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Scientific articles

Percepciones de estudiantes normalistas acerca del rol docente en la construcción de la cultura de paz

Normal school students' perceptions of the role of teachers in building a culture of peace

Percepções de alunos de escolas normais sobre o papel dos professores na construção de uma cultura de paz

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Resumen

El objetivo de la investigación es identificar las percepciones de un grupo de 46 estudiantes de sexto semestre de Licenciatura en Educación Física del centro de la república mexicana, sobre el rol docente en la construcción de la cultura de paz. La investigación se ajustó a un enfoque mixto, con diseño no experimental y alcance descriptivo. En la fase de recolección de datos se aplicó un formulario de 20 reactivos con escala Likert, agrupados en cuatro dimensiones: 1) Comprensión de la paz, 2) Actitudes y comportamientos pacíficos, 3) Rol docente en la construcción de paz, y 4) Compromiso social y acción transformadora. Desde un enfoque socioeducativo, los resultados muestran una alta valoración hacia la cultura de paz entre los 46 estudiantes, con promedios superiores a 4 en la mayoría de los ítems. En el rango de medias destaca la dimensión sobre el rol docente (4.6–4.8), en donde los datos infieren una fuerte conciencia ética y pedagógica en la promoción de la convivencia. Previo consentimiento informado, los participantes conciben la paz como una práctica activa basada en los valores y competencias hacia la empatía, justicia y autorregulación emocional. Las puntuaciones más bajas se relacionan con la expresión pública de la paz, indicando la necesidad de fortalecer la comunicación socioemocional y el liderazgo ético en la formación



docente. Los resultados visibilizan que los futuros docentes cuentan con saberes para la promoción de una cultura de paz.

Palabras clave: violencia escolar, formación docente, educación física, cultura de paz.

Abstract

The objective of this research is to identify the perceptions of a group of 46 sixth-semester Physical Education students from central Mexico regarding the teacher's role in building a culture of peace. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, with a non-experimental design and a descriptive scope. During the data collection phase, a 20-item Likert scale questionnaire was administered, grouped into four dimensions: 1) Understanding of peace, 2) Peaceful attitudes and behaviors, 3) Teacher's role in building peace, and 4) Social commitment and transformative action. From a socio-educational perspective, the results show a high value placed on a culture of peace among the 46 students, with averages above 4 on most items. The dimension regarding the teacher's role stands out within the average range (4.6–4.8), where the data suggest a strong ethical and pedagogical awareness in promoting coexistence. With prior informed consent, participants conceived of peace as an active practice based on values and competencies related to empathy, justice, and emotional self-regulation. The lowest scores were associated with the public expression of peace, indicating a need to strengthen socio-emotional communication and ethical leadership in teacher training. The results demonstrate that future teachers possess the knowledge necessary to promote a culture of peace.

Keywords: school violence, teacher training, physical education, culture of peace.

Resumo

O objetivo desta pesquisa é identificar as percepções de um grupo de 46 alunos do sexto semestre do curso de Educação Física da região central do México sobre o papel do professor na construção de uma cultura de paz. A pesquisa empregou uma abordagem de métodos mistos, com delineamento não experimental e escopo descritivo. Durante a fase de coleta de dados, foi aplicado um questionário com 20 itens em escala Likert, agrupados em quatro dimensões: 1) Compreensão da paz, 2) Atitudes e comportamentos pacíficos, 3) Papel do professor na construção da paz e 4) Compromisso social e ação transformadora. De uma perspectiva socioeducacional, os resultados mostram um alto valor atribuído à cultura de paz

entre os 46 alunos, com médias acima de 4 na maioria dos itens. A dimensão referente ao papel do professor se destaca dentro da faixa média (4,6–4,8), onde os dados sugerem uma forte consciência ética e pedagógica na promoção da convivência. Com consentimento prévio e livre e esclarecido, os participantes conceberam a paz como uma prática ativa baseada em valores e competências relacionados à empatia, justiça e autorregulação emocional. As pontuações mais baixas foram associadas à expressão pública da paz, indicando a necessidade de fortalecer a comunicação socioemocional e a liderança ética na formação de professores. Os resultados demonstram que os futuros professores possuem o conhecimento necessário para promover uma cultura de paz.

Palavras-chave: violência escolar, formação de professores, educação física, cultura de paz.

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Introduction

School violence highlights the contemporary social and educational crisis, significantly affecting children and young people in various school settings. This violence can take many forms, including physical, psychological, verbal, symbolic, cybernetic, and structural, and is reproduced both among peers and between students and authority figures. The international report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) warns that violence in schools negatively impacts emotional development, learning, school retention, and the development of peaceful relationships from childhood.

During adolescence and young adulthood, experiences linked to violence tend to solidify dynamics of exclusion, discrimination, mistrust, and a breakdown of the social fabric, hindering the transition to active, empathetic, and engaged citizenship. The persistence of these normalized practices of aggression, excessive social competition, and a lack of intergenerational dialogue in school settings highlights the need for a profound transformation of school cultures to foster more inclusive, collaborative, and peaceful relationships.

From this perspective, young people, especially those in teacher training or with community leadership roles, have a fundamental part as agents of change for peace. Their involvement in social projects and activities promoting coexistence becomes vital for creating innovative proposals for peace in schools. As Nava et al. (2022, p. 37) state, “it is young people in whom we can build the hope of a restored world, because they have the

capacity to internalize new forms of dialogue and reasoning to find solutions to grievances before they become major problems.”

Therefore, through a pedagogy for peace, it is possible to empower young people in building safe, inclusive, and restorative school environments capable of counteracting violence at its root and transforming school relationships into opportunities for reconciliation and hope. Peace education or pedagogy has emerged as a cross-cutting theme in various research projects conducted in higher education. These studies have sought to understand how higher education students perceive, internalize, and reproduce values associated with a culture of peace, as well as the role they assume in transforming contexts marked by violence, inequality, or social indifference.

Therefore, a culture of peace has been recognized as a fundamental educational and social strategy for preventing violence and building more just, equitable, and empathetic relationships. According to Fisas (2020), a culture of peace involves a dynamic process aimed at transforming conflicts through dialogue, cooperation, and social justice, which requires not only public policies but also a commitment to education within the formal education system. In this sense, schools and teacher training programs represent privileged spaces for instilling peaceful values and developing skills for the positive management of conflicts.

At the international level, the United Nations (UN, 2021) highlights in its World Plan of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond the importance of including young people as strategic actors in promoting peace, preventing violence, and fostering sustainable development. This document underscores that empowering young people through values-based education, critical thinking, and community action is essential for strengthening social cohesion and addressing the structural inequalities that generate exclusion, discrimination, and violence.

From a pedagogical perspective, Rentería (2021) argues that experiential learning represents an effective way to build a culture of peace at the higher education level, by allowing students to actively engage in reflective and experiential processes that promote empathy, respect, and solidarity. This methodological approach not only fosters the development of socio-emotional skills but also transforms young people's perceptions of conflict and violence.

Mejía-Rodríguez (2024) highlights the importance of building educational programs that integrate critical thinking, the autonomy, solidarity and the Continuous learning is a fundamental element for fostering active citizenship and commitment to peace. It also

emphasizes that these actions must be deliberate and contextualized, adapting to specific sociocultural contexts and mobilizing knowledge, attitudes, and symbols that facilitate social transformation.

The work of Porto and Segura (2024) proposes an education for peace grounded in neuroscience, articulating the contributions of neuroeducation with a critical human rights approach. Their didactic proposal, applied with teachers and students in Uruguay and Costa Rica, demonstrates that understanding how the brain learns and reacts is essential for promoting meaningful learning oriented towards coexistence, empathy, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

From this perspective, peace is not only taught as content, but is built through emotionally safe learning experiences that stimulate self-reflection, metacognition, and personal and social transformation. Research concludes that integrating neuroeducation into peace education enhances its effectiveness by fostering environments where people learn to think, feel, and act peacefully (Porto & Segura, 2024).

Along the same lines of analysis, Calderón's study (2022) posits that neuroeducation offers a scientific basis for understanding how students learn, feel, and relate to one another, which is essential for the development of civic competencies. Using a qualitative and phenomenological approach, the author analyzed the perceptions of secondary school teachers, coordinators, and students, finding that teaching citizenship requires emotionally safe, motivating, and contextualized learning environments that foster self-regulation, empathy, and democratic coexistence.

The findings show that many teachers still lack solid training in neuroeducation (that is, a precise description of how the brain functions in learning processes), despite recognizing its transformative potential. Integrating this approach allows us to move beyond traditional content-centered teaching and toward a pedagogy based on understanding the brain, emotions, and motivation, which strengthens educational processes oriented toward peace, participation, and the conscious exercise of citizenship (Calderón, 2022).

Through the lens of social representations, a term coined by Moscovici (1979) that focuses on studies of common sense, everyday knowledge, and the collective construction of reality, Calderón and Jiménez (2024) explore how university students conceptualize peace. Their findings indicate that peace is seen not as an absence of conflict, but as an active construction that involves values, everyday practices, and ethical responsibilities. This view resonates with the perspective of the present research, which considers that future teachers

can symbolize and project values of peace toward children from a critical understanding of their social role.

For her part, Nava-Preciado (2022) documents a training experience with university students within the framework of a peace culture program. Her study emphasizes the importance of designing educational proposals that allow students to engage with the culture of peace based on their experiences, emotions, and ethical commitments—that is, to take an active part in or participate in a process toward peace. The author highlights how working with young people in higher education can lead to processes of personal and community transformation when peace is embraced as an active value and not as empty rhetoric.

Taken together, these studies agree that initial teacher training and youth participation are key elements for cultivating a sustainable culture of peace. This research builds upon this review of the state of the art by exploring how student teachers, as future educators, understand and symbolize peace, and how this symbolic construction is projected toward vulnerable children through messages imbued with empathy, justice, and social commitment.

Based on the above, the following research questions are posed. General: How do sixth-semester Physical Education students perceive the concept of peace in the school context? Specific: What peaceful attitudes and behaviors do students demonstrate in their teacher training? How do sixth-semester Physical Education students understand their role as teachers in building a culture of peace? What level of social commitment and transformative action do students express in relation to peace? And what symbolic meanings do students attribute to peace when addressing a message to vulnerable children?

At the same time, the following objectives are established. General: to identify the perceptions of sixth-semester Physical Education students regarding the teacher's role in building a culture of peace. Specific: 1) To analyze the level of conceptual understanding that students have regarding peace as a personal, social, and pedagogical value; 2) To explore the peaceful attitudes and behaviors that students demonstrate in their training as future Physical Education teachers ; 3) To examine students' perceptions of the teacher's role in building a culture of peace within school contexts; and 4) To interpret the symbolic representations of peace expressed by students through messages directed at vulnerable children.

In turn, the following research hypothesis is established: Sixth semester students of the Bachelor's Degree in Physical Education perceive peace as a personal, social and

pedagogical value that is reflected in their attitudes, behaviors, social commitments and symbolic representations linked to their teaching role in the construction of a culture of peace.

Theoretical framework

The study of peace culture in higher education requires theoretical frameworks that allow us to understand peace as a multidimensional, dynamic, and situated process. Among the main authors and international organizations that have contributed to this discussion are Johan Galtung (1969) with terms such as positive peace and negative peace; UNESCO (2000) with its conceptualization of a culture of peace; Elise Boulding (2000) who describes peace as a cultural practice; Paulo Freire (1970) with terms such as liberating education, dialogue, and critical consciousness; John Paul Lederach (2003) who proposes a theory of conflict transformation; Vicent Martínez Guzmán (2005); Francisco Muñoz (2004) who describes the concept of peace and introduces the term imperfect peace; Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009) with epistemologies of the South; and Mejía-Rodríguez (2024) with the theory of resistance and citizenship. Their perspectives offer an analytical and pedagogical framework that enriches the understanding of peace in university settings. The contributions of these authors and organizations, which provide conceptual foundations for understanding and promoting peace through higher education, are presented below.

One of the pioneers in peace studies is Galtung (1969), who proposed differentiating between direct, structural, and cultural violence, as well as between negative and positive peace. This approach is fundamental for analyzing universities not only as spaces free from armed conflict, but also as settings where inequalities, exclusions, and symbolic violence can be reproduced. From this perspective, peacebuilding in higher education involves creating conditions of equity, social justice, and democratic coexistence.

At the institutional level, UNESCO (2000) consolidated the concept of a culture of peace as a set of values, attitudes, and behaviors oriented toward respect for human rights, democracy, gender equality, and sustainable development. This vision has served as an international normative framework and guide for educational policies that promote peace from the university level.

Boulding (2000), for his part, conceived of peace as an everyday cultural practice built through interpersonal and community learning. His contributions highlight the importance of education as a privileged space for developing skills in dialogue, empathy, and cooperation—essential aspects of university life.

From the perspective of critical pedagogy, Freire (1970) argued that peace is only possible through liberating education, based on dialogue and critical consciousness. For the university, this means educating students capable of analyzing their reality, questioning oppressive structures, and promoting social transformations toward justice and equity.

In addition, Lederach (2003) developed the theory of conflict transformation, which emphasizes building sustainable relationships based on reconciliation and community participation. In higher education, this approach translates into strengthening student leadership and promoting practices of mediation and peaceful conflict resolution.

In the philosophical sphere, Martínez (2005) introduced the concept of "peaces" in the plural and the notion of imperfect peace, understood as a constantly evolving process. The author suggests that there is no single, universal, and homogeneous form of peace, but rather multiple ways of understanding, experiencing, and building it. This framework invites us to conceive of Higher Education Institutions as spaces for experimenting with and testing diverse forms of peace, adapted to the contexts and needs of each educational community.

Muñoz (2004) further explored the idea of imperfect peace, arguing that peace is not a finished state, but rather a daily practice that acknowledges conflict and tension as an inherent part of social life. This approach is particularly useful for understanding the challenges of coexistence within the university community.

For her part, de Sousa Santos (2009), with her proposal of epistemologies of the South, invites us to rethink peace from a decolonial perspective, recognizing local and community knowledge. In the field of Higher Education, this implies the need for peace education that does not reproduce Eurocentric models, but rather values cultural diversity and situated knowledge.

In addition to the above, there is the theoretical perspective of Mejía-Rodríguez (2024) that addresses education for citizenship and peace from the theory of resistance and critical pedagogy, identifying these approaches as key foundations for conceiving educational processes that transcend the merely transmissive and promote social transformation. This perspective aligns with proposals from other authors of critical pedagogy, who consider education as an emancipatory practice that fosters critical reflection and democratic action.

Methodology

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, with a non-experimental design and descriptive scope, aiming to identify both quantifiable perceptions and symbolic and qualitative expressions of students regarding a culture of peace. From this perspective, mixed-methods approaches allow for “a better understanding of research problems through the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data” (Creswell, 2014, p. 43).

According to Hernández et al. (2014), mixed-methods studies are characterized by the integration of both qualitative and quantitative research strategies, with the aim of obtaining a broader, deeper, and richer understanding of the phenomenon under study. This approach is based on the assumption that no single methodology is sufficient to capture the complexity of social reality, and therefore, combining them allows for overcoming limitations inherent in each paradigm.

Among the main characteristics of the mixed methods approach, complementarity stands out, since qualitative data offer contextual and subjective explanations, while quantitative data provide precision, generalizability, and objectivity. According to Hernández et al. (2014), mixed methods studies can be developed sequentially (one approach precedes the other) or concurrently (both approaches are applied simultaneously). For the present study, the concurrent approach was used since the qualitative and quantitative data were obtained simultaneously.

A sample of 46 sixth-semester students from the Physical Education Bachelor's Degree program at the Benemérito Instituto Normal del Estado “General Juan Crisóstomo Bonilla” (24 men and 22 women, aged 20 to 28) was used. A non-probability convenience sampling strategy was employed, as the entire student body was available during the application phase. Due to the limited number of participants and the convenience sampling method used, the results cannot be generalized, although contextualized interpretations are possible.

Data was collected using a *Google Forms questionnaire* consisting of 20 items with a five-level Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). The items were organized into four analytical dimensions: 1) Understanding of peace; 2) Peaceful attitudes and behaviors; 3) Teacher role in peacebuilding; and 4) Social commitment and transformative action.

Prior to administering the instruments, informed consent was obtained from the participants, explaining the study's objectives, procedures, and the academic use of the



collected information. Voluntary participation was guaranteed, as well as the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Furthermore, confidentiality and anonymous processing of the data were ensured in accordance with the ethical principles governing research.

To ensure the conceptual adequacy of the items, content validation was conducted by expert review by three specialists in peace and violence, following the methodological approach of Escobar-Pérez and Cuervo-Martínez (2008). The questionnaire consisted of 20 Likert-type items distributed across four categories: conceptual understanding of peace, attitudes and behaviors, the teacher's role, and transformative action. The instrument was reviewed by three specialists in peace education and culture, who evaluated each item based on the criteria of clarity, relevance, coherence, and conceptual pertinence, using a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = deficient, 2 = sufficient, 3 = good, 4 = excellent). Symbolic representations, described later, were obtained from the open-ended questions.

The results showed that most items were consistently rated 3 (good) and 4 (excellent). Aiken's V coefficient was calculated from these ratings, reaching values above 0.80 for all items, reflecting adequate content validity. It is important to note that the rating was calculated on an item-by-item basis.

Qualitatively, the experts suggested minor adjustments to the wording of some items to strengthen their conceptual precision and avoid potential ambiguities. After incorporating these observations, the final version of the questionnaire was obtained, consisting of 20 items organized into four categories, with sufficient evidence of content validity.

The quantitative analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, considering averages per item. This stage allowed for the identification of general trends in students' perceptions of peace and their connection to teaching practice.

In the qualitative phase, data was collected through a digitally formatted written text. The 46 participants were asked to write a message addressed to a child in a vulnerable situation, as an exercise in symbolizing the value of peace. The prompt was open-ended, designed to encourage individual reflective expression. The activity took place during school hours, in the usual academic setting, and had a standardized time limit of 30 minutes, ensuring equal conditions for all participants.

Subsequently, a content analysis was performed on the symbolic texts written by the students. The coding was inductive, allowing the emergence of the following categories:

1. Ethical commitment and teaching responsibility.

2. Example and personal consistency.
3. Social-emotional education and self-awareness.
4. Play, movement and values in Physical Education.
5. Inclusion and social justice.
6. Symbolic expression and nonviolent communication.

According to Hernández et al. (2014), this type of analysis allows for the discovery of hidden meanings within the data, meanings constructed from the language and subjective experience of the participants. Taken together, the mixed-methods approach allows for linking the data and obtaining a more comprehensive view of how future teachers understand, represent, and symbolize peace in educational and social contexts marked by vulnerability.

Results

The following is a quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics obtained from the responses of 46 students enrolled in the Physical Education Bachelor's program at a teacher training college in central Mexico, corresponding to 20 Likert scale items. Each item was evaluated from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”).

Table 1. Summary of descriptive statistics

Reactive (abbreviated)	Average	Standard deviation	Min	Max
11. Promotes respect in teaching practices	4.78	0.42	4	5
13. Use games that teach cooperation and respect for rules	4.76	0.43	4	5
12. Positively integrate the excluded student	4.74	0.57	2	5
3. Peace is built in daily interactions	4.72	0.46	4	5
15. Prepares as a teacher to have a positive influence	4.67	0.52	3	5
16. Intervene in cases of harassment or discrimination	4.67	0.56	3	5
2. Peace begins with personal balance	4.65	0.53	3	5
14. Questions arise regarding school violence.	4.59	0.58	3	5
4. Recognizes invisible forms of violence	4.54	0.59	3	5
19. He sees his career as a means of social change	4.52	0.59	3	5
6. Avoid making fun of classmates	4.50	0.81	1	5
17. He is interested in learning about the realities of vulnerable children	4.48	0.66	3	5
8. Prefers dialogue over rumors	4.48	0.62	3	5
1. Understand peace as social justice	4.39	0.61	3	5
10. Approaches those who are feeling unwell	4.37	0.61	3	5
9. Include those who are ignored in teamwork	4.35	0.77	2	5
5. Lack of opportunities as a form of violence	4.07	0.98	1	5
7. Does not respond with aggression	4.02	1.04	1	5
18. Have you thought about writing messages of encouragement or hope?	3.91	0.89	2	5
20. Express peace as a civic responsibility	3.91	0.94	1	5

Source: Prepared by the author based on the results obtained

Based on the summary of the statistics, the following can be interpreted: The items with the highest averages show a strong commitment to respect, integration, cooperation, and the ethical preparation of future teachers. The items with the lowest averages reveal areas of opportunity related to the public expression of peace (items 18 and 20) through the use of symbolic tools with messages of encouragement, hope, and civic responsibility. Most items remain above 4, which indicates a generally favorable trend toward attitudes and practices related to a culture of peace.

Some items, such as items 5, 6, 7, and 20, show greater variability, indicating individual differences rather than just central tendency. Compared to the other items, these items have higher dispersion indices (variance), indicating less homogeneity in responses and greater diversity in response patterns.

Next, an interpretive description of the results by dimension will be made based on the averages obtained above.

Table 2. Interpretation of quantitative results by dimension

Dimension	Reagents	Key topics	Range of averages per item	Interpretation
1. Understanding peace	1 to 5	Social justice, personal balance, daily treatment, invisible violence and opportunities	4.0 – 4.6	The students demonstrate a solid understanding of peace beyond armed conflict, recognizing its structural and symbolic dimensions. However, slight differences are identified in their recognition of peace as social justice linked to a lack of opportunities.
2. Peaceful attitudes and behaviors	6 to 10	Respect, non-violence, dialogue, inclusion, and emotional support	4.0 – 4.5	Everyday peaceful attitudes such as respect, empathy, and inclusion are evident. However, there is variability in how direct personal conflicts are handled, suggesting areas for development in emotional management and assertiveness.
3. The role of teachers in peacebuilding	11 to 15	Respect in the classroom, integration, cooperative games, intervention, positive influence	4.6 – 4.8	This is the highest-rated dimension. Students view their teaching practice as a fundamental way to build peace, demonstrating a strong ethical, pedagogical, and emotional commitment to promoting respect and coexistence in schools.
4. Social commitment and transformative action	16 to 20	Intervention, social empathy, symbolic writing, social transformation, public expression	3.9 – 4.6	Although there is awareness of the social impact of the teacher's role, the lower averages in symbolic and expressive items reflect less confidence in or practice of public peace initiatives. This indicates an area for improvement in initial teacher training.

Source: own elaboration

From a qualitative approach using an open-ended text design, and based on a review of the symbolic messages written by student teachers in the activity “Sowing Peace through Physical Education: Reflections on a Teaching Vocation,” several emerging categories were identified that reflect a deep internalization of peace values and an ethical vision of teaching. These emerging categories were constructed through an open inductive coding process, which involved repeated and comparative reading of the texts to identify recurring units of

meaning. It is important to note that the study participants authorized the use of the data obtained for academic purposes through informed consent.

Subsequently, these units were grouped by semantic and conceptual affinity, allowing for the progressive formation of broader thematic cores. Finally, the categories were refined and delimited through a process of constant comparison between the data and the theoretical interpretation, ensuring their internal coherence and analytical relevance. The main thematic categories are described below:

1. Ethical commitment and teaching responsibility. Students demonstrate a clear awareness that their role goes beyond teaching content; they recognize that they are role models, agents of change, and sowers of values.

“Being a teacher carries a profound ethical dimension... Educating for peace means forming critical citizens committed to social justice.” (LEF Student 4, June 2025). “My work is not limited to the transmission of information, but to the comprehensive development of individuals capable of building a more just and peaceful society.” (LEF Student 35, June 2025)

2. Example and personal consistency. A cross-cutting category is the consistency between being and doing as a teacher: participants emphasize that peace must be born from their own emotional balance, their way of acting and their way of relating to others.

“First, I must be at peace with myself in order to express it to others” (LEF Student 24, June 2025). “Teachers must promote values... but also live them and represent them through their example.” (LEF Student 11, June 2025).

3. Social-emotional education and self-awareness. The importance of cultivating emotional self-regulation, self-esteem, and empathy in students is highlighted as pillars for peaceful coexistence.

“To promote respect, empathy, emotional self-regulation... and above all, peace” (LEF Student 29, June 2025). “My goal is for students to recognize themselves as valuable and capable of living together in harmony” (LEF Student 20, June 2025).

4. Play, movement and values in Physical Education. The group demonstrates how, from their area (Physical Education), values can be promoted through play, cooperation, inclusion and active participation.

“Every game and activity is an opportunity to foster respect, empathy, and coexistence.” (LEF Student 28, June 2025). “From the court to the classroom, I want to sow peace not only through sports techniques, but also through values.” (LEF Student 46, June 2025).

5. Inclusion and social justice. The messages reflect sensitivity towards contexts of exclusion, vulnerability, and inequality. Students are perceived as agents who must actively intervene to guarantee equity and respect for diversity.

“It is necessary to implement strategies to prevent the exclusion of students from teaching practices” (LEF Student 37, June 2025). “Promoting peace implies working for justice, equity, and dignity for all” (LEF Student 26, June 2025).

6. Symbolic expression and nonviolent communication. Some messages emphasize the power of words, dialogue, and positive expression as fundamental tools for peace.

“Through example, words, and listening, I lay the foundations for harmonious coexistence” (LEF Student 23, June 2025). “Promoting dialogue, active listening, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.” (LEF Student 32, June 2025).

The previously recorded qualitative results can be interpreted as follows. The students' voices reflect a profoundly humanistic vocation, committed to a pedagogy for peace that is lived, modeled, and built from everyday life. The data indicate that through their messages, the future teachers demonstrate that they understand physical education not only as physical training, but also as a privileged space for transforming lives, fostering respect, and building a more just society.

In terms of recurring themes, the predominant categories are those related to ethical commitment and teacher responsibility, personal consistency as the foundation of pedagogical practice, and inclusion associated with social justice. These dimensions structure the students' representation of peace as a comprehensive educational value that articulates personal convictions, professional responsibility, and social transformation.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data indicates that Physical Education students have not only internalized the values of a culture of peace, but also actively project them into their future teaching practice. The high scores on the instrument's dimensions, especially those related to the teacher's role as a promoter of peace, are reinforced by messages imbued with ethics, empathy, justice, and inclusion. The data suggest that the coherence between thought, word, and pedagogical action constitutes a central finding of this research.

However, areas for improvement were identified: for example, the symbolic expression of peace (such as writing messages of hope or taking a public stance against violence) showed slightly lower scores. This suggests the need to strengthen socio-emotional communication strategies and proactive leadership in initial teacher training, so that future

teachers are empowered not only as ethical role models, but also as active advocates for peace in vulnerable contexts. Consequently, the implementation of these actions will enable the realization of the research findings, by translating into observable pedagogical practices in the daily work of teachers in training.

In summary, the study reveals the transformative potential of teaching as a vehicle for peace, and reinforces the urgency of consolidating educational processes that prepare teachers in training not only as transmitters of content, but as builders of a new social culture, woven from the classroom with sensitivity, example and commitment.

Discussion of the results

In a global context marked by various forms of violence, exclusion, and inequality, training teachers who are sensitive to building a culture of peace is urgent. On this topic, the study gathered the perceptions of student teachers through a reflective and expressive exercise on the meaning of peace and their ethical responsibility as future educators. Writing a "Text for Peace," addressed to a child from a vulnerable community, not only generated significant data but also connected academic knowledge with an experience of emotional and social commitment.

Therefore, the findings of this research suggest trends toward the consolidation of a teaching identity committed to a culture of peace among student teachers in the Physical Education Bachelor's program at a teacher training college in Mexico. Both the questionnaire responses and the written reflections express a profound ethical and pedagogical understanding of what it means to cultivate peace within the school setting.

Taken together, the combination of quantitative and qualitative results suggests that future teachers' social representation of peace is firmly rooted in immediate ethical, relational, and pedagogical dimensions (respect, inclusion, cooperation), while structural and civic dimensions show greater heterogeneity. This partial convergence with the reviewed literature not only validates the findings but also qualifies their scope, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in initial teacher training.

From the perspective of social representations (Calderón & Jiménez, 2024), peace is configured as an active construction based on ethical and relational values. The results of this study empirically support this perspective: the highest averages (items 11, 13, 12, and 3; $M = 4.72-4.78$) demonstrate a strong appropriation of respect, cooperation, and integration as everyday pedagogical practices. This quantitative consistency is linked to the qualitative

findings, where peace is represented as professional responsibility and axiological commitment, confirming the coherence between representational dimension and behavioral disposition.

In line with Calderón (2022), who emphasizes the centrality of emotional regulation and safe learning environments, the data show a high valuation of intervention in situations of violence (item 16, $M = 4.67$) and of personal balance as a starting point (item 2, $M = 4.65$). However, while the author bases her proposal on neuroeducation, in this study the legitimization of peace emerges more from an internalized professional ethic than from an explicitly neuroscientific discourse, suggesting a more experiential than theoretical appropriation.

Porto and Segura (2024), for their part, propose that peace is learned in emotionally safe environments facilitated by the teacher. This idea is supported by the high value placed on cooperative play and integration. However, the items related to symbolic expression and civic responsibility (18 and 20; $M = 3.91$) show the lowest averages and greatest dispersion, indicating that the sociopolitical projection of peace has not yet reached the same level of consolidation as its interpersonal dimension. This finding introduces a relevant nuance to the existing literature, highlighting a gap between immediate pedagogical practice and broader civic agency.

In relation to the critical pedagogy proposed by Mejía-Rodríguez (2024), students recognize their profession as a path to social transformation (item 19, $M = 4.52$). However, the greater variability in items such as 5 ($SD = 0.98$) and 7 ($SD = 1.04$) suggests individual differences in the structural understanding of violence and in the response to conflict, revealing an uneven internalization of the critical-emancipatory component.

Finally, in line with Rentería (2021), the symbolic narratives show a significant appropriation of the language of peace—"sowing," "coexistence," "vocation"—which confirms the power of the qualitative approach to mobilize ethical awareness. However, the contrast with the quantitative dispersion in certain items indicates that this symbolic appropriation does not always translate into homogeneous positions regarding structural or civic dimensions.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the social representation of peace among future teachers is firmly rooted in relational ethics and immediate pedagogical practice, while its structural and sociopolitical dimensions exhibit greater heterogeneity. This nuance expands upon the existing literature by demonstrating that initial teacher training more

strongly reinforces peace as an interpersonal practice than as a critical project for social transformation.

In this sense, this research contributes to the line of studies on youth and culture of peace by demonstrating that initial teacher training can be a fertile space to create transformative educational leaders, capable of confronting the multiple forms of violence (symbolic, structural, emotional or verbal) from a critical, inclusive and affective pedagogy.

Conclusions

The Physical Education students participating in the study conceive of peace not as the mere absence of conflict, but as an active, sustained, and daily process that integrates respect for diversity, the promotion of equity, the defense of justice, and the constant practice of empathy. This understanding reflects an ethical and relational vision, in which peace is recognized as a central value for coexistence and the holistic development of individuals.

Regarding their pedagogical approach, the students expressed their intention to incorporate peace into their teaching practices through concrete strategies, such as play, inclusion, and peaceful conflict resolution in Physical Education. These practices demonstrate an understanding of the transformative potential of physical education and movement as privileged spaces for fostering cooperation, interpersonal connection, and mutual respect, linking the conceptual dimension of peace with effective pedagogical actions.

From this perspective, the symbolic texts analyzed reveal the characteristics of an emerging teacher identity marked by a commitment to ethics, social justice, and the well-being of children, demonstrating a clear willingness to act as agents of change in contexts marked by vulnerability and inequality. However, despite this commitment, areas for improvement remain, particularly regarding the public expression of peaceful stances and the creative use of symbolic tools to raise awareness about peace. These aspects underscore the importance of promoting educational experiences that strengthen communicative empowerment and the capacity to influence school and community spaces with a language of peace.

Finally, the findings suggest that peace culture training should be considered a cross-cutting and experiential axis in higher education, aimed at consolidating in future teachers a humanistic vocation committed to the common good. Based on the comprehensive analysis of the results, it is concluded that the systematic incorporation of active methodologies, reflective practices, and community experiences in the Bachelor's Degree in Physical

Education not only fosters the development of technical skills but also strengthens a sense of ethical and social responsibility essential for addressing contemporary challenges in schools. This connection between professional training and axiological commitment positions the teacher in training as an agent of transformation capable of influencing contexts marked by dynamics of exclusion, conflict, or inequality, thus contributing to the construction of more just, inclusive, and peaceful societies.

Consequently, the identified perceptions allow us to affirm that sixth-semester students understand peace as an active construction that materializes in the daily exercise of the teaching role, thus confirming that initial training constitutes a strategic space for the configuration of pedagogical practices oriented towards the construction of a culture of peace in the school context, in full correspondence with the question and objective that guided the present research.

Future lines of research

Based on the results of this study, the following lines of research are proposed: 1) *Teaching practice and peace in the classroom: Experiences of student teachers in the implementation of strategies for a culture of peace.* This line of research seeks to understand how student teachers transfer the learning acquired in their initial training to real-world classroom practice, particularly in relation to building a culture of peace. Analyzing their experiences allows us to identify both the resources and strategies they employ (such as conflict mediation, cooperative learning, or social-emotional learning), for example, and the tensions and challenges they face in school contexts often marked by inequality, violence, or exclusion. This study is justified because novice teachers (student teachers) represent a key turning point: being in the transition between theory and practice, specifically in the area of the teaching role, they offer valuable input for improving training programs and strengthening preparation for the peaceful and ethical management of school coexistence, as established by UNESCO (2019).

2) *The use of narratives, symbols, and languages in promoting peace in educational contexts.* This line of research focuses on exploring how in-service teachers and student teachers employ narratives, symbols, and languages as pedagogical tools to raise awareness, transmit values, and foster climates of respect and collaboration in schools, all within a qualitative case study design. From a qualitative perspective, the analysis of symbolic and expressive devices of a narrative and artistic nature will allow us to understand how shared

meanings about peace are constructed and how these impact teacher identity and students' civic education. Its relevance lies in the fact that the symbolic (social representations) not only communicates but also mobilizes emotions, generates a sense of belonging, and strengthens the sense of community. Precisely for this reason, studying and delving into the dimensions of the teacher's role in peacebuilding and social commitment and transformative action opens the possibility of designing more creative and culturally relevant educational strategies to promote peace from the school to society.

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