



Social Emotional Learning for Peace

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ABSTRACT:

Teaching peace is a means to education rather than an end in itself. Therefore, making peace education always relevant. To educate is to prepare young humans to live sustainably and not just excel academically to form future workforce. The virtuous cycle of peace education requires not only self understanding but also valuing other person's thoughts and emotions. This can be done through the medium of social emotional learning. Social Emotional Learning helps in achieving emotional intelligence which paves the way for peaceful coexistence. Peaceful nations come from peaceful societies and to build a peaceful society, individuals need to be at peace with themselves. For this, one needs to achieve social harmony and emotional understanding of self as well others in order to live their life upto fullest potential and capability. Amid rising cases of poor mental health and increased crimes, peace needs to be restored at all levels. Social Emotional Learning must acquire a centre stage in academic curriculum to nurture compassionate individuals, making peace more relevant and natural to follow.

Keywords: Social Emotional Learning, Peace education, Emotional intelligence, Inclusive learning.

INTRODUCTION:

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a tool to develop healthy individuals, emotional well being, empathy, compassion and better relationships. It complements the ability of conscious decision making and achieving one's goals in life. This sets the ground for peaceful community engagement. SEL builds the skills required for conflict resolution, solving complex social problems, accepting multicultural society and emotional management. It helps in preparing oneself to handle stress, disagreements in a rather healthy way, therefore assuring peace. SEL can be viewed as a building block for peace development.

Unlike academics, Social Emotional Learning cannot be forgotten or may become outdated with time. It is a life skill that supports individual growth and development. Making one more adaptable in society and follow the path to responsible citizenship. It teaches empathy not just towards other human beings but also towards plants, wildlife, ecology and planet as a whole. Hence, creating a peaceful environment to live

amicably and in natural harmony. Such inclusivity is at the core of peace. SEL thus provides for building the right attitude in order to foster peaceful coexistence. It is a rather hands on experience for practicing and learning peace.

Understanding Social Emotional Learning:

Social Emotional Learning is a mindful exercise of understanding oneself as well as others. It fosters empathy and develops skills and attitude necessary for healthy social relationships and conflict management. It comprises of five basic components that form the foundation of learning-

i. Self Awareness –

Based on the principle of “know thyself”, Self awareness is to acknowledge one’s thoughts and feelings. It is to name the underlying emotion that one goes through. This enables a person to analyse strengths and weaknesses in order to optimise them fully.

ii. Self Management –

Once someone learns about their emotions , next comes the skill to control the impulse. Self management is to lengthen the time between impulse and action. It is to think of the consequences and then act upon the best one rather than vice-versa. This leads to improved behaviour and self conduct.

iii. Social Awareness –

A socially aware person is empathetic, compassionate and understands about diverse cultures, people and societies. Socially aware kids do not indulge in bullying and teasing. Socially aware people embrace multiculturalism, multilingualism and refrain from racism, regionalism and casteism.

iv. Relationship skills –

It focuses on peaceful communication and mutual respect to harness healthy and positive relationships. Relationship skills involve cooperation and managing conflicts before they surface up.

v. **Responsible decision making** – This skill helps in realistic assessment of situations and take the best course of action. It refers to following ethical standards, safety concerns and best practices as per social norms. Responsible decisions are made after effectively assessing the consequences and impact on all stakeholders.

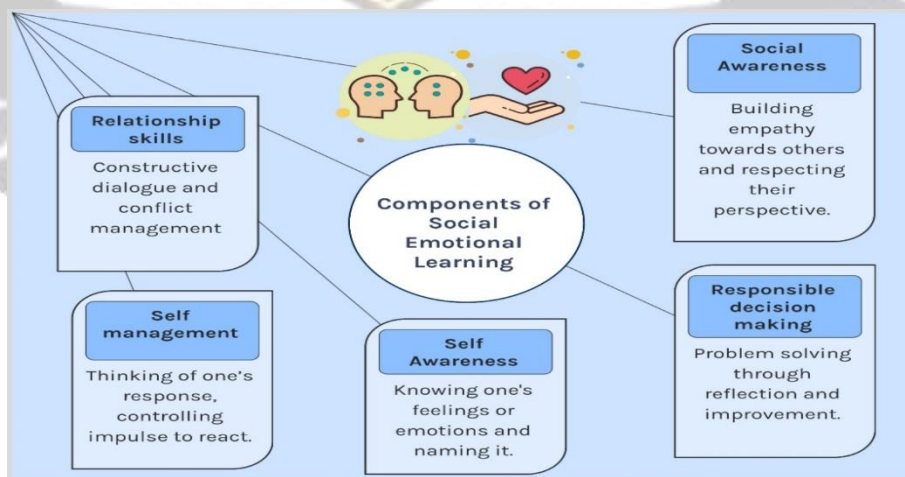


Fig1- Components of Social Emotional Learning.

SEL is not a one time phenomena but a continuous process of self learning and improvement in order to maintain healthy social lives, relationships and effective decision making power. There is no age limit to learn the skill and it can be taught as early as elementary schooling. Rather, many schools globally have incorporated SEL programs as a part of their curriculum, including India in its National Education Policy 2020. The reason for this is that research shows children with SEL skills do much better academically and outside. It tends to focus on the three aspects of development which are cognitive, emotional and social. Thus making children cognitively equipped, emotionally healthy and socially competent.

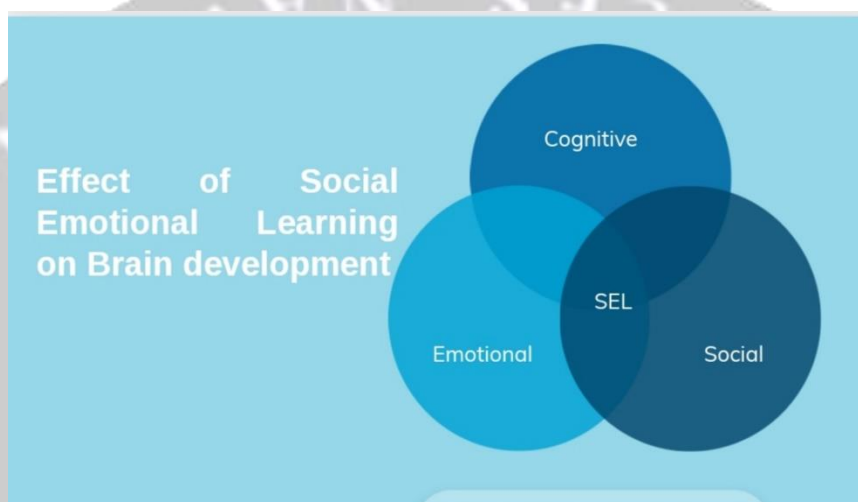


Fig2- Effect of Social Emotional Learning on Cognitive, Social and Emotional aspect of brain.

Relevance of Peace-

Peace can be understood in two broad terms, external and internal. External peace refers to establishing peace against political, ethnic, religious, economic and social conflicts, civil wars, violence against marginalised groups, women and children. Whereas, Internal peace means inner harmony between one's thoughts and actions. However, peace in true sense holds deeper meaning than just absence of violence. It is the adoption of non violence in all aspects of life including peaceful communication, conflict resolution, social, economic and political justice, social equity and equal rights, responsible behaviour and so on.

In today's world of misinformation, fake news, bullying and ragging among students, workplace harassment, environmental degradation, peace has become all the more relevant. Peaceful dialogue and healthy conversations are the key to resolve issues together. Multicultural and multilingual societies need to work together for a better world. Climate change, Nuclear disarmament, Disaster management, Socio-economic well being, Healthcare are some global problems that needs to be dealt collectively with mutual cooperation and communication. Hence, making Peace Education an important aspect of curriculum throughout education in the world. Therefore, it is a process involving various types of learning tools like social emotional learning, sports, Yoga, meditation, music, mindfulness, communication, community participation, cultural studies, etc that help in teaching Peace Education.

How to make use of SEL to establish Peace-

As discussed above, SEL is an effective tool in teaching peace to students from all age groups and backgrounds. This begins with group activities involving children to interact with other closely. Here, they may be asked to recognise or learn various emotions they undergo on a day to day basis and how they feel while going through that emotion. Secondly, they may be asked to recognise the emotions of other group members. This simple activity teaches empathy and compassion while learning self awareness and social awareness.

Another example of SEL can be a 'traffic light drill' to teach Peace. Here, students need to treat their ongoing emotion as a red light and must stop if they feel angry or upset or any other negative emotions. Then they need to think about this emotion and the course of action they are going to take. This is termed as yellow light where they are taught to lengthen the time between impulse and action as they go on pondering over the consequences of their actions. This is further followed by taking the best action as a green light. This simple drill can teach effective peaceful communication and avoid major conflicts at the same time building peaceful relationships.

Short stories, plays, skits, movies are often used in SEL classes to reflect upon peaceful behaviours. Students are taught to analyse the dynamics of each characters feelings and their conduct or behaviour. Then a collective discussion helps them in understanding the right behaviour along with social norms and challenges that come across in doing so. Such exercises teach conflict management, stress handling, love and harmony as a part of SEL. Psychology, emotional intelligence, mental health are some of the inter disciplinary themes in teaching Peace education through SEL.

The key to successful SEL program is the amount of freedom of expression that is provided to students in the class to express and communicate among themselves without barriers. Also, allowing their fellow team mates to do so by respecting their perspective. Making them more patient, empathetic and kind towards diverse view points. Another important exercise in the process of SEL is to ask the right questions to students and use of right emotional vocabulary to make them well verse with Peaceful behaviour and healthy conduct.

Challenges encountered in implementation of SEL-

While implementing SEL in classrooms, several challenges can be encountered. Some of them are discussed below-

- To unlearn inappropriate behaviour and language children often pick up from their social backgrounds or family and re learn the right way.
- Lack of time in classrooms focused on cognitive learning and large curriculums that need to be finished in time.
- Poor teacher-student communication and bonding due to ineffective teacher training, teacher stress and burnout.
- Lack of usage of activity based learning rather than theoretical or bookish lessons.
- Highly competitive education system focused on grades rather than overall development of children.
- Budget and resource constraints in arranging various SEL tools and activities.

- Lack of community participation in education programs build for students.
- Poor inclusion of students and prejudices towards certain socio-economic backgrounds.

Thus, there are various challenges that need to be addressed by all stakeholders involved in the process of education.

Way forward and Future of SEL for Peace Education-

Social Emotional Learning is still in its native stage in many parts of the world. It needs to be incorporated in the school curriculum in order to integrate it with Peace Education. Its implementation is to be done right from young age in order to build a culture of peace. Along with the above strategy, the challenges encountered in doing so must be resolved with appropriate measures and on time. Countries must come up with National policies for the same and all stakeholders including the community has to become it's part for it to be successful.

An inclusive approach is to be adopted where classroom environment is friendly and fearless. Rethinking of classrooms is the need of the hour, children must be able to speak their mind and indulge in various activities in order to enhance their social skills and emotional attitudes. Two way communication between teacher-pupil and among pupil groups has to be ensured. Scaffolding methods involving simulation and skill training to impart life skills can go a long way in preparing students to develop the foundation of peace education.

Conclusion-

Hence, Social Emotional Learning can be an effective tool to achieve SDGs, especially SDG 4 which is quality education and also SDG 16 which is Peace and Justice. Establishing peace through education is a continuous process and can be promising to achieve through tools like SEL. Moreover, it inculcates the habits of peaceful communication, ethical behaviour and right social conduct. Imparting SEL also helps children to reflect upon their behaviour. This can create a culture of peace among generations. Therefore, drastically reducing social evils like bullying, gender inequality, crime against women, domestic violence, xenophobia, and so on.

This however requires certain prerequisites such as incorporating SEL as a part of teacher training programs. Raising awareness among parents and communities, allocating resources and time for Social Emotional Learning in school and college education. Designing SEL pedagogy with prior designed lesson plans can help in reducing time and effort that would go otherwise in conducting such programs. Last but not the least comes reinforcement of SEL programs to shape a peaceful attitude among children.

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Cite this Article:

Dr. Anita Jaiswal, "Social Emotional Learning for Peace", Naveen International Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences (NIJMS), ISSN: 3048-9423 (Online), Volume 1, Issue 3, pp. 63-68, December-January 2025.

Journal URL: <https://nijms.com/>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71126/nijms.v1i3.24>



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