

Accelerated learning versus early promotion of the child in preschool education: impact on comprehensive development

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Abstract

The objective of this research article is to compare the foundations provided by accelerated learning with the integral development pursued by the Colombian educational system. For this, a field investigation based on the mixed method was carried out. As data collection instruments, a semi-structured interview was applied to ten teachers from private educational institutions in the tourist and cultural district of Riohacha, and an observation guide with a Likert scale was applied to children who were the subject of early promotion. The results show that, although some children who have been subject to early promotion present cognitive development in line with the grade they are in, they show deficiencies in social integration into the group, which could be affecting their emotional development.

Keywords: learning; preschool education; basic education; social integration.



Research result article.

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Aprendizaje acelerado frente a la promoción anticipada del niño en educación preescolar: Incidencia en el desarrollo integral

Resumen

El presente artículo de investigación tiene como objetivo comparar los fundamentos que aporta el aprendizaje acelerado con el desarrollo integral que persigue el sistema educativo colombiano. Para ello, se llevó a cabo una investigación de campo basada en el método mixto, se aplicaron como instrumentos de recolección de datos una entrevista semiestructurada a 10 docentes de instituciones educativas privadas del distrito turístico y cultural de Riohacha y una guía de observación con escala de Likert para ser aplicada con los niños que fueron objeto de una promoción anticipada. Los resultados de esta investigación demuestran que algunos niños que han sido objeto de una promoción anticipada presentan un desarrollo cognitivo en consonancia con el grado que cursan; sin embargo, manifiestan deficiencias en la integración social al grupo, lo cual podría estar afectando su desarrollo emocional.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje; educación preescolar; educación básica; integración social.

Aprendizagem acelerada versus promoção precoce da criança na educação pré-escolar: impacto no desenvolvimento integral

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo de pesquisa é comparar as bases fornecidas pela aprendizagem acelerada com o desenvolvimento integral perseguido pelo sistema educacional colombiano. Para isso, foi realizada uma investigação de campo com base no método misto. Como instrumentos de coleta de dados, foram aplicados: uma entrevista semiestructurada a dez professores de instituições de ensino particulares do distrito turístico e cultural de Riohacha, e um guia de observação com escala Likert a crianças que foram objeto de promoção precoce. Os resultados mostram que, embora algumas crianças que passaram pela promoção precoce apresentem desenvolvimento cognitivo compatível com a série em que estão, elas possuem deficiências na integração social no grupo, o que pode estar afetando seu desenvolvimento emocional.

Palavras-chave: aprendizagem; educação pré-escolar; educação básica; integração social.

1. Introduction

In recent years, accelerated learning theories have been gaining some relevance within the educational task, which has led some parents or teachers to implement these principles, hoping that their children or students can acquire a greater amount of knowledge in a relatively short period compared to conventional teaching models (Vergara et al., 2019).

According to Rodríguez (2014), in most cases, these procedures affect children's ability to receive and accumulate knowledge, indicating certain cognitive development about their peers, although this does not correspond to the other stages of their comprehensive development. When this happens, parents feel the need for their child to be promoted to the next higher grade, considering that cognitive maturity is the main requirement for promotion, without taking into account other factors such as development and socio-emotional interests.

Obeying this reality, many institutions agree to this request and, after taking certain standardized tests, choose to promote the children if they have the knowledge and skills required at the next level. However, this promotion does not guarantee that, in the next grade, they will experience comprehensive performance, where the knowledge acquired is complemented by the social skills and emotional stability that they can experience within the group with which they share the school day.

Based on this problem, this article compares the foundations provided by accelerated learning with the integral development pursued by the Colombian educational system, to determine if it is pertinent to approve a child at the next level, regardless of age or the emotional maturity to interact with students of other ages and who may have other interests or expectations. However, it should be noted that the purpose is not to question the foundations of accelerated learning, but to determine the incidence of promotion from one level to another, without having completed the respective grade and the socio-emotional experiences that this entails (Ross, 2013).

Following the objective of this article, a series of definitions about accelerated learning, cognitive development, social development, and the foundations of comprehensive learning are exposed, among others, to then focus on the current situation of the Colombian educational system regarding the early promotion as part of an accelerated learning process. After that, the methodology with which the research was carried out (based on a qualitative and field study) is exposed, to then address the analysis of the results obtained from the interviews carried out with parents and teachers. Finally, the conclusions of the study are detailed, where the reality observed in the private institutions studied in the special, tourist, and cultural district of Riohacha is reported.

Some theoretical references

Next, a series of concepts and theories related to the subject matter of this article is exposed. The purpose is to understand the various aspects that revolve around the investigated problem, at the same time that they are extrapolated to illustrate the reality evidenced in the institutions that are the object of this investigation.

Accelerated learning

It is the result of a series of theories, approaches, methods, and resources, whose main purpose is to increase the capacity to receive and appropriate new knowledge in a shorter time than is usually provided for these purposes; for this, "the real power of the brain is harnessed through strengthening the ability to concentrate using the 5 senses appropriately" (Powell, 2019, p. 73). To obtain this result, it is appealed for the use of all the resources that the person has, as well as the possibilities that the surrounding environment guarantees. In this way, the brain develops its potential more dynamically and naturally.

There is a diversity of concepts around accelerated learning, which, far from contradicting each other, must be analyzed in detail to have an approximation of what these proposals imply and their incidence in current educational models. In this sense, some authors consider that more than a theory, accelerated learning is a process where motivation acts as a catalyst for the contents received by the subject so that their learning rate is accelerated, along with long-term memory. This demands active participation on the part of the learners, who must "activate their curiosity and creativity so that a natural state of receptivity towards new knowledge develops" (Ochoa and Oropeza, 2004, p. 39).

For his part, Ferrín-Schettini (2019) points out that accelerated learning is based on a set of techniques and strategies that increase learning capacity in the classroom, but that, when incorporated into the subject's usual routines, they allow the acquisition of knowledge in a faster and more relevant way throughout life. Although the most significant results are obtained by implementing these strategies from the first years of life, there are no limitations to their application at any stage of life, so it is possible to assume the presence of different strategies that are appropriate to age, cognitive development, and even, the sociocultural context in which the subject develops.

Based on the preceding considerations, accelerated learning can be used with people of different ages, but for different purposes. Thus, when implemented with high school students, it can be an excellent alternative to teach a greater

number of program contents that, for reasons of time and workload, cannot be completed during their daily workday. In the case of university students, it can be a viable alternative to finish school in shorter times while, in children in initial and basic primary education, it has become an alternative to alleviate the effects of school absenteeism caused by the pandemic COVID-19 (Cincinnati Public Schools, 2021). For all the above, it is evident that it is not an alternative for early grade promotion, since during the stage 3 - 7 years, children have a series of interests and motivation triggers, which are not linked to the academic aspect, but to the affective, playful and social aspects.

Within this juncture, Armus et al. (2012) have expressed their disagreement with accelerated learning in preschool education and propose early learning that is based on the initiation of schooling from the first 3 or 4 years, to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to start basic primary education. It should be noted that, for these authors, the years that comprise preschool education are fundamental for the integral formation of the student, for which it is advisable to study them in their entirety, without an early promotion that interrupts this process.

Cognitive development

Cognitive development constitutes a part of the integral development of the person, which is reflected in the ability to establish a position about the elements of the external world that are known. This is evidenced in the children's ability to accumulate information through learning or experience and keep it in long-term memory, as long as it represents a practical utility in their life. To achieve this task, a series of mental processes (simple and complex) intervene, which are described through cognitive psychology.

This notion arises from Piaget's postulates (as cited in Castilla, 2014), who associated this development with the person's ability to learn through observation, experience, or, rather, intentional teaching. Thanks to this faculty, the child strengthens the memorization of concepts, but also the ability to plan and solve problems based on previous knowledge or experiences. In this regard, Universidad de Valencia (2016) considers that it is an innate process in the person, divided into a series of stages that Piaget

defined as follows: the sensorimotor stage, pre-operational stage, stage of concrete operations, and stage of formal operations.

For this article, the pre-operational stage, developed between 2 and 7 years of age, deserves special attention in which egocentric thinking is carried out, the strengthening of the imagination, at the same time that language passes to become a means of self-expression. In some cases, the early stimulation received by the child can give way to a clear, precise language, capable of surpassing in words and grammatical constructions that of other children of the same age, which in itself does not constitute an indicator to be prematurely promoted to basic primary education (Castilla, 2014).

Child's social development

Along with the cognitive development of the children, their social development must go determined by the ability to relate to those around them in an effective way, acquiring socially accepted behaviors, values, and regulations, for harmonious coexistence. In this sense, social development can be defined as a behavior initially learned at home, but which is strengthened in other contexts such as school or the family environment.

Most authors agree that social development takes place alongside affective and intellectual development and has a direct impact on the formation of personality. On this point, Riesco (2007) considers that this development begins when children start to understand human nature and to differentiate between the people around them, who act as active or passive agents in their learning process. Initially, there is a physical and emotional dependence on the parents, which is gradually overcome when children integrate into different social and cultural settings.

As children grow, they become aware of their abilities at a cognitive and motor level; this allows them to explore their surrounding environment and the world more freely and expand their referents (Gil et al., 2008). In some cases, reaching certain capacities leads children or adolescents to overestimate their potential and try to prematurely break their dependence on their parents, although in others there may be an underestimation of their capacities.

From a more recent perspective, Campos (2021) affirms that social development is the result of a confluence of factors among which is brain maturation, which provides the guidelines for behavior adjusted to the precepts of society, as well as, the cognitive factors that facilitate the development of language that will allow children to interact with those around them and, the socio-emotional aspects through which they strengthen the family bond.

Focusing on this point, Ocaña and Martin (2011) believe that social development is closely linked to affective development and to cognitive processes such as language strengthening, which determines the ability to communicate effectively with others. Based on these considerations, socialization is understood as the ability to relate to others and it is the indicator par excellence of social development.

Without ignoring the existing interaction between cognitive and social development, it may be the case that children have knowledge, abilities, or skills that exceed the competencies required at the level of schooling attended; however, their ability to socialize, make friends or share interests may be conditioned by their chronological age. According to Gomez et al. (2011), interpersonal relationships can be fluid or limited (without there being a pathology involved) depending on the age, sex, or interests of those around them. Therefore, the interaction of a child with a group that is older than him/her can generate discrepancies that affect his/her adaptation and comprehensive development.

Emotional development

Emotions are another fundamental aspect in the life of children between 2 and 6 years of age. During this period, they recognize that people around them may experience similar or different emotions than their own, which allows feelings of empathy or antipathy. As infants mature, they recognize that their moods must be regulated to guarantee harmonious interaction with their environment. This allows them to develop values and attitudes such as cooperation, assertiveness, empathy, and, above all, self-control, through which they will be able to regulate their moods based on the demands of the environment and social conventions (Muslera, 2016). Therefore, when they enter initial education, they should

already have certain socio-emotional skills that allow them to regulate their behavior based on what is socially acceptable.

In this matter, Araque (2016) argues that emotional development has the possibility of influencing cognitive development, either positively or negatively, given that emotions experienced by the child from his early years have the ability to "shape his mind, and, therefore, his behavior" (p. 1). In addition to cognitive development, social development is also influenced by emotional development, generating states of empathy, apathy, or antipathy towards the teacher, as well as towards classmates.

For López (2007), the family is constituted as the main emotional referent that children have from the moment they are born and during the first years of their life. This environment is presented to the author as "a reference that provides means for imitation, so if the mother smiles, the child tends to reflect this behavior" (p. 25). However, there must be continuous reinforcement of positive emotional behaviors for children to incorporate them into their habitual behavior.

Armus et al. (2012) recognize that, during the first years of life, children develop emotional bonds with their parents or those in charge of their care. In this way, they are weaving socio-affective ties that, if they are not the most appropriate, put their integral development at risk, a fact that coincides with López (2007). On the other hand, Armus et al. point out that the interaction of children with the closest adults gives way to the imitation of behaviors that, when repeated with some regularity, are reproduced in the habitual behavior of children.

Integral development theory

Integral development can be conceived as the confluence between biological, cognitive, social, and emotional development that guarantee the stability of children. On the subject, Armus et al. (2012) point out that this process will also depend on a series of factors external to them, namely: education, health, and public policies that assure comprehensive protection from early childhood.

Calvera (2015) refers that integral development is simultaneously a process and a child's right. As a process, it can be considered that it is the normal course that every infant should go through when the physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and even spiritual dimensions are appropriately addressed, while, as a right, it poses an ideal condition for childhood, which must be guaranteed by the family, under the auspices of State institutions. In children between 3 and 6 years of age, this is strengthened by a series of activities that include "sensory and perceptual experiences; intellectual activities; the orientation; games and reading-writing activities, among others" (Duque and Sierra, 1990, p. 6). This constitutes a task that must be carried out by the parents, in coordination with the teachers, once children start in the school system.

These reflections refer that preschool education constitutes a new world for children, where they recognize the existence of different habits and procedures from those that they have been evidencing at home. For this transition to represent an experience of personal growth, educational models taught at this stage must be coupled with the dynamics that children experience at home, which is achieved through communication and coordinated work between parents and teachers.

In this regard, Claro (2011) argues that a determining aspect for the integral development of the child is mental health and an indicator that this could be being affected is evidenced in the changes experienced in their relationships with the environment, rather than in their individual changes, which, in most cases, respond to normal developmental processes. The methods used to attend to mental health and therefore the integral development of the child include therapeutic and even pharmacological treatment.

In the particular case of Colombia, the integral development of the child is a topic of interest not only in school curricula but also in State policies. For this reason, since 2013 the comprehensive care strategy 'De Cero a Siempre' has been implemented, through which intersectoral coordination is established aimed at providing children from 0 to 5 years of age with health care, nutrition, education, social assistance, and

recreation, which allows them to achieve the full development of their capacities (Comisión Intersectorial de Primera Infancia, 2012).

For this purpose, the protection policies go from the moment of gestation until 5 years of age, although, for some State agencies, this period extends up to six years. The fundamental goal is to attend first to the children in the most vulnerable conditions to gradually expand the coverage until reaching the entire population belonging to this conglomerate.

Integration of the child into the group

It constitutes the ability that the child experiences to join a group with similar ages and interests, which should be a simple act, considering that human beings are sociable by nature. According to Flores (2017), through group dynamics, "closer relationships are fostered and emotional ties are established between the members of the group" (p. 6). In this way, the socialization processes are inserted within a comprehensive educational process that not only favors cognitive development, but also personality.

Most of the authors that address this topic focus on children with special needs, for which reason there is abundant documentation regarding the integration into the group of deaf, blind, autistic, or Down syndrome children (Viloria, 2016). However, it is also recurrent that a child with normal cognitive development and in a position of all his physical and motor capacities requires dynamics for group integration, which can be implemented by the teacher or school counselor, although there may be cases in which requiring more specialized care.

Under this scenario, the Ministry of Education of Spain (n.d.) points out that there are two procedures by which the child "generates, stores, and transforms knowledge to achieve their social integration into the group" (para. 4), namely: the knowledge schemas and perspective-taking ability. Through the first, the references that the child brings about reality and their way of interpreting it are activated, to determine the individual characteristics, as well as those of those around them. Through the second, the ability to "put oneself in the other's place and see the world through the particular perspective that he handles" is constituted (para. 6).

Cava and Musitu (2001) consider that group integration depends on the way the child gets along with the teacher and their peers. In each classroom there is a school climate generated from the interaction between all those who interact in it, therefore, when a new child joins the group, there may be changes in this climate, which trigger his/her shyness when interacting with the rest of the group.

In this sense, the fear of rejection can be a stressful situation for children, affecting their emotional development and, at the same time, the motivation necessary to maintain academic performance. To this, it must be added that factors such as personality, the home environment, and genetic predisposition may cause some children to experience higher levels of anxiety in the classroom than others subjected to similar situations (Jiménez, 2018).

State-of-the-art in Colombia

In the particular case of Colombia, basic and secondary education institutions have the power to carry out an early promotion of a degree, determined by the Board of Directors of the institution, coming after the guidelines established in article 7 of Decree 1290 of 2009 (that replaces Decree 230 of 2002), which provides for the following:

Article 7. Advance grade promotion.

During the first period of the school year, the academic council, with the prior consent of the parents, will recommend to the board of directors the early promotion to the next grade of the student who demonstrates superior performance in cognitive, personal, and social development within the framework of the basic competencies of the grade they are studying. The decision will be recorded in the minutes of the board of directors and, if positive, in the school record (Decree 1290, 2009).

As this provision is proposed for basic and secondary education in Colombia, it does not apply to the preschool education level; however, some institutions, at the insistence of the parents, make a wrong interpretation of it, to apply criteria that determine that the child (without having completed the transition grade) is apt to enter the first grade of basic primary education.

This process begins with the parental request to the Evaluation Department of the institution where the child attends, stating the reasons that justify said promotion. Subsequently, a 'sufficiency test' is carried out in all the subjects, to verify the learning and acquired skills, based, fundamentally, on academic criteria, leaving aside the aspects of social and emotional development that guarantee full integration into the new group where the child will share (Ministerio de Educación Nacional [MEN], 2022).

In addition to this, there is another problem: the study topics that are evaluated in these proficiency tests correspond to the areas and programmatic contents of primary and secondary education, for which there are no standardized tests for early promotion in preschool education. In this sense, the MEN (2022) presents a certain ambiguity that can be interpreted at the convenience of the parents or the institution itself, since it defines who can be subject to early promotion and which instance is in charge of suggesting or implementing it, but not establishes from what age is possible to start doing it.

The literature review for this topic allowed us to verify that there is little documentation on this problem, for which its causes and possible consequences are presented from the perspective of the researcher, supported by some studies such as that of Cambindo and Mina (2011), who note:

Taking into account the provisions of Decree 1290, where the evaluation of learning is defined as an integral process in which values, attitudes, and knowledge are incorporated, it is expected that teachers have the necessary strategies for students to develop skills that allow them to successfully solve academic situations and everyday life. (p.119)

This means that any early promotion process must go beyond the cognitive criteria that prevail at the time of establishing the evaluations that are applied to preschool students from the institutions under study, which once again leads to the problem addressed in this study, based on the fact that students could be promoted from the transition grade to grade 1 of primary school, without having the necessary social or emotional maturity to face the changes in school routines and the classroom climate.

In the preschool education institutions of the tourist and cultural district of Riohacha, the problem with early promotion occurs more regularly in private institutions. This could be because parents have a higher educational level, which leads them to train their children at home, to the point of considering that the learning achieved by them constitutes the only requirement to advance to the next level or grade.

Faced with the pressure exerted by parents, both teachers and administrators would be opting to carry out early promotion tests, to establish if the child's knowledge allows him to enter the immediately higher grade, leaving aside the different stages that, as a whole, make up their integral development. Once the child is incorporated into the immediately higher grade, there is no follow-up to determine if their performance and adaptation are the most acceptable, for which the socio-affective development could end up affected, without parents or teachers noticing it.

2. Methodology

A mixed investigation was carried out under a field design focused on the institutions: 'Jardín Escolar Mi Pequeña Universidad'; 'Jardín Escolar Las Dunas' and 'Instituto para el Desarrollo de las Inteligencias Múltiples de Riohacha', located in the department of La Guajira in Colombia, which have the level established for preschool education (transition grade) and grade 1 of basic primary. A semi-structured interview of five questions was carried out with ten teachers, through which some aspects of the criteria for early promotion tests were consulted, as well as the methods applied to follow up with those children who have been promoted to the higher grade. Likewise, convenience sampling was applied in which the willingness to participate on the part of the teachers was taken as inclusion criteria, along with the fact of having worked with the transition grade or the first grade during the last five school years.

In the same way, an observation guide consisting of eight items was implemented, to be applied to the twelve children who were the object of an early promotion (the entire population was taken), to verify the different aspects of their

integral development, which may or may not be fulfilled in their interaction with the group. Said instrument included the age of the children, the grade or level they are in, as well as the aspects observed in an estimation scale in which the following criteria are presented for each question: always (A); almost always (AA); sometimes (ST); almost never (AN) and never (N).

Results of the application of the interviews were subjected to a narrative analysis; they are exposed in the discussion of the same. The information obtained through the observation guide made it possible to verify the different factors of integral development that are observed in those children who have been the subject of early promotion, which were compared with the author's considerations, besides the theoretical foundation that served as support for this research.

3. Discussion

Interview with the teachers

Teachers interviewed handle the approach that early promotion is advisable for children who demonstrate cognitive abilities that exceed those established for the level of schooling in which they are (in this case, the degree of transition). Through promotion, children can continue their training process more quickly and respond to their academic interests. Although this is a general opinion, some educators consider that this promotion could disadvantage the integral development of the child, since it only focuses on knowledge or abilities, without taking into account socio-affective development, very important at this age for the child to have the disposition and receptivity necessary in his/her formative process.

Those that differ from early promotion allude to the fact that social interests and emotional development could present notorious differences between children in the transition grade and those in the first grade, which would lead to those who have been 'benefited' through this process, to progressively feel excluded or displaced by their peers; this could slow down the advances obtained through a process of early stimulation or accelerated learning that could be carried out at school or home.

Therefore, to carry out an early promotion, it is not only necessary to take into account the infant's cognitive skills or if he/she has undergone an accelerated learning process at home, but also his/her socio-emotional development. This will make it possible to determine if he/she can establish social and academic relationships with the children of the course to which he/she will be referred and will not have problems that affect his/her integral development.

Starting from the previous considerations, a correspondence is established with the indications of Oropeza and Ochoa (2004), who recognize that, to generate accelerated learning, there must be motivation on the part of the children, which to a large extent will allow them to appropriate this knowledge. However, when this process affects their social or emotional development, there may be difficulties that affect their cognitive progress. This is evidenced when some children, once promoted from transition to first grade, experience a decrease in their performance or lack of interest in the activities proposed in class.

Several of the interviewed teachers responded that they had cared for children who have been subject to early promotion, as part of the policies that institutions manage when they (upon parental request) demonstrate knowledge and skills to attend the first grade. When questioned about the academic performance of these children, they agree that it is satisfactory and possibly the result of an accelerated learning process at home. They maintain that, at a cognitive level, children do not show difficulties to carry out activities in the classroom and that numerical and verbal reasoning is coupled with that of their classmates. However, when asked about their social integration, various positions were observed, namely:

Some interviewed teachers state that children promoted early do not face major problems in their social integration into the group, although, at first, socialization costs them a little more work than the rest of their classmates. Other interviewees acknowledged having observed adaptation problems on the part of these children, who are occasionally rejected by their older peers or exclude themselves from the group because they do not share the interests of the majority.

In this regard, the remarks of Araque (2016) stand out, when he recognizes a marked incidence of emotional development in cognitive development, which can positively or negatively affect infants. This would be determining why, by adapting satisfactorily to the group, children who have gone through an early promotion do not see their school performance affected, but those who find it difficult to integrate show a slowdown in their academic performance.

Teachers surveyed have also shown how some children who have been promoted to first-grade face incidents in their process of adaptation and integration into the group, incidents that can affect them emotionally or socially in different ways if they are not detected and attended to promptly. However, they claimed to have the capabilities and strategies to deal with the situation and make children adapt to the group dynamics without losing their autonomy or their particular interests. In this sense, it was possible to establish correspondence with what Flores (2017) referred to: the child is an eminently social being. To the extent that children develop communication and the ability to deal with adjustment problems, they will integrate into a group with which they will establish affiliation ties.

Finally, the interviewees affirmed that they had not observed attitudes that denote an affectation in the emotional development of the children, but they stated that those could be experiencing difficulties without showing, at least at school, warning signs. For this reason, indirectly, they acknowledge not having enough strategies to analyze this aspect of integral development. These findings are similar to the study by Santi-León (2019), who was able to confirm that teaching professionals do not recognize the signs that indicate socio-emotional problems in children; therefore, they may be presenting them, without being detected or channeled promptly.

Observation Guide

With the observation guide applied to children who have been subject to early promotion, it was found that they have some difficulties in carrying out the activities proposed by the teacher; some found trouble understanding what she was explaining during class. However, this

situation was timely corrected by the classroom teachers, who recognized that it was not about cognitive problems, but rather about adjusting the strategies used in class, to the requirements and expectations of these students, who come accustomed to working at a different pace.

Also, it was possible to verify that several children present difficulties to integrate into the groups formed by the teacher when carrying out the academic or recreational activities proposed during the school day. This was solved progressively, as the teacher herself was in charge of forming the groups. In the beginning, there were some cases of resistance from the older children, but these barriers could be overcome by proposing funny and interesting activities that all the students could do.

The foregoing corresponds to the statements made by Claro (2011), who states that the classroom climate is an element that can be configured from the mediating action of the teacher and the establishment of conditions, considering that the mental health of the infant (and the educator himself) are a priority within a comprehensive educational process. When the suggested activities in class are motivating, the desire to participate prevails over particular interests, thus significantly improving coexistence and participation in the classroom.

Observed children did not show restlessness in the classroom (except when some of them were rejected by their peers). In general, the students adapted without problems to the methodology proposed by the teacher and regularly participated in the scheduled activities. However, some of them showed intermittent behavior in which they partially matched the work rhythm, participating only in some of the activities scheduled during the school day and in the entire teaching-learning process.

Regarding communicative competence, it was possible to observe that children present a repertoire of words according to their age and the level of schooling completed, demonstrating the ability to link conversations on different topics of interest, adjusted to their age. On the other hand, some others had difficulties in their communication with the teacher and/or their classmates, without it being possible to determine if this was due to deficiencies in

this competence or to factors related to social integration or emotional development.

Finally, the observation guide allowed us to verify that only one of the children promoted early had repeated absences that put his academic performance at risk. The guide also made it possible to demonstrate the need to consider other factors that go beyond school performance and that, in this case, concern the emotional stability of the infant, his motivation towards the training process received, and his degree of integration into the group, the which require a more detailed analysis, carried out by specialized personnel (psycho-pedagogue).

In this sense, the remarks of Angulo et al. (2020) are pertinent: the consolidation of integral development in children is the result of a meticulous process, where the caution and disposition on the part of the teachers establish the difference between a motivated student and another who feels excluded or displaced by the group. It is a process in which factors of a social, cognitive, and cultural order intervene, which must be monitored and attended to for giving a satisfactory response to the changes that are generated during the 5 and 6 years of age.

4. Conclusions

The results provided by the data collection instruments show correspondence between what was reported by the teachers who care for children with an early promotion and what was observed by the researcher. Most of these students show academic performance in line with the grade they are studying; however, there are deficiencies in the social and emotional aspects, which allows us to assume that their training process is not in line with the comprehensive training provided for the level of the Colombian educational system.

Although comprehensive development encompasses the cognitive, social, and emotional processes of children, in the institutions under study, only the cognitive aspect is being considered for early promotion. The strategies for accelerated learning, implemented by some parents or teachers, also focus exclusively on this component, leaving aside a series of qualitative aspects of integral development, which, by their

nature, are more difficult to ponder or detect when they are being affected.

These results allow us to conclude that the accelerated learning proposals can be implemented with preschool students, as long as they do not affect the process of socialization and emotional development of the child, as an essential right. In other words, early stimulation during the transition grade can be beneficial for the child and increase their cognitive potential, but this should not lead to early promotion to the first grade, since this does not correspond to what is established by the Colombian Educational System or with the principle of the best interests of the child.

Therefore, it is recommended to make a more adjusted interpretation of the reality of Decree 1290, to avoid continue carrying out early promotions in preschool education. The aforementioned document is precise when establishing its radius of action and includes this benefit only for basic and secondary education in Colombia, and at no time does it provide guidelines or content for the evaluation of children in preschool education.

5. Conflict of interest

The authors of this article declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding the presented work.

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Annexes

Semi-structured interviews to be applied with teachers

1. Do you consider that early promotion is advisable in preschool education? Why?
2. Have you cared for children who have received an early promotion?
3. How is the academic performance of those children who enter a new grade due to early promotion?
4. How is the integration of those children who join the group by early promotion?
5. How is the emotional development of those children who join the group through early promotion?

Observation guide

(For children who received an early promotion)

Child's name:	Grade/Level:				
Observed aspects:	A	AA	ST	AN	N
1) Demonstrates an academic performance commensurate with the grade/level being studied.					
2) He/she joins the group.					
3) He/she is accepted by the classmates.					
4) He/she appears emotionally calm in the classroom.					
5) He/she adapts to the teacher's work methodology.					
6) He/she participates in the activities programmed by the teacher.					
7) His/her communicative competence is appropriate to the grade/level he/she is studying.					
8) He/she regularly attends classes.					