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Educator's Understanding of Intellectual Social Emotional Skills as Strengthening Educator's Character

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyse teachers' understanding of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as an effort to strengthen the character of educators. The research focus includes teachers' understanding of: (1) the impact of implementing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making in learning on teaching quality; (2) Integration of intellectual and SEL skills into critical thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, and computational logic for decision making in the learning process at class; and (3) teachers' needs in developing the integration of intellectual and SEL skills in learning. The research method uses a phenomenological approach with data collected through surveys, in-depth interviews and observations of

teachers in five provinces in Indonesia. The results show that 94% of teachers understand the importance of SEL in creating positive and inclusive learning, but only 53% are able to implement it effectively. As many as 78% of teachers succeeded in creating a conducive classroom atmosphere, while only 64% were able to understand students' perspectives, and 45% showed sensitivity to students' individual differences. These findings indicate that limited professional training, curriculum pressure, and high workload are the main obstacles. This research emphasizes the importance of integrating social-emotional and intellectual skills in learning to support the adaptive character of educators. Recommendations include ongoing training, policy support for resource provision, and regular reflection on teaching practice to improve teacher competency in implementing SEL.

Keywords: *Intellectual Skills, Social Emotional Learning, Educator Character*

INTRODUCTION

Education has a very important role in facing the demands of life in the future (Tan et al., 2017). A future-oriented educational approach is called 21st century learning which emphasizes the importance of individual initiative and the intellectual capital of citizens (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013). Future-oriented education is closely tied to ideas about digital technology in today's world and its role in shaping teaching and learning (Benade et al., 2014; Istance & Kools, 2013). This is done in line with rapid changes in student-centred, personalized, inquiry-based, collaborative and authentic learning (Moradoff et al., 2021; Oliver & Oesterreich, 2013; Pastini & Lilasari, 2023).

The 21st century has brought major changes in the education system, with an emphasis on 21st century competencies such as digital literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022; Van Laar et al., 2017). Exposure to inclusive social values can accelerate the development of empathy and cooperation among students. Environments that support positive interactions between individuals, such as learning communities, also increase the mastery of social-emotional skills (Morze & Hrynevych, 2021). However, social-emotional learning (SEL) skills are becoming increasingly important for teachers as a complement to these skills. Research shows that teachers' mastery of SEL not only improves student learning outcomes, but also helps create an emotionally healthy classroom environment. The research identified that the most important non-cognitive qualities for effective teaching are: empathy and communication; organization and planning; and resilience and adaptability (Klassen et al., 2018). SEL is not only beneficial for students, but also for teachers. Teachers who master SEL tend to have better emotional resilience. Teachers can manage stress from work pressure, improve relationships between colleagues, and maintain work-life balance (Frank, 2020). This is very important in the 21st century, where the level of burnout among teachers is increasing.

SEL skills not only strengthen student-teacher relationships but also improve teachers' managerial abilities in the classroom. Teachers who master SEL are better able to create safe and supportive learning environments. This is relevant to the challenges of the 21st century, where students face various pressures, including rapid technological developments and social uncertainty. Teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also facilitators of student character development. In this case, teachers' emotional competence helps students manage stress, understand other people, and build healthy social relationships. Teachers' social-emotional competence contributes significantly to improving student learning outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teacher trained in SEL have a very positive impact on students. These teachers not only teach technical skills but also create a learning environment that supports students' emotional development (Gilar-Corbi et al., 2019). Training teachers in SEL also helps them better manage classroom dynamics. Teachers who understand and apply SEL are able to support student character development and increase student engagement in the classroom. Teachers are also able to face emotional challenges in education, such as interpersonal conflicts and work pressure (Vila et al., 2021). The importance of mastering SEL

by teachers in dealing with crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The ability to remain calm, empathize, and support students emotionally becomes an urgent need in this situation (Maas et al., 2018).

Pellaud et al. (2021) emphasize that formal SEL training for teachers results in significant improvements in classroom management, student development, and management of interpersonal relationships. This research also states the need for regular evaluation of SEL competencies to ensure their effectiveness. Lawson et al. (2019) systematically identified core components of SEL including social skills, identifying feelings in others, identifying feelings in oneself, and coping skills/relaxation. A review conducted by Mahoney et al. (2018) showed that universal school-based SEL programs resulted in positive benefits for participating students on a variety of behavioral and academic outcomes. Gimbert et al. (2023) conclude with guiding principles for training programs and professional learning opportunities for strengthening educators' understanding of their own SEL to improve daily pedagogical practice and ensure each school-wide initiative around SEL drives seamless strategies for attaining school improvement outcomes.

SEL contributes to student success, so it needs to be strengthened for teachers so that teachers can implement it in schools (Mustafina et al., 2020). SEL can improve new teachers' emotional and social skills, making them more resilient to change, such as those resulting from the recent COVID 19 pandemic (Styfanyshyn & Yurko, 2020). TISEL supports the formation of teacher professionalism which is carried out in the education of prospective teachers so that they have the ability to (a) understand or implement educational foundations, both psychological, philosophical and sociological; (b) implementing learning theories that are appropriate to students' level of development; (c) developing learning materials; (d) using varied learning methods; (e) utilize various tools, media and learning resources; (f) organize and implement learning programs; (g) evaluating student learning outcomes; (h) forming students' personalities. It can be seen that the TISEL elements strengthen the formation of teacher professionalism. Professional teachers in the 21st century (a) have matured and developed personalities; (b) strong mastery of knowledge; (c) skills to awaken students to science and technology; and (d) continuous professional development. These four aspects constitute a unified whole that cannot be separated and supplemented with other efforts that influence the development of the professional teaching profession (Boeriswati et al., 2023).

This research is urgent and cannot be overlooked because the findings contribute to the advancement of science. Understanding of SEL, which comprises self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relational skills, and responsible decision-making in learning for teaching quality, must be prioritized. In practice, this study provides a foundation for integrating teachers' intellectual skills and SEL with critical thinking skills, creativity, teamwork, and computational logic for decision making in the classroom. Based on this, this study seeks to answer the question of how teachers perceive Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as an effort to enhance their character.

METHOD

This type of research is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was chosen considering that this research seeks to reveal the phenomenon of the educational character of teachers' implementation of social emotional learning. This research was conducted in Jakarta, Pandeglang, Purwokerto and Surabaya. Location selection is determined purposively. This school was chosen because it has a unique school culture that supports the implementation of social emotional learning in the classroom by teachers. The research was conducted for 8 (eight) months from April 2024 to November 2024. The subjects of this research were high school teachers in Pandeglang, high school

teachers, students and lecturers in education in Jakarta, Purwokerto and Surabaya. The object of this research was teachers' understanding of the impact of teacher social emotional skills towards the interaction of teachers and students in the classroom.

In this research, the research instrument or tool is the researchers themselves. Researchers as research instruments carry out the function of determining research focus, selecting informants as data sources, collecting data, assessing data quality, analyzing data, interpreting data and making conclusions about their findings. Researchers go into the field themselves, at the grand tour question stage, focused and selection stage, carrying out data collection, analysis and making conclusions. To support the validity of this research data, data credibility testing was carried out by increasing persistence by carrying out continuous observations, triangulating techniques, sources and time, peer debriefing (discussing it with other people). Through these efforts, it is hoped that the validity of the data will gain a degree of trust and can be scientifically justified. The data analysis technique uses an interactive analysis model. Activities in data analysis include: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ability to implement self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making is very important in fostering a sense of empathy and humanist attitudes in teachers. This can help teachers maximize teaching potential, provide opportunities for continuous improvement, help build more empathetic relationships with students, make wiser decisions in learning, and be a positive role model for students in terms of self-development. Based on data in the field, it was found that teachers' understanding of implementing self-awareness self-management, social awareness relationship skills and responsible decision making in teacher-student interactions in the classroom can be explained as follows.

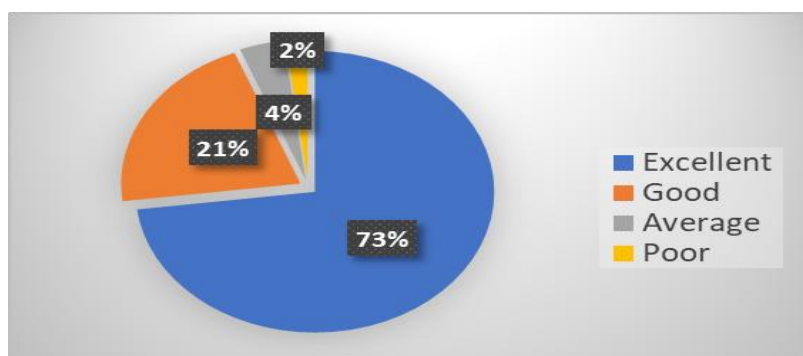


Figure 1. Teachers' Understanding of SEL in Teacher and Student Interactions in the Classroom

Based on data from in-depth interviews, interpretation of the role of SEL in teacher and student interactions in the classroom, seen from various aspects of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. 94% of teachers have an understanding of the application of SEL, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Teachers realize that mastering SEL helps teachers create more empathetic relationships with students and promotes a positive classroom atmosphere. Research findings specifically suggest that teachers who have good self-awareness can recognize their own emotions and understand how these emotions influence interactions with students. This awareness allows teachers to control negative emotions, thereby creating more positive relationships with students.

In terms of Self-Management, respondents said that teachers who are able to manage their emotions well can face class challenges calmly and wisely. These findings realize that this self-

management helps teachers create a stable learning atmosphere, supports students emotionally, and minimizes conflict. Classroom learning is a social interaction between teachers and students, as well as students and students, so it is important for a teacher to have an understanding of the diverse needs of students, especially those facing social or emotional pressure. From data in the field, respondents believe that teachers' social awareness of students' emotional and social backgrounds helps create a more inclusive approach. This awareness has the consequence that relationship building skills enable teachers to create trusting relationships with students. These good relationships motivate students and create active engagement in learning.

What is more important in this research is that a teacher in carrying out the learning process in the classroom is required to always make a decision. Based on the results of this interview, it is concluded that teachers who make decisions based on empathy and justice can help create a supportive and fair learning environment. The reason is that teachers who have good empathy can support building students' trust in teachers and support an inclusive learning process.

However, teachers also realize that understanding the role of SEL needs to continue to be honed through reflection, learning and experience to support more effective and quality learning. This can be seen from teachers' efforts to continue learning and developing through experience, reflection, evaluation and training. Based on the results of the interview, understanding of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making in fostering a sense of empathy and humanist attitudes in teachers was obtained from reflecting after the learning process. Teachers use reflection to evaluate strengths and weaknesses, both in terms of teaching methods and interactions with students. Some teachers also ask for feedback from students and peers to gain a more objective perspective.

Teachers also identify challenges in dealing with students with special needs or certain emotional situations as important moments to strengthen self-control. However, it is recognized that there are many challenges in implementing SEL. From data in the field, 53% of teachers expressed difficulties in understanding SEL independently. However, teachers try to find solutions through self-evaluation and collaboration with colleagues.

It is realized that a teacher's SEL skills have an impact on students in classroom learning. Based on data in the field it can be described as follows.

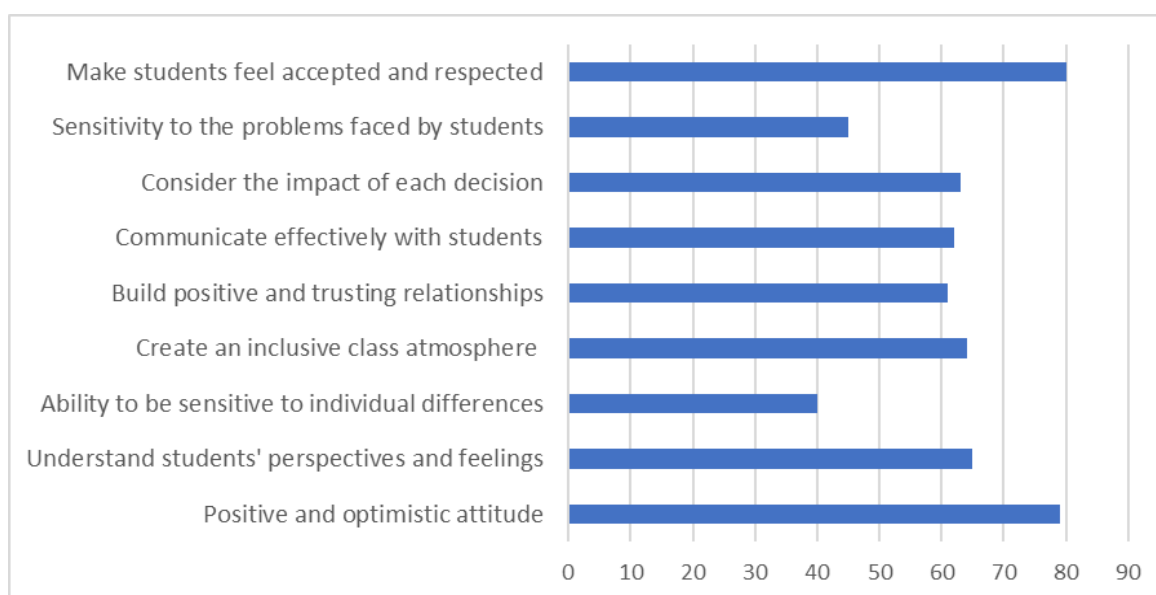


Figure 2. The Level of Teachers' Social-Emotional Skills

This data reflects the level of teachers' social-emotional skills in important aspects that can support effective and inclusive learning. Based on this data it can be categorized as follows: (1) The teacher has been able to build positive relationships and a supportive classroom atmosphere. This is proven that 78% of teachers have a positive and optimistic attitude. Most teachers (78%) have an attitude that supports a positive classroom atmosphere, provides motivation, and increases student enthusiasm. 74% of teachers were able to create an inclusive classroom atmosphere and 80% of teachers felt that they had made students feel accepted and appreciated. (2) Teachers have been able to interact with students as proven by 73% of teachers who can communicate effectively, that is, teachers are able to convey information clearly and open space for dialogue with students, creating a two-way communication relationship. Teachers have also been able to build positive relationships and mutual trust, namely 72% of teachers stated that the majority of teachers succeeded in establishing good interpersonal relationships, increasing student involvement in learning and providing a sense of security. (3) Although the data shows a fairly good position, it needs special attention, namely only 64% of teachers are able to understand students' perspectives and feelings and 63% consider the impact of each decision. This indicates that there is still room for development in the ability to understand students' points of view and make decisions that take into account the emotional impact on students. Furthermore, only 49% of teachers have teacher sensitivity towards the problems faced by students. This low sensitivity indicates challenges in recognizing or understanding students' problems in depth, such as emotional or academic difficulties. The same thing also happened in the aspect of teacher sensitivity to individual differences, namely 45%. This shows that many teachers are still unable to recognize and adapt approaches to individual student needs, such as learning styles or cultural backgrounds.

Based on the data above, an in-depth exploration of the factors that cause teacher sensitivity to individual student differences and teacher sensitivity to problems faced by students to be less than optimal is carried out, namely: (1) Lack of understanding of educational psychology aspects, such as learning styles, emotional needs and cognitive differences of students, tend to be insensitive to individual differences. A lack of professional training regarding inclusive education or differentiation in teaching makes it difficult for teachers to recognize and respond to the needs of students with different backgrounds. (2) Teachers often focus more on achieving academic targets or completing material, so that individual aspects of students are neglected. In addition, a uniform evaluation system makes it difficult for teachers to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses. (3) The inadequacy of tools or support such as school counsellors and appropriate learning materials causes teachers to be unable to accommodate the needs of diverse students. (4) Teachers do not routinely reflect on teaching practice to identify strengths and weaknesses in learning. (5) Teachers often face high workloads and emotional stress.

Based on the results of the FGD, it can be concluded that the need for teachers to strengthen their character as educators is not only from the personal domain such as social emotional but also intellectual strengthening. The role of intellectual skills in implementing social emotions in learning is very important. Intellectual and social emotional balance in teaching is very important, especially analytical skills, problem solving, critical thinking, and communication skills to design meaningful learning, manage class dynamics, provide reflective models, deliver material creatively, and carry out evaluation and feedback. Based on the reflections carried out by teachers to make this happen, teachers in the field need a collaboration of intellectual and social emotional skills as the character of educators to teach. The following is a list of teachers' needs for strengthening the character of educators through social, emotional and intellectual skills.

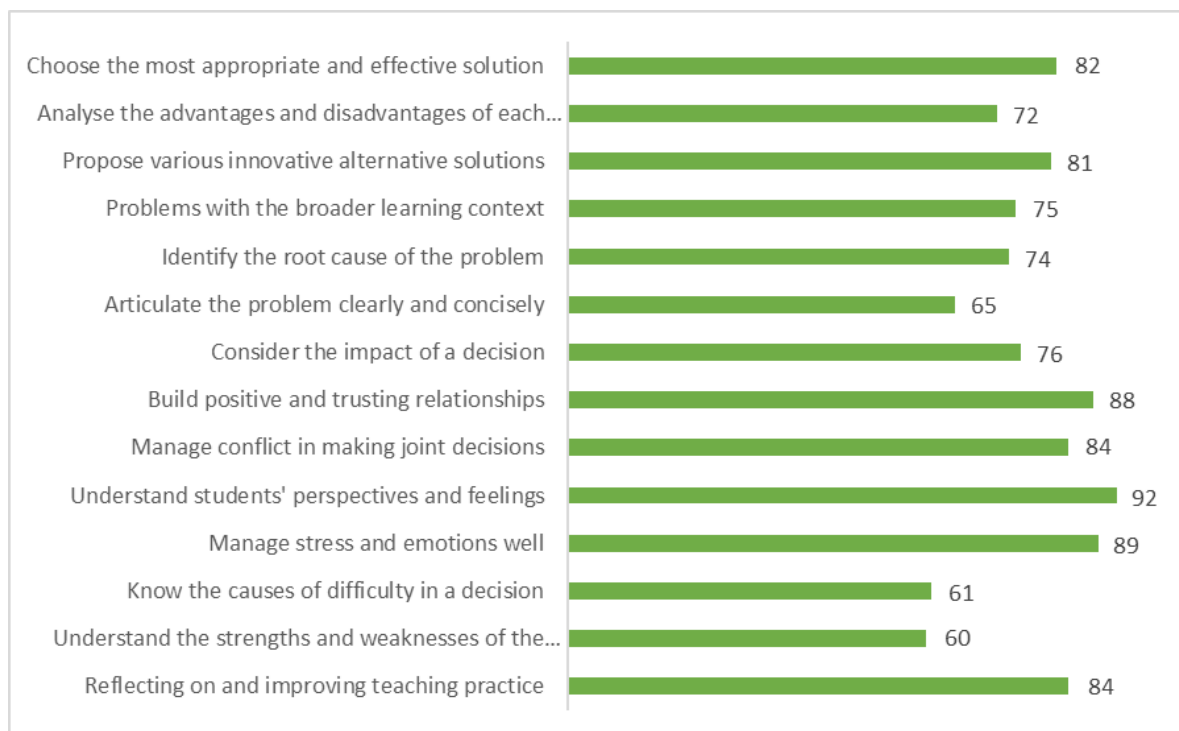


Figure 3. Teacher Needs for Intellectual Skills and SEL in Classroom Teaching

Based on the data above, it can be described the pattern of teacher needs in strengthening the character of educators. High levels of need (>80%) focus on interpersonal skills, such as empathy, emotion management, and reflection, which are core to SEL. Medium level of needs (70–79%) related to more complex analysis and decision making related to intellectuals. Low levels of need (<70%) reflect a lack of attention to self-reflection and communication aspects related to pedagogy.

Teachers need strengthening in empathy, managing emotions, reflecting on practice, and building positive relationships. This aspect is the main foundation for supporting effective learning. Analytical and communication skills must be improved to complement the teacher's strengths in classroom management and decision making. Deep reflection on strengths and weaknesses in decision making needs to be the focus of training to support professional development.

By strengthening these skills, teachers can be more effective in carrying out their role as reflective, empathetic and adaptive educators. Thus, the main factors leading to low teacher SEL skills include lack of training, curriculum pressure, limited time and resources, personal bias, lack of reflection, emotional distress, and uniform evaluation systems. Of course, less than optimal teacher SEL skills encourage teachers to make improvements.

The results of this research specifically suggest that the level of teacher need for intellectual skills and social emotional interpersonal skills is very high, such as empathy, emotional management, and reflection, which are the core of SEL. More complex analytical and decision-making skills related to intellectual, and self-reflection and communication skills in learning suit with the results of research that has been carried out by other researchers. The findings relate to teachers' understanding of the relevance of SEL to teaching skills in the classroom and its impact on student intelligence. SEL plays a role in teacher and student interactions in the classroom. 94% of teachers have an understanding of the application of SEL, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. However, teachers are less able to integrate learning. These findings are in line with the results of Jessie Ee1's research which highlights the importance of

building teacher capacity in SEL to improve the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. This research highlights that SEL-based approaches not only improve student behavior, but also contribute to a more harmonious and productive classroom environment (Ee et al., 2014). Teachers with good SEL skills tend to be successful in creating supportive and inclusive learning environments (Geesa et al., 2022; Reicher, 2010; Sokal & Katz, 2017). This minimizes student disruptive behavior while increasing student cooperation, empathy, and compliance with class rules (Dolev & Leshem, 2016).

The impact of teachers' intellectual and SEL skills is very positive in supporting effective and inclusive learning. This reason has been proven by several researchers, namely (a) Teachers who develop social-emotional skills are able to become agents of change, improve student welfare, and improve relationships between students and teachers (Dobia et al., 2019). (b) SEL can improve a conducive climate in the classroom. This has been proven to be the case with teachers who adopt the SEL framework being able to increase students' social skills, improve behavior, and strengthen a sense of connectedness among students. With intellectual and SEL skills, teachers are able to build harmonious relationships. It has been proven that the integration of SEL into Restorative Practices supports the development of students' social-emotional skills, such as empathy, communication, and emotional regulation (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). (c) In the learning process, teachers must quickly make decisions in dealing with student behavior during learning. In this case, teachers are not only required to have intellectual skills, but also have to have social emotional skills which can help teachers develop "soft skills" such as empathy, conflict management and interpersonal communication which must start from pre-service training for prospective teachers (Lozano-Pena et al., 2021; Waajid et al., 2013). Therefore, learning that combines intellectual skills and SEL in the development of pre-service teachers, to create a more conducive and effective learning environment (Boeriswati et al., 2023; Goegan et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that teachers' social-emotional (SEL) and intellectual skills play a very important role in creating effective learning, supporting student well-being, and building humanist educational characters. To increase learning impact, teachers need ongoing training and systemic support in implementing SEL approaches in the classroom. As evidence of its importance, namely (1) the influence of SEL on students, such as teachers with mastery of SEL creating a supportive learning environment, making students feel valued, accepted, and motivated to learn. 78% of teachers in this study succeeded in creating a positive classroom atmosphere and building good interpersonal relationships with students. (2) the role of teachers' intellectual skills, such as a balance between intellectual skills (such as analysis, critical thinking, and decision making) and social-emotional skills is very important for effective learning. Teachers with good intellectual abilities can design learning strategies that are more creative, reflective and inclusive. (3) Intellectual and SEL implementation challenges: As many as 53% of teachers face obstacles in understanding and implementing SEL independently, especially in the context of recognizing individual student differences. (4) The need to strengthen teacher character. Teachers need training to strengthen interpersonal skills, emotional management, and reflection on teaching practices. This supports teachers to be more adaptive to the diverse needs of students.

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