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**DO THI DUNG**

**Primary teachers' perspectives and understanding  
of social and emotional learning  
in Vietnam**

**DOI ID: 10.15476/ELTE.2023.077**

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**Budapest, 2023**

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## Introduction

This dissertation presents research on social and emotional learning (SEL) topic in Vietnamese primary education, and from teachers' perspectives and understanding. In Vietnamese education, this research might be the first to shed light on the understanding of SEL from teachers, the primary deliverers of SEL. The dissertation includes six chapters. Chapter One Introduction presents the rationale, research questions, term definitions, theoretical framework, and research paradigm. Chapter Two Preliminary literature review discusses existing knowledge in relevance to the research topic to provide the researcher with foundation and sensitivity for further investigation. Chapter Three Methodology describes the grounded theory as the methodology and method of this study and reports the research design in detail. Chapter Four Findings presents a product of this grounded theory in four different themes, respectively with four research questions. Chapter Five Discussion discusses the meaning of the findings and their connection to the existing literature through a secondary literature review. Chapter Six Implications and Recommendations provide possible applications of the findings to the current educational practice and research considerations for further investigation in SEL topics.

### Research questions

In the primary education context, and in teachers' perspectives and understanding:

1. What is social and emotional learning for primary students?
2. What are the roles of social and emotional learning for primary students?
3. How to integrate social and emotional learning for students in primary schools?
4. What factors influence the integration of social and emotional learning for students in primary schools?

## **Definitions of terms**

Definitions relating to the terms representing psychological and educational key concepts throughout this study were presented.

*Life skills* are the “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (World Health Organization, 1997), “refer to a large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills which can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills that may help lead a healthy and productive life” (WHO, 2003; UNICEF 2011, cited in UNICEF, 2017, p.2).

*Social and emotional competence*: “The ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one’s life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development” (p.2).

*Social and emotional learning* is developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). CASEL defines SEL as learning activities through which individuals “acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions”.

*Perspective, teacher’s perspective, and understanding* are “the thoughts or mental images teachers have about their professional activities and their students, which are shaped by their background knowledge and life experiences and influence their professional behaviour.” (Papadakis & Kalogiannakis, 2020).

*Primary education and public primary school*. As defined by Law on Universal Primary Education (Vietnam) (Law on Education, 2019), primary education in Vietnam is compulsory, from grade 1 to grade 5 for every child aged from 6 to 14. A primary school in Vietnam is an educational institution of the elementary level for foundation education of the national education system, and includes public, half-private, and private schools.

## **Theoretical framework**

The social and emotional learning (SEL) program developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was employed to guide the study.

There are five core competencies categorized in the SEL model, according to CASEL including “self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making” (n.d.-a). Together with the five elements, there are four popular approaches to promoting students’ SEL including a free-standing course, integrating SEL in other academic subjects, integrating SEL in daily teaching-learning practice, and integrating SEL into an organizational setting in which SEL is adopted school-widely.

### **Research paradigm**

The interpretivism-constructivism paradigm with a qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate approach.

### **Preliminary Review of Literature**

The preliminary literature review is to provide a theoretical foundation for the study and includes discussions on life skills education and previous research on SEL in different contexts.

***The conceptualization of social and emotional competence.*** Social and emotional competence (SEC) has its root in social competence and emotional competence. There is controversy on the definition of SEC as a combined structure. Considering the main characteristics of these individual competencies, however, SEC could be defined as: “*the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one’s life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development*” (Elias et al., 1997, p2). Despite the different definitions, SEC ultimately includes the following characteristics: (a) a multifaceted and ever-changing system instead of individual abilities or skills (Zsolnai, 2015); (b) the development outcomes as effectiveness in interaction and adjustment to the norm, social expectation, conviction to the social moral and value; (c) cognitive process, affection/emotion, and behaviour are three main core components; (d) the demonstration of self-efficacy.

***Social and emotional learning (SEL) and Social and emotional education (SEE).*** Various terms have described social and emotional processes in education. One of the most used terms is “social and emotional learning” (SEL) developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The SEL program is based on

building a learning context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful (Zins et al., 2004). In European countries, several other terms are closely used alongside SEL such as social and emotional skills, life skills, personal and social education or development, citizenship education, character education, health education, and promotion (Cefai et al., 2018). To embed social and emotional learning in a core curriculum across European countries, the Network of Experts working on the Social dimension of Education and Training coins the term “social and emotional education” (SEE) as a shift into a wider insight into social and emotional matters in school (Cefai et al., 2018).

***The importance of social and emotional competence and social and emotional learning.***

SEC contributes to developing an individual's characteristics like responsibility, accountability, altruism, honesty, self-regulation, and cooperation which are qualities required to establish an active life and flourish in a complex and competitive world (Hoang and Vu, 2016). SEC and SEL skills can predict an individual's adjustment throughout their life, and in the short term, SEC improves school performance, relationships, and behaviour. In the long term, SEC plays a role in preventing risky behaviours, and there is a significant link between social and emotional skills in early life and key outcomes in schooling, jobs, illegal engagement, drug use, and mental health.

***The development of children and the importance of SEL at primary school ages.***

Primary school ages are usually referred to as the period from 6 to 11 years. Students rapidly develop and change in bodybuilding and cognitive skills (Del Giudice, 2017; Eccles, 1999; Ghetti & Bunge, 2012). Students learn to perceive the world around them through practical activities, personal experiences, and participation in diverse social activities. The entry of primary school requires students to get used to a completely new social environment. The student-teacher relationship becomes dominant and defines other relationships (Del Giudice, 2017; Yee et al., 2020). Leading activity is a learning activity that determines the relationship between the child and the teacher and between the child and his peers. Entering primary school also marks the significant development of the emotional sphere of children (McClelland et al., 2017).

**The approaches to implementing SEL in schools.** There are 4 popular approaches to promoting SEC for students (CASEL, n.d.-a). Firstly, free-standing lessons designed to enhance students' SEC explicitly could be the optimal choice for SEC improvement

goals. The second approach is integrating SEL into other courses or subjects as elements added in. The third way is the integration of SEL in teaching and learning activities to create a favourable classroom climate. The last approach is to use an organizational setting to support SEL as a school-wide program that develops a learning-friendly environment and community.

***The importance of SEL to teachers' life, career, and the implementation of SEL.*** SEC plays significant roles in teachers' performance. SEC affects teachers' well-being, teacher-student relationships, classroom management and the success of SEL implementation. Both teacher-student relationships and positive classroom climate contribute to students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes which in turn impact teachers' career satisfaction, happiness, and later on well-being and motivation. With sufficient competence in SEL, healthy class climates and relationships, teachers implement the best SEL to promote their students' SEC, and create better conditions for a further positive learning environment and better educational activity outcomes.

***Teacher's perspectives and views on social and emotional learning.*** In SEL implementation, teachers are the primary implementers, and their beliefs, attitudes, skills and appropriate practice in SEL play a decisive role in their students' SEL development. The evidenced literature proves this major impact. Besides, the sense of support from senior leaders and policymakers to SEL often concerns teachers to perform the SEL fully desired practice. The efficacy and commitment feelings of teachers in SEL are strongly influenced by teachers' own social and emotional skills. It is suggested that before any SEL implementation, teachers' SEC is pre-requisite information for the school readiness for the successful SEL program (Brackett et al., 2012; Inna, 2017; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

***Teacher training in social and emotional learning.*** Alongside with the concern of preparing teachers to support students' SEL, teachers' own SEC also needs more attention. Studies investigating teachers' own SEC indicate its favourable impacts on maintaining teachers' well-being and career motivation, developing positive teacher-student relationship, successfully classroom management, and modelling SEL in education process (Brackett et al., 2012; Esen-Aygun & Salim-Tasking, 2017; Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jones et al., 2014; Roffey, 2012; Sieberer-Nagler, 2015; Wiseman & Hunt, 2008). SEL is beneficial to both in-service and pre-service

teachers. As evidence, many countries include the SEC as one of the standards for teacher competence assessment criteria (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017).

***Support teachers in integrating social and emotional learning.*** Teachers' SEC helps them stay in a well mental state to utilize appropriate energy, and capabilities to become the most responsive, helpful to their students' ever-changing needs. In addition, an effective SEL needs several essential components including strong leadership, well-designed program, and fidelity in program implementation (Greenberg et al., 2003). While society heavily relies on school and their teaching staff for the delivery of social and emotional learning (Forrester, 2020), studies, however, emphasize the all-part, school-wide collaboration for students' learning attainment. School leadership fosters a culture of continuous improvement within which every aspect of the school supports the integration of SEL. The support could involve policymakers, curriculum developers, parents or any other possible adults inside and outside the school context (Bridgeland et al., 2013; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Jone et al., 2017; S. M. Jones et al., 2013 Cefai et al., 2018b).

***The implementation of SEL in schools worldwide.*** SEL has gained interest all over the world. The United States of America has pioneered SEL programs since the 1960s, and these programs have spread throughout the country's school systems. The United Kingdom has also shown an interest in SEL, with a program called "Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL)" being implemented on a large scale in England to promote emotionally literate learning environments. Israel has implemented SEL in connection with the concept of "wisdom of the heart," while Singapore has sent delegations to the United States to learn about effective SEL strategies. Colombia has implemented a policy on national citizenship competencies to promote peaceful conflict resolution and effective citizenship, while Canada and Australia are also investing in SEL programs. The Australian government, for example, funds programs like KidsMatters and MindMatters to promote social and emotional well-being in children.

***Social and emotional learning and life skills education in the context of Vietnam.*** SEC is one of the relatively new issues in Vietnam. Recently, there has been a growing interest in life skills education and integrating social and emotional skill domains in Vietnam. There is the overlap between life skills education and SEL, but that SEL has a broader impact and is more effective when implemented explicitly. While SEC is a core area in the Early Childhood Education curriculum, it is not a compulsory requirement in higher educational phases in Vietnam.

## **Methodology**

This chapter presents general knowledge of the grounded theory method and the choice of constructivist approach for this study. It further describes in detail the research participants, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis, and finally the trustworthiness, reliability of the study, and ethical considerations.

### **Description of grounded theory method**

Grounded theory (GT) has changed through a number of its methodological models. Classic Grounded theory is the original model developed by its original authors Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). Evolved grounded theory developed by Strauss and Corbin (2015) in contrast to the classic model presents a very detailed outline of data analysis and emphasizes ongoing validation and a combination of induction and deduction. Constructivist grounded theory is the third model developed by Charmaz (2006). In Charmaz's model, GT maintains the core elements of the traditional approach including thematic emergence, constant comparison, inductive approach, and open-ended inquiry (Groen et al., 2017). However, there are several elements shared by all. First, GT remains open throughout the study and expects findings "grounded" from data. Second, data collection and analysis are conducted parallelly and iteratively. Third, the connection between data is obtained through constant comparison and memo writing. Fourth, theoretical sampling and saturation are central requirements in a GT design. Fifth, a substantive theory is the production of a GT study. The timing and position of a literature review have risen as a controversial issue. In this study, the researcher reviews the literature before and after data collection and analysis. (Giles et al., 2013; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hennink et al., 2011, Timonen et al, 2018, Sbaraini et al., 2011).

### **Constructivist grounded theory method for the current study**

The chart below illustrates the procedure of the study graphically adapted from Tweed and Charmaz (2012) and Cho and Lee (2014). The process goes through choosing participants, data collection, data analysis, and finally generating conceptual categories.



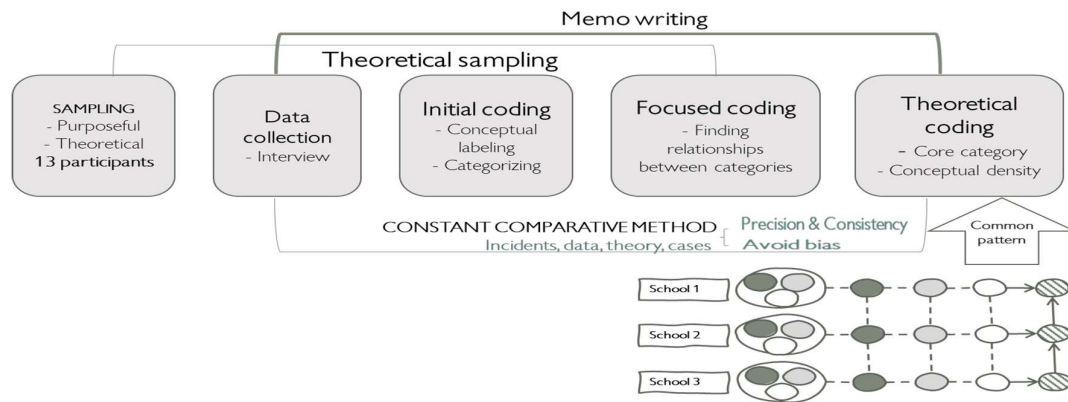


Figure 1. Grounded Theory Process

### Trustworthiness and Credibility

During the process of choosing a sample, selecting purposeful, theoretical samplings, and data analysis, the researchers employed techniques that help instantly collect, analyze, select, and compare data to ensure the value of meaning bearing in collected data. The researcher paid exclusive attention to testing the codes and categories for clarification and reliability.

### Ethical considerations

The participants were informed fully about participation conditions. Every necessary procedure was performed to secure the participants' rights and protect their confidentiality.

### Findings

The findings of this study present four aspects as four main themes generated in the study of SEL in Vietnamese primary schools.

**Theme 1: Social and Emotional Learning is a part of life skills education, and it comprises of 5 elements: Self-awareness, Empathy, Emotional management, Cooperation, and Problem-solving skill. SEL aims at developing students' positive attitudes, feelings of attachment, and happiness, and making the community better.** Self-awareness involves recognizing strengths and limitations and being grateful for the good things in life. Setting goals is also an element of self-awareness. Empathy involves seeing oneself in others and feeling for them, which requires emotional understanding and feeling. Being excited to involve in different social networks is also critical for promoting empathy. Social diversity and respect are important requirements for children's

skill acquisition. Emotional management is a critical element of SEL that helps children avoid arguments and direct confrontations and manage stress effectively. Cooperation is an essential element that links to all other skills, particularly emotional skills, and is built on basic skills like saying "sorry", "thank you", and "please". Nevertheless, SEL from teachers' perspectives can be summarized as a process in which students apply their knowledge and experiences to recognise the capacity and emotions of themselves and others, manage their emotions, and have empathy for others so that they perform productive cooperation and effective problem-solving in any social activities to develop positive attitudes and behaviours, promote feelings of attachment and happiness, and contribute to a better community.

**Theme 2: Social and emotional learning plays a significant role in a wide range of daily activities of students and other involved people, including school, family, and community.**

*First, as a part of life skill education, SEL develops students' basic and foundation skills for life.* Social and emotional skills provide students with favourable conditions to join their daily activities. In general, SEC students are believed to have good mental and physical health because they have the competence to take care of themselves independently to some extent. Students have the best chance to expose themselves to any available social context. Teachers believe that together with kindergarten ages, primary school ages are golden ages for children's development. Students in these ages absorb and learn new things every minute of their lives. Notably, by actively and effectively engaging in social activities, students establish healthy relationships with others. This is a significant landmark as the first opportunity for students to initiate attachment with non-family members. Schools, in general, are designed to be the best healthy, meaningful social environment for young people to learn and develop their basic life competence. Having a healthy relationship in schools plays the most important role in that social context, it guarantees students not only a happy and meaningful time in school but also long-term benefits in their further education and future life.

*Secondly, SEC helps to improve students' academic learning.* Teachers believe that with SEC, students quickly recognise their learning interests, and they are to adopt and develop the best approaches to achieve their learning goals. Besides, students with positive attitudes to learning are willing to learn from mistakes, be open to learning from others and have empathy to help others. SEL helps students to be confident, persistent, and well-organized when dealing with difficult learning tasks. When students perceive a task as a

challenge and are determined to work it out, they learn the most. With a wide range of SEC, especially the advancement of language skills and cooperation skills, students' intellectual capacity is promoted significantly. In turn, it provides a cognitive foundation to adapt and develop further SE skills. Therefore, these iterative processes promote students' abilities so they can achieve their best potential.

***Thirdly, the benefit of SEL for students is related to experiential and practical competence inside and outside the school context.*** Teachers report experiential activities as new and important activities in primary school in which students actively engage, learn, practice, and acquire a great deal of non-academic but practical and meaningful skills including cooking, growing trees, shopping, fixing things, or designing clothes or inner furniture. Teachers observe from these activities that SEC students are keen on a variety of activities, enjoy them, and always try to acquire certain skills throughout their experiential time. These students also tend to be more creative and successfully apply or combine experiences when dealing with new tasks. Therefore, students perform well and are likely to cope with real challenges better in their actual life outside school.

### **Theme 3: Social and Emotional Learning is integrated into every activity of students**

***Firstly, SEL helps students achieve better in their academic learning,*** and vice versa, ***academic subjects are also the means to promote SEL.*** Teachers claim that all elements of SEL are covered in these subjects, especially Literature, Civic Education, and Experiential activities. The first class of any subject learning is about discipline for the class and for the individual. Most of the primary school classes remain quiet and in order even without teachers. Teachers are aware of infusing life skills and SEL, particularly in every subject, however, Literature, Civic Education, Nature, and Society intensively address this goal.

***SEL integrated into Experiential activities.*** Experiential activity is a new and compulsory module in primary school since the academic year 2020-2021. It focuses on self-discovery activities, and self-discipline activities to develop relationships with friends, teachers, and family members. Social activities and learning about some careers close to students are also organized with age-appropriate content and forms. SEL elements together with many other significant life skills are partly or fully addressed in all three forms of these activities namely Regular school/class meetings; Thematic activities on monthly basis; and Excursions on a particular program or event basis.

***SEL integrated into external life skill class.*** An external life skill class is defined as a class specifically designed for one or several life skills learning and is delivered by external life skill teachers or experts. Schools partner with a life skill centre in the town so that the centre's teachers can pay several visits to teach students life skills at a particular time during an academic year. During these classes, thanks to well-designed lessons, either of content or presentation, students concentrate on skill learning from theory to practice and how to repeat to establish their daily routines. Teachers particularly report that they also learn a lot from these expert lessons.

***Integration methods.*** Role models and role play are two core methods of infusing SEL in primary school. Through academic learning, experimental activities, and external life skill learning, students acquaint themselves with different figures, characters, and people either in legends, in history, or present life who bear good characteristics, personalities, or heroic acts so that students are inspired to follow whom they look up to. Lecture, dialogue, and observation are three main specific methods that help students approach new role models in their surroundings or their learning materials.

Teachers believe that SEL must be experienced, infused, and practised at home and in broader social contexts "SEL is needed for every single life activity of children, home and community must play an important role in developing this competence". Parents as critical partners to support the effectiveness and continuity of SEL. Teachers reckon that parental styles and lifestyles and their roles to children at home could either promote or hinder their students' SEL progress.

***Contradiction.*** Firstly, most homeroom teachers try to infuse SEL in academic teaching as much as possible, but at times, it causes chaos in class. Teachers reckon that the benefits of soft skill learning or SEL are not easy to be measured, therefore students and parents at times are not patient to accept SEL in class integration. Secondly, teachers are fully aware of the importance of social and emotional skills for students' academic achievement and life success, they are willing to implement them, but without expertise in the field, they are not always confident, and apparently, they do not do it well. Thirdly, classroom teachers report having a strong willingness to infuse SEL or any other soft skills in their teaching, but they do not have sufficient time and expertise for it. Fourthly, students in grades 1 and 2 have more time and their academic learning materials provide more opportunities for SEL than in grades 4 and 5. Fifth, all stakeholders in the school, at home, or outside society are role models and participate in SEL, however, teachers do not see

the coherent and well-planned connections between the parties in all aspects of content, method, and form of education.

#### **Theme 4: Factors that influence Social and Emotional Learning implementation**

Five factors influence SEL integration. These factors either promote or hinder the process of SEL in primary schools.

***Factors from students.*** The developmental characteristics of primary school students strongly impact SEL. Primary students aged 6 to 10 are in their first years of actual social life outside of their family house. Most of the students are healthy, active, full of energy, and have a big curiosity about things. In primary schools, students are easy to be engaged in physical and outdoor activities. Students mostly obey and attentively listen to teachers and parents or caregivers at home, show strong respect and affection for their homeroom teachers. Primary students always want to comply with all regulations and perform well in any educational activities so that they can please their teachers. They behave well and learn quickly any skills taught at school and home. Teachers find that promoting SEL to “good students” [who already have foundation life skills] has a lot of advantages. This requires students to have certain SEL supports at home and in their preschool education. However, working with young students in primary school has challenges. Students, especially in grades 1 and 2, are shy, nervous, and even feel sick often to engage in class/school activities. They need a great deal of care emotionally and physically to get on well with academic learning and strict school timelines. Moreover, students cannot express themselves at times since they still lack vocabulary. This causes difficulties for both teachers and students to engage students in supportive or regular school activities.

***Factors from teachers.*** The lack of understanding of students’ psychological development, stressful working schedule, and low SEC all together contribute to teachers’ lack of confidence in SEL implementation. However, teachers perceive some aspects which are their strengths and motivate and strengthen them to overcome the above-mentioned disadvantages. Becoming a primary school teacher was the first choice of all participants. Secondly, teachers state that they love “kids”, they would dream of playing, teaching, and caring for young children for the whole of their life.

***Factors from Family (Caregiver).*** Parents of primary students are mostly young, active, and have a good education, they provide their children with good foundation skills at home and further support as well as coordinate to promote school education. Some families who

are in good financial conditions are willing to sponsor or provide support to their children's class activities, especially outdoor or experiential activities. However, a number of parents are too busy with their young careers, young unstable family life and cannot spend enough quality time taking care of and educating children at home. In rural areas, many students are cared for by grandparents or housemaids. Some parents do not take primary school education as much important, assuming that the kids are still very young, they could learn more seriously later or let them have more years playing around to grow up more.

***Factors from school leaders.*** All respondents mention school leaders as the element having only a positive impact on their SEL practice. Listen to teachers' opinions and support any possible ideas for teachers and facilitate opportunities for teaching staff's coordination. Principals and their deputies are instrumental links between the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Training and the actual practice in daily schooling. Importantly, teachers reckon that leadership committees should build up strong and effective connections between schools, families, and the community.

***Factors of community.*** The study was conducted during Covid19, teachers strongly emphasise new phenomena in which students experience 1 or 2 years at home or in their community in extraordinary conditions. Apart from many health concerns and negative impacts on every walk of life, teachers identify how the whole nation or students' local community act upon the pandemic measures has taught students lessons about community unification, communal responsibilities, and outcomes. Teachers particularly emphasise that students' life skills and SEL in particular will help the community cover after the pandemic. Besides, teachers agree that every community where students live and go to local schools has the potential to provide socially experiential experiences to students, what is needed is common voices and agreements between the community and school.

Another aspect that attracts teachers' attention is the controlling of unhealthy and promoting healthy elements in the community. Community is life itself, it reflects and displays either the negative or positive sides of life.

In short, teachers view SEL as a part of life skills education and believe that each of the five elements of SEL plays a specific role in developing students' SEC. These elements overlap, link, and compensate each other in the process. Teachers believe that SEL facilitates students' foundational competencies, academic achievement, experiential practical skills, and long-term targets of improving their quality of life and contributing

effectively to their living environment. Teachers integrate SEL into academic learning, experimental experience activities, and life skill lessons, using role models and role play as effective techniques. The factors that impact SEL implementation are Student, School, Family, and Community, which are strongly linked to the three previous aspects of SEL. SEL aims at the development of individual students and is strongly dependent on students' traits, physical, mental, or contextual conditions, to include it in primary education. Finally, SEL is believed to enable students to participate effectively in society, including their family, school, and community.

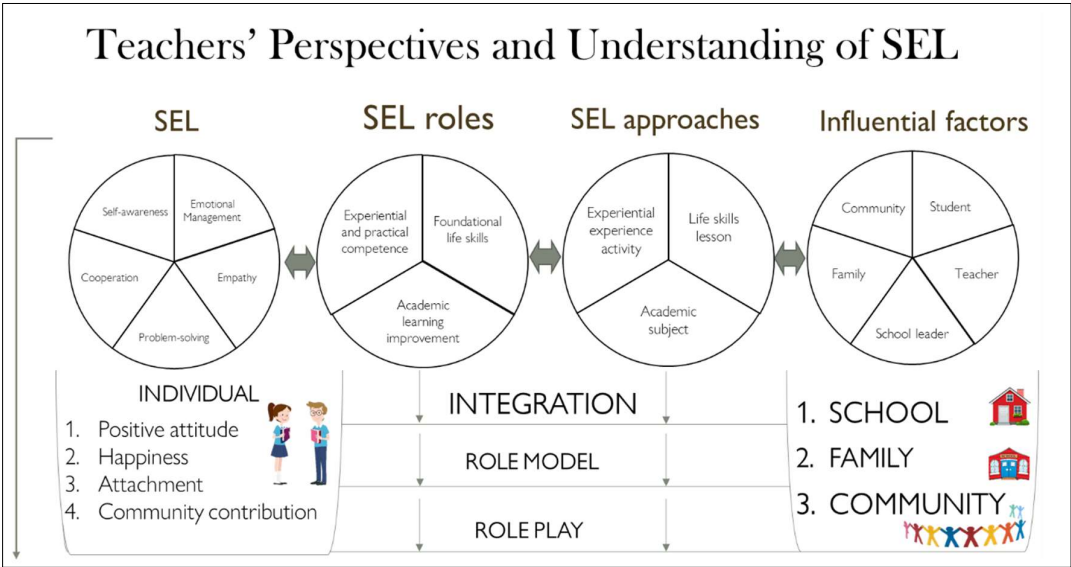


Figure 2. Teachers' perspectives on SEL

### Implication and Recommendation

This investigation sheds light on the understanding of teachers' views on SEL, in the context of Vietnam. SEL is highly recommended to be implemented rigorously in Vietnam. The implementation should be with a well-evidence-based design (Cefai et al.2015, 2018, S. M. Jones & Bouffard, 2012, CASEL. n.d.). The study provides evidence and discussion about teachers' lack of confidence associated with the lack of training and partnerships between three main forces of children's education, and it accentuates a strong request to prepare teachers, either in-service or pre-service teachers knowledge, skills, and attitudes to promote their own SEC, and well-designed SEL teaching tools so that they will be confident and effective in SEL delivery. Four popular approaches to promoting SEC could be applied to teacher education in the Vietnamese context. Firstly, free-standing lessons designed to enhance student teachers' SEC explicitly could be the

optimal choice for SEC improvement goals. The second approach is integrating SEL into other courses. SEL could be integrated into other courses as elements added in. The third way is the integration of SEL into teaching practices to create a favourable classroom climate. The last approach is to use an organizational setting to support SEL as a school-wide program that develops a learning-friendly environment and community.

### **Conclusions**

The study aimed at exploring public primary school teachers' perspectives and understanding of social and emotional learning for their students. The emergent themes of the study indicated that SEL was a part of life skills education in Vietnamese primary schools, and it aimed at developing students' positive attitudes, feelings of attachment, happiness and making the community a better place. From teachers' understanding of SEL as a part of life skills education, SEL benefits directly covered every student's activity at school and indirectly influence students' life at home or outside their living community. As a result, teachers attempted to integrate SEL into three respective activities of students in school, namely academic learning, experimental experience activities, and life skill lesson. These approaches interlinked with each other and each integration method would overlap or compensate for other approaches. Nevertheless, SEL was infused into every educational area than being delivered in the independent or explicit subject. Since the integration of SEL involved every stakeholder, role models and role play was confirmed to be the most employed and effective techniques in SEL integration. There were four main sources that directly and indirectly impact SEL implementation, including Student, School, Family, and Community. It demonstrates a strong relevance to the three previous aspects of SEL. The explanation of teachers' perspectives on social and emotional learning humbly contributes to the scholarly literature on teachers' understanding and view of SEL in the Vietnamese primary school context. Together with many other research studies, the implications for practice and further research questions were proposed and discussed. As a teacher educator, the researcher expresses her ambitions of providing pre-service and in-service teachers with SEL knowledge and practice so that they are competent socially and emotionally and have the best equipment to promote competence to their primary students. The researcher also strongly believes the best practice of SEL is in the cooperation of school, family and community, and it should be applied widely, continually from early childhood to higher education.



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## **The author's publications on the topic of the thesis**

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