

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CLASSROOM

Dr.Poonam & Merly Mathew

Abstract

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has emerged as a pivotal framework in modern education, promoting emotional intelligence, relationship building, and responsible decision-making among students. This paper takes the initiative to define SEL from various perspectives, discusses the core principles of SEL, and also explores the impact of SEL on classroom dynamics, academic performance, student behaviour, and teacher-student relationships. Evidence from multiple studies shows that SEL fosters a supportive learning environment, enhances student engagement, and improves overall academic outcomes. It also discusses various challenges faced during the implementation SEL in the classroom scenario. The article also has a review of the literature on similar findings. It concludes with suggestions as to how more effectiveness can be improved in the incorporation of SEL in the classrooms.

Keywords: [Social Emotional Learning (SEL), positive student behaviour, academic performance, teacher-student relationship, academic performance]

1. Introduction

In the last two decades, the field of curriculum surrounding Social Emotional Learning has increased exponentially. For nearly 20 years, researchers and practitioners of social and emotional learning (SEL) have aimed to determine the best practices available for intra- and interpersonal skills enhancement, problem prevention, health promotion, and positive development. As per the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2020), Social and Emotional Learning is the process by which children and adults learn and apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand and manage: 1) emotions; 2) set and achieve positive goals; 3) feel and show empathy for others' feelings; 4) create and maintain healthy relationships; and 5) make responsible decisions. In a diverse and complicated school atmosphere more than ever, SEL is a cross-cultural solution to improve achievement and participation in the classroom. Social and Emotional learning is also known as Socio-Emotional Learning and Social-Emotional Literacy. Broadly speaking, social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, and related skills, attitudes, behaviors, and values that help direct students. This includes thoughts, feelings, and actions in ways that enable them to succeed in school.

Definition of SEL

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a method of learning that aims students to get a better vision to understand their feelings, to feel those emotions fully, and to be

considerate to others. This enables them to make positive, sensible decisions; create clear-cut patterns to achieve their goals, and hence develop positive relationships with others.

UNESCO has defined Social and emotional learning (SEL) as the process of acquiring the competencies to recognize and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations effectively. In other words, it is the holistic process of learning grounded in ethics of care. It combines cognitive, social, emotional, and relational aspects of learning to enhance learners' well-being, academic success, and active global citizenship, promoting positive social change.

According to Hoffman, SEL can be used to refer to any school-based programs directed from public health, mental health, moral and ethical, or child rights perspectives (Hoffman, 2009).

The Core Components of SEL

According to CASEL (2020), SEL is built on five core competencies:

- Self-awareness: Recognizing one's emotions and values.

Self-awareness helps in accurately recognizing one's thoughts and emotions, and their influence on behaviors; accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations; and possessing a well-grounded sense of self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-confidence, perceived control, and optimism.

- Self-management: Regulating emotions and behaviours.

Self-management aims at controlling thoughts, emotions, and actions in various situations. It helps in effectively regulating one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviours; managing stress; savoring emotional well-being; and successfully engaging in skills such as coping, problem-solving, mindfulness, relaxation, and positive and productive thinking.

- **Social awareness:** Showing empathy and understanding others.

Social awareness is the ability to identify appropriate social resources and supports; display accurate perspective-taking, respect for others, and empathy. It enables one to visualize oneself from the perspective of a different individual with a different background or culture from his. A socially aware person will be able to interact empathically in society.

- **Relationship skills:** Forming positive relationships and resolving conflicts.

Relationship skills are the ability to develop healthy relationships with people of diverse backgrounds. This skill focuses on listening to and being able to communicate with others, peacefully resolving conflict, and knowing when to ask for or offer help. It helps to resolve interpersonal problems.

- **Responsible decision-making:** Making ethical and constructive choices.

This skill enables one to choose how to act or respond to a situation based on learned behaviors such as ethics, safety, weighing consequences, and the well-being of others, as well as yourself. It helps in making constructive, responsible, and ethical choices that promote self and other's well-being; effectively managing goals, time, and tasks.

Research has demonstrated that social and emotional competencies in these five SEL domains are critical to higher education students' development, adjustment, and success. For example, students with positive self-awareness and self-perceptions appear to adapt most successfully in higher education contexts.

The various benefits of SEL are connectedness to learning and school, academic attainment, interpersonal relationships, mental well-being, and social behaviour. It reduces school dropouts, distress, anxiety, depression, bullying and harassment, risk-taking with alcohol and drugs, inequality, and social disadvantage, including discrimination and social exclusion.

3. SEL's Impact on Classroom Environment

3.1 Positive Student Behaviour

SEL programming is associated with reductions in disruptive behaviours, aggression, and bullying. Durlak et al. (2011) found that with SEL measures, students had an 11% increase in constructive social engagement and a 10% decrease in adverse emotional responses. When students have the tools to resolve conflict and process their emotions-let alone the emotions of others- classrooms can operate in a calmer environment.

An essential element of SEL programming is developmentally appropriate and sequenced practices that include proactive instruction in SEL skills- skills that reflect how students think, feel, and act. The approach focuses on student behaviour and on emotions and cognitions that underlie prosocial behaviour and self-discipline. Primary among the emotions and cognitions that research has shown to be linked to prosocial behaviour and self-discipline are empathy, regulation of anger, moral reasoning, problem-solving, and self-efficacy (Bear, 2012).

3.2 Academic Performance

Multiple studies connect SEL to positive learning results. For instance, a meta-analysis by Taylor et al. (2017) revealed that children exposed to SEL scored an average of 13 percentile points higher on academic tests than those in similar situations but without SEL exposure. SEL increases attention, participation, and



flexibility when faced with academic challenges.

SEL programming provides students with various skills that positively affect academic achievement. They include

- Managing emotions that interfere with learning and concentration.
- Developing motivation and the ability to persevere even in the face of academic setbacks and challenges.
- Working cooperatively and effectively in the classroom and peer learning groups.
- Setting and working towards academic goals.

For example, learning in a history class improves markedly when students are taught to use problem-solving skills to understand and analyse a historical event. Teaching students social and emotional skills also makes them less likely to behave in ways that interfere with learning. (Ragozzino, et, al)

3.3 Teacher-Student Relationships

Additionally, SEL strengthens the bonds between educators and learners. According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), teachers who use SEL report improved classroom management and increased student trust. In order to create emotionally safe environments that promote student participation, this relational component is essential. Teachers play a pivotal role in the learning environment. A positive relationship between the students and teachers can facilitate a better classroom environment.

4. Review of related literature

Various studies have been conducted across the globe discussing the pros and cons of the implementation of SEL in the education system. Let us analyse the results of a few ones.

A study conducted by Amrit Kaur Dhanjal and Chandani Pandey discussed the impact of SEL skills on students' benefit by integrating them into school curriculums. The impact of the SEL skills program has been provided timely through various meta-analyses, suggesting the importance and need of including socio-emotional learning skills for children, through their immediate environment (Mahoney et al., 2018). At the same time, concerning the quality suggests focusing on

'SAFE' (Sequenced, Active, Focus, and Explicit) components for effectiveness (Durlak et al., 2010, 2011; Verma, 2022). The common relation recommended throughout is the importance of facilitating techniques, monitoring, teacher training, evaluating, and community awareness (Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012; Wiglesworth et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2017). Hence it can be noted that the initiative has been taken by the Indian education system through policies and programs for integrating SEL and life skills. It also brings us back to the areas formulated by studies that focus on the quality application of the program. This brings us to a suggested scope of further study, wherein the quality of SEL programs in the Indian education system can be assessed, and informed implementations can be made. Studies by Campbell, et al highlighted that educators are responsible for supporting positive school experiences for all students, including those with or at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). Students with or at risk for EBD experience multiple negative outcomes impacting their school years, and these negative outcomes extend past graduation. Social and emotional learning programs are being used by schools to build students' competency in areas designed to help them successfully manage the school environment and life in general.

Social-emotional learning interventions are intended to improve classroom dynamics and have the potential to enhance the well-being of students and their teachers. In a study conducted by Sandilos et. al, using data drawn from an effectiveness trial of the Social Skills Improvement System SEL Edition Classwide Intervention Program (SSIS SEL CIP; Elliott and Gresham in SSIS SEL Edition Classwide Intervention Program manual, Pearson, Inc., 2017), explored associations between classroom implementation of a universal SEL program, teachers' emotional well-being, and teacher-student interactions. The results from a sample of 80 first- and second-grade teachers located in three socioeconomically and geographically diverse regions of the USA indicated that implementation of the SSIS SEL CIP curriculum was positively associated with

teachers' classroom organization skills at the end of the year. Findings also revealed an interaction between treatment condition and teacher emotional well-being such that control teachers with lower well-being also had lower quality classroom organization but this association did not exist for teachers in the intervention condition. Findings suggest that implementation of the SSIS SEL CIP may help to preserve positive teacher-student interactions even when teachers are reporting lower levels of emotional well-being.

According to a 2011 article published in *Child Development*, a meta-analysis of 213 K-12 programs found that students who participated in SEL interventions that focused on the five competencies improved their academic performance by 11 points more than their counterparts who did not.

5. Implementation Challenges and Considerations

Even with its advantages, SEL implementation can be difficult. Significant obstacles include a lack of resources, time, and training (Brackett, et al., 2019). Furthermore, for SEL to be successful, it needs to be in line with the school's larger educational objectives and culturally sensitive.

For SEL programs to contribute to positive learning environments, all school staff must be involved in implementing the program, especially the teachers who have the most frequent and direct interaction with students (CASEL, 2020b). In efficacy studies of universal SEL programs, teachers are typically the implementers of the curriculum, whereby they receive training to support high-quality delivery of the lessons and integration of the skills throughout the school day (e.g., during academic instruction, in the hallways, cafeteria, and playground). In a meta-analysis of the effects of universal SEL programs in schools, Durlak et al. (2011) found that over half of the interventions were administered by classroom teachers. The other half of the interventions were delivered by non-school personnel (e.g., program developer staff, and research staff). They also found that teacher-facilitated SEL programs had the broadest effects on students, resulting in greater improvements in every outcome measured

examined.

6. Conclusion

Classroom environments are shaped in a transformative way by social-emotional learning. SEL fosters interpersonal and emotional intelligence, which benefits students' overall development in addition to their academic performance. Teachers and legislators must make investments in ongoing training, culturally appropriate resources, and systemic support if they want SEL to realize its full potential. Major findings indicated that participating in SEL programs had positive effects on academic, social, and life outcomes for students.

"When you think about the best teacher you ever had, it's not about their amazing knowledge of calculus, it's about who they were as a person. SEL is really the heart and the mind of a person, and just taking that moment to realize where is my mind, where is my heart in all of this, and how can I do more to help the learners so that it supports them in their journey and in all sorts of ways, not just academically but the social, emotional growth for their whole life." - Dr. Maggie Broderick, Associate Professor at the Sanford College of Education, National University.

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