ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Integration of Social and Emotional Education in the European Context

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ABSTRACT
In the European context, social and emotional education (SEE) has been developed from social and emotional learning (SEL) and aims to be a core curriculum element across the region. However, to reach the current development in SEE, apart from the effort of individual nations, the roles of the European Union (EU) in uniting and strengthening the SEE concept across its member states is significant. This paper employs document analysis method as the main tool to accentuate the roles of the EU in this development process. It first identifies the educational context and policies articulated by the EU as the foundation for the induction and inception of SEE into the area, which are reviewed afterward. Finally, the current module of SEE adopted across the EU members is introduced as an illustration of the EU's effort to bolster SEE in their regional area. This paper presents a good example of how a regional union unites and boosts their regional development in general and particularly educational innovation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has attracted substantial attention from researchers, educators, and curriculum developers all over the world for nearly three decades now. The SEL concept has brought back the primary aim of education, which is to educate "the whole child" (Burroughs & Barkauskas, 2017). In modern society, the society of knowledge, technology, and innovation, within the educational context, academic learning has been particularly concerned and strongly invested. More than a century ago, however, Aristotle said: "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all", which implies that education for heart has been around for a long time now and with the development of SEL by Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2003) and recently SEE (Social and Emotional Education), improving other skills for children apart from merely academic ones has been attracting more and more attention. Nowadays, SEL/SEE programs have been broadly and effectively implemented in primary and secondary schools worldwide, especially in North America and Europe. Within a limited scope, this paper introduces the concept of SEE adopted within the European Union (EU) area. It also presents one of the significant landmark reports produced by the EU in which SEE is proposed to be a core subject in the EU education curriculum for their children and young people.

This paper aims to investigate how SEL/SEE has been implemented in the European areas, and to identify the significant role of the European Union (EU) in the process. In order to achieve this aim, the authors employed document analysis as the main research method in which SEL/SEE documents published in the European region had been collected, reviewed and analyzed. The analysis is expected to bring a deeper insight into the matter of SEL/SEE in a certain part of the world.

In a certain limited scope, this paper first reviews the implementation of SEL in different areas of the world, and followed by the concept SEE adopted within the European Union area. It further presents one of the significant

landmark reports produced by the EU in which SEE is proposed to be a core subject in the EU education curricular for their children and young people.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social and emotional learning has gained interest all over the world. A brief review of the inception and the earlier stage of SEL implementation in several high-profile educational countries would illuminate the high demand for adopting SEL in the EU area.

In the United States, the efforts and programs to promote student's social and emotional learning (SEL) are widespread since SEL has been first pioneered and led by American researchers since the late 1960s (e.g. Roger P. Weissberg, Timothy Shriver, Maurice Elias, and Marc Brackett). Particularly with the critically important establishment of SEL concepts with five main competences by CASEL in 1994, SEL development and implementation have gained continuous momentum nationwide with countless studies about the effectiveness of different SEL programs. There are a number of SEL programs launching currently in the country such as Second Step (Committee for Children, 2002), Steps to Respect (Committee for Children, 2001); Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) (Greenberg et al., 1995); Responsive Classroom (Rimm-Kaufman & Hulleman, 2015), School Climate (National School Climate Council, 2007); RULE (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). SEL standards have expanded throughout school systems in the US for decades, allowing educators and parents to see positive changes in their children.

In the United Kingdom, social and emotional skills (SES) are taken as a privilege in their education systems in all of its constituent countries regardless of their separate educational systems (Holmes et al., 2020). England and Northern Ireland rely on stand-alone policies, but Scotland and Wales have developed innovative statutory curricula in which SES are integrated throughout. Schools across the UK state that they employ a 'whole-school approach' to delivering activities, but there are minor discrepancies between home nations. Those in Scotland deliver activities that are part of the curriculum; those in Wales deliver activities that are both part of the curriculum and outside of it, but both during the school day and outside of it (Holmes et al., 2020).

In Israel, educators have implemented social and emotional learning in connection with the concept of "wisdom of the heart" (Northampton Center for Learning Behavior, 2008, p.1). It involves finding and nurturing children's strengths, their potential and bringing into their everyday school life the opportunity for them to develop and express their unique abilities. This approach, according to the Ministry of Education's Psychological Services and Counseling unit, plays critical roles in engaging students, reducing school violence, and increasing motivation for learning and school activities.

In Singapore, in response to the demand for effective graduates who are capable to work in multi-racial and cultural working groups, from their global business growth, Singapore sent its first delegation from the Ministry of Education to CASEL in 2004 (Northampton Center for Learning Behavior, 2008). Even though Singapore students are always in the leading rank in cross-national academic comparisons, graduates still face a number of actual job challenges which involve problem-solving skills and other inter-personal solutions. As a result, the SEL model (CASEL) has been adopted but with more emphasis on cultivating basic moral values such as respect, social responsibility, integrity, and harmony in the Social and Emotional Competence framework (SEC) (Liem et al., 2017).

In Latin America, Colombia is an exceptional example. By implementing a policy on national citizenship competencies, the country has taken a bold and innovative step toward peaceful conflict resolution, promoting understanding of differences, involving young people in mutual decision-making, and encouraging youth and adults to collaborate on need-based community projects that foster and promote effective citizenship. This approach is being applied nationwide, and educators are guided in the implementation of programs and practices by standards and assessments of citizenship competencies (Janet & Adriana, 2007).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed document analysis to identify how social and emotional learning has been integrated into the European context and the roles of the European Union. Document analysis is used as an independent qualitative research method in social sciences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this method, the researchers interpret documents to give them voice and meaning in relation to a certain evaluation issue (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis includes

classifying content into themes in the same way that focus group or interview transcripts are evaluated (Bowen, 2009). Purposeful sampling is the technique, which is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). To achieve this study's aims, the researchers collected documents discussing social and emotional education in the European region in general, particularly within the European Union and its member states. This region was selected because the European Union has been playing an instrumental role in supporting and executing educational innovations in its member states and the region. Similarly, the Southeast Asian region is a dynamic and developing area with substantial support from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The data collected from the EU area could be an exemplar of the critical roles of international organizations worldwide, and in the Southeast Asian area particularly. The documents collected were the EU documents, journal articles, book chapters published mainly in European areas.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Social and emotional education in the European Union context and policies

There are a number of documents issued by the European Union (EU) regarding their strategies, policies and indicators to which SEE is related directly or indirectly.

The Europe 2020 Strategy (European Council, 2010), which is the EU's agenda for growth and jobs for the 2010-2020 decade (EU2020) should be the first highlight. To achieve their aims of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, they post school-leaving prevention as one of the EU2020 headline common targets. The target is to bring the early school leaving rate across the EU down to below 10%. As a result, the target has ignited a few policy issues which generally include SEE or relevant elements such as wellbeing, personal development, resilience promotion, bullying or anti-social behavior prevention, and school climate (Cefai et al., 2018).

The Paris Declaration (European Union, 2015) directly discusses their citizens' personal development. Presenting the union education ministers' ambition that through education their citizens can learn the core values of freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination at different levels, the document introduces two SEE relevant core views which are "Ensuring that children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences", and "Promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in cooperation with other relevant policies and stakeholders" (p.4). In SEE, personal development is the primary element, and stakeholder cooperation is a fundamental condition.

The Council Recommendation (European Commission, 2011) on early school leaving has emphasized the SEE importance. The lack of sufficient support for students to cope with emotional, social, or educational difficulties is one of the main causes of early school leaving. As the experience of failure, a lack of self-confidence in learning and increased social, emotional, and educational problems after dropping out reduce the likelihood of achieving a qualification and completing education successfully, the prevention seems more effective than the compensation. As such, creating a positive learning environment, and reinforcing excellence and innovation in pedagogy which are significant features of school-wide SEE are recommended approaches to the issue (Cefai et al., 2018).

The Commission's Theme Working Group report (European Commission, 2013) also acknowledges the significant role of a positive learning environment. Within the document, emotional support, positive learning climate, teaching staff, and all stakeholder commitments are stressed. It states that "those who face personal, social or emotional challenges often have too little contact with education staff or other adults to support them" (p.21). Therefore, SEE could be a promising approach in connection with emotional support, in particular emotional counselling (Cefai et al., 2018). The issue of promoting teachers' social and emotional competences is also emphasized in the documents since it has been recognized as important and relevant to students' social and emotional development.

The messages from Education and Training 2020 (ET20), Working Group on Schools Policy (European Commission, 2015) acknowledge the necessity for schools to implement "the whole-school approach" (p.9) in which the learners' educational achievement, pro-behavior and supporting their healthy emotions, pro-social relationships, and psychological health are mentioned. Besides, a variety of strategies in the management of the classroom, diversity, relationship, conflict, and anti-social behavior prevention aiming to support, and counsel students

emotionally and psychologically are all important factors to consider. Apparently, SEE has been appraised implicitly throughout the document.

Apart from the above highlighted documents, according to Cefai and his colleagues (2018), in order to stay updated with the increasing attention on the social and emotional competence roles, many other working papers issued by the European Commission also strongly assert their recognition and commitment to the learners' well-being and positive school climate. These include The Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life; The Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication on school development and excellent teaching for a great start in life.

However, according to Downes and Cefai (2016), none of the specific policies adequately address SEE, especially the emotional dimension. These authors also dispute an argument that citizenship education should implicitly cover SEE to prepare students with civic, social, or cultural competences (Downes & Cefai, 2016). The situation is the rationale for the development of SEE as a core curriculum area across the EU study funded by the European Union.

4.1.2. The adoption of SEL and inception of SEE in the EU context

Social and emotional learning (SEL) was developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) almost three decades ago. It is a process of promoting social and emotional competence which has been recognized as a significant factor for lifelong success and achievement of both children and adults (Cowen et al., 1998; Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016; Hecht & Shin, 2015; Tarasova, 2016). The SEL program is based on the requirement of building a learning context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful (Zins et al., 2004). There are five core competencies associated with SEL namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, n.d, 2003, 2012; Zins et al., 2004). Nowadays, thousands of schools from pre-schools to high schools within and outside the United States have implemented SEL programs (Humphrey, 2013), providing evidence for the effectiveness of SEL programs (Mahoney et al., 2018).

In European countries, there are several other terms that are closely used alongside SEL. For instance, personal and social education/development usually cover many aspects including self-regulation, self-management, emotional regulation, communication skills, decision making, social awareness and responsibility, character development, human rights, and other social issues (Cefai et al., 2018). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015) uses the term "social and emotional skills" as "non-cognitive skills", "soft skills", or "character skills" to describe "the kind of skills involved in achieving goals, working with others, and managing emotions" (p.34). Meanwhile "life skills" is a commonly used term to describe "the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (World Health Organization, 1997).

To embed SEL in the core curriculum across European countries, the Network of Experts working on the Social Dimension of Education and Training (NESET) recognizes the divergence in social and emotional related terms and their approaches in the education systems of the 27 European Union's members. However, social and emotional issues are their common concern. As a result, NESET uses the term "social and emotional education" (SEE) as a shift into a wider insight into social and emotional matters in school (Do, 2020). SEE refers to the educational approaches that embed relational and contextual curricula to develop SEC for key aspects of individual development including personal, social, and academic (Cefai et al., 2018). The concept employs the SEL core module while integrating more recent advanced concepts including positive education which is the blend of academic learning with character and wellbeing, and mindfulness (Bott et al., 2017; Cefai et al., 2018). Therefore, the shift from SEL to SEE intends to include a wider view of teaching and learning, considering classroom environment, entire school ecology, parental engagement, and teacher effectiveness in both SEL illustration and implementation (Cefai et al., 2018). As such, SEE should be implemented from the whole-school approach.

4.1.3. Social and emotional education implementation framework in the EU context

There is a SEE model proposed among EU member states with eight elements needed to take into consideration in implementing SEE in schools (Cefai, et al., 2018).

Firstly, SEE needs to be well designated and integrated into the curriculum. When SEE is considered as an add-on element with unstructured allocation, it normally results in fragmentation and marginalization. There exists evidence in many schools where SEL or SEE is not seen as a core part of the educational mission, there is little effort to apply the skills learned during SEL or SEE programming (Jone et al., 2017). In this framework, the SEE curriculum is suggested to focus on both self and social capable skills as well as on resilience and engagement skills. In this concern, a strategy named SAFE (Sequence, Active, Focused and Explicit) is recommended to apply by adequately internally trained teachers.

Secondly, the proposed model brings to the literature a new technical term "Climate: taught and caught approach" (Cefai, et al., 2018, p.59). The primary suggestion here is to create a whole-school positive and favourable environment where children are explicitly taught certain social and emotional skills in the classroom, and practice, experience, assess and get constructive feedback either in classroom zone or school-wide zone contexts and circumstances. It is believed that with interpersonal, instructional, and contextual supports, children obtain more feelings of connectedness, collaboration, a sense of belonging and security which in turn help them acquire and experience the skills with the greatest and long-lasting effectiveness. This approach is completely agreeable since the literature has strongly recognized the significance of a positive learning climate for physical and mental health, academic performance, and behavioral conduct both short-term and long-term outcomes (Cowen et al., 1998; Elias, 2019; Seligman et al., 2009).

The third element is early intervention. Early childhood care and education have been the mainstay of a nation's education system for their critical roles in either social stability, development, or financial concerns. The model illustrates that SEE is beneficial for people from every range of age, however, early intervention is more effective than one made in a later phase of an individual life. In a large social context, SEE is believed to warrant economic and financial returns on investment. Housman (2017) remarks from a neuroscientific perspective that the golden time for children to learn is in the ages of zero to five, as it requires the development of emotional and social competences as a vital element for long-term success meanwhile fostering both mental health and wellbeing. Blewitt and his colleagues also find that children who participated in universal, curriculum-based SEL programs showed significant improvement in social competence, emotional competence, behavioural self-regulation, and early learning skills (Blewitt et al., 2020).

The fourth element is targeted intervention. As mentioned above, SEE benefits every learner, therefore, universal SEE is an ambition of any educational program. However, there is evidence that SEE brings tremendous support to children at risk either in their physical, mental development or in their socio-economic context (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Elliott et al., 2018; Jimerson et al., 2006). The model suggests that universal programs could serve the best at-risk children when they are implemented mindfully with well-planned and purposeful interventions as well. As remarked by Jimerson, that there is no single intervention that can meet the needs of all students (Jimerson et al., 2006); an effective intervention must be aware of certain individuals with their certain struggle and support needs. With well-personalized appropriate support and intensive assistance, children experiencing both social and academic difficulties are likely to make their own significant turning points in developmental pathways (Jimerson et al., 2006).

The fifth element is student voices which emphasize students as the key stakeholders in any teaching-learning processes, particularly in SEE where both inter-and intra-personal competences of students are influenced. Students, especially the older ones, apart from being active learners and lively actors, are capable and necessary to take part in the design and establishment of SEE activities (Cefai, et al., 2018). Their active role in preparing their own SEE programs is believed to provide adequate tools to support students from diverse backgrounds. Their parts could range from the planning to the delivery of SEE.

The sixth element concerns staff competence and wellbeing. Teachers, educators, and staff in general inside or outside a school, together with their students are key figures, the primary deliverer of the SEE program (Do & Zsolnai, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to prepare them with the best social and emotional competences and well-being prior to implementing any SEE activities. The element is proposed after Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem perspective within the SEE context. Moreover, it is difficult, even impossible that teachers help students build skills that they themselves do not possess (Jones et al., 2014). Teachers with high social and emotional competence can maintain their mental and physical health, have better teaching performance, and all of these in turn have a positive influence on their students' social and emotional development, and their general achievement in school (Flook et al., 2013). In another study, Brackett and colleagues also emphasize that when teachers are assigned to deliver a SEL

lesson or program, without illustrating their SEL competence, their students' SEL competence seemingly decreases instead of being improved (Brackett et al., 2012).

The seventh element is parental collaboration and education. The family is the first place where children learn, develop and experience social and emotional competences before and after school. As such, children bring with them foundation competences developed from home to get themselves engaged successfully in school activities, and later, school attainments will soon be experienced, testified, and reinforced at home and other broader social contexts. Therefore, parental collaboration and education are decisive factors to the SEE success. With the collaboration and education, parents are able to handle any resistance caused by anxiousness, prejudices, or lack of adequate knowledge, as well as how to play an active role in their children's education and well-being. From evident literature, to engage parents and the community, the proposed model recommended that schools should take more dynamic, individualized, and culturally appropriate initiatives. Moreover, schools must be more attentive and empathetic to the different needs and viewpoints of relevant SEE stakeholders, particularly parents.

The last element is quality implementation and adaptation. This is not an inner factor of the SEE process. However, it is a matter of fact that whatever steps, procedures, and elements have been studied and included in SEE, they are not unlikely to function well without a high fidelity of the designated plan or curriculum. The literature has recognized a number of statements from worldwide researchers regarding this issue (Jones et al., 2015; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Christopher et al., 2019; Zins & Elias, 2007).

4.2. Discussion

Since 2010, the importance of social and emotional competences has been recognized in the European context. Accordingly, numerous documents and policies have been issued to illustrate how social and emotional elements contribute to the development of students' well-being as well as their social and academic success. The region pays attention to these elements not only to promote students' development personally but also to consider these as the boosters for societal development. In addition, the policies determine the necessity of a school-wide or "the whole school" approach to the issue. It is believed that students' social and emotional competence can be promoted significantly only when they emerge in a positive learning environment, and every element in school is playing an active role in SEE implementation. Particularly, teacher training to ensure teachers' SEC is emphasized as a critical element of any successful SEE program. However, it is obvious to figure out that none of these policies adequately address SEE systematically.

The situation is the rationale for more investment in SEE studies funded by the EU. In recent years, European countries have observed the adoption of SEL and the inception of SEE in the area. SEL has been implemented in thousands of American schools as the result of the country's determination in its significance and seriousness in SEE implementation. The success in American schools could be a good model applied in European countries. As a result, considering the current situation of European education, particularly in relation to social and emotional competence, SEE has been developed from the adoption of SEL. In the European context, SEE is an innovation since it illustrates an important shift from SEL to a suitable educational framework in the area. According to Cefai et al. (2018), SEE includes a broader perception of teaching and learning in which the entire school ecology, familial engagement, and teaching effectiveness are all actively involved.

The SEE model proposed among EU member states is a plausible result of all the above considerations. The eight elements presented in the model show the region's tremendous seriousness and efforts to solve the existing problems in the education of their young people regarding social and emotional issues. The model illustrates the important principles of a school-wide approach to the issue, and the fidelity of any SEE application. Regardless of the explicit or implicit implementation, without fidelity, SEE results in fragmentation and marginalization. Besides, parental engagement is also critical to SEE. Young students undeniably are influenced passively and proactively by any parties in contact. They also practise, experience, and test the appropriateness of their learning here and there. Therefore, the connection between the family and school is a primary factor in a thoroughly implemented SEE.

In a nutshell, being concerned about their young students' life and school quality, as well as the commonwealth of the nations, European countries, especially with the work of the European Union, have attempted to propose a number of policies and strategies in order to improve students' social and emotional competence. The efforts led to the inception of SEE as a core curriculum in the area. With the elements covering all significant principles needed for a successful SEE, the model has the potential to be accepted widely in the European area, as well as obtain fruitful

results in promoting their young generations' wellbeing and success. Importantly, the effort of the European Union together with the attempts of its member states exposes an example of an effective working system. A union could be an efficient body to garner the joint effort of its all members. Policy initiation and financial support for scientific research are the two most important strengths that the EU has proven in this instance. It is believed that the same effort could be generated by other similar bodies worldwide in respect of their specific regional demands.

5. CONCLUSION

The concept of SEE and the intention of integrating SEE into the core curriculum in the EU area have been intensively and successfully adopted, developed, and constructed by NESET. The effort was boosted by a very influential and well-known publication named "Social and Emotional Education in Primary School - Integrating Theory and Research into Practice" (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014). More importantly, this effort marks the official and formal recognition of the EU toward the crucial existence of SEE. Before the initiative, SEE had been drawing some attention and concerns from researchers, educators, parents, and many other stakeholders all over their member states. The attentions nevertheless were not coherent and strong enough to make SEE recognized as a core subject in the educational curriculum for children and young people. SEE after being clearly defined and reviewed on its important roles by a few EU Members, is expected to be listed as a separate important area in the EU Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning which has been criticized for neglecting social and emotional roles in preventing early school dropout (Cefai, 2018). Finally, the inception of SEE is evidence of successful effort in the whole European area in scientific research and educational innovation under the support of the European Union.

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