



SIES School of Learning and Leadership Development (SIESLLD)

TRAINING NOTE (001/2024-25)

On

**Integrating Social and Emotional Learning
(SEL) in Curriculum**

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Backdrop:

The purpose of education is not only to develop competencies in technical skills required for a specific job but also to inculcate certain soft and life skills that would be required to be successful in both professional as well as personal journey. All these soft skills have few aspects in common; these include the development of emotional balance, empathy, better social relationships and ability to take informed decisions. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) provides a theoretical framework for the above.

This is important for educators as integrating SEL approach in curriculum helps in holistic development of students and facilitates “development of character” in an individual that is the core objective of education. This is important at all levels of education beginning primary school level.

Background of SEL:

The formal development of the concept of SEL particularly in context of education is of recent origin. The idea was first developed by Prof James Comer at Yale School of Medicine, USA in 1960s. This all began in the context of inclusivity of socially and culturally deprived school children in the mainstream. The study found that academic performance is closely linked to development of social and emotional aspects.

Pathbreaking development took place with publication of the book on “Emotional Intelligence” by Daniel Goldman (1994) that brought to the fore the issues related to emotional intelligence, its importance and growth. A byproduct was the formation of the formal framework for SEL through what is known as “Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)”. This gave a framework for understanding and integrating SEL in education and other learning initiatives.

Five Principles of CASEL:

CASEL has identified five key principles that are fundamental to SEL. These provide a comprehensive framework for incorporating SEL into academics.

These competencies aim to create a holistic approach to education, ensuring that students develop the emotional, social, and cognitive skills needed to navigate life's challenges effectively.

These five principles are:

1. Self-Awareness

This is the starting point. Self-awareness is the ability to recognize one's emotions, thoughts, and values and understand how they influence behaviour. This competency includes recognizing one's strengths and limitations. It is the foundation of emotional intelligence, enabling individuals to gain insights into their feelings and motivations.

2. Self-Management

Self-management refers to the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in different situations. It includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and working toward personal and academic goals. It is a natural sequel to understanding own's own emotions.

3. Social Awareness

Having managed one's own emotions, it is now time to look at others and their perspectives. Social awareness involves the ability to empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It also includes understanding social and ethical norms for behaviour and recognizing family, school, and community issues.

4. Relationship Skills

Relationship skills involve the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communication, active listening, cooperation, conflict resolution, and seeking or offering help when needed.

5. Responsible Decision-Making

It is the final stage. Responsible decision-making is the ability to make choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. It involves evaluating the consequences of various actions and considering the well-being of oneself and others.

Integrating CASEL Principles in Classroom:

If one looks at carefully, it can be appreciated that all the five principles form a continuum of "self to others" and then finally leading to making

judgements and taking decisions. The final objective is creating a just and equitable world where inclusivity become the end point, and all people can live happily. Therefore, group and group dynamics in teaching learning processes become the key.

However, the beginning point is that the teacher must believe in the principle of equality / justice before he / she can make things happen in the classroom. Thus he / she must first firmly believe in the principles of CASEL.

Some of the teaching techniques that the teachers at various levels can try & experiment as pedagogy for propagating SEL include the following:

- a. Create a climate of kind and serene classroom environment that is conducive for “unhindered learning”. No rebukes nor reprimand no sense of exclusivity, no bias: purely objective and rational environment and at the same time full of empathy and kindness.
- b. Try to bring in inclusivity in the classroom in all types of pedagogy / other interventions through group and team work (diverse groups).
- c. Teach students to respect each other’s with a strong sense of empathy.
- d. Develop listening skills among students.
- e. Encourage the students (at least the interested ones) to engage in “reflective writing”. This will help foster self-awareness and self-management. Teachers can encourage students to explore how emotions like frustration, anxiety, or excitement affect their learning. Some story telling exercises can be useful to bring out these issues.
- f. Try and include self-management techniques like “meditation”, “maintaining silence periods”, “celebrating days like friendship day”, etc. that might help. “Mindfulness activities” can help students regulate stress before examinations or during challenging group projects. Teachers can model effective self-management by

- demonstrating coping strategies for stress and showing students how to remain focused during learning journey.
- g. Encourage “community service” as a part of curriculum like visit to orphanage, elder homes, etc. that will help sensitize students to the reality on ground in terms of social challenges & disparities and help them to become better socially sensible citizens.
 - h. Integrate teaching of “ethics” and “ethical decision-making processes” in the subjects, wherever possible, to encourage students to take responsible decision making.
 - i. Make “value education” an essential part of curriculum. “Minimalism”, “Gratitude”, “Happiness in Giving”, “Joy in Help”, among others will help development of emotional and social sensibility among students.

Special Note:

Some of the above aspects may be integrated in regular curriculum through pedagogic innovations like cases, stories, role plays, etc. Some others may be tried as a separate module like course on value education or community service. It all depends on the class, its diversity and intent of the teacher.

Conclusions:

Integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) as a part of the curriculum is essential to develop the softer traits among the learner community. The hypothesis is simple: however strong one can be in technical skills; it is the combination of soft skills that makes an ideal individual. The movement of SEL is directed towards creation of a society that is just and equitable and hence education and educators have a great role to play.
