

# Applied Research Partnerships with Developing and Transition Countries

## Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education

### Project title

## Building Citizenship on Skills. An applied research on peace building skills and social and emotional learning skills.

### Thematic focus

Education, social and emotional learning, peace building

### Year

'12-'13

### Project location

Managua, Nicaragua and Locarno, Switzerland



### Swiss Institution

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### Description

Because the history of war and confrontation to which Nicaragua has been subjected, the shift towards a Culture of Peace is urgent and necessary. Although there is a law addressed to the integration of human rights into the curriculum of primary and secondary education, there is still much work to do on a series of values linked to the Culture of Peace, such as environmental education, gender, communication and development among others. In Switzerland, awareness is growing on the importance of social and emotional learning skills for the future lives of children and young people. According to the present research on this topic, the introduction of such contents in school

education shows positive results both for the academic performance of pupils and for their attitude towards others and the society in general. The project aims to a sharing of expertise on these two related areas, both central for the development of a positive and active citizenship. By introducing social and emotional learning skills and peace building skills in school education, we want to propose a concrete way to use the educational system in order to increase a more active and positive attitude towards citizenship, to build a more caring society and to reduce aggression and disruption.

### Development relevance

The project belongs to the aims of Millennium Development Goal number 8: "Develop a global partnership for development".

We focus on the basic importance of school education for the development of citizenship. The school system has to be sensitive to some crucial themes, like peace building and social and emotional learning, which represent the roots for

the change we want to promote in our societies, in order to achieve a better life standard everywhere in the world. Moreover, since the two institutions play a significant role by fostering and regulating public education in the society, this project is although to see as a contribution to Millennium Development Goal number 2: "Achieve universal primary education".




A workshop with teachers on Social and Emotional Learning skills.



A workshop with teachers on Peace Building Skills.

# KFH

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and Cooperation SDC

## Main features of the project

Peace building skills and social and emotional learning skills are both parts of the life skills, a critical element in UNICEF's definition of quality education. The recent history of Nicaragua implies a strong interest of the country for the construction of a pacific society and this has promoted the development of a culture of peace, which is already influencing the educational field. In this context, it would be very precious to embed a special attention for the social and emotional dimensions of personality. In Switzerland, where there is already an interest about the development of social and emotional learning skills, the introduction of a peace building culture would allow to better face the challenges of an increasing multicultural society.

The two institutions share a commitment for the fostering of positive values in teachers and in their pupils. More precisely, the Nicaraguan team has a long experience in the training of teachers and of other members of the civil society (like for instance police bodies, etc.) on peace building skills, while the Swiss staff has expertise in educating teachers on social and emotional learning skills.

The project aims to a sharing of expertise on these two related areas, and it will take place through an application-oriented research which has two main goals:

- 1) To increase the knowledge of the two institutions both in the teacher training on the above-mentioned topics and in the research capacities in these fields.
- 2) To evaluate the implementation of the learned topics in the everyday work in class in the two countries. The evaluation process will focus on how teachers in the two countries will learn about the proposed topics, how they will apply the learned contents to their classes and the level of learning of their pupils. This will allow the identification of the key characteristics of a training for the development of social and emotional learning skills and peace building skills.

During the project, two groups of teachers will be created, one in each country. Nicaraguan experts on peace building skills will train the Swiss group, and Swiss experts on social and emotional learning skills will train the Nicaraguan group. The applied research on the two teacher trainings, and the concrete application of contents in class will allow to define fundamental guidelines for future projects in both countries and internationally. From the very beginning of the project, teachers in Nicaragua and in Switzerland will be improving the process of teaching and learning in classrooms, considering both peace building skills and social and emotional learning skills. Moreover, both SUPSI / DFA and IMLK are institutions aimed to educate teachers, and this will make it possible to use our findings to improve our teacher education programs. Last, the partnership with IMLK will potentially provide a new venue for international cooperation internship, which is a possibility that SUPSI/DFA offers to its students.

Working on the basements of citizenship also will permit to build new connections to other development and cooperation projects on this topic. Moreover we want to research in which way it is globally possible to implement good teaching strategies that allow to develop social emotional competencies and peace attitudes in teachers and their pupils. We consider that such knowledge is of great interest for any other institution in the world whose aim is to foster positive values and social competencies in children and youth.



A lesson on Peace Building Skills in a Nicaraguan school.



An outdoor lesson on Social and Emotional Learning skills with children in Switzerland.