

# Social Emotional Learning in School a Holistic Approach for the Development of Children: A Case Study

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**Abstract:** *In this research, it was a little effort to explore the perception of teachers regarding development of social emotional learning skills of children at Government Girls High School Chitkan Panjgur (Balochistan). In many of the international surveys, reports, and researchers has been proven that SEL is an essential part for the holistic development of children. Those children who attended SEL programs and instruction perform better and have less behavioral issues. Qualitative research approach was used in this case study. Data was gathered by interviewing ten SST teachers 124secondary class students, students were observed by naturalistic observation also document of school policies were analyzed. All the teachers were interviewed perceived that developing SEL skills of children falls outside of their job description, and developing SEL skills of children is the responsibility of parents. Thus, it is concluded that perception of teachers regarding development of SEL skills affect the strategies positively, or negative in school, their perception has huge impact on children's learning. Throughout this study researcher couldn't find any documents regarding SEL in our national curriculum and policies and teachers and students didn't attend any program and workshops regarding SEL.*

**Keywords:** Social Emotional Learning; Teachers Perception about SEL and Importance of SEL.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today education is facing more complexity than before now schools have to educate the students in a holistic way students should be responsible, knowledgeable, socially skilled, and caring (Mark T. Greenberg, Roger P. Weissberg, Mary Utne O'Brien, Joseph, Linda Fredericks and Hank Resnik Maurice J. Elias, 2003).due to rapidly changing trends in society schools are facing more challenges and pressure to deliver quality education and enable the students to cope with the challenges. Schools must concentrate on their policies of teaching and learning to meet the challenges of twenty-first century and to be effective (Ravitch, 2000). Children learn more with collaboration of family, teachers, and peers (Joseph A. Durlak, Roger P. Weissberg Allison B. Dymnicki and Rebecca D. Taylor Kriston B. Schellinger 2011). Most of the public school focus only is on the academic side of education while they ignore the other holistic aspects of education. Those students in school getting only academic education they face more complex challenges academically as well as socially to be successful and adjust in the society. (Stephanie M. Jones and Suzanne M. Bouffard, 2012).

Balochistan is the largest province by area in Pakistan but the educational scenario is very worse

than the other provinces. The province is facing many challenges in context of education some of them are: quality education, high dropout rate, lack of professional teachers, absenteeism of teachers, behavioral problem among students and vice versa (Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2013-18). Most of the teachers in public school of perceive that developing the SEL skills of the children in school doesn't fall in their job scope (Schultz et al., 2010). SEL is a critical part of every child's growth, both as students and as contributing members of society (Peter D. Hart,John Bridgeland , Mary Bruce Arya Hariharan August,2016). SEL refers to the necessary skills of teaching and learning that are adequate for social and emotional regulation including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationships, and responsible decision making (Stephanie M. Jones and Suzanne M. Bouffard, 2012). Collaborative for Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning (CASEL guide 2013) defined the following competencies:

1. **Self-awareness.** Students are aware of their own emotions that how their emotions influence their behavior. They recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and they have a sense of confidence.

2. **Self-management.** The ability of the students to regulate their emotions, thoughts in different situations effectively this include stress, self-

motivation, goals, setting and achieving academic goals.

**3. Social awareness.** This is included to adopt the perspectives of different background. Students understand ethical and social norms and recognize their own strength to support.

**4. Relationship skills.** This include communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperation, resolve conflict, resisting to inappropriate social pressures, and seek help when needed.

**5. Responsible decision making.** This includes making constructive and ethical choices about personal and social behavior.

### **1.1 Problem statement**

The important role of SEL in school context has proven in different national and international studies for the holistic development of children (Stephanie M. Jones and Suzanne M. Bouffard, 2012). But unfortunately the study of SEL in context of public school of Balochistan is missing. The province is facing many issues in public sector (Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2013-18), one of the considerable issue is lacking of SEL skills in children this issue is not only affecting the children as well the teachers, school and also the society. The perception of most of the public school teachers regarding the development of SEL skills in children is that it falls outside of their job description (Schultz et al., 2010). This perception is affecting the holistic development of children. This study aims to explore the perception of teachers regarding the development of SEL skills for the holistic development of children.

### **1.2 Research Question:**

- ✓ Do the teachers perceive SEL as a holistic approach for the development of children in school?
- ✓ What is the level of awareness among teachers regarding their responsibility for the development of children's SEL skills in school?

### **1.3 Research Objectives:**

The study aims to explore the perception of teachers regarding SEL as a holistic approach for the development of children in school.

## **2. SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

SEL refers to the processes through which children and adults acquire the necessary skills to manage and understand their emotions, setting plan to achieve positive academic goals, showing empathy for others, collaboration with others and make responsible decisions (CASEL 2013). SEL is also rooted in the holistic theories of education that contribute for the whole person development. (Meaker, 2006). SEL

systematizes the specific set of skills of the students to solve interpersonal intrapersonal problems and issues, and make effective decisions in classroom instructions (Payton, Wardlaw, Graczyk, Bloodworth, Tompsett, & Weissberg, 2000). Students with more developed social-emotional competencies, are capable to manage their emotions, seek for help when it is needed, and cope with the difficult situations (Romasz, Kantor, & Elias, 2004). In today's education SEL has been given more emphasis because it promote success academically and socially (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Karin, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone, & Shriver, 1997). SEL is a process that helps children to pose the essential traits to live ethically and effectively in harmony with others and within oneself. (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

### **2.1 Importance of SEL**

SEL increase the capacity of student to take part in learning experiences and also boost their Social-emotional competencies, it also increase the capacity of students to solve the learning issues. (Durlak et al., 2011). When in school teachers integrate the academic learning with social emotional competencies it enhanced students learning they take interest in learning process (Elias, 2004). Social-emotional competencies when develop in students they become more interested towards learning in school and there is less chances to misbehave in class (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Durlak et al. (2011) found that if teachers focus on SEL skills of the students during instruction they got multiple opportunities to improve the learning and behavioral issue. Major review of SEL programs in schools Durlak (2011) stated that those students who participated in SEL programs demonstrated better academic achievement, improved social-emotional skills, and decreased emotional distress. When students enter in the school they don't know how to interact in classroom with the teachers and other students, they are unable to understand that how their emotions affect classroom interactions (Osher et al., 2008).

### **2.2 The Role of the Teacher in Student's SEL**

Kemp & Hall, 1992; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999) stated that teachers' have a crucial role the in the learning process of the students. Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke, and Baumert (2008) explained that educators' mindset can influence the perspective of student regarding learning. Furthermore the perception of teachers also affect the holistic learning of students because students care about the perception of their teacher

(Haynes, Emmons & Ben-Avie, 1997). The subject knowledge of teachers and the delivery of instruction has been shown to affect receptiveness of students in classroom (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006; VanDriel, Bulte, & Verloop, 2007). As the teachers are primary facilitator of SEL skills in students, it is very important for them to be knowledgeable about the framework of SEL to differentiate among students and help them out. The crucial roles of teachers in developing the social and emotional competencies of the students, it is necessary for the educators and policy makers to develop such policies that enhancing the SEL skills of students in the classroom.

### **2.3 Influences of Teachers' Perception on Teaching**

The perceptions of teachers influence not only their own pedagogical practices but also affect the success of students (Akey, 2006; Bamburg, 1994; Obiakor, 2000; Pajares, 1996; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Ferguson, 2003; Schirmer, Casbon, & Twiss, 1997; Tatto, 1996; Yero, 2002). Brophy (1985) explained that the perception of teachers affect the way they interact with students. Perception of students about their own abilities can be affected positively or negatively by teacher's perception (Andrews, Soder & Jacoby, 1986; Brophy & Everston, 1981; Jussim, 1986; McDonald & Elias, 1976; Rutter 1979; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) defined those teachers who have high social emotional competencies have the ability to more easily develop the SEL skills of the students. Marzano, and Pickering (2003) defined that when teachers didn't have awareness how to manage social emotional challenges in the classroom there is likely more chances that children display behavioral problem and poor performance in learning.

Any disturbance in classroom may make the teachers emotionally exhausted and they may punish the students and these type of punitive responses aren't favorable for conducive learning and didn't enhance the self-regulation of students (Ortner, Sachne, & Zelazo, 2007). However if teachers want to maintain a positive classroom climate, they have to be able to infuse SEL in the learning environment. Furthermore perceptions of teachers about time also affect the effectiveness of SEL infusion. If a teacher feels that developing SEL skills of the students isn't fall in their job responsibility this difference may likely affect the SEL program in school (Schultz et al., 2010).

The primary SEL skill providers are the teacher, their support and belief regarding SEL may impact SEL programs and this may affect interaction among teacher and students. The policies, curriculum and the

culture of school (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Patti & Tobin, 2006; Fullan, Miles, & Taylor, 1980) can also influence the commitment of teachers to develop SEL skills of the students (McCormick, Steckler, & McLeroy, 1995; Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). According to Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, and Merrell (2009) that teachers must be trained to take active roles to improve social emotional competencies of students that they may enable enough to cope with the current academic demands of education.

### **2.4 Strategies for SEL**

(Larry Ferlazzo 2012) there are many strategies that educators may use to develop SEL skills of the students some of them are as follows:

#### **1. Classroom discussion**

This strategy engaged the students in academic activities like communicating with teacher and peers. By participating in classroom discussions, students get the opportunity to listen to others and express their own ideas, and agree or disagree in a respectful manner. Classroom discussions enhance the abilities of students to get involved with other classmates and also enhance their social and self-awareness.

#### **2. Responsibility and choice**

Teachers should give choices to students to complete their lessons and activities in classroom. This practice might increase their interest in studies and motivate them towards learning.

#### **3. Teacher language**

It matters a lot that what type of language teachers used to talk with students. Teacher should use such language that encourage students to regulate their own emotions. When it comes to SEL skills of students teachers are the powerful role models for them. Teachers' positive and negative attitude towards other may affect the students' attitude.

### **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

This study was based on the social constructivist approach, which view that capabilities of children to co-construct their own understanding through the collaborating with each other. (Edwards, Gandini & Foreman, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). Loris Malaguzzi 2001, Edwards et al., 1998) we learn more when we socially interact with numerous people, learning is a reciprocal and social process. Creating a healthy environment in which children and adults develop strong relationships with each other and respect is valued such environment promotes healthy development. Edwards et al., 1998; Rinaldi, 2006; Wink & Putney, 2002 indicated that by carefully listening to the perspective of each children contribute to more productive learning this practice motivate them towards learning, help them to

regulate their emotions and they will respect each other. According to Bo and Darling (2009) the current studies in sociological perspective reveals the notion that children are the actors in their lives.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

McMillan & Schumacher (1993) defined the case study is as an inquiry in which the main focus is on one phenomenon. Merriam (1998) stated that case study has a rich description of the phenomenon under the study. Case study is a methodology that maintains very deep connections to the core values, and intentions of study (Merriam, 2009). It is an analysis and investigation of one single or collective cases aims to find out the complexities of the study (Stake, 1995). Case study is the most suitable methodology for this study to explore the perception of teachers' at Government Girls High School Chitkan Panjgur regarding SEL skills of children at school. In case study researchers are urged to find out the commonality and differences within the cases. By careful and in-depth consideration, historical background, institutional and political contextual factors of the case, enable the researchers to find out commonalities and differences within cases (Stake, 1998). Qualitative case study approach is a pliable methodology (Merriam, 2009; Meyer, 2001; Stake, 1995). In this study the maximum variation sampling was used to explore the perception of teachers' regarding SEL as a holistic approach for the development of children at school. Each teacher has different experiences and qualification in their respective fields and their behaviors, qualities and perceptions were different. The basic purpose behind choosing maximum variation sampling (heterogeneous) is to gain in depth and greater insights about the commonalities and differences of the perception of teachers' from all angles.

The participants of this case study are ten teachers' and 124 students' of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> class of Govt Girls High School Chitkan Panjgur, all the ten teachers' are female and they are (SST) secondary school teachers. They have also professional qualifications as well all the ten teachers' have B.ed degree but only six teachers' have M.ed degree, they also have masters 'degree in different subjects. Their teaching experiences also differ from each other two teachers have twenty years of experiences on different school one teacher has twelve years of experience and other seven teachers have three years of teaching experience. 124 students are only girls from 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> class. Data collection for this study include focus group interview, observation of students and document analysis of school policies. More than this, the researcher analyze the school policies and

curriculum which the school is following whether the school has some rules regarding SEL in their policy, they ever conduct SEL programs in the school and has the teachers ever get professional training in SEL.

### 4. FINDINGS

#### Teachers Knowledge About Social Emotional Learning.

All the ten teachers researcher interviewed were SST Science and SST General they taught the students the science subjects as well the other subjects. Researcher made aware the teachers that focus group of teachers' interview is a part of the study. Researcher asked the teachers some questions to gauge their understanding that how they perceive SEL for the holistic development of children. I asked them to define the term social-emotional learning? Teachers define SEL as behavioral development of children, respecting each other, managing one's behavior and cooperative learning. When I asked them that they ever receive any training on how to develop social and emotional skills of students? All the teachers said that we didn't ever receive any professional training regarding SEL, we individually guide the students to respect, cooperate with each other but unfortunately a very few students listen to us.

I asked them about their opinion that who is responsible for developing social-emotional skills of children and why? Seven teachers said that developing social emotional skills of student is purely the responsibility of parents and family because the parents are the first teachers of a child, child behavior is highly influenced by parents' behavior. Development of social emotional skills of children falls outside of our job scope, it is the job of parents. Three teachers said that

teaching isn't is an easy job we agree with this that it is also our (teachers) responsibility too, to teach students social emotional skills at schools but we always guide students for good and cooperative behavior unfortunately we didn't find any change in student's behavior. Provincial Government should conduct and train teachers how to develop SEL skills of children. I also asked the teachers' that did they ever feel that students have SEL problems during the class. All teachers said that they always face problems during class discussions, group discussions and presentations because students like to sit with their friends and they didn't like to sit with other peers like some students don't like weak students they like to made groups of those students who are sharp and they equally contribute in group discussions and presentations. We at that time make them understand that each student has their different



learning styles if a student is weak you should help them out but after presentations, class and group discussions they misbehave and quarrel with each other that the other groups member contribute very less so and so.

When I asked them about the interaction among students are good? They said, well the interaction among students are sometime good but some students are moody they interact with other peers very less. When I asked what do you think student respect and help out each other in studies? All the teachers' were very relaxed and they were responding in a positive way they said, that very few students respect each other, well some student help out other peers however some students don't like, because their opinion is that if we help them out doing assignments and in other activities they will get better marks. I asked them did you ever feel that students in your class are facing learning difficulties. They said that, yes we often feel that students are facing learning difficulties some students have language issues or lack of interest in a subject. Often it become very difficult for us to address and cope with the learning issues of all students. I asked them what they think the students in their class are well equipped with SEL skills. All teachers said that we don't think so students in our classes are poses SEL skills, because their behavior towards other peers and sometimes to teachers are not satisfactory. When I asked them that what do you think what are the best ways for developing students' social and emotional competencies in school, all teachers said that we believe that, teachers' positive interaction with students, acknowledging and appreciating their efforts, guiding students when they feel learning difficulties, positive feedback, encouragement and showing empathy towards each student may help a teacher to develop their social emotional competencies. I asked them did you believe SEL should be an important part of students' learning experience in-school. All teachers said, yes why not we strongly believe SEL should be an important part of students 'learning experience in school, but government should set some priorities and made such policies, strategies and conduct SEL programs in public sector that can help a teacher to develop the SEL skills of students.

#### **Student's Knowledge about Social Emotional Learning.**

Researcher had interviewed 124 students of secondary level students to gauge their perception regarding SEL. When I asked the students that did you like to cooperatively work with other peers in class. They answer with a little hesitation, yes we like

to work cooperatively with peers, but with those peers who are our friends, and because we feel uneasy when we work with the peers who are not our friends. I asked them did they like peer criticism, majority of students said well frankly speaking we didn't like peer criticism, we thought that peers who didn't have such knowledge how they can criticize us. I want to judge their opinion that why some student misbehave in, they answer this question very carefully, well we thought that some students have learning issues and other students didn't like to help them, they get frustrated and negatively behave in classroom and some students have family issues and problem that's why they behave in a negative manner.

When I asked them that how often they interact with class teachers and peers? They replied that, in each class we interact with class teachers we ask teacher when we get confused during class. Very few students interact with other peers because we don't like to interact with other peers on daily basis. I asked them did you like to appreciate other peers by acknowledging their accomplishments. They said that in very rare cases we appreciate others by acknowledging their efforts. We didn't feel happy if performance of a student is better from us. When I asked them did you ever lose your temper during class discussion? Their responses were alarming, yes many time we lose our temper during class discussion because some students used to criticize one another. I asked them about conflict resolution, that how they resolve their conflicts. They said some students have the ability to resolve the conflicts on time by listening both sides but some student used to ignore each other and didn't talk to each other for a long period of time. I asked them did teachers encourage your strengths throughout the learning process. They said yes our teachers encourage us throughout the learning process. When I asked them what do you think teachers' appreciation affect your learning. Majority of students said yes obviously the feedback of teachers' affect our learning if a teacher give positive feedback we become more interested in studies and try our best to improve our deficiencies, and negative feedback discourage us and kill the thrust for learning. I asked them did you ever attend any SEL related program or class. All students said, we didn't attend any programs, and class related to SEL in our school and anywhere else.

#### **Document Analysis**

I analyzed the school documents in order to find out whether they had some policies regarding SEL, they didn't have such policies and didn't conduct SEL programs or trained the teachers. The headmistress said we follow the national curriculum and policies.

They only let me to read the documents, they didn't allow me to publish or print out those documents in this study because these were the official documents.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Each participant define SEL skills differently their point of view varied from each other. For some participant SEL was a behavioral development, while for another it was developing good relationship with others, for someone it was related to future academic success. One participant said that it is the capability of students how to handle different situations in different places. Another participant said, it is the ability of a person that how he/she cope with their environment, how they control their emotions. In fact SEL skills include all those things the participants said. Thus, each participant perception was different and varied that what SEL skills are and what the purpose is.

Majority of teachers' said teaching SEL skills is the responsibility of parents were, they also agreed that school should bear some responsibility too. Three teachers said it is the equal responsibility of parents and school to teach SEL skills at home and as well at school, and more emphasis should be given to parents' role than the teacher's role. One of the teacher said I think we all should contribute but I strongly believe that teaching SEL skills starts at home because we all were taught by parents that how to control our emotions and how to interact with others. Thus, all participants agreed that it is not solely the responsibility of teachers for teaching SEL skills, but also the responsibility of parents as well.

### Barriers to Teaching SEL Skills

All participants mentioned different hindrances to teaching SEL skills. The differences related internal and external factors such as time constraints, family issues, permission from the administration, lack of SEL knowledge, lack of motivation and different learning styles. All the teachers said, time constraint is a huge barrier, we have to complete courses on time and didn't get time to teach students any other thing rather their courses. Another participant stated that time is a factor but sometimes we are in a hurry we doesn't emphasize the important things during instruction. Family issues are also hindrance teaching SEL skills, each family has different structures. Like parents teach their child the basic skills and manners but sometimes the behavior of child become worse. Sometimes administration doesn't allow the teachers to teach something extra to the students rather their course. All teachers said we are not professionally trained how to teach SEL skills.

## 5.1 Conclusion

Schools are the important context for SEL development of children. In school and classrooms settings, it is very important for children to have such skills like managing their negative emotions, focused and being calm, following the directions, and developing good relationships with peers. Schools should make SEL a central focus and widely adopt SEL strategies and programs that support and build such skills in children for the holistic development. SEL strategies and programs are highly associated with the positive outcomes of children. By not adopting SEL strategies in public sector across the country students are unable to full recognize themselves as potential, knowledgeable, responsible, caring, and individuals. It is very important for educators, policy makers and teachers to understand that they have the greatest potential to bring changes and make a difference in students' learning. Teachers' perceptions of SEL development of children in schools has also positive and negative affect on learning. Majority of the teachers which I had interviewed in this study perceive that development of SEL skills isn't fall in their job description. It means that they were not aware of their role how they can play a major role to develop the SEL skills of children by applying the SEL pedagogy principles and strategies. Therefore it is the responsibility of government to include SEL related policies and strategies in national curriculum, and conduct workshops, seminars and trained teachers regarding SEL. In other countries like USA, UK, SEL is an important part of their policies and curriculum, their government regularly trained the teachers, conduct workshops, seminars in order to improve the professional deficiencies of teachers regarding SEL. But in our country Pakistan still it is not a part of our national curriculum.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The researcher recommends that:

- ✓ Policy makers and educators should review the policies to include SEL approach in our national curriculum and ensure its implementation at public and private sectors.
- ✓ SEL should be started from pre-schooling and continued through high school in order to address and meet the holistic learning objectives for all level.
- ✓ Teacher should be train regarding SEL approaches, and provide guidance how they can integrate academic content and SEL.
- ✓ Curricula should be design in a way that provide opportunities to the students to

develop their skills on daily basis. It can be possible by sharing circles, cooperative learning environment, advisory and guidance programs, and effective classroom management.

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