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*The Botín Foundation is a member of the Alliance for Childhood – European Network Group. Hosted by Karin Resetarits at the European Parliament, Fátima Sánchez Santiago addressed the Quality of Childhood Group at the European Parliament on the subject of Social and Emotional Education, an International Analysis.*

## Social and Emotional Education in Cantabria, Spain

by Fátima Sánchez Santiago

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### SUMMARY

*The Botín Foundation is Spain's leading private foundation in terms of the scale of its investment and the far-reaching impact of its programmes. Since 2004 it has been working in the sphere of education, with a particular focus on Social and Emotional Education in schools. The Foundation's Responsible Education programme is now run in 100 schools in Cantabria Spain. In addition, it has developed and delivered an innovative pilot project called "Life and Values in Education" in three of the 100 schools. The initial results from the external evaluation of the 3-year pilot indicate that the students improved in three areas: in emotional clarity, in assertiveness and their anxiety levels decreased.*

*On the international stage the Foundation is researching what has been developed in Social and Emotional Education in different countries. In 2008, it published Social and Emotional Education – an International Analysis (which covered Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the U.S.A). In 2009 the Foundation established the Botín Platform for Innovation in Education. The members of the Platform are experts in the areas of Creativity in Education and Social and Emotional Education. A second International Analysis will be published towards the end of 2011, focussing on what is happening in Social and Emotional Education in Canada, Singapore, Australia, Portugal and Finland.*

In 1964 Marcelino Botín-Sanz de Sautuola and his wife Carmen Yllera established the Fundación Marcelino Botín to "respond to the needs and help foster social development" in Cantabria, Spain. Today the Botín Foundation is Spain's leading private foundation in terms of the scale of its investment and the far-reaching impact of its programmes.

The mission of the Botín Foundation is to contribute to the global development of society. To achieve this it manages a variety of programmes in education, science, rural development, culture and social development. The Foundation mainly works in Spain and especially in the region of Cantabria, although it also carries out international projects in Latin America and the U.S.A.

The Foundation's programmes reflect its conviction that talent is the main driving force in the development of society and, accordingly, it continually strives to stimulate and support that talent.

The Foundation's principal interest has always been in training, as a priority strategy in all of the areas in which it works: Art, Music, Science, Rural Development and so on. In 2004 the Foundation began to work specifically in the educational field. There can be no doubt that the best way to contribute to well-being, development and progress in our society is to support and promote an all-round education and healthy growth, from early childhood onwards. We support the development of human capital and promote life-long learning.

We are conscious of the need to act in conjunction with others, and to deal with the educational challenges facing us in a coordinated manner. From the outset we have worked closely with the Consejería de Educación of the Regional Government of Cantabria (equivalent to the Ministry of Education for the region), and with other official bodies. We have made proposals that answer to the expectations and educational needs of young children, in the framework of school, family and society in the 21st Century, where rapid and constant change is the order of the day, and so many contradictions are apparent.

The Fundación Botín's understanding of the concept of well-rounded education 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 Social and Emotional Education to be an inseparable part of the well-rounded education of each individual.

#### Developing and applying the Responsible Education programme in Cantabria

The Education Department of the Foundation runs an educational programme, called Responsible Education, that embraces research, project set-up and implementation, support and assessment to gather together resources and educational techniques. The objective of the Responsible Education Programme is to work with schools, families and communities to facilitate and encourage the emotional, cognitive and social development of children and young people, helping them to become independent, responsible, civic-minded and competent.

This educational project has been developed in close collaboration with families, schools and the community; taking into account the physical, psychological and social aspects of each child or young person to ensure emotional equilibrium and well-being, positive academic achievement – and, in addition, to protect children and young people against the type of risks that nowadays present themselves at an increasingly early stage in life (risks such as: violence, intolerance, failure, drugs, etc.).

The geographical location of this project gives it a unique value, because the particular characteristics of the province of Cantabria (Spain) – in terms of its territory, population, and its administrative and educational set-up – make it an ideal centre for an experiment the aim of which is to develop a model that can be properly evaluated, and that can also

be successfully transferred to other places.

Currently 100 schools are involved in our project (40% of the total number of schools in Cantabria). This includes 700 teachers and 12,000 pupils and their families. We currently work with children and young people from 3 to 16 years of age.

The various components that we work on through different activities, games and content are: self-awareness, self-esteem, empathy, emotional identification and expression, self-control, pro-social values, decision-making processes, positive attitudes towards health, social skills (initial interaction and communication), self-affirmation and the ability to say no.

#### Some of the specific characteristics of this programme are as follows:

- a) We have enjoyed an excellent and close relationship with the Council for Education of the Regional Government of Cantabria – which has included both the active encouragement and the direct participation of the Council in every stage of the project.
- b) Voluntary participation and commitment by all those involved in the project. This ensures the project's stability, and is also clear proof of the interest aroused by the project.
- c) A joint initiative involving schools, families and the community. The Foundation considers itself as part of the community, and as belonging to all the people to whom the project's educational programmes are directed.
- d) Support and close supervision. We offer constant support to teachers, school principals, parents and so on. We are committed to taking responsibility for meeting the needs that arise in the educational community. A climate of trust has therefore been created, which has enabled all those involved in the project to progress, in a united fashion, towards meeting the declared objectives of the Foundation, and to overcome any difficulties.
- e) We have an excellent relationship with the University of Cantabria, and various different teams from the University are directly involved in our project – both in terms of development and evaluation.
- f) All our initiatives continue to be analysed in terms of their viability and their transferability, and are implemented in a clear and organized manner.
- g) The independence of the Foundation and the fact that it is self-funding mean that the project can be planned for the long term.

Since our Education Programme was launched, in 2004, the number of participants has grown, and the various different initiatives within the Programme have also developed and expanded.

### Life and Values in Education: An experimental innovation in education project.

In 2006, thanks to our partnership with the Consejería de Educación (the equivalent of the Ministry of Education in the region), the Foundation launched a pilot project for innovation in education, which intensively promotes the development of personal and social competencies in students from 3 to 16 years old, in three schools. (The three schools were selected from the 100 schools that are engaged in the Foundation's Responsible Education programme). The three schools are:

- The *Colegio Sagrados Corazones* in Sierrapando-Torrelavega (Cantabria, Spain), an urban school with a religious foundation which operates within the state education system, including children and young people at all levels of education (from 3 to 16 years old);
- The *Colegio Marcial Solana* in La Concha de Villaescusa (Cantabria, Spain), a rural state school, offering education at infant and primary levels (for children from 2 to 12 years of age);
- The *Instituto de Educación Secundaria Nuestra Señora de los Remedios* in Guarnizo, where we continue to offer support and close supervision to the state school pupils (aged 12 to 16) who attend this secondary school.

Some 73 teachers, 1,102 pupils and their families have participated in this pilot project. The main objectives of the pilot are:

- To encourage the all-round development of children and young people
- To increase educational quality, by ensuring that our Project has a favourable effect on the climate of each school
- To promote positive communication between teachers, pupils and families.

The different strategies that are deployed in this innovative project include: teacher training, monitoring (of teachers and students), follow up, creativity, assessment and evaluation. All these aspects are used to embed the content and activities of the project into the different subjects (arts, music, literature, physical education, history, science, etc.) with the aim of promoting the learning of academic subjects, and the students' personal and social development.

Many initiatives are being carried out in these schools – in an integrated and tailor-made fashion – in the different subject areas. In some areas we have benefited from the advice and collaboration of official bodies such as the FAD Foundation (who produce teaching materials for Science, History, Physical Education, and the weekly tutorial sessions), and the Germán Sánchez Ruipérez Foundation (who focus on literature). Both organisations have allowed us to adapt their educational programmes to our requirements. In areas such as music, we have created a specific programme for schools, working in conjunction with the University of Cantabria. Finally, in other subject areas, such as art, we have adapted our own programmes, and have developed new ones specifically designed for schools.

Each of these areas of activity has its particular methodology, and requires a specific training for teachers. In addition, planning is needed in order to actively involve families and to work effectively within the community. Each area of activity also has to be timetabled, and teaching materials organized.

The Foundation, together with the Educational Council of the Regional Government, carries out ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all these activities, programmes and initiatives. The programming and evaluation activities are co-ordinated with the regional government and with the teams of teachers. At these meetings guidelines are shared and plans are agreed and put into place. The Foundation and the regional government work with the schools to co-ordinate the programme over the course of each year. Finally, the Foundation and the regional government carry out regular evaluations of the programme with the project co-ordinators and the teachers.

Furthermore, we have a close working relationship with the University of Cantabria. The University is responsible for performing an external evaluation of this project. Two teams of experts at the University's Education Department evaluate the project in two ways: the psychological effects of the project on the children and young people (through regular qualitative interviews), and measuring the effects of the programme (in a quantitative manner). We have already received some of the results of the evaluation. These will be presented and published shortly. So far, the first results look very satisfactory. The results indicate that students' emotional intelligence (especially with regard to emotional clarity) improved over the three years of the programme, as did their assertiveness. In addition, their levels of anxiety decreased.

The need to continue expanding, innovating and moving forward meant that in 2007 the Botín Foundation directed its sights to the situation in education in both Spain and the rest of the world in order to:

1. Acquire information about new developments from around the world, 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 work of the Foundation, and which could also prove useful to professionals working in other places and in different contexts.

Consequently, the Foundation worked with Christopher Clouder to establish the first international project in this field.



We gathered together an international working group, consisting of experts from a variety of European countries (Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden) and the United States, which met periodically at the Foundation's head office to research, review and collect a variety of international educational case studies, research projects and educational approaches and programmes related to the needs and all-round development of children and young people. The result of this work was the report: *Social and Emotional Education. An International Analysis*. (<http://educacion.fundacionmbotin.org>).

This report outlines the educational challenges facing contemporary society and offers several ways to improve children and teenagers' well-being and their academic performance through addressing their social and emotional growth.

The report also includes a review of recent scientific research, the results of which provide a compelling conclusion: the systematic development and delivery of social and emotional education programmes by schools have positive effects not only on the emotional well-being of children and teenagers, but also on their social relationships and on their academic achievement, and act as an important factor in preventing problems relating to mental health and behaviour while they are growing up.

For many years now, educational programmes to promote emotional and social development have been researched and applied in 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 felt the need to take responsibility for setting up an organised, clearly-structured system that could make it possible to pool knowledge and any advances in research in this field.

At the end of 2009 the Botín Platform for Innovation in Education was created, an international initiative that works in the areas of Creativity in Education and Social and Emotional Education. This Platform is made up of different experts from around the world and is directed by Christopher Clouder.

Its general objectives are:

- To foster international collaboration in the development and promotion of Innovative Educational initiatives.
- To effect change and raise the profile of the work of the Foundation in the field of innovation in education (holistic education suitable for preparing children and young people for the future).

In the coming year the Foundation's Platform for Innovation in Education will continue to work on its International Survey of Emotional and Social Education, in countries such as Australia, Canada, Finland, Portugal and Singapore. It will also work on producing information (such as examples of good practice, the latest research findings, and so on) to disseminate through the Platform's website to teachers, parents and policy makers about the role of Creativity and the Arts in the development of an all-round education, with experts from Germany, Austria, Brazil, Norway and the United Kingdom.

After nearly 5 years spent on the development of these educational projects, we have to admit that our work is just beginning. Education is a slow, daily job, with long-term goals. For this reason we wish to progress step by step, adding our grain of sand, little by little, and setting down solid foundations to facilitate the growth, consolidation and extension of this work over the years to come.

What have we achieved so far? A working model and a series of activities which are particularly worthwhile because of their open and all-encompassing nature.

Activities have reached schools and the community and have been supported and well-received by them, since they treat Social and Emotional Education as a fundamental and inseparable part of children and young people's educational process and well-being.

There is, furthermore, something else we regard as truly important: the trust, partnership, and work we have been able to achieve jointly with the Government administration, school management, teaching staff, families and the numerous professional experts from around the world involved in this innovative experience; and to whom we are sincerely grateful for their efforts and their contributions.

There is still a lot of work to do and the Foundation is willing to go on developing its work in the educational sphere. Some of the aspects that we need to take into account are:

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

We wish to continue our research in this field, to extend the work we have begun in the field of Social and Emotional Education and to dig deeper, in order to provide educational centres, families and communities with initiatives and programmes which will meet their needs and ensure emotional and social growth in our school pupils. As a result of the experience already acquired by the Foundation, we can offer guidance and support, and can 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 adventure.

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

Social and Emotional Education should become part of the daily curriculum and operate, without exception, at all levels and among all pupils to support and develop academic achievement, well-being and 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. 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 take care of our 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 thriving in the workplace. The training of adults (teachers, academics, parents, professionals, etc.) is therefore of fundamental importance, firstly, to improve our well-being, and secondly, to work towards developing the full potential of children and young people. With all our educational experience, we, at Fundación 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.

The Fundación Marcelino Botín wishes to support, develop and stimulate educational experiences that encourage in society as a whole the emotional, cognitive and social development of children and young people, helping them to be independent, skilled and committed, improving their academic performance and attaining higher levels of well-being, balance and happiness. In short, we wish to contribute to the development and progress of society.



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was born in Santander (Spain). She graduated in Translation and Interpreting from the University of Salamanca where she specialized in Social Education. Since 2003 she has been working with the schools of Cantabria (Spain), the pupils' families and the communities around the schools to foster the emotional, cognitive and social growth of children. She is the director of the Foundation's Education Department, designing the strategies used to achieve the objectives of the educational programmes. She works with the different groups in charge of evaluating the educational projects, the development of audiovisual media as a teaching aid and new programmes that link the teaching of arts with the social and emotional growth of children. She also takes part in the teaching and coordinates the different trainings in schools and at the local university.