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*Scientific articles*

## **Juventud y Proyectos de Vida: Grupos Operativos para el Aprendizaje Colectivo en Chiapas**

***Youth and Life Projects: Operative Groups for Collective Learning in Chiapas***

***Projetos de Juventude e Vida: Grupos Operacionais de Aprendizagem Coletiva em Chiapas***

**Joao Gabriel Almeida**

Colegio de la Frontera Sur, México

[joao.rodrigues@guest.ecosur.mx](mailto:joao.rodrigues@guest.ecosur.mx)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5176-2289>

### **Resumen**

Este estudio explora la construcción de proyectos de vida en jóvenes a través de una iniciativa educativa en Chiapas basada en la metodología del grupo operativo de Enrique Pichon-Rivière. A partir de la interacción grupal y la reflexión colectiva, los estudiantes desarrollaron no solo conocimientos técnicos sobre el café, sino también adquirieron habilidades emocionales y sociales que fortalecieron su identidad y proyección futura. La teoría temporal de Alfredo Moffatt complementa el enfoque, desde su comprensión de la salud mental como la permanencia del "yo" en el tiempo. Sin embargo, se destacan los desafíos estructurales como la dependencia de iniciativas individuales y la falta de financiamiento, que dificultan la sostenibilidad de este tipo de acciones dentro del marco de la Nueva Escuela Mexicana (NEM). La investigación resalta la necesidad de políticas educativas que promuevan la autonomía estudiantil y aseguren los recursos necesarios para que los estudiantes puedan participar activamente en la construcción de su futuro.

**Palabras clave:** Desarrollo Juvenil, Aprendizaje Colectivo, Habilidades para la Vida, Educación Cooperativa.

## Abstract

This study explores the construction of life projects among young people through an educational initiative in Chiapas based on the operational group methodology of Enrique Pichon-Rivière. Through group interaction and collective reflection, students not only developed technical knowledge about coffee but also acquired emotional and social skills that strengthened their identity and future projection. Alfredo Moffatt's temporal theory complements this approach, highlighting the importance of maintaining a the permanence of the self in time. However, structural challenges, such as the reliance on individual initiatives and lack of funding, are emphasized as barriers to the sustainability these types of actions within the framework of the New Mexican School. The research underlines the need for educational policies that promote student autonomy and ensure the necessary resources for active participation in shaping their future.

**Keywords:** Youth Development, Collective Learning, Life Skills, Cooperative Education.

## Resumo

Este estudo explora a construção de projetos de vida entre jovens por meio de uma iniciativa educacional em Chiapas com base na metodologia do grupo operacional de Enrique Pichon-Rivière. Por meio da interação em grupo e da reflexão coletiva, os alunos não apenas desenvolveram conhecimento técnico sobre café, mas também adquiriram habilidades emocionais e sociais que fortaleceram sua identidade e perspectivas futuras. A teoria temporal de Alfredo Moffatt complementa a abordagem, baseada em sua compreensão da saúde mental como a permanência do "eu" no tempo. No entanto, desafios estruturais como a dependência de iniciativas individuais e a falta de financiamento se destacam, dificultando a sustentação desses tipos de iniciativas dentro da estrutura da Escola Novo Mexicano (NEM). A pesquisa destaca a necessidade de políticas educacionais que promovam a autonomia dos alunos e garantam os recursos necessários para que eles possam participar ativamente da construção do seu futuro.

**Palavras-chave:** Desenvolvimento Juvenil, Aprendizagem Coletiva, Habilidades para a Vida, Educação Cooperativa.

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## Introduction

The construction of life projects and personal development among young people is a crucial topic for studies on youth development, both internationally and nationally, as it refers to their ability to imagine and plan their future based on the opportunities and limitations they face in their educational, family, and social contexts. The challenge lies not only in acquiring technical knowledge, but also in how to integrate their experiences into their personal and professional identity, a process that determines their ability to create future prospects.

The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that this capacity depends not only on their cognitive abilities, but also on the way they relate to their environment and solve collective problems. In this sense, we engage with the reflective thinking approach proposed by Donald Schön (1983), which proposes that young people's ability to reconfigure their perception of the world and their place in it stems from meaningful experiences. When students participate in processes that challenge them to think critically about their actions and learning, they are more likely to develop a deep and nuanced understanding of their reality.

On the other hand, Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory reinforces the idea that learning needs to go beyond observation, with one of its relevant components being interaction with peers in collaborative situations. The development of interpersonal skills such as coexistence in diversity, mutual support, and trust are essential for young people to effectively integrate into their social and professional environments. This learning, according to Bandura (1977), is not a passive process, but an active one. Wenger (1998) introduces the concept of communities of practice, highlighting that learning processes develop a sense of commitment and belonging when participating in groups where they share and reflect on their collective experiences. Complementarily, studies such as those by Savickas (2013), in his career building theory, argue that these experiences can be crucial for career choice. The ability for someone to develop a "sense of purpose" from interacting with their reality is crucial for their well-being and future success.

In addition to these aspects, recent research in Latin America has begun to explore the emotional dimension of youth development. Lagos Apablaza and Mujica Johnson's (2024) work on emotions in Latin American education introduces a critical perspective to the debate on youth education, suggesting that emotional education must go beyond conventional approaches to also include emotional and bodily experiences. This research suggests that a comprehensive educational approach must include both academic and

emotional aspects in order to develop the skills necessary to navigate an environment fraught with social and economic tensions.

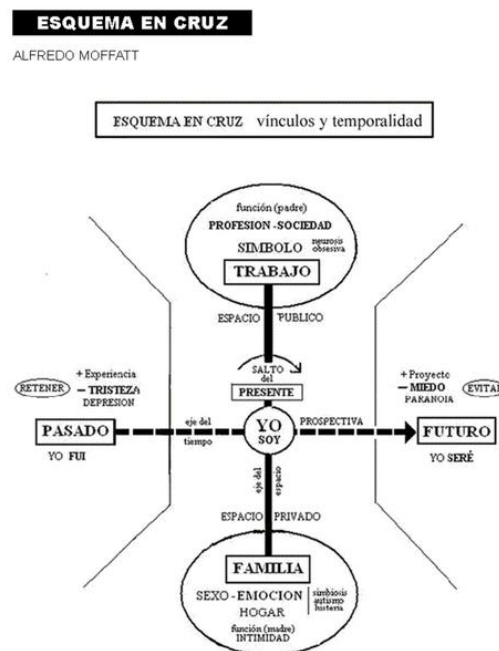
In the specific case of Chiapas, young people face additional challenges derived from their rural and indigenous context, where structural and cultural limitations impose barriers to education and employment. The study "Rayografía de la juventud en Chiapas" (X-ray of youth in Chiapas) (Gómez-Abarca, 2024) highlights structural conditions that affect these individuals in this region, highlighting problems such as social inequality, forced migration, and lack of job opportunities. These factors affect their ability to build a life plan, limiting their options for personal and professional advancement. However, the study also highlights the role that interpersonal relationships and mutual support play in development, where community and family dynamics offer crucial support in the absence of formal resources. Gómez-Abarca's analysis (2024) underscores that, despite the difficulties, young people in Chiapas have great potential to transform their realities through participation in cultural collectives and social movements that allow them to affirm their identity and develop a sense of responsibility toward their community. Other studies, such as those by Estrada Ruiz (2010), support this potential for transforming their reality through social participation and strengthening interpersonal skills. Estrada Ruiz's proposal to encourage youth participation in decision-making in school and local communities suggests that active participation can strengthen skills corresponding to those already mentioned in the previous studies.

## Method

To address these issues, this study uses the operational group methodology developed by Enrique Pichon -Rivière (1991), applied to the educational context. The operational group allows participants, through the resolution of a task, to explore both their cognitive and emotional capacities, integrating their past experiences with their future expectations. The relevance of this methodology lies in its ability to mobilize subjects through critical reflection and collective action, allowing them to more effectively confront the limitations of their environment. In the specific case of this study, we evaluated the present results in an initiative with 7 total participants, carried out between April 26 and October 17, 2024, where through the aforementioned methodology, high school students idealized and carried out a proposal called Flavors with the Scent of Tradition: Youth Innovations with Coffee (INNOVAJUVCAFÉ).

Alfredo Moffatt provides a key epistemic basis for this study, in which the construction of the "self" is understood as a process of articulation between the horizontal temporal axis and the vertical axis of space, which translates it into his cross scheme, where the self is at the center of the cross. This means that the search for the existence of a healthy and harmonious "self" is one that can feel validated by attachment, both at the level of a community and family relationships, as well as social conditions that allow it to feel capable of living in the present, projecting a future that integrates its past (Moffatt, 2007).

**Figure 1.** Cross diagram



Source: <http://www.moffatt.com.ar/>

This temporal theory emphasizes that identity is not fixed, but rather a narrative construct that connects the past, present, and future, which is essential for young people to maintain continuity in their life plans. The ability to imagine the future, according to Moffatt, allows individuals to maintain a sense of coherence, even in contexts of uncertainty.

The operationalization of this perspective is translated through the contributions of Enrique Pichon -Rivière. Attachment theory is a fundamental approach in his social psychology, where the human being is understood not as an isolated entity, but as a subject always in relationship. For him, attachment is the minimum unit of analysis, and the subject can only be understood through the relationships they establish with their environment and others. Attachment has a dual dimension: symbolic and material,

meaning it includes both the psychological and real aspects of human interactions ( Pichon -Rivière, 1991).

In the school setting, the work of Ana Quiroga, her disciple, has been key to the application of these concepts in education. She has emphasized that the educational process is inherently dialectical, based on the interaction between the student, the educator, and the social context. This means that learning is not only a process of knowledge acquisition but also of personal and social transformation, in which students become active subjects (Pampliega de Quiroga, 2009). In school settings, the operational group has been particularly effective in promoting cooperative learning and conflict resolution, helping students internalize their learning in a meaningful way.

In academic contexts, Fernando Fabris (2012), in his work on operational groups, connects this approach with social research, using the device to explore collective problems and needs within a framework of horizontal interaction. In the academic context, the author emphasizes the importance of opening a space for the expression of diverse voices and fostering participant autonomy.

Thus, this study is based on the operational group model developed by Enrique Pichon -Rivière (1991). Consistent with the methodological and epistemic proposal, this approach highlights that knowledge production is a collective, experiential process deeply linked to personal and social transformation.

This approach connects directly with critical pedagogy and the corporeal pedagogy of emotions developed by authors such as Nancy Lagos Apablaza and Felipe Mujica Johnson (2024), who emphasize the importance of including emotions and corporality in learning processes, especially in the Latin American context. Emotional and corporeal education, in this sense, seeks to transcend technocratic and hegemonic approaches, which often limit students' ability to take ownership of their own experiences and experiences within the educational framework (Lagos Apablaza & Mujica Johnson, 2024).

Pichon -Rivière 's Theory of Attachment , the operational group is seen as a space where subjects, through constant interaction, transform their reality and themselves. For Pichon -Rivière, knowledge is a collective construction, mediated by the social and affective relationships established around a common task. In this methodology, the task acts as a device that mobilizes tensions, knowledge, and emotions, allowing for the construction of new learning and ways of relating to the world ( Pichon -Rivière, 1991).



A key aspect of this methodology is the role of the coordinator. As Fabris (2012) points out, the coordinator does not impose a path or answers, but rather guides the group in finding its own solutions to the problems it faces. The coordinator facilitates a space of horizontality and equitable participation, where all members assume active roles in the learning process. According to Fabris (2012):

The coordinator aims to facilitate the connection of diverse contributions, fostering a climate of association of ideas and resonances while helping the group overcome the disqualifying and aggressive confrontation (dilemmas) that are common in everyday interactions. He or she promotes and encourages the explicitness and treatment of differences, as well as the clarification of their conceptual and experiential roots. (p. 99-100)

The choice of this working methodology was based on the hypothesis that the task force would offer a space for young people not only to perform a specific task, but also to plan their lives, connecting their personal history with their aspirations for the future.

For this work, the methodological exercise consisted of 10 meetings with the participants, using the operational group technique in 6 of them, the last being an evaluative meeting that was transcribed with the explicit authorization of the participants.

The methodology began on April 26, 2024, following a prior process of institutional agreements and outreach at the school for students to voluntarily participate. In the end, seven students between the ages of 16 and 18, four men and three women, signed up. It is important to note that the operational groups have a methodological requirement of operating in small groups, which Didieu Anzieu and Yves Martín (1971) propose that there are between 5 and 15 members.

The first session began with a meditation that invited students to connect with their earliest experiences with coffee, prompting a reflection on the calm and nostalgia this beverage evokes, associating it with family moments.

Wujec's (2015) intelligent design technique was used to structure the criteria for thinking about what they would like to do. This technique involves asking all participants to draw steps on Post-it notes showing how they would perform a certain action. These steps are then grouped by similarities and discussed to identify common patterns. What emerged from this exercise was calm, family, and the overcoming of melancholy.

The Screen Image psychodrama technique (Boal, 2002) was applied to visualize an important moment surrounding coffee. The scene was based on a student's story about a reconciliation with his mother, and deepened the group analysis by connecting the emotional with the relational. In this way, the group strengthened a shared narrative about

the meaning of coffee in their lives, managing to concretize from a lived experience what they were naming from their family ties.

Finally, in the same session, a mandala was constructed based on the generated senses, resources, and needs, culminating in the activities to be carried out as a group. The activities included a market study using 10 questions that they developed collectively at the end of the session, a visit to the Colegio de la Frontera Sur to expand their knowledge, a visit to a farm, and participation in a festival with a drink and dessert. The task mobilized the students to take action and fostered their sense of responsibility and active participation in the process, as they administered the survey independently for three weeks without supervision from the coordinator. The subsequent meetings were held to analyze the survey results in the sessions on May 23rd and 30th. During these sessions, they proposed making a bread dessert that would reflect the Chiapas people's tendency to eat bread with coffee, and they proposed a healthy alternative to drinking coffee with sweeter flavors.

The visit to ECOSUR on June 5th provided a space for the students to integrate their reflections with practical experience. This visit strengthened the young people's ability to project themselves toward an academic future, integrating new aspirations, as evidenced by one of the students expressing his desire to enter university after the experience.

Finally, the sessions on September 10 and October 4 consolidated the task force's work by organizing the October 5 festival, where roles were assigned based on each student's gifts and aptitudes. It is important to highlight the crucial collaboration of the school's teachers, particularly Elena Patricia Cordero Ramos, Floricelda López Anzueto, and Claudia Anel Ozuna Martínez .

In the September 10th session, the students presented their progress during the first semester, and the students, from their areas of specialization—cuisine and beverage—questioned and proposed proposals, which led to the idea of culinary innovations using traditional flavors. It is also important to highlight the collaboration of Dr. Francisco Enríquez, who, by offering chimbo, a traditional Chiapas sweet, allowed the idea of adapting typical Chiapas sweets with coffee to emerge. Once the students formed a group and demonstrated their initiative, he mobilized the school's teachers, allowing them to participate in the task. In addition, Festival collaborator Gabriel Amores was also able to participate, giving a talk about traditional Chiapas sweets in his restaurant. The students themselves were able to recruit the grandmother of one of the participants to teach them how to cook these dishes.



The October 5th festival, as well as the participation of Gabriel Amores and a student's grandmother, demonstrated how the task force's horizontal and participatory approach allowed for the effective integration of all stakeholders in the task, promoting shared learning that transcended individual boundaries and mobilized a portion of the educational community toward a common goal.

To carry out the proposed activities, a visit to a coffee farm was conducted on October 11th. Finally, a final session using operational group techniques was held on October 17th, where students reflected on what they had learned. To complement the final session, a structured electronic questionnaire with open-ended questions was conducted to record each participant's individual perceptions.

As we will mention in more detail in the discussion, this methodology has been widely used in public health contexts. However, it has been somewhat marginalized from the educational field in recent decades, despite the relevance of its approaches beyond psychological aspects. The methodological learning and application are due to the author's training as a social psychologist at the El Tigre School of Social Psychology, founded by Alfredo Moffatt . Part of the innovation proposed in the article is to reincorporate a technique that was strongly present between the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s into the current Mexican context, as we will mention below.

## Results

The analysis of the results is based on the responses obtained from the structured questionnaire and the transcript of the final meeting with the students. Below is a summary of the responses from the participants in an anonymous questionnaire conducted prior to the final meeting.

**Table 1.** Questionnaire Responses

Ask	Answer
<p>How has your perception of coffee changed since participating in this project?</p>	<p>- "It has changed in a thousand ways; it has honestly filled me with great satisfaction."</p>
	<p>- "I didn't believe coffee could be made in so many ways and with so many processes."</p>
	<p>- "I'm leaving with greater knowledge on the subject."</p>
	<p>- "It's helped me try to experiment more with coffee and not stick to the traditional."</p>
<p>To what extent has this process impacted your sense of life and the way you project your professional or personal future?</p>	<p>- "First, figure out what I want to achieve and then achieve it."</p>
	<p>- "I'd like to continue learning about coffee and become certified as a barista and roaster."</p>
	<p>- "It gave me a greater sense of responsibility."</p>
	<p>- "In the future I want to be a great researcher."</p>
<p>Tell us about your personal experience participating in the project and what emotions or lessons you would highlight from this process.</p>	<p>- "I absolutely loved it, it's an experience I would recommend."</p>
	<p>- "You always have to look beyond what you can do."</p>

	- "It helped me express myself better to others and not remain silent when expressing my ideas."
What proposals would you make to strengthen or give consistency to projects like this, from your perspective as a young researcher?	- "Propose more products or projects."
	- "If only these exhibitions could be held in more places."
	- "Create spaces like discussion forums based on this project and, of course, us as speakers."
	- "Make public what we did."

Source: own elaboration

During the last session, what was said was recorded and transcribed, from which we systematized the main points:

- **Overcoming initial fear:** Some recalled how the fear and anxiety they felt at the beginning transformed into motivation and personal satisfaction. One participant expressed: "I felt nervous at first, but then I felt confident when I saw the support of my colleagues." This change in attitude reflects the emotional growth experienced by the participants, who learned to trust and support each other. As the project progressed, those initial nerves disappeared, giving way to a sense of accomplishment.

- **Importance of teamwork:** There was consensus that teamwork and mutual trust were essential to the success of the activities. "The trust we had in each other allowed us to overcome our nerves and move the project forward," said one of the students. This reflection highlights the mutual support among the participants and how this collective support facilitated the achievement of the proposed objectives. Through collaborative work, the students found the strength to face the challenges.

- **Breaking out of the school routine:** Several students emphasized the importance of leaving their comfort zone and school routine. "Getting out of the school routine was what made this all so special," noted one participant. This experience allowed them to face new challenges and explore aspects of themselves they wouldn't have discovered within a typical school environment. By breaking away from the predictable, they found a space where they could innovate and experiment, which was key to the process.

- Collaboration and shared effort: The positive impact of working together was also mentioned. "We learned that by working together we could accomplish much more than we thought." This reflection shows how the experience was not only educational in terms of content, but also in terms of social skills and teamwork. Participants understood that collaboration allowed them to achieve more than they would have achieved individually.

- Development of communication skills: One of the aspects most valued by different students was the ability to express themselves better and overcome shyness when speaking in public or sharing their ideas. "It helped me express myself better with others and not remain silent when expressing my ideas or thoughts." This aspect was fundamental for them to develop confidence in their communication skills, strengthening their ability to express their opinions in a group setting. Being able to express themselves freely and be heard was key to their personal and collective growth.

- Personal growth: In terms of personal development, they mentioned that it helped them see the value of collaboration and shared effort. "What I take away most is having worked with my colleagues and grown alongside them." Beyond what they learned about coffee, they felt transformed by the experience of sharing, supporting each other, and creating something together. This was an opportunity to strengthen their bonds and grow personally as the project progressed.

Overall, the students' final reflections revealed that, in addition to the knowledge they acquired about coffee, INNOVAJUVCAFÉ represented a platform for personal growth, the development of communication skills, and the strengthening of interpersonal relationships. The combination of positive emotions, overcoming challenges, and collaborative learning was what made this experience meaningful for them.

By relating the survey responses to the transcripts and the author's observations as coordinator of the operational groups, we can conclude that the results evidenced a transformation process in the participants, reflected in the acquisition of skills that, beyond the explicit task, allow them to visualize themselves with a set of learning experiences and skills that allow them to see themselves with greater capabilities and possibilities for future projections. All survey responses were included in the table, and we highlighted the most relevant sections of the transcript in terms of skills. Other elements emerged, particularly from the teachers' contributions, which, because they were not the subjects of the study, were not included in the results section. Likewise, we include them in the discussion as limitations. The results suggest that the use of operational groups, in combination with trust in the autonomy and responsibility of young people

according to their stage of life, favors subjective and interpersonal changes at both the individual and collective levels.

## Discussion

This research exposes the relevance of an educational approach based on operational groups as a tool for building life projects among young people. The results reveal significant consistency with the principles of Pichon -Rivière's (1991) inverted cone conceptual framework, evaluating six vectors: affiliation and belonging, communication, cooperation, relevance, learning, and teleworking. Through these criteria, it was possible to observe how students, by participating in the group process, not only acquired knowledge about coffee but also transformed their personal and collective perspectives.

Analyzing the results obtained from the perspective of affiliation and belonging, it is observed that the young people developed a sense of identity and belonging both to the group and to the task. This finding resonates with the ideas of Fabris (2012), who emphasizes that operational groups can generate spaces where individuals feel a sense of belonging and commitment to the collective task, strengthening group identity. In this sense, the students' level of involvement in the project was a manifestation of belonging and of the capacity of the operational group methodology to create meaningful bonds.

Likewise, the results demonstrate the importance of communication in the project. The students were able to establish an open and fluid dialogue, thus strengthening their skills of expression and active listening. This is consistent with the work of Lagos Apablaza and Mujica Johnson (2024), who emphasize that communication in educational spaces must include affective dimensions to facilitate comprehensive development. The communicative dimension of the project allowed the young people to share their ideas and experiences in a respectful and collaborative manner, creating an environment where they felt valued and heard.

Regarding the cooperation vector, students demonstrated a remarkable ability to work as a team. This result aligns with previous studies on the use of operational groups in education and mental health contexts, such as the work of Souza et al. (2023), who found that operational groups can improve collaborative skills and mutual commitment. In our study, participants' willingness to assume responsibilities and support each other highlighted the importance of cooperation as a tool for achieving shared goals.

The relevance vector was also evident in the students' experience, as they remained focused on the task throughout the entire process. Their ability to maintain the

project's purpose, despite the challenges, reflects a deep understanding of the importance of their work, aligning with the perspective that meaningful tasks foster engagement and a sense of responsibility among participants. This outcome demonstrates how participants can sustain their commitment and persevere toward their goals, especially when the task resonates with their interests and values.

Learning was a fundamental aspect of the process, both cognitively and emotionally. Participants acquired technical knowledge about coffee, developing a broader vision of its culture and the possible professional roles they could play. This aspect is consistent with Bandura's (1977) theory of meaningful learning, which emphasizes that meaningful learning not only enriches knowledge but also strengthens young people's identity and self-confidence. In our study, they not only expanded their understanding of coffee but also strengthened their life plans, envisioning new possibilities for personal and professional development.

The telecommunication vector was observed in an emotional affinity between the students, which allowed for the creation of a space of mutual support and trust. This emotional connection facilitated the learning process and motivated participants to actively contribute to the project.

Among the study's limitations is the dependence on individual initiatives by researchers and educators to ensure the project's sustainability. As Jarquín (2023) points out, the Mexican educational system lacks adequate structures and funding to promote student autonomy and meaningful learning, which limits the potential for educational processes based on active participation and collective reflection, particularly in small groups. In the case of this project, much of the success depended on the mobilization of the external researcher to organize the logistics and the lead researcher to secure the necessary funds for the coffee festival. Furthermore, the willingness of the teachers, Elena Patricia Cordero Ramos, Floricelda López Anzueto, and Claudia Anel Ozuna Martínez, who adapted their classes to support students in their activities, was crucial to the project's success. The school's leadership, through Principal Francisco Javier García Vásquez, Assistant Principal Elyana Hernández Ballinas, and Academic Coordinator Luis Villatoro Gallegos, ensured transportation to the plot, adjusted logistics for dialogue with parents, and made class hours available. Without this type of extracurricular support, it would have been difficult to carry out the planned activities, highlighting the structural limitations that persist in the Mexican education system. The dependence on individual efforts constitutes a structural limitation that affects both the implementation of the New Mexican School (NEM) and other educational innovations.



This research reflects young people's ability to connect with their cultural roots, develop research and collaborative work skills, and thus contribute to the goals of the National Education System (NEM). However, it faces significant challenges in putting these principles into practice. Although the NEM promotes the idea of schools as "learning communities" (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2019), studies like ours demonstrate that this requires strategies to allocate time, space, and resources so that the teaching team is not forced into a double shift.

Compared to similar studies, research such as that of Dutra and Corrêa (2015) and Giraldo Cuartas, Lucchese, and Barros (2002) agree that operational groups also function as spaces for emotional support and socialization, elements that facilitate emotional resilience and adaptation of participants. Although the study by Dutra and Corrêa focuses on caregivers in work contexts and that by Giraldo Cuartas, Lucchese, and Barros on nursing education, both highlight the importance of communication and group support as mechanisms to manage stress and strengthen collective identity. In our educational context in Chiapas, these same elements were decisive in achieving group cohesion and allowing participants to project themselves into the future with greater security. The scientific literature shows that the operational group methodology is consolidated in healthcare settings. While the work of social psychologists guided by these frameworks in marginalized contexts is a constant in countries like Argentina and Brazil—whether in addiction groups, community kitchens, or public health—consolidating academic studies on population profiles like the one in our study remains a challenge. One possible explanation is that direct social intervention tools are not skills possessed by many academics, and that people who work in these contexts are far removed from academia. We consider building this bridge between theory and practice a contribution of our research. In comparison with recent studies, such as that by Barbosa Carvalho and Bolela Silveira (2023), our work concurs with the importance of operational groups as spaces for promoting mental health. As in our study, they highlight that operational groups allow participants to value everyday experiences and strengthen their sense of belonging. The dynamic of sharing experiences in a group context facilitates the development of a more humanized vision of themselves and others, which contributes to the psychological and social well-being of participants. This appreciation of everyday life and the role of leadership in groups also highlights the transformative role of group interactions, a central aspect of both their study and ours.

Likewise, Mariano, da Silva Macuch , and Grossi- Milani (2024) show how operational groups in university settings allow students to reflect on their health and address emotional and academic challenges in a space of mutual support. In our educational context in Chiapas, we find similarities in the positive impact these spaces have by providing a framework where young people can address both personal and collective issues, promoting active adaptation to their realities.

The aforementioned studies emphasize the importance of creating spaces where individuals can transform their experiences into meaningful learning, reinforcing the value of operational groups as methodologies applicable in diverse contexts.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides evidence of the positive impact of participatory methodologies, such as task forces, on the development of life projects among young people in Chiapas. Through collaboration, reflection, and collective learning, students not only acquired technical knowledge about coffee but also developed key social and emotional skills, strengthening their identity and sense of belonging. This methodology allowed participants to project their learning into the future, visualizing new opportunities and developing a sense of purpose that transcends the structural limitations of their context.

The results of this research reinforce the importance of creating educational spaces where experience and reflection can take place in an environment of mutual support. Despite challenges, such as lack of funding and dependence on individual initiatives, the research demonstrated that it is possible to generate significant change in the lives of young people when their active participation is promoted and their transformative potential is recognized. The challenge now is to leverage this established capacity and extend the model to more schools and communities, thereby strengthening youth autonomy and offering a platform for them to build coherent and meaningful life projects. Similarly, another challenge is how the participants who undergo these experiences can build themselves into a continuous network that sustains the progress made.

Overall, this research underscores the importance of an education that goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge, integrating elements of identity, culture, and a sense of belonging. We conclude that methodologies such as the operational group approach are relevant for generating educational experiences that respond to the needs and aspirations of young people in contexts of inequality, allowing them to recognize themselves as subjects of their own history, capable of transforming themselves and their

reality. The researcher's experience shows a great deal of love, passion, and willingness to change among schools and students. Harnessing this abundant capacity in Chiapas schools to offer students life-planning perspectives seems to be the heart of the matter.

### **Future lines of research**

This study has highlighted several aspects that merit exploration in future research. First, a relevant line of research is to evaluate the long-term impact of operational group-based educational initiatives on participants' professional and personal lives. This approach can determine the extent to which the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills contributes to their ability to face work and personal challenges, as well as to construct a coherent identity over time, in line with Alfredo Moffatt's temporal theory (1982, 2007).

Another necessary line of research is to analyze the effects of these actions on the relationship between students and their communities, especially in terms of social participation and community engagement. Delving deeper into the role these processes play in creating a collective identity and promoting community values will provide valuable insights into the potential of operational groups to strengthen the social fabric. Currently, the author, along with a team from Colegio de la Frontera Sur, proposes updating the ways of life methodology (Parra-Vázquez, MR, Liscovsky, IJ, et al., 2011) to incorporate Relational Capital into its interpretation of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Capitals. The proposal is to understand that there is an investment of time in aspects such as non-transactional reciprocity, trust, respect, and listening, among other indicators, which enable autonomy in different cultural contexts and reduce dependence on other types of capital to respond to diverse individual and collective needs. We believe this research offers contributions to demonstrate that methodologies such as those of the operational group can create the conditions for individuals to have the capacity to build different capitals that allow them to integrate other possible ways of understanding themselves, reality, and their peers into their careers.

A key aspect for future research is to have tools that allow these statements to be quantitatively measured. While the effectiveness of these methods requires small-group work, it is also necessary, even for debates on public policies such as the NEM, to establish new indicators that reflect the changes generated by these initiatives in comparative and correlational studies, where the individual life project is conceived from a community-building perspective. What the NEM demonstrates, as well as other global-scale initiatives, is that there is already a social perception that what Paulo Freire called

banking education is no longer desired as an educational parameter. However, it is necessary to make progress in defining what constitutes a successful educational policy. Perspectives such as Heckman 's (2011) have measures associated with the American lifestyle and are established as global solutions. These include access to white-collar jobs, reducing public costs in security and special education, as well as the development of "soft skills" required by large corporations in light of the changes described since 2019 by the World Bank ( Stromquist , NP, 2019). In an intercultural context with a strong rural presence, such as the state of Chiapas and throughout southeastern Mexico, proposals such as those presented in this article require further research that reflects the values and ways of life of diverse cultural matrices to define the possible worlds from which young people can create life projects.

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