

## Teachers Social-Emotional Learning (SEL); Ways that Impede the Development of Teachers SEL and Enhance Teachers SEL

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**ABSTRACT :** Teachers are undoubtedly susceptible to inadequate social-emotional wellness. Research indicates that teaching ranks among the most stressful professions; furthermore, classroom stress is contagious, as stressed-out teachers often lead to stressed students. Merely augmenting teachers' comprehension of SEL is insufficient for the efficient implementation of SEL. This paper reviewed the theory supporting teachers SEL, the various perceptions of teachers on SEL and the role teachers play in enhancing SEL of their students. It further highlighted the ways that impede teachers' SEL development and the effective ways to enhance teachers' SEL in schools. The paper revealed that teachers' own perceptions, beliefs and attitudes toward SEL heavily impede their SEL development. Also, two programs based on mindfulness were identified as effective strategies of enhancing teachers SEL: CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) and SMART-in-Education (Stress Management and Resiliency Training). Therefore, it can be recommended that teachers should be trained with knowledge of their students' development emotionally, socially and cognitively. This will equip them with the strategies and approaches to deliver content to meet SEL of their students.

**KEYWORDS;** *Teachers, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Self-determination Theory (SDT), Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE), Stress Management and Resiliency Training (SMART)*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Research on teacher effectiveness indicates that teachers possess the highest capacity to impact their students' learning (Kemp & Hall, 1992; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999). Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke, and Baumert (2008) asserted that teachers' mindsets can influence students' mindsets. Students are cognizant of and concerned about teachers' perceptions of them (Haynes, Emmons & Ben-Avie, 1997). Moreover, there is an increasing acknowledgement that teachers play vital roles in the social and emotional development of their pupils (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2006; Murray & Greenberg, 2000; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003). They impact on their students not only through their instruction but also by their interpersonal relationships, pedagogical approaches, modelling of social and emotional components, and classroom management (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The teacher's topic expertise influences pedagogy and delivery, therefore affecting students' receptiveness in the classroom (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006; VanDriel, Bulte, & Verloop, 2007). Consequently, they serve as the pivotal element in cultivating social emotional competencies (SEC) in students. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to be well-versed in the SEL framework to identify students with low social-emotional competencies and then enhance these students' competencies.

Teachers who acknowledged possessing limited knowledge of their subject matter indicated a diminished propensity to create lessons or instructional materials that could enhance memory and increase interest in the topic (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006; VanDriel et al., 2007). Considering the vital roles of teachers in cultivating the social and emotional competencies of their students, it is essential to investigate their perspectives on improving social and emotional learning within the classroom environment. Teachers' perceptions and beliefs (Brownlee, 2003; Chai, Teo & Lee, 2009) influence their passion for teaching and inform their pedagogical philosophy (e.g., Pierce & Ball, 2009; Staub & Sten, 2002; Tan, 2011; Yilmaz, 2009), as well as the ways in which they engage and affect students' receptivity to their instruction (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006).

Brophy (1985) posited that educators' opinions of their students influence their interactions with them. Teachers with elevated expectations for student performance are inclined to improve student outcomes (Roeser, Eccles & Sameroff, 1998). This is particularly potent, as a teacher's ideas and perceptions of a specific student's accomplishment might form independently of any prior knowledge or experience with that student's capabilities (Jussim, 1986; Mackler, 1969). Evidence confirms that a student's perceptions and beliefs regarding their abilities and learning capacity can be positively or negatively influenced by a teacher's perceptions and beliefs (Andrews, Soder & Jacoby, 1986; Brophy & Everston, 1981; Jussim, 1986; McDonald & Elias, 1976; Rutter, 1979; Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), teachers with elevated Social and Emotional Competencies (SECs) possess the capacity to facilitate student interactions characterized by social adeptness and respect. Teachers' prosocial skills will enable their students to engage ethically and responsibly with peers, family, and the community, fostering accountability for their actions while cultivating essential competencies, work habits, and values for future meaningful employment. According to Pianta and La Paro (2003), these teacher behaviors correlate with an ideal social and emotional classroom climate and favorable student results. Conflict and disruptive behavior are minimal, transitions between activities are seamless, emotional expressions are appropriate, communication is respectful, problem-solving is effective, there is a strong interest and focus on tasks, and there is supportiveness and responsiveness to individual differences and students' learning needs in the environment.

Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) asserted that when teachers lack the resources to adeptly address social-emotional difficulties in the classroom, students are prone to exhibit diminished on-task behavior and performance. As the classroom environment declines, teachers may experience emotional fatigue and may respond reactively and punitively, which does not improve student self-regulation (Ortner, Sachne, & Zelazo, 2007). Therefore, for teachers to foster and sustain a highly positive classroom atmosphere, it is imperative that they possess appropriate perspectives and expectations, demonstrate elevated social-emotional competence (SEC), and integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into the educational setting.

To enhance SEL of students, it is important to consider the SEL of those who impart into them. Enhancing teachers' understanding of SEL alone is inadequate for effective SEL implementation. Teachers' social-emotional learning competency and well-being significantly impact the integration of social-emotional learning in classrooms and schools (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) contended that teachers' social-emotional competence and well-being influence their classroom management strategies, the relationships they establish with students, and that both students and classroom management mediate classroom and student results.

Poor social-emotional wellness is a risk for teachers. The tension that teachers feel in the classroom quickly spreads to their students, according to studies. This makes teaching one of the most stressful professions. Teachers' personal social-emotional competence and wellness have a significant impact on their students, and teachers' SEL programs and practices form the backbone of SEL in schools and classrooms (Schönert-Reichl, 2017).

Classrooms characterized by nurturing teacher-child connections facilitate profound learning and foster positive social and emotional development in students, asserts by Schonert-Reichl (2017). However, when teachers inadequately address the social and emotional challenges of teaching, both students' academic performance and behavior deteriorate, as noted by Schonert-Reichl (2017). Consequently, without comprehending teachers' social-emotional wellness and their impact on students' social-emotional learning (SEL), we cannot effectively promote SEL in the classroom (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Therefore, the study provides an in-depth understanding of teachers' SEL. The study delved into a theory that supports teachers SEL, the various perceptions of teachers on SEL and the role teachers play in enhancing SEL of their students. The study further determines the ways that impede teachers SEL development and then comes out with effective strategies to enhance teachers' SEL.

## II. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Teachers SEL are rooted in the Self Determination Theory (SDT) which posits human motivation and personality in organizations and society (Deci and Ryan 2004; Ryan and Deci 2000). According to the theory, humans are curious, vital, and self-motivated people that are inspired, striving to learn, wish to extend themselves, master new skills, and apply their talents responsibly (Ryan and Deci 2000; Deci and Ryan 2004). The theory aligns with principles and practices of social and emotional learning (SEL) within the school context. Through its emphasis on basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, SDT proposes a broad perspective on how the social context can facilitate the development of social and emotional skills, which complements SEL programs (Kurdi et al. 2021).

According to studies, SDT has indeed established that teachers' performance, social, and emotional skills are determined at least partly by the extent to which their basic psychological needs are fulfilled in their working environment. SDT also brings attention to the motivation and goals underlying the teaching and learning of social and emotional skills. Although SDT-based interventions mainly target the school or the classroom climate rather than skills, they can also foster the development of the five-core social and emotional competencies defined by CASEL (2020).

## III. TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON SEL

The teacher's perceptions in the necessity of the SEL program influence the efficacy of its integration in classrooms (Schultz et al., 2010). Regarding implementation feasibility, teachers deemed it practicable to incorporate one session of social-emotional learning (SEL) per week; however, the majority considered it impractical to exceed this frequency, attributing their concerns to insufficient preparation time for the lessons (Buchanan et al., 2009). Consequently, the teacher's concept of time has impacted on the efficacy of the infusion.

If the teacher faces pressure to assure academic success, he or she may consider prioritizing academic subjects over SEL teachings. This would result in a diminished integration of SEL in classrooms and a reduced focus on the growth of students' SECs (Schultz et al., 2010). The disparity in teachers' perception of their responsibility in fostering students' social and emotional learning (SEL) results in inconsistent outcomes; if a teacher believes that a student's social and emotional development is beyond their professional purview, they are unlikely to implement SEL programs with commitment (Schultz et al., 2010).

Teachers' perceptions of their work-related psychological experiences correlated with their execution of a social-emotional curriculum (Ransford, Greenberg, Domitrovich, Small, & Jacobson, 2009). Teachers exhibiting more efficiency were more inclined to provide superior curriculum quality following training. Teachers' confidence (Guskey, 1988) and beliefs (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrell, 2009; Pajares, 1992) correlate with their attitudes on the significance and challenges of executing innovative initiatives. This indicates that teachers, as the principal implementers of SEL programs, significantly affect the adoption, sustainability, and efficacy of these initiatives through their views, attitudes, and support for SEL. This may subsequently impact on the quality of their relationship with students.

The school's culture (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Patti & Tobin, 2006; Fullan, Miles, & Taylor, 1980) can significantly impact teachers' dedication to executing SEL programs and demonstrating SEL competencies (McCormick, Steckler, & McLeroy, 1995; Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). Consequently, teachers significantly influence students, as their topic expertise affects pedagogy and instructional delivery (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006; VanDriel, Bulte & Verloop, 2007). Consequently, teachers' perceptions and beliefs influence their enthusiasm for teaching and inform their pedagogical philosophy and practices (Brownlee, 2003; Chai et al., 2009). This, in turn, influences the efficacy of SEL integration in classrooms and students' interactions (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), which can either enhance or hinder students' learning abilities and capacities. Also, the study by Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, and Merrell (2009) on teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices in social-emotional learning (SEL) classrooms revealed that teachers must engage proactively by obtaining training and support from diverse professionals to address contemporary academic challenges and enhance students' social-emotional competencies (SECs). Teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding their attitudes and the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) significantly influence the efficacy of the SEL intervention program.

#### IV. ROLE OF TEACHERS IN SEL IMPLEMENTATION IN SCHOOLS

Recent evidence indicates that teacher-related factors affect the implementation variations of SEL programs, potentially influencing the program's quality and performance (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Larsen and Samdal, 2012; Wanless & Domitrovich, 2015). Teachers are more effective in executing SEL programs when they maintain a favorable disposition towards the initiative, are driven to apply it faithfully, and possess confidence in their skills and knowledge for successful execution (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Teachers are fervent proponents of enhancing students' social and emotional competencies. A report from a nationally representative survey involving over 600 teachers indicated that the majority of teachers from preschool to high school assert that social and emotional skills are teachable (95%), that the promotion of social and emotional learning (SEL) will benefit students from both affluent and disadvantaged backgrounds (97%), and that SEL positively influences school attendance and graduation rates (80%), standardized test scores and overall academic performance (77%), college readiness (78%), workforce preparedness (87%), and civic engagement (87%) (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

Furthermore, these teachers indicated that robust support from district and school leaders is essential for the efficient implementation and promotion of social and emotional skills inside classrooms and schools. These findings are significant as they illustrate teachers' willingness to advocate for social and emotional competencies, while also indicating the necessity for support in implementing SEL effectively.

#### V. WAYS THAT IMPEDE TEACHERS' SEL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers' own perceptions, beliefs and attitudes toward SEL heavily impede their SEL development. Several studies have been conducted which revealed this result. Teachers' perceptions of their role in infusing SEL and their doubtful belief that SEL will lead to students' academic achievement may impede the success of their SEL infusion in class according to Ee and Quek (2013). Ee and Quek (2013) conducted a study on Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Social Emotional Learning and their Infusion of SEL. Seventy-six teachers were involved in the infusion of SEL in four schools. After Posttest 1, besides administering a teacher questionnaire, 19 out of 76 teachers were interviewed individually to assess their perceptions of SEL, their views on their SEL infusion in class and their perceptions of the factors that enhance or hinder SEL implementation. The interview questions were divided into three categories: the importance of social and emotional competencies (SECs) for students; infusion of SEL into the school curricula and their own attempts at imparting SECs to their students during their lessons. The study revealed that teachers' perceptions of their role in infusing SEL and their doubtful belief that SEL will lead to students' academic achievement may impede the success of their SEL infusion in class. Furthermore, although they perceived that students with low SECs have poor self-management and relationship-

management skills, they did not translate this into practice in enhancing their students' SEL. According to the study, all teachers should go through a screening test before entry into the teaching profession and be given social and emotional competencies (SEC's) training even if they are merely relief teachers in the classes. This is to ensure that teachers have the right mindset in preparing their students for the 21st century. Their perceived support and alignment of the school's mission, thrusts and resource allocation also impact the effective implementation of the SEL program.

Similarly, Schonert-Reichl (2017) asserts that the fidelity with which teachers implement SEL programs has been associated with a number of teacher beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions: beliefs about whether the SEL program's activities are aligned with their teaching approach; beliefs about their own teaching efficacy; level of comfort with delivering an SEL curriculum; beliefs about behavior management practices; dedication to developing students' SEL skills; beliefs about whether they receive adequate support from school principals; and perceptions of the school culture's support for SEL instruction. Thus, teachers' social and emotional competence and wellbeing are reflected in their classroom behavior and interactions with students are a primary mechanism for socialization. Teachers with higher social-emotional competence organize their classrooms and provide emotional and instructional support in ways that are associated with a high-quality classroom climate.

Therefore, to address this canker, all teachers should go through a screening test before entry into the teaching profession and be given social and emotional competencies (SEC's) training to ensure that teachers have the right mindset in preparing their students. Teachers beliefs about whether the SEL program's activities are aligned with their teaching approach; beliefs about their own teaching efficacy; level of comfort with delivering an SEL curriculum; beliefs about behavior management practices; dedication to developing students' SEL skills; beliefs about whether they receive adequate support from school principals; and perceptions of the school culture's support for SEL instruction all have an extend of hindrances to their own SEL development (Domitrovich et al., 2016; Ransford et al., 2009; Reyes et al., 2012).

## VI. EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ENHANCE TEACHERS SEL

Teachers play a vital role in enhancing students' academic performance. Ensuring teachers are sound minded to deliver contents of subjects and ensure SEL in their student therefore becomes essential. There are several ways to ensure these teachers are emotionally healthy. Firstly, two programs based on mindfulness have been identified; CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) and SMART-in-Education (Stress Management and Resiliency Training). This is in consonant with a study by Schonert-Reichl (2017). Schonert-Reichl (2017) conducted a study on Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers where she considered how we can boost teachers' social-emotional competence, and how can we help them create the kind of classroom environment that promotes students' SEL, how teachers' beliefs about their own teaching efficacy, or about whether they receive adequate support, for example influence the fidelity with which they implement SEL programs in the classroom. Also, the study addressed the extent to which US teacher education programs prepare teacher candidates to promote their own and their students' social-emotional competence. The study revealed that firstly, two intervention programs that boost teachers SEL and these are based on mindfulness: CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) and SMART-in-Education (Stress Management and Resiliency Training).

Mindfulness means an attentive, nonjudgmental, and receptive awareness of present-moment experiences in terms of feelings, images, thoughts, sensations, and perceptions. In boosting teachers' mindfulness, both programs aim to increase their job satisfaction, compassion and empathy for students, and efficacy in regulating emotions, while reducing stress and burnout. Initial research has shown both programs to be effective in promoting teachers' SEL competence and wellbeing. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Patricia Jennings and Joshua Brown, a professor in the Department of Psychology at Fordham University, along with several colleagues who conducted a large, randomized trial involving 224 teachers in 36 urban elementary schools. The researchers found that compared to a control group, teachers who received CARE training showed greater improvements in adaptive emotion regulation and mindfulness, and greater reductions in psychological distress and time urgency (a feeling of time pressure and needing to hurry through daily tasks).

Also, another dimension that's central to effective, high-quality teaching and learning is teachers' knowledge and understanding of their students' social, emotional, and cognitive development according to Darling-Hammond and John Bransford (2001); Denise and Shumow (2003). Research tells us that teachers who understand child and adolescent development are better able to design and carry out learning experiences in ways that support social, emotional, and academic competence and enhance student outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). Further studies revealed how successful social relationships in schools (both between teachers and students and among students) are connected to positive social and academic outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2003). Also, according to the study by Schonert-Reichl (2017), to effectively prepare teachers to enhance SEL of their students, they need to possess knowledge and understanding of their students' social, emotional, and cognitive development. Successful social relationships in schools (both between teachers and students and among students) are connected to positive social and academic outcomes. Finally, to embed SEL into teacher preparation, preservice teacher education shouldn't just give teacher candidates knowledge about students' SEL; it should also give them tools and strategies to build their own social and emotional competence.



## VII. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The paper provides insights into the social and emotional needs of teachers. Teachers are important stakeholders of education. They play role of impacting knowledge, skills and values into learners thus coming out with strategies to address their social and emotional needs become very crucial. Also, authorities and policy makers in education need to be equipped with various means and ways of enhancing productivity among teachers. And one of these means is through the enhancement of their teachers' SEL. The social and emotional wellbeing of teachers further determines students SEL, therefore finding solutions to meet the needs of teachers in this perspective will have a positive impact on their students which intend will enhance their learning outcomes.

## VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of teachers' SEL is influenced by their beliefs, attitudes, and certain perceptions. Consequently, the implementation of effective strategies such as CARE and SMART, which are founded on mindfulness, would enhance their SEL competence. It is imperative that teachers receive training that encompasses their students' cognitive, social, and emotional development. This will provide them with the necessary strategies and methods to convey content that is tailored to the SEL of their students.

Additionally, teachers can cultivate supportive and compassionate classroom environments and cultivate positive student-teacher relationships. When they effectively incorporate SEL programs into their practice, their students experience superior results. Before entering the field for practice, preservice teachers should be equipped with the necessary tools and strategies to develop their own SEL competencies during their training. In the same vein, in-service instructors should participate in professional development that encompasses the cognitive development and emotional well-being of students to adequately address the social-emotional learning (SEL) concerns of 21st-century students.

Also, the curriculum should be structured to prioritize the social and emotional learning (SEL) of both students and teachers, rather than prioritizing the SEL of students. Teachers are the primary implementers of students' social-emotional learning (SEL), and therefore, any obstruction to their SEL would have a significant impact on students' success.

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