

# Teachers' Social and Emotional Competencies: A Lever for Social and Emotional Learning in Schools

**Iva Odak**<sup>1\*</sup>

e-mail: [iva@idi.hr](mailto:iva@idi.hr)

ORCID: 0000-0002-4249-4964

**Iris Marušić**<sup>1</sup>

e-mail: [iris@idi.hr](mailto:iris@idi.hr)

ORCID: 0000-0003-4837-790X

**Jelena Matić Bojić**<sup>1</sup>

e-mail: [matic@idi.hr](mailto:matic@idi.hr)

ORCID: 0000-0003-1101-3379

**Saša Puzić**<sup>1</sup>

e-mail: [puzic@idi.hr](mailto:puzic@idi.hr)

ORCID: 0000-0001-7231-7312

**Hrvoje Bakić**<sup>2</sup>

e-mail: [hrvoje.bakic@mzo.hr](mailto:hrvoje.bakic@mzo.hr)

**Nina Eliasson**<sup>3</sup>

e-mail: [nina.eliasson@miun.se](mailto:nina.eliasson@miun.se)

ORCID: 0000-0002-6981-0162

**Barbara Gasteiger**

**Klicpera**<sup>4</sup>

e-mail: [barbara.gasteiger@uni-graz.at](mailto:barbara.gasteiger@uni-graz.at)

ORCID: 0000-0002-1101-5457

**Katinka Gøtzsche**<sup>5</sup>

e-mail: [katinka@clin.au.dk](mailto:katinka@clin.au.dk)

ORCID: 0009-0001-3740-0636

**Ana Kozina**<sup>6</sup>

e-mail: [ana.kozina@pei.si](mailto:ana.kozina@pei.si)

ORCID: 0000-0002-0117-6476

**Iva Perković**<sup>7</sup>

e-mail: [iva@edupolicy.net](mailto:iva@edupolicy.net)

**Nina Roczen**<sup>8</sup>

e-mail: [n.roczen@dipf.de](mailto:n.roczen@dipf.de)

ORCID: 0000-0002-6057-5215

**Gina Tomé**<sup>9</sup>

e-mail: [ginatome@sapo.pt](mailto:ginatome@sapo.pt)

ORCID: 0000-0002-4440-6868

**Manja Veldin**<sup>6</sup>

e-mail: [manja.veldin@pei.si](mailto:manja.veldin@pei.si)

ORCID: 0000-0002-2212-4878

<sup>1</sup> Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Croatia, <sup>2</sup> Ministry of Science and Education, Zagreb, Croatia, <sup>3</sup> Mid Sweden University, Sundsvall, Sweden, <sup>4</sup> University of Graz, Graz, Austria, <sup>5</sup> Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark, <sup>6</sup> Educational Research Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia, <sup>7</sup> Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC), Zagreb, Croatia, <sup>8</sup> Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education (DIPF), Frankfurt, Germany, <sup>9</sup> University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

\* Correspondence: Iva Odak, [iva@idi.hr](mailto:iva@idi.hr)

Cite as: Odak, I.; Marušić, I.; Matić Bojić, J.; Puzić, S.; Bakić, H.; Eliasson, N.; Gasteiger Klicpera, B.; Gøtzsche, K.; Kozina, A.; Roczen, N.; Tomé, G.; Veldin, M. (2023). Teachers' Social and Emotional Competencies: A Lever for Social and Emotional Learning in Schools. *Sociology and Space*, 226 (1): 105 -122

Copyright © 2023 Institut za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu – Institute for Social Research in Zagreb  
Sva prava pridržana – All rights reserved

**ABSTRACT** The present paper focuses on social and emotional learning, and highlights empirical findings on its importance for teachers, students and schools. The importance of social and emotional learning in school settings has been a central focus of research for the last 30 years. The development of teachers' social and emotional competencies has been an essential factor for improving social and emotional learning of students. Only when teachers are able to create a school climate in which students feel included and welcome, students can develop and enhance their social and emotional competencies. In this paper, we outline the main conceptual frameworks on social and emotional learning, emphasizing the CASEL framework, relevant for both young people and adults. We proceed by focusing on teachers' social and emotional competencies, as teachers are one of the key figures for fostering and developing social and emotional competencies in school settings. Afterwards, we address the issue of development of teachers' social and emotional competencies in various settings. The last part of the paper links teachers' and students' social and emotional competencies. We stress the importance of teachers' social and emotional competencies for healthy teacher-student relationships, and students' well-being and academic achievement. As teachers also need support for the development of these competencies, we advocate for comprehensive school-wide approach, in order to ensure the successful implementation of social and emotional learning in classrooms.

*Key words:* social and emotional learning, teachers' social and emotional competencies, teacher-student relationships, teachers' professional development.

This work was supported by the Erasmus+ KA3 programme, under the Grant Agreement number: 626137-EPP-1-2020-2-SI-EPPKA3-PI-POLICY, and is an outcome of the project HAND IN HAND: Empowering teachers across Europe to deal with social, emotional and diversity related career challenges (HAND:ET).

## 1. Introduction

Social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools has a long history, evolving from the early interest for social competencies and character education to the elaborated contemporary approaches and comprehensive frameworks that have expanded in recent decades (Cohen, 2006; Osher et al., 2016). Social and emotional development has been increasingly in the focus of both research and policy in education (Cefai et al., 2018). The last two decades of research in social and emotional learning in schools indicate that social, emotional and cognitive development are intertwined and related to an array of academic and life outcomes (Jones et al., 2019). Research suggests that social and emotional competencies are fundamental for students' academic performance and completion at the post-secondary level, later occupational success and mental health, quality relationships and citizenship engagement in adulthood, while being inversely related to negative outcomes such as criminal behaviour and substance use (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Greenberg et al., 2017).

The importance of integrating social and emotional learning in schools has been reflected in a variety of recent education policy documents in the European Union. These documents recognize the improvement of students' emotional, social and psychological well-being and their academic achievement as equally important strategic educational goals (EU, 2017). The EU framework on key competences for lifelong learning proposes *personal, social and learning to learn competence* that integrates social, emotional and cognitive elements, such as the ability to reflect upon oneself, empathize and constructively work with others, support one's physical and emotional well-being, and maintain physical and mental health. Further, this competence involves respecting the diversity of others, and the capacity to overcome prejudices and to compromise (Cefai et al., 2018). Recent policy documents of the European Educational Area focus on teachers and educators as well, considering their well-being as critical for their professional motivation and the quality of their teaching (EC, 2021). Social and emotional competencies are gaining more prominence internationally, as reflected in the OECD Learning Compass 2030. The document promotes core foundations as the fundamental conditions that enable learning. Three foundations are seen as particularly important: cognitive foundations, which include literacy and numeracy; health foundations, including physical and mental health and well-being; social and emotional foundations, including moral and ethics. This framework recognizes the role of social and emotional competencies, which include emotional regulation, collaboration, open-mindedness and engaging with others, in the individuals' adaptation and engagement with their environments, including home, school and work. Further, it states that children and young people need to develop and internalise moral and pro-social principles and self-regulatory skills and behaviours, such as empathy, honesty and treating others fairly (OECD, 2019).

Strong empirical evidence on the importance of social and emotional competencies for a number of educational and life outcomes promoted the area of social and emotional learning in schools into a priority issue worldwide, as reflected in a number of policy documents and initiatives. The literature in the field is, however, abundant with various, often overlapping terms and concepts such as social and emotional learning, social and emotional skills, emotional intelligence, personal and social education, mental health, social and emotional well-being etc. (Cefai et al., 2018; Monnier, 2015). As Jones and Doolittle (2017) argue, conceptual variation is a challenge in understanding and interpreting the evidence on social and emotional learning. Different conceptual frameworks can lead to different research questions, measurement issues, interventions and evaluation strategies. It is therefore important to outline main theoretical positions and core concepts promoted in the literature about social and emotional learning.

## 2. Conceptual frameworks on social and emotional learning

In their recent paper, Brown and Donnelly (2020) argue that there are three main conceptual approaches to the field of social and emotional learning: the skills and competencies approach, the morals and ethics approach, and the capital and identity approach. The conceptualizations behind the latter two approaches are beyond the scope of our competence-oriented overview. We are therefore focusing on the skills and competencies approach as a dominant paradigm with various frameworks that organize the social and emotional domain into categories. These categories, according to Brown and Donnelly (2020), refer to three dimensions: 1) cognitive skills, such as self-awareness and social awareness, problem-solving and decision-making; 2) affective skills, such as emotional awareness and managing feelings, and 3) behavioural competencies, such as interpersonal skills, social intelligence and relationship skills. Cefai et al. (2018) propose a distinction between two core sets of competencies, ones related to Self (intrapersonal skills) and Others (interpersonal skills).

Summarizing the research on social and emotional learning of children and adolescents in schools, Jones and Doolittle (2017) provide a framework that integrates both cognitive as well as social and emotional processes. They organize social and emotional competencies in three categories: cognitive regulation, emotional processes, and social and interpersonal skills. While cognitive regulation refers to a set of traditional cognitive abilities, such as problem solving and focusing attention, emotional processes are seen as the ability to recognize, express and regulate one's own emotions and understand the emotions of others. Social and interpersonal skills are conceptualized as the ability to interpret other people's behaviour, effectively manage social situations and successfully interact with others.

The most prominent of the proposed frameworks is Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) that recently updated their widely recognized definition of social and emotional learning and competencies framework (CASEL, 2020a, 2020b). CASEL defines social and emotional learning as the process through which people acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020a). The framework outlines five broad, interrelated areas of social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020b). According to CASEL (2020b; see also Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017), *self-awareness* refers to the ability to recognize and understand one's emotions, thoughts and values, as well as their influence on behaviour across contexts. This includes the capacity to assess one's strengths and limitations, and having a strong sense of confidence and purpose. *Self-management* implies having the ability to effectively regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in various situations, and to achieve goals and aspirations. This presumes

delaying gratification, managing stress, motivating oneself, and persisting in achieving personal and collective goals. *Social awareness* is the ability to understand the perspective of others and to empathize, including with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It assumes having the capacity to understand social norms, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and support. *Relationship skills* refer to the ability to establish and keep healthy and supportive relationships. These skills imply communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, negotiating conflict, navigating different social and cultural settings, providing leadership and seeking or offering help when needed. Finally, *responsible decision-making* is the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions, based on the realistic evaluation of different actions and the consideration of ethical standards, safety issues and social norms (CASEL, 2020b; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017).

CASEL has become the organizing framework for the research in the field that has become increasingly complex and conceptually integrated in a larger social context and social priorities (Cohen, 2006). Following the introduction of CASEL, several models have been proposed that expand the existing framework to integrate social and emotional competencies into a broader array of social issues such as mental health, self-determination, transcultural competencies and transformative citizenship.

Recognizing the increasing prominence of school mental health promotion in the global child health policy agenda, Cavioni et al. (2020) propose a model of mental health promotion in schools that integrates three lines of intervention: programmes focused on enhancing social and emotional competencies, programmes that promote resilience in children and interventions aimed at preventing emotional and behavioural problems. Social and emotional learning of students thus appears as one of the three fundamental domains of mental health promotion in schools. In line with the observation that well-being of teachers has been largely overlooked in the existing conceptualizations of school mental health, the authors underline the importance of teachers' own emotional health as a key element of the whole-school approach to the mental health promotion (Cavioni et al., 2020).

Collie (2020) proposes a Social and Emotional School Model integrating a well-established self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the CASEL model of social and emotional competencies. According to this model, support for basic psychological needs related to the social and emotional domain in schools reinforces social-emotional autonomous motivation, which in turn promotes socially and emotionally competent behaviours. Support for autonomy, competence and relatedness as basic psychological needs are in this model focused on a domain of social and emotional competencies. This underlines the importance of school environment that meets basic psychological needs for social and emotional competencies development.

Jagers et al. (2019) use the CASEL framework to further expand the definitions of social and emotional competencies, advocating transformative social and emotional competencies that can better address existing inequities, promote social justice and critical citizenship. Recently, efforts have been made to integrate social and emotional competencies with intercultural ones in a framework that seeks connections between the two domains, recognizing that social and emotional competencies are a fundamental part of the intercultural ones (Nielsen et al., 2019). The next section focuses on teachers as one of the key figures for fostering and developing social and emotional competencies in school settings.

### **3. Teachers' social and emotional competencies**

Along the lines of the described CASEL (2020b) model dimensions, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) describe teachers with high social and emotional competencies as self-aware, able to identify their own emotions, and use them positively to encourage others to learn. Such teachers are realistic in assessing their own capacities, strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the emotional domain. They are good in self-management and can regulate their emotions and behaviours in a way that promotes a positive classroom climate, even in emotionally burdened situations. Furthermore, teachers with high social and emotional competencies are socially aware. They understand others' emotions and strive to establish and maintain supportive relationships. Moreover, they demonstrate prosocial values and care about the impact of their decisions on the well-being of others. They are also culturally aware, knowing that others' perspectives may differ from their own, which can help them in resolving conflicts (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Apart from the concepts of social and emotional competence that were outlined in the work by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), the domain of teachers' social and emotional competencies also includes more generic constructs, such as empathy or broader-level self-efficacy beliefs, that may also affect teachers' striving to form supportive relationships in the classroom (Cooper, 2004). Investigating the interrelations between the more general constructs, Hen and Goroshit (2016) indicated that teachers' emotional self-efficacy has a direct and indirect positive effect on their empathy and that this relationship is partially mediated by teaching self-efficacy. It is stressed that these findings support the idea of a larger domain of teachers' social and emotional competencies, while indicating the relevance of enhancing teachers' ability to regulate their emotions.

Even though there is growing awareness of the importance of teacher's SEL, this type of learning often remains neglected (Collie et al., 2011). According to Jones et al. (2013), most interventions to develop SEL and build a positive school culture focus on students, while teachers typically receive little training for supporting students' social and emotional development, and little or no training for developing their own social and emotional competencies. Recent qualitative evidence suggests that even

teachers place little importance on their personal SEL (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Across a sample of teachers who completed cognitive interviews, the authors identified that, despite being aware of their own needs, teachers had to balance them with their students' needs. This shift of attention from themselves to students was something that teachers often did at the expense of their own mental health.

The overlooking of teachers' SEL, combined with increasing demands and challenges of the teacher profession, can lead to adverse outcomes that take toll in both professional and personal lives of teachers, such as low job satisfaction (e.g. Vršnik Perše et al., 2020), stress (Collie et al., 2012), burnout (Oliveira et al., 2021b), etc. The findings of Rodriguez et al. (2020) clearly demonstrated that teachers struggled to maintain a positive mental attitude both at work and at home. Further, the challenges of an increasingly demanding profession can be critical for new teachers who are prone to epistemological challenges and emotional exhaustion (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). In contrast, Carstensen and Klusmann (2021) showed that beginning teachers' social competence negatively predicted emotional exhaustion, and that it might constitute an important predictor of their occupational well-being and early-career adaptation.

Given their importance for the overall process of social and emotional learning in schools, teachers' social and emotional competencies warrant more attention from school leadership, scholars and policy makers. In the next section, we focus on the development of teachers' social and emotional competencies.

### ***3.1. Development of teachers' social and emotional competencies***

Many people hold the assumption that teachers should be socially and emotionally competent by disposition, and that all teachers naturally possess fully developed social and emotional competencies (Jones et al., 2013; Oliveira et al., 2021a). Rather, these competencies, as it is the case with other competencies, should be developed through ongoing efforts in various settings, e.g. through careful interaction between teacher and students in everyday classroom encounters (Rodriguez et al., 2020), through specifically tailored interventions aiming at the development of teachers' social and emotional competencies (Jones et al., 2013), and through teachers' delivery of the SEL programmes focused on students social and emotional competencies development (Domitrovich et al., 2016). At the same time, the development of social and emotional competencies is greatly dependent on the context (Collie & Perry, 2019). For example, managing stress is an easier task in an environment that encourages learning compared to an environment that is overly critical. Thus, a supportive climate not only enhances teachers' SEL, but also provides conditions for its effective use (Jones et al., 2013). Along these lines, it is recommended that teachers' implementation of an SEL programme includes regular support by other experts who may give them constructive feedback on their performance (Buchanan et al., 2009). In doing so,

teachers may implement the programme with more ease, efficiency and integrity. Furthermore, they can use opportunities for improvement when needed (Buchanan et al., 2009). It is crucial that this kind of support is based on a collaborative relationship between teachers and fellow experts, e.g. other teachers, school psychologists, school counsellors, university researchers or others. Likewise, Nielsen et al. (2019) highlight the collaborative aspect of successful SEL implementation, and especially the fact that it cannot be reduced to the activities in the specific SEL programme. Instead, the authors point to the central role of professional learning over time, whereby the balance between programme adaptation and fidelity might best be addressed by an adaptive curriculum emphasizing active forms of learning.

Professional learning programmes aiming at strengthening teachers' social and emotional competencies (e.g. those focusing on establishing and maintaining positive relationships with students, parents and colleagues, those empowering teachers for handling situations of intensive stress, disruptive student behaviour or conflicts etc.) are usually seen by teachers as highly beneficial, even more than subject-related and instruction-related trainings (Dorman, 2015). This is not surprising knowing that main stressors in the teaching profession are those pertaining to the social and emotional domain (Oliveira et al., 2021b). At the same time, pre-service teacher education tends to overlook both the comprehensive social and emotional development of future teachers, and their preparation for the promotion of these competencies in their prospective students (Cross Francis et al., 2019; Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019). Namely, upon a systematic examination of pre-service teacher education requirements and courses in the USA, Schonert-Reichl et al. (2017) concluded that few higher education institutions educate future teachers on how to enhance SEL of all students through everyday classroom practice. The authors point to a mismatch between what specific American states require teachers to know about SEL and what universities offer them. Accordingly, in their study on teachers' perceptions and practices regarding SEL in classrooms, Buchanan et al. (2009) revealed that more than a third of the respondents reported not being satisfied with their current knowledge and skills related to SEL. Moreover, more than a third of the teachers from this study saw their current level of training as "somewhat" of a barrier to SEL implementation and around one third as a significant barrier, i.e. as a barrier that "very much applies".

Jones et al. (2013) group in-service professional development programmes, designed to enhance teachers' social and emotional competencies, into four categories: emotion-focused training, relationship-building interventions, mindfulness and stress reduction, and SEL routines. The main idea of emotion-focused training is to empower teachers for enhanced emotional regulation that has potential to help them to cope with stress, frustration, and challenges of the teaching profession. Students learn by watching how teachers manage frustration, keep control of themselves and the classroom, remain focused even when distracted, and adapt tactics if necessary.



Relationship-building interventions are intended to foster positive teacher-student interactions. Mindfulness and stress reduction approaches aim at assisting teachers to be more focused, more aware of the present moment, non-judgmental, more reflective, more responsive, and more flexible. This is achieved with a help of strategies such as deep breathing, yoga, and secular meditation. Finally, SEL routines refer to structures and routines that continuously remind and lead students and teachers in using SEL skills. Used in the everyday school context, routines are either structured activities (e.g. breathing techniques) or specific language (e.g. "I-messages"). In some cases, the school environments are arranged to encourage students, teachers and others to use SEL skills (e.g. via exposing them to posters or video material). Routines appear effective due to their consistent use throughout the day, with staff and students using them in the same way that they use other behaviours, such as raising hands prior to speaking in the classroom (Jones et al., 2013).

As evident, SEL interventions may come in different forms, many of which are quite easy to implement and inexpensive. These interventions have several common aims: to build emotional awareness, to promote reflection as a part of the daily practice, and to address teachers' professional and personal stress (Jones et al., 2013). A recent meta-analysis revealed promising results of SEL interventions for teachers, particularly in reducing teachers' psychological distress and increasing well-being (Oliveira et al., 2021b). In line with these findings, Collie et al. (2011) found that support and promotion of SEL culture in schools, as well as comfort with and regular implementation of SEL in the classroom, are associated with greater teacher commitment. The authors suggested that a possible explanation may be that SEL support and promotion provide benefits to the whole school culture and that regular implementation of SEL positively influences teachers' own well-being. The results of a related study (Collie et al., 2012) indicated that teachers' comfort with implementing SEL was positively associated with teaching efficacy and job satisfaction, and negatively associated with the stress regarding students' behaviour and discipline. It is assumed that teachers who are more comfortable implementing SEL interventions also have higher SEL competence and generally feel more comfortable in the classroom. Higher commitment to improving SEL capacities was positively associated with job satisfaction, but also with the stress concerning students' behaviour and workload. The authors suggested that teachers committed to improving their SEL skills may experience stress because they feel that they lack these skills, which may be further exacerbated by growing pressure on teachers – coming from parents, the media and the government - to effectively implement SEL. Concerning job satisfaction, a possible explanation could be that improving skills in SEL may result with a sense of professional growth, which fosters teachers' job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012). The authors also highlighted practical implications of the finding that comfort with implementing SEL and commitment to improving SEL skills had opposite effects on stress, since it suggests that learning SEL skills may be stressful and difficult in the short-term. However, when confidence

for implementing SEL increases, teachers may experience less stress, greater teaching efficacy and greater job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012).

#### **4. The role of teachers' social and emotional competencies in students' SEL**

Teachers are considered to be important emotional socializers (Poulou, 2017). Their SEL is therefore beneficial not only for themselves but also for their students' well-being and social and emotional competencies. Many of the theoretical frameworks on SEL outline three distinct but interrelated dimensions - the learning context, students' SEL, and teachers' SEL (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). As each of the dimensions influences and is influenced by the other two, every discussion about SEL should address all three dimensions. Along these lines, there is evidence suggesting that teachers are strong advocates of introducing SEL in schools. They agree that social and emotional competencies can be taught, that they bring benefits to children from diverse backgrounds, and that they are related to many positive outcomes such as school attendance, good academic results, graduation success, workforce readiness and citizenship skills (Bridgeland et al., 2013). Cross Francis et al. (2019) highlighted the role of teachers' emotional support as perhaps the most influential for students' well-being. Emotional support addresses students' emotional needs by providing empathy, love and care and building trust which in turn predicts students' subjective well-being, as well as their social, academic and emotional competencies. As the authors point out, this holds especially for underachieving students. Similarly, Shechtman and Abu Yaman (2012) concluded that students who received teaching with integrated SEL showed academic improvement, had greater motivation to learn and more favourable perceptions of classroom climate compared to their peers who were not involved in SEL. Poulou's (2017) research also showed that emotional components of the teaching process, along with the teacher's professional skills, had some impact on the minimization of students' emotional and behavioural difficulties. Following a similar rationale, Baroody et al. (2014) advocate the 'responsive classroom' approach – "instructional delivery and social-emotional learning intervention designed to provide teachers with skills needed to create caring, well-managed classroom environments that are conducive to learning" (Baroody et al., 2014, p. 69). The authors suggest that the proposed approach fosters close student-teacher relationships.

The interplay of teachers' and students' awareness of emotions in classroom was the subject of Arguedas et al. (2016) research, who analysed how specific teaching strategies impact students' motivation and learning practices. The study showed that students' awareness of their emotions in some situations helped them to adjust their behaviour, thus benefiting the group. Their achievement also improved with regard to their motivation, engagement and self-regulation (Arguedas et al., 2016).

For the successful transmission of SEL and its values in classrooms, teachers should have positive perceptions of and confidence in their own emotional competencies. As Poulou (2017) showed, teachers' perceptions of their emotional intelligence were significantly correlated with their reports of closeness to students and perceptions of comfort with implementation of SEL, supporting Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) model, which stresses teachers' social and emotional competencies as important for healthy teacher-student relationships. Teachers' beliefs and commitment in relation to SEL are important as they affect the quality of teachers' implementation of SEL programmes. Moreover, as Brackett et al. (2012) pointed out, teachers' commitment to SEL professional development may be critical to the effective implementation of SEL programmes in schools. This is so because teachers are the main deliverers of SEL programmes, whose commitment to learning about SEL can influence both their ability to implement SEL and to model related skills in children (Brackett et al., 2012). Other related factors that may impact the implementation of SEL programmes in schools are teachers' beliefs about the importance of SEL for students' academic success, their comfort-level in implementing SEL programmes, as well as the extent to which one feels that the school culture supports social and emotional learning. Based on these theoretical premises, Brackett et al. (2012) developed an instrument for assessing teacher beliefs about SEL. The instrument included three independent scales addressing a sense of confidence in teaching SEL (Comfort), a desire to participate in training and teaching SEL (Commitment), as well as schoolwide support to SEL (Culture). Reflecting on the practical value of their instrument, the authors conclude that scores on each of the scales could affect the type, timing and amount of training teachers need when participating in an SEL programme (Brackett et al., 2012). The conceptualization offered by Brackett et al. (2012) implies that positive attitude towards the development of students' social and emotional competencies is essential, but insufficient for the successful SEL in schools. Adequate learning context and teachers' social and emotional competencies are necessary prerequisites for the successful development of social and emotional competencies for all students.

It is therefore important to support teachers in further development of their social and emotional competencies in order to ensure the successful implementation of SEL in classrooms. Some authors, like Baroody et al. (2014) and Jennings and Greenberg (2009), stress the role of school principals and school psychologists, who could help by supporting teachers to develop their practice and confidence for using SEL with students. Just as students depend on their teachers to provide safe and supportive classrooms using effective classroom management, teachers depend on their colleagues to create the school environment that is supportive of SEL. For this reason, Tan et al. (2021) advocate for comprehensive school-wide approach, as it promotes school culture that fosters positive behaviours, mutual support between all actors and enhances the feeling of belonging, for students and teachers as well.

The whole-school approach that fosters SEL follows the proposed three dimensions of SEL in schools (Schonert-Reichl, 2017), as it stresses the learning context as well as students' and teachers' SEL. Our position is also in line with the research stressing the importance of SEL development in teachers in order to care about their own personal and professional well-being, well-being and academic achievement of their students, and also to enable teachers to create safe and supportive school and classroom environment for their students.

## **5. Conclusion**

The paper provides an outline of core concepts related to social and emotional learning in schools, and an overview of empirical findings on the benefits of SEL. Recent policy documents in both the European Union and globally underline the importance of social and emotional competencies for the successful life-long learning and well-being, promoting social and emotional learning into a priority area of learning for all. The most prominent theoretical model of social and emotional competencies has been Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), providing an integrative theoretical framework for the growing body of empirical research on the role of social and emotional learning in schools. The empirical evidence on the importance of teachers' role in social and emotional development of their students has been particularly highlighted. However, the research on social and emotional competencies of teachers and their importance for teachers' own mental health has been developing only recently, with promising results underlining the need to foster whole-school approach to social and emotional learning. In line with the existing evidence, we advocate further advancements in the field in both conceptual and empirical domains. Future research should strive for theoretical and conceptual clarity and capitalize on methodological advancements in the field to provide evidence on the most efficient ways of promoting SEL in schools. Considering all the positive effects that emerge from the development of teachers' and students' social and emotional competencies, reflected in professional, educational or personal arenas, we advocate for further sensibilisation of educational policy on these topics. It implies that educational policies at national, regional and local levels should include social and emotional learning in professional education of future teachers, in-service learning for teachers, as well as promote students' SEL in schools from an early age.

## References

1. Arguedas, M.; Daradoumis, T. and Xhafa, F. (2016). Analyzing How Emotion Awareness Influences Students' Motivation, Engagement, Self-Regulation and Learning Outcome. *Educational Technology & Society*, 19 (2): 87-103.
2. Baroody A. E.; Rimm-Kaufman S. E.; Larsen R. A.; Curby T. W. (2014). The Link Between Responsive Classroom Training and Student-Teacher Relationship Quality in the Fifth Grade: A Study of Fidelity of Implementation. *School Psychology Review*, 43 (1): 69-85.
3. Brackett, M. A.; Reyes, M. R.; Rivers, S. E.; Elbertson, N. A.; Salovey, P. (2012). Assessing Teachers' Beliefs About Social and Emotional Learning. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 30 (3): 219-236. doi: [10.1177/0734282911424879](https://doi.org/10.1177/0734282911424879)
4. Bridgeland, J.; Bruce, M. and Hariharan, A. (2013). *The missing piece: A national teacher survey on how social and emotional learning can empower children and transform schools. A report for Casel. executive summary*. Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse.
5. Brown, C. and Donnelly, M. (2020). Theorising social and emotional wellbeing in schools: A framework for analysing educational policy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 37 (4): 613-633. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2020.1860258>
6. Buchanan, R.; Gueldner, B. A.; Tran, O. K.; Merrell, K. W. (2009). Social and Emotional Learning in Classrooms: A Survey of Teachers' Knowledge, Perceptions, and Practices. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 25 (2): 187-203. doi: [10.1080/15377900802487078](https://doi.org/10.1080/15377900802487078)
7. Carstensen, B. and Klusmann, U. (2021). Assertiveness and adaptation: Prospective teachers' social competence development and its significance for occupational well-being. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91: 500-526. doi: [10.1111/bjep.12377](https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12377)
8. CASEL. (2020a). *What is SEL?* <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>. (accessed June 29,2022).
9. CASEL. (2020b). *CASEL Framework*. <https://casel.org/sel-framework/>. (accessed June 29,2022).
10. Cavioni, V.; Grazzani, I. and Ornaghi, V. (2020). Mental health promotion in schools: A comprehensive theoretical framework. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, 12 (1): 65-82.
11. Cefai, C.; Bartolo P. A.; Cavioni, V.; Downes, P. (2018) *Strengthening Social and Emotional Education as a core curricular area across the EU. A review of the international evidence*, NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018. doi: [10.2766/456730](https://doi.org/10.2766/456730)
12. Cohen, J. (2006). Social, Emotional, Ethical, and Academic Education: Creating a Climate for Learning, Participation in Democracy, and Well-Being. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76 (2): 201-237. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.76.2.j44854x1524644vn>

13. Collie, R. J. (2020). The development of social and emotional competence at school: An integrated model. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 44 (1): 76-87.
14. Collie, R. J. and Perry, N. E. (2019). Cultivating teacher thriving through social-emotional competence and its development. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 46 (4): 699-714. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00342-2>
15. Collie, R. J.; Shapka, J. D. and Perry, N. E. (2011). Predicting Teacher Commitment: The Impact of School Climate and Social-Emotional Learning. *Psychology in the Schools*, 48 (10): 1034-1048. doi: [10.1002/pits.20611](https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20611)
16. Collie, R. J.; Shapka, J. D. and Perry, N. E. (2012). School Climate and Social-Emotional Learning: Predicting Teacher Stress, Job Satisfaction, and Teaching Efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104 (4): 1189-1204. doi: [10.1037/a0029356](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029356)
17. Cooper, B. (2004). Empathy, interaction and caring: Teachers' roles in a constraint environment. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 22: 12-21.
18. Cross Francis, D.; Liu, J.; Kaur Bharaj, P.; Eker, A. (2019). Integrating Social-Emotional and Academic Development in Teachers' Approaches to Educating Students. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 6 (2): 138-146. doi: [10.1177/2372732219864375](https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732219864375)
19. Domitrovich, C. E.; Bradshaw, C. P.; Berg, J. K.; Pas, E. T.; Becker, K. D.; Musci, R.; Embry, D. D.; Jalongo, N. (2016). How Do School-Based Prevention Programs Impact Teachers? Findings from a Randomized Trial of an Integrated Classroom Management and Social-Emotional Program. *Prev Sci*, 17: 325-337. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-015-0618-z>
20. Domitrovich, C. E.; Durlak, J. A.; Staley, K. C.; Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Social-emotional competence: An essential factor for promoting positive adjustment and reducing risk in school children. *Child Development*, 88 (2): 408-416. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12739>
21. Donahue-Keegan, D.; Villegas-Reimers, E. and Cressey, J. M. (2019). Integrating Social-Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Teaching in Teacher Education Preparation Programs: The Massachusetts Experience So Far. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Fall 2019: 150-168.
22. Dorman, E. (2015). Building Teachers' Social-Emotional Competence Through Mindfulness Practices. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 17 (1-2): 103-119.
23. EC (2021). Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030).
24. EU (2017) 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. COM/2017/0248 final
25. Greenberg, M., Domitrovich, C., Weissberg, R., Durlak, J. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning as a Public Health Approach to Education. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), 13-32.

26. Hen, M. and Goroshit, M. (2016). Social-emotional competencies among teachers: An examination of interrelationships. *Cogent Education*, 3: 1-9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1151996>
27. Jagers, R. J.; Rivas-Drake, D. and Williams, B. (2019). Transformative social and emotional learning (SEL): Toward SEL in service of educational equity and excellence. *Educational Psychologist*, 54 (3): 162–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1623032>
28. Jennings, P. A. and Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79 (1): 491-525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>
29. Jones, S. M.; Bouffard, S. M. and Weissbourd, R. (2013). Educators' social and emotional skills vital to learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 94: 62-65.
30. Jones, S. M. and Doolittle, E. J. (2017). Social and emotional learning: Introducing the issue. *The Future of Children*, 27 (1): 3-11. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2017.0000>
31. Jones, S. M.; McGarrah, M. W. and Kahn, J. (2019). Social and emotional learning: A principled science of human development in context. *Educational Psychologist*, 54 (3): 129-143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1625776>
32. Monnier, M. (2015). Difficulties in Defining Social-Emotional Intelligence, Competences and Skills - a Theoretical Analysis and Structural Suggestion. *International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training*, 2 (1): 59-84. <https://doi.org/10.13152/IJRVET.2.1.4>
33. Nielsen, B. L.; Laursen, D. H.; Reol, L. A.; Jensen, H.; Jurko, S. (2019). Social, Emotional and Intercultural competencies: A literature review with a particular focus on the school staff. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 42 (3): 410-428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2019.1604670>
34. OECD (2019). *Future of Education and Skills 2030 Conceptual Learning Framework*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
35. Oliveira, S.; Roberto, M. S.; Pereira, N. S.; Marques-Pinto, A.; Veiga-Simão, A. M. (2021a). Impacts of Social and Emotional Learning Interventions for Teachers on Teachers' Outcomes: A Systematic Review With Meta-Analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12: 2543.
36. Oliveira, S.; Roberto, M. S.; Veiga-Simão, A. M.; Marques-Pinto, A. (2021b). A meta-analysis of the impact of social and emotional learning interventions on teachers' burnout symptoms. *Educational Psychology Review*, 33 (4): 1779-1808. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-021-09612-x>
37. Osher D.; Kidron Y.; Brackett M.; Dymnicki A.; Jones S.; Weissberg R. P. (2016). Advancing the Science and Practice of Social and Emotional Learning: Looking Back and Moving Forward. *Review of Research in Education*, 40 (1): 644-681. doi:10.3102/0091732X16673595

38. Poulou, M. (2017). An examination of the relationship among teachers' perceptions of social-emotional learning, teaching efficacy, teacher-students interactions and students' behavioral difficulties. *International Journal of School and Educational Psychology*, 5 (2): 126-136.
39. Rodriguez, V.; Lynneth Solis, S.; Mascio, B.; Kiely Gouley, K.; Jennings, P. A.; Brotman, L. M. (2020). With awareness comes competency: The Five awarenesses of teaching as a framework for understanding teacher social-emotional competency and well-being. *Early Education and Development*, 31 (7): 940-972. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2020.1794496>
40. Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55: 68-78.
41. Schonert-Reichl, K. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers. *The Future of Children*, 27 (1): 137-155.
42. Schonert-Reichl, K. A.; Kitil, M. J. and Hanson-Peterson, J. (2017). *To reach the students, teach the teachers: A national scan of teacher preparation and social and emotional learning. A report prepared for the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)*. Vancouver, B.C.: University of British Columbia.
43. Shechtman, Z. and Abu Yaman, M. (2012). SEL as a component of a literature class to improve relationships, behavior, motivation, and content knowledge. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49 (3): 546-567. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212441359>
44. Tan, K.; Yore, C. and Hillen, M. (2021). Ninth Grade Office discipline referrals: The critical role of teachers in addressing students' social, emotional, and behavioural needs. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 26 (2): 119-134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2021.1880731>
45. Vršnik Perše, T.; Kozina, A.; Vidmar, M.; Veldin, M.; Pivec, T.; Mlekuž, A.; Štremfel, U. (2020). Socialne, čustvene in medkulturne kompetence učiteljev: napovedna vrednost za zadovoljstvo z delom [Teachers' Social, Emotional and Intercultural Competencies: Predictive Value for Job Satisfaction]. *Sodobna Pedagogika*, 71 (3): 26-225.



## **Socijalne i emocionalne kompetencije učitelja: Temelj za socijalno i emocionalno učenje u školama**

**Iva Odak<sup>1</sup>**  
e-mail: iva@idi.hr

**Iris Marušić<sup>1</sup>**  
e-mail: iris@idi.hr

**Jelena Matić Bojić<sup>1</sup>**  
e-mail: matic@idi.hr

**Saša Puzić<sup>1</sup>**  
e-mail: puzic@idi.hr

**Hrvoje Bakić<sup>2</sup>**  
e-mail: hrvoje.bakic@mzo.hr

**Nina Eliasson<sup>3</sup>**  
e-mail: nina.eliasson@miun.se

**Barbara Gasteiger Klicpera<sup>4</sup>**  
e-mail: barbara.gasteiger@uni-graz.at

**Katinka Gøtzsche<sup>5</sup>**  
e-mail: katinka@clin.au.dk

**Ana Kozina<sup>6</sup>**  
e-mail: ana.kozina@pei.si

**Iva Perković<sup>7</sup>**  
e-mail: iva@edupolicy.net

**Nina Roczen<sup>8</sup>**  
e-mail: n.roczen@dipf.de

**Gina Tomé<sup>9</sup>**  
e-mail: ginatome@sapo.pt

**Manja Veldin<sup>6</sup>**  
e-mail: veldin@pei.si

<sup>1</sup> Institut za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu, Hrvatska

<sup>2</sup> Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja, Zagreb, Hrvatska

<sup>3</sup> Sveučilište Mid Sweden, Sundsvall, Švedska

<sup>4</sup> Sveučilište u Grazu, Austrija

<sup>5</sup> Sveučilište u Aarhusu, Danska

<sup>6</sup> Pedagoški institut, Ljubljana, Slovenija

<sup>7</sup> Mreža centara za obrazovne politike (NEPC), Zagreb, Hrvatska

<sup>8</sup> Leibnizov institut za međunarodna pedagoška istraživanja (DIPF), Frankfurt, Njemačka

<sup>9</sup> Sveučilište u Lisabonu, Portugal

### **Sažetak**

Ovaj se rad usredotočuje na socijalno i emocionalno učenje i ističe empirijske nalaze o njegovoj važnosti za učitelje, učenike i škole. Važnost socijalnog i emocionalnog učenja u školskim okruženjima središnji je fokus istraživanja tijekom posljednjih 30 godina. Razvoj socijalnih i emocionalnih kompetencija učitelja bio je bitan čimbenik za poboljšanje socijalnog i emocionalnog učenja učenika. Samo kada su učitelji sposobni stvoriti školsku klimu u kojoj se učenici osjećaju uključenima i dobrodošlima, učenici mogu razvijati i unaprijediti svoje socijalne i emocionalne kompetencije. U ovom radu iznosimo glavne konceptualne okvire o socijalnom i emocionalnom učenju, s naglaskom na CASEL okvir, relevantan i za mlade i za odrasle.

Nastavljamo usmjeravajući se na socijalne i emocionalne kompetencije učitelja, budući da su učitelji jedni od ključnih figura za poticanje i razvoj socijalnih i emocionalnih kompetencija u školskom okruženju. Zatim se bavimo pitanjem razvoja socijalnih i emocionalnih kompetencija učitelja u različitim okruženjima. Posljednji dio rada povezuje socijalne i emocionalne kompetencije učitelja i učenika. Naglašavamo važnost socijalnih i emocionalnih kompetencija učitelja za zdrave odnose učitelja i učenika te za dobrobit i akademska postignuća učenika. Budući da i učitelji trebaju podršku za razvoj ovih kompetencija, zalažemo se za sveobuhvatan pristup na razini cijele škole kako bismo osigurali uspješnu implementaciju socijalnog i emocionalnog učenja u razredima.

*Ključne riječi:* socijalno i emocionalno učenje, socijalne i emocionalne kompetencije učitelja, odnosi učitelj-učenik, stručno usavršavanje učitelja.