emotions of others and in Emotional control. While, in the other socio-cognitive skills, they did perceive improvements. During the pandemic period, the teachers, in addition to observing improvements in socio-cognitive performance, perceived changes in the emotional manifestations of their students. Thus, they observed that a high percentage of their students managed to recognize their own emotions and have emotional control. In reference to emotional control, it does not mean inhibition in the expression of emotions, but rather expanding awareness and emotional regulation. To a lesser extent, the children were able to recognize emotions in their classmates. In the training sessions carried out during the pandemic, our team highlighted the importance of scaffolding processes in the expression of emotions and the role they play in interpersonal relationships, with friends and significant adults. In turn, it was highlighted how emotions interact with cognitive functions. Likewise, conducting monthly webinars with teachers from different institutions encouraged exchanging of experiences according to the different realities, sharing innovative strategies and establishing a

support network among themselves. These aspects may have collaborated to teachers' focusing on the emotional perception of their students, and not only on cognitive changes. One of the affective resources is being able to identify which emotion or set of emotions arise in a specific situation. Understanding their own emotions helps children to be able to express them and guide their behavior in social situations (Castillo, et al., 2022).

The role those significant adults have for canalizing and scaffolding those emotions are fundamental. This helps when dealing with or resolving interpersonal situations (Morelato et al., 2019; Greco et al., in press). In turn, studies carried out in Argentina on teachers' perceptions and emotions showed that the emotional state they experienced at the start of non-face-to-face classes was one of confidence to cope with this challenge. However, at the same time, they felt stress, anxiety, and fear of assuming their responsibility of online educational tasks (Expósito & Marsollier, 2021; Oros et al, 2020; Vergara et al., 2021).

In times of global crisis, it has been observed that teachers and managers operate with different resources, in unequal contexts, in dissimilar times (Expósito & Marsollier, 2021). In addition to this, the low salaries of teachers represent another stressful factor that influences the educational system. Taking into account all of these aspects, they could highlight the willingness of teachers to actively intervene in the teaching-learning processes, in the search for strategies to scaffold and support the progress made by their students and in highlighting the importance of the affective bonds, interactions, and contact with others.

## Conclusion

Before concluding, some limitations of this work should be considered when interpreting the results. The first of these was that, during the pandemic period, only one online survey could be applied in order to explore the perception of teachers of the training courses carried out and the advances, or not, observed in the socio-cognitive and emotional functioning in their initial level students after the implementation of the stimulation program.

Another aspect was that, although the researchers of the team monitored, through virtual meetings, the doubts and concerns of the teachers, they could not follow up on the application of the PHSCE, as was



done in the classroom before the pandemic. Although social isolation due to the pandemic caused countless situations of uncertainty, affective and economic losses, and disadvantages for people, it also created reevaluation of the importance of affection and the need for face-to-face encounters. The learning and affective bonds that were generated in the context of the school, during the pandemic, had to be managed online. From this perspective, we highlight the role of teachers during the pandemic who had to quickly adopt a distance education modality (Baptista Lucio et al., 2020), resorting to technological mediation. This passage to virtuality produced a change in the daily educational practices of the teacher. They had to incorporate digital resources with new materials and tools, develop skills and abilities in the management and use of information and communication technologies (ICT), adapt the curriculum, and prioritize the teaching and evaluation of certain contents over others. Likewise, the way of approaching classes, interactions and evaluative instances was modified (Vergara et al., 2021). Under these circumstances, the teachers had to adapt the implementation of the program for the strengthening of socio-cognitive and emotional skills in their students, through a reconfiguration of their own personal and technological possibilities, but also those that the socio-family context allowed. Those families that had greater resources and possibilities for communication through electronic devices were more likely to accompany their children through the implementation of the program, compared to those families with fewer opportunities. In these cases, we highlight the attitude of the teachers, so that children with fewer resources and opportunities could also carry out the activities, such as sending photocopies or videos showing the tasks or games in the online classes. It is believed that, during the pandemic, the role of educators has been revalued, because they were essential actors to facilitate and scaffold learning in their students, giving continuity and sustaining the teaching and learning processes.

The bonds of security, appreciation and affective warmth created between the teacher and the children, as well as the bond of trust and respect between the institution and the family, are a condition for the learning experience to take place and be possible (UNICEF, 2021).

## Acknowledgements

This work has been written within the framework of the two research projects. The first, PS01-081/22, supported by the University of Aconcagua, and the second PIP 2017-2019, N° 11220170100664, supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET- Argentina).

The authors gratefully acknowledge David Beach for the English version.

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**Cite this article:** Mirta S I Zintilini, D F González1. (2023). School Intervention: An Experience Focused on Initial Education Teachers, *Journal of Clinical Psychology and Mental Health*, BioRes Scientia Publishers. 1(1):1-10. DOI: 10.59657/2993-0227.brs.22.001

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**Article History:** Received: December 02, 2022; Accepted: December 26, 2022; Published: January 02, 2023