

# Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in the Educational Environment of the Universidad Popular del Cesar, Valledupar Campus

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## Summary

The growing complexity of human relationships and the lack of training to deal with conflicts constructively encourage the emergence of problematic situations in the school and university context and increase the need for alternative mechanisms for their resolution. These procedures contribute to the construction of more favorable conditions of coexistence than those allowed by the traditional judicial system. The Valledupar campus of the Popular University of Cesar has implemented several alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including school mediation, university community mediation, conciliation, negotiation, restorative justice, peace circles, informal mediation, and the use of digital platforms. The effectiveness of these initiatives is assessed on the basis of success indicators and quality criteria collected through a mixed approach. Although positive results have been achieved, the implementation of alternative mechanisms faces cultural and teacher training barriers that limit their development.

**Keywords:** alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, university classrooms, education, educational environment.

## 1. Introduction

Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms have been consolidated over the last three decades in the field of education, in terms of research, design, training and training, implementation and evaluation. The proposal of the article is to describe the implementation of these mechanisms in the context of the Popular University of Cesar, Valledupar campus. In this institution, school mediation and university community mediation are the most developed mechanisms, along with conciliation and negotiation between educational actors, restorative justice and peace circles. The use of digital platforms and tools to resolve disputes is also presented. Finally, the main findings derived from the analysis of the effectiveness and challenges of these mechanisms are collected and recommendations for their improvement are formulated.

Education must contribute to the development of more peaceful and supportive societies through the construction and reconstruction of coexistence. This requires literacy in conflict resolution and prevention, as well as the inclusion of these processes in curricula and in the organization and functioning of institutions. The teaching and learning processes are inextricably social and include the formation of competencies for democratic coexistence and citizenship. Consequently, the development

of coexistence must be a specific objective of education, as well as an implicit result in the formation of competencies. Since cohabitation involves relationships with other people, the development of cohabitation must expressly address the way in which conflicts that arise in those relationships are resolved. (Candelaria & Ceja, 2024)

## **2. Theoretical framework**

Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are processes that resolve disputes without resorting to formal justice. They are classified into conciliation, mediation, negotiation and restorative justice. They differ from judicial resolution because the conflicts are not promoted by the State, the participants have an active role, the decision is not imposed, they are flexible, the time and costs are lower, and the resolution seeks to meet the needs of the parties. Work-life balance and mediation are two of the best-known methods in the field of education (Rodríguez, 2024).

Pedagogical and educational approaches to learning conflict resolution are based on the theories of meaningful learning and learning by discovery, through which educational actors build coexistence from literacy in conflict resolution. The role of teachers is reconfigured, ceasing to be the center of the teaching-learning process, and they become mediators of student learning. (Borja and Aguirre..., 2024)

### **2.1. Definition and nature of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms**

Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are procedures for resolving disputes, in which the opposing parties agree on the terms of the solution, with the support of a third party, known as a facilitator, who acts as a mediator or conciliator (Montaño Díaz, 2025). These mechanisms are used instead of, or as a complement to, the judicial decision. Mediation, conciliation, negotiation, community resolution, and restorative justice are such mechanisms. What they have in common is that they are based on the will of the parties and allow them to take responsibility for the resolution of the conflict, rather than delegating that responsibility to someone else.

School mediation consists of the use of people outside the conflict, chosen by the parties, who help to find a solution accepted by all. In the university environment, community mediation is carried out between members of the community who ascertain the interests of both parties in conflict, prepare a conciliation proposal and guarantee the implementation of what has been agreed. Conciliation is similar, although it is carried out by a person other than the parties (Misas Camacho). In negotiation, the parties seek a solution, with the assistance of a facilitator. Restorative justice is combined with formal education, using peace circles as a pedagogical tool. These circles are dialogue sessions that allow the sharing of feelings, needs and concerns, favoring understanding between the participants and their cohesion as a group.

### **2.2. Pedagogical and educational approaches to conflict resolution**

Conflict resolution in the educational environment must be approached from the pedagogical and educational approaches established for the construction of coexistence, which involve all the levels that make up the university community (RODRIZALES, 2025). In this sense, the work of the Popular University of Cesar, Valledupar campus, is based on school mediation and university community mediation, which are considered the alternative mechanisms for conflict resolution with the greatest potential. School mediation involves students and teachers in the resolution of conflicts among their peers, developing in the former the ability to work as mediators. For its part, university community mediation seeks the peaceful resolution of conflicts between the different actors of the University.

School mediation is a model of educational intervention, in the context of school coexistence, that promotes the peaceful resolution of conflicts that arise between students and that, by their nature, can be addressed and resolved by them, with the help of classmates trained as mediators (Benítez Moreno, 2023). Its success lies in the empowerment of students as active agents in the transformation of their environment, through their direct participation in the resolution of conflicts. The development of a school mediation program requires the creation of a space for reflection, debate, and decision-making,

where students can share their concerns, opinions, and experiences about school coexistence (Contreras Ramos & Montes Reyes..., 2024).

### **2.3. Principles of restorative justice and school mediation**

The principles of restorative justice and school mediation reveal the conceptual foundations of the field of restorative justice, both in its normative aspect and in the school mediation model. The practice of the restorative justice movement, including the basic rules of the mediation process, is as follows: the process is voluntary, the principles of confidentiality, impartiality, neutrality and physical connection are respected; the mediator does not make decisions or make value judgments; The parties have equal conditions throughout the process, and the solution is agreed and accepted by both, of a restorative nature, and non-compliance with the solution is not considered. (Correa Monsalve & Jaramillo Gaona..., 2025)

The experience of integration and application of the global restorative justice movement, within the framework of an educational establishment and in a context of social vulnerability, informally confirms the postulates and rules that underpin the school mediation process. The evaluation of a school mediation programme based on the restoration of relationships and peaceful coexistence, in which children and young people from a high-risk community development centre with problems of social violence have participated, shows that the positive impact on the participants, the victims and the social environment of the events. However, the design and implementation of a restorative justice program and peace circles in a primary and secondary educational establishment, in a context of social violence, allow us to reflect on its effectiveness indicators, in relation to the climate of school coexistence and the social cohesion of the community. (Santana Durango & Sierra Pineda, 2023)

### **3. Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms at the Valledupar headquarters**

The Popular University of Cesar, Valledupar campus, has implemented various alternative conflict resolution mechanisms for the educational community, including school mediation, university community mediation, conciliation and negotiation, restorative justice programs, peace circles and the use of digital tools. School mediation, exercised by students of the institution and managed by a teacher, takes place in a neutral and confidential space, with the aim that the parties make an analysis of their behaviors and feelings, recognize the affectations, seek solutions and sign an agreement. University community mediation is led by a group of students and faculty, along with other volunteers, who serve internal actors and the community in general. Students have the possibility of asking for support and guidance in the different situations that arise in the environment or that may have an impact on their academic life.

Conciliation and negotiation between the educational actors of the institution is planned jointly, using different techniques that enable dialogue. A space is offered where different opinions and feelings can be expressed, and proposals for solutions are generated. This mechanism is easily accessible and does not require formality; It is carried out between the parties who wish to reach an agreement and who consider that the solution may lie in the intervention of another person or persons. Phases of preparation, discussion and agreement are developed. Each phase can lead to a closure of the process if the parties consider it appropriate. It ensures that the agreements are viable and that they are fulfilled in the agreed time. This mechanism is especially used to resolve conflicts between two or three people. (Mendoza)

#### **3.1. School mediation and university community mediation**

School mediation is an alternative dispute resolution mechanism developed within the educational system that, through a structured and voluntary process, allows students, in the company of two mediators, to sit down to talk about the conflict and agree on the best possible solution, which is included in a document agreed upon and signed by the parties. In this sense, the school mediation of the Popular University of Cesar (UPC) has the particularity that, based on the training of student mediators, it seeks not only to intervene in conflicts that arise in the school, but also to prevent them through awareness and training in non-violent conflict resolution. In addition, other UPC departments

carry out a process of university community mediation in which, through the participation of student mediators, they address situations that threaten the coexistence between the different actors of the Valledupar Headquarters and its headquarters. (Torres et al., 2024)

School mediation and university community mediation at the UPC are processes that, although they share similar characteristics, differ in their approach and in the actors involved. For its proper development, it is necessary to have a team of student mediators who have specific skills, who are supported by a team of teachers and professionals in the process and who consider the contexts and scenarios in which they find themselves, as well as the characteristics of the parties participating in the mediation.

### **3.2. Conciliation and negotiation between educational actors**

Conciliation and negotiation are methods of conflict resolution that can be applied in different spheres of life and that are used by all actors in the education system. However, within the educational environment, where different personalities develop, different visions of the world and other aspects that can generate conflict are at play, special attention must be paid to the way they are used. Conciliation and negotiation can be applied by parents, teachers and students; Problems can be between parents, between teachers, between students, between teachers and students, between teachers and parents, etc. These parties can be considered as educational actors, which are one of the variables that must be taken into account when implementing Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (IDMs) in the educational environment. The modalities of conciliation and negotiation between educational actors are similar, but they differ in that in conciliation there is a third party who accompanies them and directs the discussion, and this third party can be a trained conciliator or simply an educational actor. (Martínez Bonilla, 2022)

Conciliation can be carried out informally, with the intervention of an educational actor who acts as a conciliator; or formally, with a trained conciliator who proposes the meeting to the parties in conflict. Negotiation, on the other hand, is more effective if it is prepared by two people, either a pair from the same group or one from each group in conflict; among them they must draw up a plan that contains the purpose of the meeting, the place, the time and the conditions of the discussion. For negotiation, the following phases must be considered: preparation, problem statement, search for interests, exploration of solutions and achievement of agreements; and the following techniques: brainstorming, role-playing, and structured reflection.

### **3.3. Restorative justice programmes and peace circles**

The implementation of restorative justice programs and peace circles in the educational environments of the Popular University of Cesar, Valledupar campus, responds to the search for effective solutions for peacebuilding. Restorative justice is understood as a form of response to crime that takes into account both the perpetrator and the victims and the affected community; It seeks to repair the damage caused in the most comprehensive way possible, in a process where those affected actively participate and where, after the intervention, the specific situation and the relationship between the parties are restored or improved. It is also known as restorative justice, restorative justice, or reconciliation justice. Peace circles are one of the best-known mechanisms for implementing restorative justice. They are constituted as a group of people who meet with the purpose of resolving conflicts, reviewing decisions, sharing experiences or planning new actions, which allows them to reflect and learn from each situation experienced. (Becerra Cañas & Ríos Chagüendo, 2025)

A restorative justice programme has been designed and implemented at the Eduardo Santos district school in Valledupar, where eight peace circles have taken place with groups of students. A program of restorative circles has also been used in the meetings of the peace training subject of the university's social work program, achieving results that are considered indications of greater group cohesion. A recent restorative circle allowed students in the social work program to reflect on a painful event in their history.

### **3.4. Use of digital platforms and tools for dispute resolution**

Digital platforms make it possible to offer educational actors alternatives for conflict resolution that do not involve physical travel to a point of care. In particular, the use of these tools is key in situations of social distancing, such as those imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Its implementation, however, must be taken care of, since transmitting information by digital means entails risks, especially in its security, traceability and privacy. Digital platforms must be structured to guarantee the maximum security and privacy of information, ensuring compliance with regulatory aspects such as Law 1581 of 2012 in Colombia. Likewise, there must always be a traceability record of the messages and information transmitted. However, the use of digital platforms is not without risks. The lack of physical contact between the parties can lead to misunderstandings in the construction of messages and in their interpretation. The lack of proximity can lead to aggressiveness in communication, which may make it necessary to implement some type of restriction in the use of messaging tools. These aspects must be considered and their possible effects evaluated. (Tayupanta & Esteves, 2023)

The use of digital tools for conflict management can also be applied to mediation and conciliation. Although in mediation the resolution of the conflict depends on the agreement of the parties, the mediator has the duty to facilitate that this agreement is reached. Sometimes, the role of the mediator is very active, promoting the creation of a climate that allows the parties to communicate without tension or enmity. In the educational field, the mediator is generally a student, while conciliation is a procedure in which the parties present their positions, interests or needs, and the conciliator proposes a solution that cannot be imposed. In the digital sphere, the lack of physical contact can make it difficult to establish a climate conducive to mediation and, therefore, the purpose of this alternative is to offer a solution to a conflict that has become a problem and a fact, even if the proposed solution is not accepted by the other actor.

### **4. Evaluation of the effectiveness of alternative mechanisms**

The evaluation of the effectiveness of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms in the educational environment of the Universidad Popular del Cesar is based on success indicators and quality criteria. These include, among others, the level of satisfaction of the parties, the resolution times, the recurrence rate and the impact on the training of those involved. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used, under a non-probabilistic sampling approach, combining various techniques and instruments. In general, the results allow us to conclude that the mechanisms analyzed are effective and perceived as such, although there are nuances that show the need to strengthen their implementation.

The alternative mechanisms for conflict resolution in the educational environment of the Universidad Popular del Cesar, Valledupar campus, have been evaluated considering the success indicators and quality criteria defined in the reference framework. From this evaluation, findings and lessons are identified that are also useful for different contexts. The decisions of the agents are considered effective when: they reach the desired agreement, contribute to the recovery of the relationship between the parties, are perceived as fair, are effectively executed and are not revoked. Various approaches have proposed indicators regarding these decisions, four of which are the most relevant: satisfaction of the parties, resolution time, recurrence rate and effect on the training of those involved.

#### **4.1. Success indicators and quality criteria**

The effectiveness of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in the educational environment of the Universidad Popular del Cesar, Valledupar campus, is evaluated through the analysis of the satisfaction of the participants in the mediation and conciliation processes; the duration of these interventions, with the aim of making them brief but effective; and the recurrence rate, which makes it possible to determine the educational impact that these tools have on the educational community. In addition, the presence of some type of training that allows the actors involved in a dispute to resolve it by themselves is considered relevant.

Satisfaction is assessed based on surveys of students who have participated in a mediation or conciliation process on their perception of it, as well as interviews with mediators and conciliators. The resolution times, on the other hand, are analyzed based on the information registered in the databases of the School Mediation Corporation of the Popular University of Cesar; and the recurrence rate, based on the number of students who have participated in at least two mediation processes, divided by the total number of students who have been part of one.

#### **4.2. Assessment methodologies used**

The evaluation of the effectiveness of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms at the Universidad Popular del Cesar has required the use of various methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative, which have made it possible to analyze user satisfaction, the time needed for dispute resolution, the rate of recurrence of these mechanisms and their possible impact on education. The qualitative approach has been carried out by means of a non-probabilistic sampling from the solved cases, and interviews with school mediators and several users have been used to evaluate satisfaction.

The quantitative approach uses a probabilistic sample of 241 surveys of users of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Surveys have been used to determine the impact on education by comparing averages. The reliability of the instrument has been established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and its validity has been evaluated based on two criteria: apparent validity (expert opinion), and convergent validity (correlation with the evaluation of school mediators).

#### **4.3. Results and lessons learned**

The evaluation of the effectiveness of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms in the educational environment of the Popular University of Cesar, Valledupar campus, has revealed that compliance with the indicators and quality criteria defined for such systems has occurred in general terms. The satisfaction of the parties with the result, the time of resolution of the dispute, the recurrence rate and its impact on the educational process are elements that allow, at least indicatively, to validate the processes carried out, to understand the reasons why they are being used and to follow the path of constant improvement. It has become clear that the reason why the parties are resorting to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms provided by the institution is not mandatory, but the search for a solution different from the one normally obtained through the courts.

However, some lessons learned shed light on the elements that must be taken into account to ensure the success of these systems. In the first place, the critical moment for the use and effectiveness of these systems is not their dissemination or promotion through institutional campaigns, but the formative moment that takes place before a conflict arises, since those who are duly literate in conflict resolution are the ones who subsequently know the Mechanisms and go to them. Secondly, its success is not guaranteed only by the training of a group of students in the condition of mediators, conciliators or facilitators, but it is a necessary but not sufficient condition.

### **5. Challenges and opportunities for implementation**

5.1 Cultural and teacher training challenges: resistance, literacy in conflict resolution, continuous training.

The implementation of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms in an educational institution is based on the community culture that surrounds it and the degree of training of the staff. In the first place, it should be noted that each of the experiences of school mediation, university community mediation, conciliation and negotiation between the actors of the educational community, as well as the implementation of restorative justice programs or peace circles, has been carried out in a context in which the actors of the educational community have been receptive to implementing conflict resolution processes in which they the rest of the educational community could also participate and walk in the same direction. This receptivity has depended on the culture of conflict resolution that characterizes the educational community and the way in which the conflict resolution process has been presented to the different actors of the educational community. The culture of conflict resolution of the different actors in the educational community has determined, among other aspects, the levels of

effectiveness, efficiency and effectiveness that the different mechanisms have had. The implementation of awareness and literacy programmes on conflict resolution that involve a wider educational community, while sensitizing a smaller number of key actors, has allowed the different experiences to be carried out successfully.

As for the training of the teachers who lead each of the processes, training in mediation, conciliation, negotiation, restorative justice or any other mechanism is a key element for the success and, above all, for the continuity of the process, since any process has a beginning and an end, and the important thing is that conflict resolution skills are installed and in use in the educational community. The main challenge is that the training process becomes a true continuous training.

#### 5.2 Institutional resources and sustainability: financing, personnel, infrastructure, governance.

The institutional resources available to implement the conflict resolution mechanisms have been a determining element for the success of each of the experiences and processes. The resources used have been mainly financial, although it has also been important to have the right staff who, in volunteering, have implemented the different experiences. As for economic resources, this has been a fundamental aspect in the development of experiences. During the research period, the scarce funding from the institutions that have supported the implementation of school mediation has conditioned the development of school mediation in certain institutions. The implementation of each of the mechanisms requires financial resources for the development of training, awareness-raising and maintenance of the same. On the other hand, institutional support for the development of the different mechanisms has been fundamental. In this sense, the support of different institutions has allowed school mediation, university community mediation or the implementation of restorative justice programs to be carried out.

The implementation of conflict resolution mechanisms required not only having economic resources to sustain training and awareness-raising, but also to provide institutions that wished to do so with access to the necessary resources that would allow them to set the processes in motion. In the case of university community mediation, the scarcity of resources and infrastructure to carry out the training and sessions has determined that, in several cases, they have not been able to be carried out properly. Therefore, the availability of resources – financial, personnel and infrastructure – has a strong impact on the success of the mechanism. The absence of resources does not nullify the viability of the mechanism, but it does exempt the actors of the educational community from the responsibility of resolving their conflicts, which generates a dependence that is not favorable.

#### 5.3 Inclusion and equity in conflict resolution: accessibility, biases, cultural adaptation.

The incorporation of conflict resolution mechanisms that are available to all actors in the educational community whenever they wish to do so is an important criterion to be taken into account. School mediation and university community mediation are accessible to all actors who wish to do so and who consider that they can reach an agreement. Conciliation and negotiation between the actors of the educational community are carried out when requested by the actors, and when the relationship between the parties is sufficiently strong and stable for negotiation to be a valid alternative. The incorporation of other conflict resolution mechanisms must take this criterion into account, since the objective is not to impose the minimally invasive mechanism, but rather that each actor can decide, at the time they need to resolve a conflict, which mechanism to use.

Some of the restorative justice programs that have been developed can be considered exclusive to Afro-Colombian communities. The structuring of restorative justice programs has not been carried out following a model of cultural imposition, but has been adapted and designed together with Afro-Colombian actors. This fact has made it possible to implement restorative justice programs that have respected the worldview of the Afro-Colombian community and its way of understanding restitution, reconciliation and forgiveness. Adaptation and respect for the Afro-Colombian people does not guarantee the success of the program, but it does contribute to its implementation.

### **5.1. Cultural and teacher training challenges**

The implementation of alternative mechanisms in the educational environment faces various challenges that present themselves in the form of opportunities. The first challenge to be overcome lies in the cultural difficulties that educational actors have when it comes to peacefully resolving the conflicts that arise in their environment. This cultural problem is evidenced by the initial resistance that students and teachers show towards restorative justice programs, school mediation and conciliation, which are often considered unnecessary and unattractive. Literacy in the peaceful resolution of disputes is a strategy that contributes to the development of a culture of peace, but it must be implemented on an ongoing basis and not as an isolated activity. The initial training of educators does not include alternative mechanisms, which are mostly considered optional subjects in the specialization in school coexistence and conflict resolution.

Another fundamental aspect is the continuous training of teachers in the use of these mechanisms. Although most teachers consider school mediation to be a useful tool that allows the approach and resolution of conflicts in the classroom, a significant percentage express the need to receive training to become school mediators. However, the lack of time, due to the workload and the reduction in training time, is a limiting factor that contributes to their resistance and the non-use of these resources in their daily work.

### **5.2. Institutional resources and sustainability**

The long-term sustainability of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms depends on the availability of institutional resources, which affect both the implementation and the continued operation of these initiatives. The difficulty in finding, obtaining, dedicating, using and accounting for a sufficient set of resources of a physical, human, technical, material and economic nature has a direct impact on the possibility of offering these services, as well as on their quality.

Financing is one of the components of institutional resources related to sustainability. Sometimes resources are generated to provide conflict resolution processes, but it is not possible to maintain those processes over time. Although a number of cases have been discharged through these processes, the offer is not maintained, since there is no group of people who are willing to continue providing these services and those who decided to accompany these processes did not receive any type of remuneration. The main reason for ceasing to operate in this area was the scarce or, in some cases, no economic or financial support from institutions or entities to meet the expenses involved in the processes, whether school mediation or community mediation.

### **5.3. Inclusion and equity in conflict resolution**

The Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (MARC) in the educational environment of the Popular University of Cesar (UPC) Valledupar campus are, for the most part, accessible to all actors in the educational community. However, its use by some sectors, such as students with disabilities, is still very scarce. The promotion of restorative justice and peer mediation in the educational community promotes the development of a culture of peace and the construction of a healthy coexistence, but in order to ensure that all educational actors benefit from it, it is necessary to carry out a more detailed analysis of access and equity in MARCs.

The implementation of the MARCs at the Valledupar headquarters of the UPC shows that, as they are flexible processes, adapted to the needs, realities and expectations of the actors, it is possible to successfully implement mediation and restorative justice processes. However, the full inclusion of all actors, regardless of their status – social, cultural, ethnic, training, educational or other – requires additional work to focus attention on access and equity of MARCs, to address possible implementation biases and ensure that diversity is a real contribution to the construction of a culture of peace in the institution.

## **6. Recommendations for the improvement of alternative mechanisms**

The implementation of processes of mediation, conciliation, restorative justice, peace circles and other alternative mechanisms for conflict and dispute resolution benefits from a set of guidelines

that reinforce their quality and effectiveness. These include training and awareness-raising strategies, the integration of mechanisms into educational and university regulations, and continuous monitoring and accountability.

#### 7.1 Training and awareness-raising strategies

It is important to design and implement a training and awareness program that covers the entire educational community, with an emphasis on students and teachers. The offer must contemplate a schedule of activities in the short, medium and long term, aimed at facilitating the learning of skills related to the regulation and peaceful management of conflicts through inclusion, social justice, dialogue and empathy. Courses and workshops should be evaluated periodically to validate that the skills acquired are applied in practice. If necessary, the contents must be adjusted and complemented during the continuous training of teachers and managers. The design, implementation and improvement of the programme can take advantage of the experience, knowledge and availability of facilitators from the educational community, as well as the collaboration of other educational institutions in the region that have training programmes in conflict resolution.

#### 7.2 Integration with educational and university regulations

For the optimal development of processes of mediation, conciliation, restorative justice, peace circles and other alternative mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts and disputes of an institutional nature, these must be typified and regulated. Therefore, it is advisable to adopt an agreement that is a reference for the action of teachers and students, and that establishes the guidelines that promote its strengthening in accordance with the institutional development policy of the Popular University of Cesar, the higher education law and other regulatory frameworks. Normative alignment is also a key component in ensuring the sustainability and financing of the mechanisms.

#### 7.3 Continuous monitoring and accountability

The implementation of processes of mediation, conciliation, restorative justice, peace circles and other alternative mechanisms for conflict and dispute resolution is more effective if it is carried out under a focus on continuous improvement. To this end, it is necessary to define success indicators and quality criteria that provide relevant information on its operation and results. With these elements, it is possible to prepare periodic reports that account for the progress and challenges in their operation, as well as the lessons learned in the management and resolution of cases. The presentation of these documents to the educational community and accountability favor dialogue, the socialization of knowledge, the building of trust and the identification of opportunities for improvement.

### 6.1. Training and awareness-raising strategies

The training of educational actors has been shown to be a decisive strategy to reduce the institutional and cultural barriers that limit the use of alternative mechanisms in conflict resolution. In particular, the resistance to the use of these mechanisms by the university community expresses the need to work on a literacy process that teaches them to use, promote and manage mediation, conciliation and restorative justice as ways of resolving everyday disputes. Likewise, the continuous training of teachers, both in the integration of these mechanisms in their daily educational practice and in the different learning theories that support their promotion and use, is essential for their proper implementation. For both aspects, a training and awareness-raising program is proposed, which includes an initial introductory workshop on Alternative Mechanisms, followed by more in-depth training in school mediation and university community mediation.

The availability of human and economic resources of the different bodies and institutions involved makes it possible to guarantee the continuity of the training and education processes in the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms. In addition, it is recommended that these processes be carried out in alliance with the University Network of School Mediation and University Mediation of the region, which articulates, develops and accompanies training and awareness in the region. Government institutions and agencies can co-finance the training process. These programs should

include the evaluation and verification of competencies in order to ensure that educational actors have assimilated the different strategies and approaches presented.

### **6.2. Integration with educational and university regulations**

The integration of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (MARC) in the educational field must be contemplated within the sectoral regulations of the Ministry of National Education of Colombia and in the guidelines of universities. In addition, when MARCs are used to resolve conflicts between students, the decision arising from these mechanisms must be contemplated within the student regulations of the institutions. The regulation must allow the solution of the conflict arising from the MARC agreement to be taken into account within the academic and disciplinary trajectory of the students, in such a way that it is recognized and valued in the educational process.

Such regulation must contemplate, among other aspects, that the presentation of complaints and claims before the different university bodies includes recommendations for channeling through MARC. Higher education institutions must generate internal policies that encourage actors, in particular students, to resort to MARCs and their use should be part of teacher training and, therefore, addressed in teacher training and updating programs.

### **6.3. Continuous monitoring and accountability**

The systematization of the experience at the National Pedagogical University of Colombia outlines a set of indicators that allow evaluating the effectiveness of mediation and restorative justice in school and university contexts. These criteria suggest that user satisfaction, decreased conflict resolution time, recurrence rate—that is, the number of cases that are repeated—and their educational impact are guidelines for evaluations.

The use of such criteria also opens up the possibility of accountability to the educational and university community. By generating information on the functioning of alternative mechanisms and on their contribution to coexistence, it is possible to check the fulfillment of the goals set and critically identify strengths and weaknesses, as a guide for continuous improvement.

## **7. Conclusions**

The implementation of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms in the educational environment of the Popular University of Cesar, at the Valledupar campus, has shown positive results and has allowed the improvement of coexistence, training in peaceful dispute resolution and the configuration of a more conducive learning environment. However, the approach adopted poses challenges that must be considered to ensure sustainability and the use of the potential of these tools in the educational field.

The main challenges are one of cultural acceptance and appropriation by the educational community, which often perceives these mechanisms as second-rate, of "low quality" or ineffective, and considers that they should be used only when formal justice should be avoided. This limits its use and therefore its effects. The awareness and training of the different actors in the importance of the culture of peaceful resolution of conflicts is an unavoidable requirement to make learning to live together one of the axes of training and education. Actions are also necessary to continue building, strengthening and consolidating these conflict resolution tools, as well as their inclusion in educational and university regulations.

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