




## Research exercises in the classroom identifying differences among concepts on peace

### *Ejercicio de investigación en el aula identificando diferencias entre conceptos sobre la paz*

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### Abstract

In Colombia, the General Education Law 115 of 1994 and Law 1620 of 2013 are elements that allow exploring fields of socio-cultural research in the classroom. The objective of this research is to determine if there are differences between the concept of peace between students. Records of exercises in class of 973 children between 10 and 15 years old were used, in the subject of Peace Chair in Grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the José Asunción Silva Educational Institution, Municipality of Palmira, Colombia. The appropriate ethnographic methodology was applied to the educational context for the observation and recording of information. In the cases of the variables Patience, Justice, Agreement, Tolerance, Hope, Protect, the H<sub>0</sub> is rejected. In this research it was possible to identify two types of concepts associated with peace: 1. Stable and 2. Unstable. Despite the differences recorded in the analysis, all the concepts are part of the diversity of meanings that our student community associates and applies in the daily process of coexistence. As a whole, this exercise allows the use of indicators to evaluate and adjust pedagogical and curricular elements that are more closely related to the environment and the particular context of the classroom. At an academic level, it allows broadening the understanding of the relationship between the classroom community and the local community, facilitating the application of ethnographic techniques as part of the pedagogical process and enriching the teaching-learning dichotomy.

**Keywords:** Peace, perception, classroom, concept, teaching program, evaluation.

### Resumen

En Colombia, la Ley General de Educación 115 de 1994 y Ley 1620 de 2013 son elementos que permiten explorar campos de investigación sociocultural en el aula. El objetivo de esta investigación es determinar si existen diferencias entre el concepto de paz entre estudiantes. Se utilizaron registros de ejercicios en clase de 973 niños y niñas entre 10 y 15 años, en la asignatura de Cátedra de Paz en de los grados 6, 7, 8 y 9 de la Institución Educativa José Asunción Silva, Municipio de Palmira, Colombia. Para la observación y registro de la información se aplicó la metodología etnográfica adecuada al contexto educativo. En los casos de las variables Paciencia, Justicia, Acuerdo, Tolerancia, Esperanza, Proteger se rechaza la H<sub>0</sub>. En esta investigación fue posible identificar dos tipos de conceptos asociados a la paz: estables e inestables. A pesar de las diferencias registradas en el análisis, todos los conceptos hacen parte de la diversidad de significados que nuestra comunidad estudiantil asocia y aplica en el cotidiano proceso de convivencia. En conjunto, este ejercicio permite usar indicadores para evaluar y ajustar elementos pedagógicos y curriculares de mayor relación con el entorno y el contexto particular del aula. A nivel académico permite ampliar la comprensión de la relación entre la comunidad del aula y la comunidad local, facilitando la aplicación de técnicas etnográficas como parte del proceso pedagógico y enriqueciendo la dicotomía enseñanza-aprendizaje.

**Descriptor:** Paz, percepción, aula, conceptos, programa de enseñanza, evaluación.

## 1. Introduction

There is a branch of knowledge in Colombia that defines pedagogical research in general and classroom research in particular, and has evolved since the 80s. It is a field of study in continuous growth that has served to progressively model the concept of “Master Researcher Model” since the 90s, gradually increasing in the country (Ossa, 2015). Known as Research-Pedagogical Action, several studies have been conducted, focused on designing strategies to build pedagogical knowledge applied to particular contexts. These studies have also demonstrated the improvement of curricula, pedagogical practices and teaching-learning processes from classroom research (Quiceno, 2002; Restrepo, 2003a, 2003b; Ávila, 2005).

The construction process of pedagogical knowledge from classroom research has defined at least three approaches: 1. Teacher research on their pedagogical work, 2. Teacher research on student practices and 3. Teacher research on the student research process and its accompaniment (Vélez, 1980; Restrepo, 2009). This research is mainly defined within the second approach mentioned, although it is possible to consider a transversal process to all others. It can also be understood as a complementary part of the research exercise that has been called in other ways as research of formative evaluation, research of performance evaluation, research of reflective practice, transversal reflection or ethnography of the classroom (Porlán, 1987; Goetz and Lecompte, 1988; Porlán and Martín, 1991; Parra Sabo, 1998; Álvarez, 2011; Guzmán *et al.*, 2017).

### 1.1 Research objective

The concept of peace and its reflection in peaceful coexistence are learned in the family and in the direct social contexts of the individual experiences, especially during the stage of growth. For some authors who are focused on research in the classroom, the concept of peace in the school environment has been investigated as the

reflection of opinions on the understanding and application of elements such as: 1. The design of the coexistence manual, 2. The development and implementation of the subject of Peace; and 3. The regulations applied to conflict mediation within educational institutions. In this way, the school emerges as a space where social processes, both conflict and peacebuilding, are manifested and are oriented from government bodies that help mediate daily coexistence (McKernan, 1999; Laguna and Sánchez, 2005; Cardozo-Rusique *et al.*, 2020).

In Colombia, since the implementation of the General Law of Education 115 of 1994 and Law 1620 of 2013, the bases were founded to organize the National System of School Coexistence and Training for the Exercise of Human Rights, Education for Sexuality and Prevention and Mitigation of School Violence, establishing the legal mechanisms that open the space to be applied through the Manual of Coexistence and the organization of the Committees of School Coexistence. Subsequently, the promotion of culture for peace is established from Law 1732 of 2014 to be applied in educational institutions and its obligatory since Law 1874 of 2017.

These elements issued in recent years have allowed to explore various fields of socio-cultural research in the classroom and its community environment. One of them is the understanding of the phenomenon of generation and social support of critical thinking related with the process of meaningful and supportive construction of knowledge. For the Ministry of National Education, the concept of peace is defined as the result of school coexistence, i.e., the group reflection of the action of living in the company of other people in a peaceful and harmonious way. This process is understood as the basis for social development and the exercise of citizenship. Following this idea, the space where training to know how to live peacefully and constructively in society is called School and is defined in official educational institutions from their committees



and subjects related with the topic (Marrugo-Peralta *et al.*, 2016).

Since the implementation and application of the subject for Peace in the I. E. José Asunción Silva de Palmira since 2015, it has been part of the teaching task to collect information on the generation and social consolidation of knowledge around the culture of peace, as well as its reflection in processes of critical group thinking in the educational community. This research presents the results of the analysis of information collected between 2015 and 2020 in the regular courses of Peace at I.E. José Asunción Silva of the City of Palmira (Colombia) between grades 6, 7, 8 and 9. The main objective of this research is to determine if there are significant differences between the structures of understanding the concept of peace between groups and over time. It is believed that the development of this objective through research in the classroom will improve the pedagogy in the area and facilitate reflection on the teaching-learning process in the context of this educational institution. The results described here serve to adjust and improve the curriculum in the area towards the future.

## 2. Methods

The records of permanent observations of exercises in class were used, which were carried out during the classes of Peace to 973 children between 10 and 15 years from grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the school José Asunción Silva, Municipality of Palmira, Valle del Cauca. Between 2016 and 2020 (until April 17, 2020, due to compliance with the school on preventive isolation due to Covid-19 in public schools established by the Colombian Government through Decree 457 of 2020), there were changes in the configuration of some groups due to the natural behavior of the enrollment processes. Also, in most cases, boys and girls moved on to the next grade and their responses can correspond to all the years considered, a few others repeated the year and doubled the records. For these reasons, data were

collected by grade and year. The exercise of this research was carried out in an ordinary session of classes at the beginning of the school year (diagnostic classes) where an open question was asked, and the children were asked the following: Write the word that you consider most similar to the concept of Peace. In the explanation, it was mentioned in detail that the students had to write a short word or explanation that for them meant the same as “Peace”; that was a synonym for them or that evoked a state of peaceful coexistence with other people.

In this research the ethnographic methodology appropriate to the educational context was applied (mixed approach of exploratory character). The concept of “classroom ethnography” or “school ethnography” is usually defined as an ethnography carried out in the specific field of school (Stenhouse, 1984; Goetz and Lecompte, 1988; Martínez Rodríguez, 1990; Aguirre Baztán, 1995; Rojas, 1996; Parra Sabaji, 1998; Serra, 2004; Ortiz Cobo, 2006; Jociles and Franze, 2000 8; Álvarez, 2011). According to this definition, the ethnographer in the classroom must live continuously with the group that studies in order to facilitate the dialectical understanding between social interactions and meanings. This process helps to achieve holistic relations between cultural objects through reflective description. Following the above, a technique that adapts very well to these needs is participant observation, combined with the interview and the survey. These three mechanisms related to the inspection of the data allow to obtain a robust set of information (Goetz and Lecompte, 1988; Álvarez, 2011).

The answers to the question were used as a source of open survey information and were systematized in Excel and then in a table of SPSS v16, counting each time the synonym appeared. Some students interested in the exercise helped systematize information in Excel and subsequent classroom discussions in the class. The analysis was made by degrees, years and variables. A set of 27 common variables was obtained for all groups



in all years. The criterion was that the endpoint should occur at least once in all grades during the five years observed. There were 49 cases that mentioned anonymous or non-corresponding variables (empty or unknown) and were excluded from the database. Statistical procedures suggested by several authors were followed (Pessat, 1966; Pérez-Tejada, 2008; Congacha, 2015). The first step of the analysis was to calculate the descriptive statistics of each variable in each year. Then, a goodness of fit test was performed to check if the distributions of each data set corresponded to a normalized distribution. In this step, the H0 referred the sets of data of grades and years obtained from standardized samples. Because in most cases the samples for each grade and year approached or exceeded 50 individuals (opinions), it was decided to use the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests:

$$KS = \sup | F_n (X_i) - F_o (X_i) | 1 \leq i \leq n$$

Where KS is the largest absolute difference observed between the cumulative frequency ( $F_n$ ) of the  $i$ -th value observed in the sample and the theoretical cumulative frequency ( $F_o$ ), obtained from the probability distribution that is specified as null hypothesis.

The second step was the application of the hypothesis test to check if there were significant differences between the sets of peace synonyms of each group and year. In this step, the H0 proposed was that the compared degrees are similar in their means. The T-student test was applied for those data sets with normalized distributions.

Mann-Whitney U test was applied for data sets with non-normalized distributions:

$$T-s = (x-\mu)/(s/\sqrt{n})$$

Where T-s is equal to the average of the variable  $x$  minus the population average  $\mu$ , divided over the standard deviation of  $n$ . On the other hand, for the Mann-Whitney test, U is equal to the sample sizes  $n_i$  compared to the sums of the ranges of both samples  $r_i$ :

$$U = \Sigma (n_{1i} n_{2i} + (n_i+1)/2) - r_{1i} r_{2i}$$

### 3. Results

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the variables allows rejecting or not the H0. In most cases the hypothesis is not rejected, but in the cases of the variables Patience, Justice, Agreement, Tolerance, Hope, Protection it is rejected. This means that these variables come from datasets with non-normalized distributions. A significant difference was found in the frequency of some concepts such as respect, dialogue, honesty and tolerance. When comparing grade 6 with grade 9, there is a significant difference when using the concept of respect as a synonym for peace. The same corresponds to the concept of dialogue when comparing grades 6 to 8 and 8 to 9. The concept of honesty demonstrates significant differences when comparing grades 6 to 7 and 8 to 9. Finally, the concept of tolerance shows significant differences when comparing grades 8 and 9. Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness of fit test results are shown in Table 1:



Table 1

*Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results*

Variable	Normal parameters	More marked differences			Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Sig. asynt. (bilateral)	H <sub>0</sub> is approved	
	Mean	Typical deviation	Absolute	Positive				Negative
Tranquility	2.2	0.834	0.245	0.245	-0.205	1.095	0.182	Si
Love	2.25	0.91	0.258	0.258	-0.192	1.155	0.139	Si
Solidarity	2.45	1.146	0.184	0.166	-0.184	0.825	0.505	Si
Harmony	2.1	1.165	0.284	0.284	-0.173	1.271	0.079	Si
Respect	2.55	1.234	0.222	0.222	-0.128	0.993	0.278	Si
Consideration	2.15	1.04	0.216	0.216	-0.193	0.964	0.31	Si
Union	2.35	1.348	0.302	0.302	-0.158	1.352	0.052	Si
Kindness	2.45	1.099	0.209	0.209	-0.142	0.934	0.347	Si
Dialogue	2.25	0.967	0.202	0.202	-0.181	0.904	0.388	Si
Liberty	2.15	1.137	0.252	0.252	-0.156	1.129	0.156	Si
Equality	2.15	1.137	0.302	0.302	-0.198	1.353	0.051	Si
Equity	2.4	1.046	0.249	0.249	-0.151	1.113	0.168	Si
Trust	2.25	1.251	0.229	0.229	-0.159	1.025	0.244	Si
Stillness	1.85	0.988	0.255	0.255	-0.195	1.141	0.148	Si
Calmness	2.25	1.118	0.288	0.288	-0.212	1.29	0.072	Si
Opinion	1.95	0.887	0.258	0.258	-0.232	1.153	0.14	Si
Honesty	1.6	0.598	0.298	0.292	-0.298	1.333	0.057	Si
Help	1.7	0.865	0.291	0.291	-0.209	1.301	0.068	Si
Patience	1.65	0.988	0.345	0.345	-0.255	1.541	0.017	Si
Justice	1.75	1.07	0.308	0.308	-0.242	1.379	0.045	Si
Loyalty	2	0.795	0.3	0.3	-0.25	1.342	0.055	Si
Comprehension	2.05	0.887	0.222	0.222	-0.178	0.995	0.275	Si
Agreement	1.65	0.875	0.321	0.321	-0.229	1.436	0.032	Si
Solution	1.6	0.598	0.298	0.292	-0.298	1.333	0.057	Si
Tolerance	1.65	0.875	0.321	0.321	-0.229	1.436	0.032	Si
Hope	1.15	0.489	0.52	0.52	-0.38	2.327	0	Si
Protect	1.1	0.308	0.527	0.527	-0.373	2.358	0	Si

Note. Concepts that do not approve the H<sub>0</sub> are in gray.

Hypothesis tests were performed for paired groups considering the goodness of fit test. The objective in this step was to test the H<sub>0</sub> between pairs of degrees and to observe if there were significant differences between the means of each concept. The test for normalized groups

is shown in Table 2 and the test for non-normalized groups in Table 3. Table 4 collects the results of the rejection or not of the H<sub>0</sub> in this research, i.e., that the grades of students do not present significant differences between the means of the distributions for each variable compared.



Table 2  
T-student test results for grades with normalized means

	t test for mean equality among grades with																	
	Grades 6 y 7			Grades 6 y 8			Grades 6 y 9			Grades 7 y 8			Grades 7 y 9			Grades 8 y 9		
	t	gl	Sig.	t	gl	Sig.	t	gl	Sig.	t	gl	Sig.	t	gl	Sig.	t	gl	Sig.
Tranquilidad	.000	8	1.000	.577	8	.580	-.632	8	.545	.943	8	.373	-1.265	8	.242	-1.789	8	.111
Amor	1.206	8	.262	1.890	8	.095	.894	8	.397	.302	8	.771	-.667	8	.524	-1.342	8	.217
Solidaridad	.516	8	.620	1.089	8	.308	.211	8	.838	.784	8	.455	-.254	8	.806	-.802	8	.446
Armonía	.873	8	.408	.930	8	.380	1.549	8	.160	.000	8	1.000	.667	8	.524	.784	8	.455
Respeto	1.270	8	.240	1.807	8	.108	2.546	8	.034	.566	8	.587	1.265	8	.242	.649	8	.535
Consideración	.000	8	1.000	-.739	8	.481	.000	8	1.000	-.885	8	.402	.000	8	1.000	1.000	8	.347
Unión	1.789	8	.111	.385	8	.710	1.492	8	.174	-1.897	8	.094	-.447	8	.667	1.443	8	.187
Amabilidad	2.021	8	.078	1.033	8	.332	1.131	8	.291	-.949	8	.371	-1.095	8	.305	.000	8	1.000
Diálogo	-2.121	8	.067	-4.000	8	.004	-1.500	8	.172	-.667	8	.524	1.000	8	.347	2.236	8	.056
Libertad	-1.387	8	.203	-2.214	8	.058	-1.500	8	.172	-.447	8	.667	.535	8	.608	1.206	8	.262
Igualdad	.873	8	.408	.825	8	.433	1.132	8	.290	.000	8	1.000	.535	8	.608	.408	8	.694
Equidad	-1.443	8	.187	-.649	8	.535	-1.890	8	.095	.788	8	.453	.000	8	1.000	-.973	8	.359
Confianza	.400	8	.700	.802	8	.446	.447	8	.667	.250	8	.809	.000	8	1.000	-.302	8	.771
Quieted	.283	8	.784	.000	8	1.000	-.485	8	.641	-.447	8	.667	-.849	8	.421	-.649	8	.535
Calma	.422	8	.684	.422	8	.684	.647	8	.536	.000	8	1.000	.408	8	.694	.408	8	.694
Opinión	-.649	8	.535	.316	8	.760	-.649	8	.535	1.095	8	.305	.000	8	1.000	-1.095	8	.305
Honestidad	-3.162	8	.013	.000	8	1.000	-1.633	8	.141	.000	8	1.000	1.500	8	.172	2.449	8	.040
Ayudar	.566	8	.587	.000	8	1.000	.000	8	1.000	-.730	8	.486	-.894	8	.397	.000	8	1.000
Lealtad	.000	8	1.000	-.949	8	.371	-.535	8	.608	-.949	8	.371	-.535	8	.608	.784	8	.455
Comprensión	.000	8	1.000	.577	8	.580	.302	8	.771	.756	8	.471	.408	8	.694	-.408	8	.694
Solución	.447	8	.667	.447	8	.667	.894	8	.397	.000	8	1.000	.577	8	.580	.577	8	.580

Note. the concepts that do not approve H0 are in gray.





Table 3

*U Mann-Whitney Test Results for Grades with Non-Normalized Means*

	U test for mean equality among grades with non-norm distributions											
	Grades 6 y 7		Grades 6 y 8		Grades 6 y 9		Grades 7 y 8		Grades 7 y 9		Grades 8 y 9	
	U	Sig.	U	Sig.	U	Sig.	U	Sig.	U	Sig.	U	Sig.
Tolerancia	11.500	.811	10	0.513	5.5	0.118	9.5	0.439	8.5	0.381	4	0.054
Esperanza	10.000	.317	12.500	1.000	10.000	.317	10.000	.317	12	0.881	10	0.317
Proteger	10.000	.317	12.500	1.000	10.000	.317	10.000	.317	12.5	1	10	0.317
Paciencia	10.500	.606	11.000	.735	11.500	.811	9.000	.408	11	0.699	9	0.419
Justicia	12.500	1.000	9.000	.432	11.500	.811	9.000	.432	11.5	0.811	8	0.309
Acuerdo	8.000	.309	12.500	1.000	11.500	.811	8.000	.309	9	0.432	11.5	0.811

*Note.* The concepts that do not approve  $H_0$  are in gray.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

It was possible to identify two types of concepts associated with peace: 1. Those which are frequently used by most of the high school students and whose association with the concept of peace is similar during the six years at school. These concepts can be called “stable” and belong to the set of elements of meaning that help our students to understand and act based on a peaceful coexistence scenario in the educational community. These concepts also enrich the language that can be used in the teaching-learning process in the area of peace subject, 2. Those concepts that are infrequent and have notable differences (meaning) between some students. These concepts can be called “unstable” and they create a set of dissimilar ideas that allow to broaden and diversify the students’ understanding of the peaceful life they build. Despite the differences recorded in the analysis, all concepts are part of the explicit diversity of meanings that our student associate and apply in the daily coexistence process.

From the pedagogical point of view, the “stable” concepts identified can help to mediate and facilitate the teaching process of the teacher through its articulation and inclusion in activities, readings and practices in the classroom. This may suggest more participation of students

in the curriculum design of the subject, in the feedback of participatory components by adjusting the coexistence manual, and in the design of clear strategies for solving conflicts among students. As a whole, the “stable” concepts help to familiarize the pedagogical practice with the learning process of the student, having a direct impact on the improvement of the strategies for qualitative and quantitative assessment of the components of the social sciences area and their reflection in competencies that the student will remember more easily in the future. A pragmatic use of these learnings can help to reflect progress in external tests on civic competences.

On the other hand, the “unstable” concepts identified can contribute to establish other exercises in the pedagogical practice, seeking to establish positive and constant associations that allow to include them progressively in the experiential process of peaceful coexistence. They also constitute future research to distinguish why abrupt differences between grades occur in students when these concepts are used.

In general terms, the “unstable” concepts identified in this research are used daily by students as synonyms of peace and are part of their concepts about what it means to live peacefully together. A greater scope in its meaning shows that the school context, as a research element,



allows understanding peace as an object of study that brings together a set of emotional states and diverse social interactions between the actors of the educational community. The concept of Respect has been identified, and its use as synonym of a state or sense of peace among students changes and differs between grades 6 and 9. In this sense, the progressive relationship of closeness and treatment between students delimits a space of trust that generates reasons for them to carry out peaceful coexistence in small groups. Respect as a synonym of peace can indicate an element of change in social interaction that is important in the social growth of students. In the four years of difference between baccalaureate degrees, students experience processes of social interaction that lead them to configure and integrate this concept in their representation system and application of peaceful coexistence. Similarly, it is observed how something similar happens between students of grades 6 and 8 when they use the concept of dialogue.

From this point, dialogue is established as an important resource to build individual references about those actions that allow living in harmony with others. On the other hand, there are significant changes in the differences between grades 8 and 9, when concepts such as honesty and tolerance are referred to as peace synonyms. This may be due to the accelerated change in the levels of academic demands, the confrontation with new academic and family scenarios, the pressures exerted by interest groups and friendship groups, all of them hypothetical and impossible to associate directly with this research, opening interesting research that can be conducted in the future. In a year, honesty and tolerance go from being with little-quoted concepts to becoming main elements in the meaning of a peaceful coexistence environment. Their learning and resignification can be a generator of conflicts that are sporadically reflected among some students.

Overall, this research has led to indicators of change when relating diverse concepts with

peace. At the institutional level, it will allow the use of indicators to evaluate and adjust pedagogical and curricular elements more related to the local environment and the context of the classroom, assessing its usefulness. Finally, at the academic level, it has allowed to broaden the understanding of the relationship between the classroom and the local community, allowing the application of ethnographic techniques and statistics as part of the pre-pedagogical process and enriching the teaching-learning dichotomy of the high school curriculum in the aforementioned school.

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