Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning: Multiple case study approach

by

Snezhana Djambazova-Popordanoska

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University
February, 2016
I am the author of the thesis entitled “Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning: Multiple case study approach” submitted for the degree of PhD (Doctor of Philosophy).

This thesis may be made available for consultation, loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

'I certify that I am the student named below and that the information provided in the form is correct'

Full Name: Snezhana Djambazova-Popordanoska
(Please Print)

Signed: [Signature Redacted by Library]

Date: 03.02.2016
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I certify the following about the thesis entitled

‘Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning: Multiple case study approach’

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

a. I am the creator of all or part of the whole work(s) (including content and layout) and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

b. The work(s) are not in any way a violation or infringement of any copyright, trademark, patent, or other rights whatsoever of any person.

c. That if the work(s) have been commissioned, sponsored or supported by any organisation, I have fulfilled all of the obligations required by such contract or agreement.

d. That any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any university or institution is identified in the text.

e. All research integrity requirements have been complied with.

'I certify that I am the student named below and that the information provided in the form is correct'

Snezhana Djambazova - Popordanoska

Signed: [Signature Redacted by Library]

Date: 03.02.2016
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving husband Emil, for his unconditional love, unwavering support and positive encouragement to pursue my passion and make my dream a reality.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my principal supervisor, Professor Matthew Clarke, for his wise guidance, unconditional support and encouragement throughout the most important stage of my PhD journey. Your words of encouragement and sound advice helped me to persist and overcome the challenges that I encountered throughout this amazing journey.

I am also deeply grateful to my external supervisor, Dr Frank Muscara for his valuable input, and hours of dedication to my work. I have learned valuable lessons form you throughout this journey and you have always been a great source of support and inspiration to me.

Professor Mile Terziovski’s insights and the immeasurable amount of support he has provided throughout this study has been a true blessing.

I would also like to express my appreciation and deep reverence to Dr Eva Dakic for believing in my potential and for her extraordinary emotional support and encouragement.

Special thanks are given to Professor Andrea Nolan and Dr Anna Kilderry for supporting me throughout this PhD journey.

My sincere gratitude goes to my wonderful children Kristijan and Graciella, for being my greatest teachers on this journey. I feel truly blessed to have you in my life as you have taught me the joy of living in the present.

I also thank all my loyal friends for their unconditional support and genuine trust in my abilities that helped me to have faith in myself and accomplish this work that is truly meaningful to me.
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS


Djambazova-Popordanoska, S 2015, ‘Implications of Emotion Regulation on Young Children’s Emotional Wellbeing and Educational Accomplishment’, research paper accepted for publication in the academic journal Educational Review.

**Table of Contents**

LIST OF TABLES.................................................................vi
LIST OF FIGURES...............................................................vii
ABSTRACT..............................................................................viii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .........................................................1
    Statement of the Problem ......................................................2
    Background of the Problem ..................................................4
    Rationale of the Study .........................................................10
    Significance of the Study .....................................................12
    Research Purpose and Aims ................................................13
    Research Questions ...........................................................13
    Definition of Terms ............................................................14
    Chapter Summary ...............................................................15

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................17
    Introduction to SEL ..........................................................17
    Overview of the Origin and Evolution of SEL .......................19
    CASEL Framework: Core components and Sub-components ......22
    Self-awareness .................................................................24
    Self-management .............................................................25
    Responsible decision making .............................................28
    Social awareness ............................................................29
    Relationship skills ...........................................................31
    Influence of Affect on Cognition .........................................32
    Relationship between Children’s Learning Environment and their Learning Process ........................................................................................................34
    SEL in Education: School Practices around the World ............37
    SEL in the Australian Education System ...............................41
    The Role of Schools and Teachers in supporting Student SEL ....46
    Chapter Summary ...............................................................51

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ................................................52
    Introduction ...........................................................................52
Constructs within the CASEL framework .............................................................. 103
Constructs outside of the CASEL framework ....................................................... 109
Summary of Crystal’s profile ............................................................................. 109
Position of SEL in the ‘You Can Do It’ (YCDI) program ....................................... 112
Constructs within the CASEL framework ............................................................. 113
Constructs outside of the CASEL framework ....................................................... 118
Summary of the analysis of the ‘YCDI’ program ................................................... 118
Position of SEL within Greenfield Primary School Policy ..................................... 119
Constructs within the CASEL framework ............................................................. 119
Position of SEL within the Curriculum of Greenfield Primary School ................. 120
Constructs within the CASEL framework ............................................................. 121
Position of SEL within the Student Social Competence Development Program (SSCDP) ................................................................. 121
Constructs within the CASEL framework ............................................................. 121
Constructs outside of the CASEL framework ....................................................... 122
Summary of the Analysis of the School Curricula and Policies of Greenfield Primary School ................................................................. 124
Enablers to SEL at Greenfield Primary School .................................................... 124
Barriers to SEL at Greenfield Primary School ..................................................... 128
Summary of Greenfield Primary School ............................................................... 131
Chapter Summary .............................................................................................. 132

CHAPTER FIVE: ROSEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL ........................................... 133
Brief Description of Rosefield Primary School .................................................... 133
Overview of the ‘School Wide Positive Behavioural Strategies’ ........................... 134
Data Analysis: Rosefield Primary School ............................................................. 134
Grace .............................................................................................................. 134
Constructs within the CASEL framework ............................................................. 135
Constructs outside of the CASEL framework ....................................................... 141
Summary of Grace’s profile ............................................................................... 142
Samantha ......................................................................................................... 143
Constructs within the CASEL framework ............................................................. 143
Constructs outside of the CASEL framework ....................................................... 149
Summary of Samantha’s profile ......................................................................... 149
Mary .............................................................................................................. 150
Constructs within the CASEL framework ............................................................. 150
Constructs outside of the CASEL framework ....................................................... 156
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION.................................................................174

RQ1. How is SEL understood and implemented in preparatory classrooms in two Victorian Primary schools in context of the CASEL framework?... 176
Constructs within the CASEL framework ........................................ 176
Constructs outside of the CASEL framework ................................ 179
A proposed expansion of the CASEL conceptual framework .......... 185
RQ2. How is SEL positioned within the school programs, policies, and documentation in context of the CASEL framework?...................... 186
Constructs within the CASEL framework ........................................ 187
Constructs outside of the CASEL framework ................................ 188
RQ3. What do teachers see as the possible enablers and barriers to incorporating SEL within the school environment? .................... 189
Enablers to SEL within the school environment ......................... 189
Barriers to SEL within the school environment ............................ 191
Further Implications and Practical Recommendations .................. 192
Overall Limitations of the Study ..................................................... 195
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1. Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions ........ 65
Table 3.2. List of the Relevant Information obtained from the School Curricula Documents ................................................................. 70
Table 3.3. Alignment of Research Questions and Questions asked in the Document Analysis of the School Curricula Documents .......... 71
Table 4.1. CASEL framework: Core social and emotional components and sub-components ............................................................. 87
Table 4.2. Greenfield teachers’ understandings and pedagogical approaches related to SEL viewed through the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) ........................................................................................................ 111
Table 4.3. Greenfield teachers: Formal classroom practices related to SEL in view of the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) ................. 112
Table 4.4. CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) mapped onto the ‘YCDI’ program (Bernard 2003) ................................................................. 117
Table 4.5. CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) mapped onto Greenfield School Curricula and Policy Documents ....................................... 123
Table 4.6. Enablers and Barriers to SEL incorporation at Greenfield Primary School ................................................................................... 130
Table 5.1. Rosefield teachers’ understandings and pedagogical approaches related to SEL viewed through the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) ........................................................................................................ 158
Table 5.2. Rosefield teachers: Formal classroom practices related to SEL in context of the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) ..................... 159
Table 5.3. CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) mapped onto the ‘SWPBS’ program (Rosefield Primary School) ................................................. 162
Table 5.4. CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) mapped onto Rosefield Primary School Policy Documents .................................................. 167
Table 5.5. Enablers and Barriers to SEL incorporation at Rosefield Primary School ................................................................................... 172
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1. Goals of You Can Do It! Education for All Students .................. 84

Figure 4.2. The 5 Blockers Leading to Negative Student Outcomes: The Barrier Model ................................................................. 85

Figure 6.1. Proposed expanded CASEL framework for SEL ....................... 186
ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this thesis was to explore teachers’ understandings and classroom practices related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) within the context of the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) conceptual framework. Additionally, to gain a more comprehensive picture of the place and value of SEL within the Australian education system, this study investigated the place and value of SEL within the school curricula documents and wellbeing programs incorporated in the participating schools.

For the purpose of this research project, two state government schools in Melbourne were selected, one where Preparatory teachers use a specific SEL program and another school with a behavioural program in place. In order to inquire in depth about teachers’ understandings and classroom experiences related to SEL, semi-structured interviews were conducted on with six Preparatory teachers on two separate occasions, supplemented with data from the school curricula documents, policies and wellbeing programs of the selected schools. In order to develop a better understanding of the complex and rich set of data in this qualitative study, a combined technique of deductive and inductive approach through thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected set of interview and documentary data.

Recognising that primary school teachers play a significant role in facilitating students’ social and emotional wellbeing, it was important to gain insight into teachers’ perspectives and classroom practices in regards to SEL. Insights into teachers’ attitudes and perspectives of SEL could assist policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet teachers’ needs related to SEL in practice. Additionally, exploring the position of SEL within the relevant curricula documents of the participating schools can help curriculum developers to acknowledge the significance of addressing children’s social and emotional wellbeing within the school curricula of the Victorian Education System.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

‘In the process of civilizing and humanizing our children, the missing piece is – without doubt – social and emotional learning’.

Elias, MJ

My initial interest in the subject of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) was born while facing the challenges of raising my both children in another country which cultural background differed in many ways from the culture of my native country. In an attempt to discover ways to increase the social and emotional wellbeing of my own children through reading and research on the subject of SEL, my initial curiosity grew into a genuine concern of the social and emotional wellbeing of all Australian children. On the national scene, research revealed (Bernard, Stephanou & Urbach 2007; Fuller & Wicking 2013) that a relatively high percentage of Australian children lack social and emotional skills, which in turn affects their wellbeing, cognitive development and academic outcomes (ACECQA 2011; Ashdown & Bernard 2012; Durlak et al. 2011). Hence, I came to realisation that this problem appeared to be not only a matter of my personal preference, but a concern at a national level.

The selection of this topic for my research project was a natural progression of my increased awareness of this issue, as well as my sustained interest of a national problem that sparked my curiosity. As I continued to read relevant literature on this subject, I realised that there have been some coordinated attempts on a national level to address this issue (Kids Matter 2014; Response Ability 2015), but not at the level that a problem of this proportion deserves to be approached and attended (Adelman & Taylor 2014; Adelman & Taylor 2007; Brunker 2008; Stafford et al. 2007). The collaborative endeavours of the school-based leaders and educational policy makers to address SEL within the Australian context have not been proven sufficiently effective in finding a solution of a problem that was considered to be increasingly important for young children’s wellbeing and
their cognitive development (Adelman & Taylor 2014; Adelman & Taylor 2012; Adelman & Taylor 2002; Elliott 2006). Hence, my initial interest in this subject evolved into developing a strong view of the significance of SEL for each child’s healthy development. This view grew into a passion to explore the issue of SEL in depth in order to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence children’s social, emotional and cognitive development within educational settings.

**Statement of the Problem**

Schools of the 21st century have witnessed a subtle shift in education in recent years. Focus on academic accomplishment alone that has been emphasised traditionally in schools in the last few decades has been shown not to be sufficient to assist children’s development into well-balanced adults and valuable citizens (Durlak et al. 2011, 2014; Payton et al. 2000; Zins et al. 2004). On the other hand, a holistic approach encompassing both academic learning and Social and Emotional Learning that offers all students an opportunity to develop their potential optimally, has demonstrated its positive impact on students’ emotional wellbeing and their school success (Blum & Libbey 2004; Daunic et al. 2013; Durlak et al. 2011; Greenberg et al. 2003; Payton et al. 2008; Zins & Elias 2006; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015). Hence, several researchers (Blackmore et al. 2010; Blum, McNeely & Rinehart 2002; Durlak & Weissberg 2005; Hargreaves 2000; Payton et al. 2008; Poulou 2005; Weare & Gray 2003; Zins et al. 2004) agree that Social and Emotional Learning should be addressed as an essential aspect of children’s formal education, as it provides a strong foundation for their healthy development and academic success.

Within Australian Education System, in recent years, teachers have been commonly confronted with behavioural problems among students such as bullying, violence, or substance abuse (Lawrence et al. 2015; Masia-Warner, Nagle & Hansen 2006; Veevers 2007; Williams & Lawson 2013). Moreover, the number of Australian students with attention deficit problems, poor social and emotional skills, anxiety and depression is increasing rapidly (Bayer et al. 2009; Bernard, Stephanou & Ubach 2007; Fuller & Wicking
For example, according to the Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (Lawrence et al. 2015), nearly 14% of children aged 4-17 years experience serious mental health problems, the most frequent being Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), aggressive or withdrawn behaviour, anxiety and depression, whereas 7.7% of the participating children reported attempted suicide.

As a result of these official announcements, the Australian Government has begun to explore some coordinated approaches to enhancing children’s social and emotional wellbeing (Brunker 2008; Graham et al. 2011). Hence, introduced by an Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative ‘Kids Matter’ (2007) in all Australian states and territories, the promotion of SEL in education has received growing attention recently. This has resulted in increased expectations on classroom teachers to support students’ social and emotional wellbeing in many schools across Australia (Graham et al. 2011; Kay-Lambkin et al. 2007). However, whilst Australian teachers are frequently required to address students’ social and emotional needs, there is insufficient research-based information as to their capacity (expertise and confidence) to effectively support students’ wellbeing in their classrooms (Brackett et al. 2012; Brunker 2008; Graham et al. 2011; Koller & Bertel 2006; Kratochwill & Shernoff 2004). Thus, the important question arises as to how teachers understand the concept of SEL and their role in supporting children’s social and emotional wellbeing, which in turn can affect their pedagogical approaches and classroom practices pertinent to SEL (Graham et al. 2011). To address this question and further contribute to the limited knowledge base in this field, teachers’ views of their content knowledge, pedagogical approaches and classroom practices related to SEL are the main focus of inquiry of this research project.

Several researchers (Beamish & Bryer 2015; Greenberg et al. 2003; Hawkins et al. 2001; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015; Zins et al. 2004) affirmed that social and emotional competencies can be learnt and strengthened by practicing those competencies consistently in schools. This corresponds with the affirmation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2006) and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals.
for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008) that schools can play a significant role in increasing students’ social and emotional awareness. However, to ensure effective integration of SEL within the school environment, teachers’ views, attitudes and beliefs about SEL should be interwoven into their pedagogy and aligned with the school philosophy (Collie et al. 2015; Isenberger & Zembylas 2006; Reinke et al. 2011). Hence, at a school wide level, it is necessary that SEL is adopted as a whole school approach and infused into the content of the school policies and the academic curricula (Greenberg et al. 2003; Elias et al. 1997; Weare 2000, 2004). Incorporating SEL in the content of the school curricula documents would provide additional support to teachers’ endeavours to deliver social and emotional education in their classrooms, as this would ensure sufficient amount of classroom time dedicated to these efforts (Collie et al. 2015; Isenberger & Zembylas 2006; Lindahl 2006; Wells, Barlow & Stewart-Brown 2003).

In the Australian Curriculum, SEL has been addressed as an integral part of the ‘learning area content descriptions and elaborations’ (ACARA 2013, p.2). Besides, in the Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008), children’s Social and Emotional Learning is considered as an important contributor for children’s motivation to achieve academically and to reach maximum potential in life. However, although SEL is identified as an important part of the national curriculum standards in Australia (ACARA 2013), to date no previous studies have examined the position of SEL within the written and published documents of the school policies and academic curricula of the Australian schools. To address this gap in the literature, this study aims to investigate the place and value of SEL within the school curricula, policies and wellbeing programs implemented in the participating Victorian schools.

**Background of the Problem**

There is a growing body of scientific research undertaken internationally (Adi 2007a,b; Blank et al. 2009; Daunic et al. 2013; Durlak et al. 2011; Eisenberg 2006; Guerra & Bradshaw 2008; Masten & Coatsworth 1998; Weare & Nind 2011; Weissberg & Greenberg 1998; Wilson & Lipsey 2007)
that presents the multiple benefits of teaching children social and emotional skills in schools starting from an early age. This extensive research indicates that successful attainment of social and emotional competencies is correlated with better emotional wellbeing and higher academic achievement, while on the contrary, lack of social and emotional skills can result in many personal, social and academic problems. For example, the findings from a meta-analysis (Durlak et al. 2011) of 213 school-based SEL programs across the world including 270,034 students from kindergarten through high school, illustrated improved social and emotional competencies, prosocial (kind, considerate and helpful) behaviour, improved attitudes about self and others, reduced level of emotional distress, and an 11 percentile gain in academic achievement. These findings add to the growing body of compelling evidence (Catalano et al. 2002; Durlak et al. 2014; Greenberg et al. 2003; Payton et al. 2000; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015; Zins et al. 2004) affirming the positive outcomes of SEL on students’ wellbeing and educational attainment.

A significant body of empirical research (Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo 2004; Daunic et al. 2013; Dryfoos 1997; Eaton et al. 2008; Howse et al. 2003; Trentacosta & Izard 2007) indicates that children who lack social and emotional skills have increased tendency towards stress, anxiety, and depression. The rationale behind this assertion is the notion that those children who have difficulties in recognising and regulating their own emotions effectively, are more likely to experience frequent feelings of fear, sadness and anger (Watson, Clarke & Tellegen 1988), that usually support avoidant social behaviour (Garner 2010; Watson et al. 1999). Those children generally develop negative feelings and attitudes towards their peers and significant adults in life (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Watson, Clark & Tellegen 1988), which in turn, may affect the social relationships across their life span (Garner 2010). Hence, children with lower level of social and emotional competence may feel insecure, misunderstood and unsupported, resulting in emotional and social isolation from others (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Schutte et al.1998).

In addition, children with poor social and emotional skills generally display lower educational attainment, and thus remain unqualified, and often unemployed (Bodrova & Leong 2008; Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012;
As Greenberg and colleagues (2003) indicated, socially and emotionally incompetent children may experience difficulties in focusing their attention on the learning task at hand and acquiring new knowledge, while concomitantly disrupting the learning experiences of their peers. Children’s disruptive behaviours can increase the possibility of school absenteeism and school failure (Centre for Community Child Health 2007). Hence, a low level of social and emotional competence in children may interfere with their learning engagement and academic attainment (Centre for Community Child Health 2007), and consequently can impede their potential for success in life (Daunic et al. 2013; Denham et al. 2014; Duncan & Magnuson 2011; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015; Rose, Rose & Feldman 1989; Rumberger 1995; Trentacosta & Izard 2007).

On the other hand, children with well-developed social and emotional skills are able to recognise and manage their emotions effectively, empathise with others, and make sensible decisions regarding their behaviours and social interactions (Denham et al. 2012, 2014; Garner 2010; Jones & Bouffard 2012; Kress & Elias 2006). Hence, those children manage to associate with a wide range of individuals (Bar-On & Parker 2000; Fabes & Eisenberg 1992; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015), and are able to establish and maintain positive relationships with peers and significant adults in their life (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Garner and Estep 2001; Parlakian 2003). Engagement in positive relationships with their peers and teachers provides a sense of security, belonging, and support to those children (Denham et al. 2012; Blum, McNeely & Rinehart 2002; Bolmer et al. 2005). This in turn, is associated with a positive attitude towards school environments (Daunic et al. 2013; Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Osterman 2000) and increased participation in the learning activities (Denham et al. 2014; Hamre & Pianta 2005; Weissberg & Greenberg 1998).

Socially and emotionally competent children are more self-aware and self-assured about their own capacity to learn and achieve academically, and therefore can bring out their best in school (Aronson 2002). Those children can motivate themselves, have self-discipline, and are well organised when
approaching their work (Duckworth & Seligman 2005; Elliot & Dweck 2005). Hence, children who are able to manage their stress effectively, display resilience when faced with challenges and make responsible decisions regarding completing their homework, do better academically (Zins & Elias 2006).

Neuroscientists agree (Doidge 2010; Greenfield 2000; Halfon, Schulman & Hochstein 2001; Shore 2001; Wall 2004) that children’s experiences associated with the learning environment have a significant impact on the quality of their learning. According to Harris (2007), effective learning occurs when teachers are able to establish engaging, interactive and meaningful interactions with their students, creating a positive atmosphere that intensifies the process of learning. Therefore, as Doidge (2010) further asserts, educators need to take advantage of neuroplasticity (the ability of the human brain to change as a result of one’s experience) to help children master the skills that are crucial to their school and life success. However, many of these neural changes appear before the twentieth birthday (Doidge 2010), pointing out the importance of raising children's social and emotional skills in their early developmental years.

These insights have alerted educators around the world to the importance of a holistic form of education, one which includes both the cognitive and affective development of children (Davidson 2011; Jones & Bouffard 2012; Stafford et al. 2007; Sylwester 1995). This has resulted in the establishment of several school-based SEL initiatives globally with a proximal goal to empower students to become self-motivated learners and well-balanced individuals (Greenberg et al. 2003; Elias 2006; Weissberg et al. 2007), able to reach their highest potential in school and life (Durlak et al. 2011). For example, Illinois was the first state in the United States of America (USA) that incorporated SEL as part of their national curriculum (Illinois State Board of Education 2011). Other international efforts that address SEL as a way to promote positive learning environments and better academic performance of all students include: Singapore, United Kingdom, Canada, Israel, Sweden, Netherlands, Spain, Argentina, South Africa, and Germany among others (CASEL 2013).
The majority of the emerging evidence-based SEL programs around the world are based on the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL 2013) framework that comprises the following five sets of social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, social awareness and relationship skills. The conceptual framework postulated by CASEL was designed to assist students strengthen the skills necessary to manage their inner emotional states and relationships with others, in order to maximise their learning potential and educational accomplishment (Elias, Kress & Hunter 2006). Weissberg and colleagues (2007) meta-analysis comprising of 270 studies of evidence-based SEL programs implemented in several countries worldwide, indicated that incorporation of social and emotional education within school settings, resulted in increased students' learning engagement, reduced emotional distress, and improved prosocial behaviours.

Within the Australian context, recognition of the pivotal role of schools in promoting children’s social, emotional and cognitive development, led to development and implementation of several SEL school-based initiatives in many schools across the country (Kids Matter 2007; Department of Health and Ageing 2009; Response Ability 2015). The evaluation of the impact of those SEL programs revealed that students’ school connectedness enhanced significantly, the number of students expressing empathy and respectful behaviour increased considerably, and students' overall school performance improved (Kids Matter 2009). These SEL initiatives correlate closely with the vision of the Australian National Safe Schools Framework, which states that all schools in Australia should be 'safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing' (MCEECDYA 2011, p.3).

It is important to note that there are differing views regarding the most appropriate ways to increase children’s social and emotional competence in schools. On one hand, some researchers contend (Durlak et al. 2011; Payton et al. 2008; Wells, Barlow & Stewart –Brown 2003) that one effective way to promote SEL in schools is through delivering explicit evidence-based SEL formal programs across all grade levels that can foster students’ social and emotional skills. On the other hand, Boorn, Dunn and Page (2010) and
Hyson (2004) declare that caring, warm and positive learning environments where teachers address students’ emotional and social needs on a daily basis are the most influential ways to foster children’s social and emotional development. According to several other researchers (Greenfield 2000; McDonald 2001; Merrell & Gueldner 2010; Ciarrachi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Halfon, Schulman & Hochstein 2001; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015; Zins et al. 2004), one of the most effective approaches to raise social and emotional skills in students is believed to be a combination of both approaches through systematic and consistent implementation of SEL as a whole-school approach, by sensitive, warm, trusting and supportive teachers.

According to Buchanan and colleagues (2009), when implementing SEL strategies in their classrooms, teachers need to feel confident in their capacity to apply them effectively. Yet, teachers in contemporary classrooms, frequently challenged to deal with students’ social and emotional difficulties, or behavioural problems, often feel poorly trained and educated to manage them effectively (Graham et al. 2011; Skilbeck & Connell 2004). This in turn, might affect teachers’ efficiency in supporting SEL in their classrooms, which can influence student learning engagement and academic achievement (Collie et al. 2015; Poulou 2005). Therefore, considering the significant role that teachers play in children’s development and learning, the crucial question arises as to how teachers understand their role in supporting children’s social and emotional wellbeing, which in turn, can affect their educational practices (Graham et al. 2011; Brunker 2008; Pajares 1992; Reinke et al. 2011).

A considerable body of international evidence (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Cooper, Hegarty & Simco 1996; Daunic et al. 2013; Durlak et al. 2011; Frye & Mumpower 2001; Greenberg et al. 2003; Roffey 2011; Weare & Gray 2003; Wells, Barlow & Stewart-Brown 2003) confirms that schools can play a pivotal role in fostering children’s social and emotional competence. However, in Australia, majority of schools are predominantly academically oriented (Mazzer & Rickwood 2015), often ‘leading to highly competitive external examinations’ (Dafty & Dafty 1994, p.20). As Hargreaves (2000, p.825), asserted: ‘By focusing only on cognitive standards and on processes to achieve them, we actually undermine the emotional understanding [of
children] which is in fact the foundation in achieving these standards.' Hence, infusion of social and emotional education within the school curricula should be considered as an important aspect of children’s formal education (Durlak et al. 2011; Field 2000; Frederickson 2009; Hargreaves 2000; Poulou 2005). As Brunker (2008) contends, there is a need for new educational viewpoints regarding the place and value of SEL within the Australian school system. The question then arises as to how is SEL positioned (placed and valued) within the written and published documents of the school curricula, policies and programs implemented in Australian schools. Furthermore, it is important to investigate the influences of the school curricula documents and programs on teachers’ pedagogical approaches and classroom practices related to SEL.

**Rationale of the Study**

The ability of students to manage their emotions and behaviours and to establish and maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships is an important prerequisite for their emotional health, social adjustment and academic success (Daunic et al. 2013; Durlak et al. 2011; Harris 2007; Masia-Warner, Nagle & Hansen 2006; Oswald, Johnson & Howard 1999; Payton et al. 2000; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015). According to the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010), schools must attend to children’s social and emotional needs as they do to their academic skills, in order to build a strong foundation for their healthy development and successful educational outcomes. Hence, incorporating social and emotional education within school settings from an early age should be considered as an educational priority (Daunic et al. 2013; Jones & Bouffard 2012; Shriver & Weissberg 2005; Weissberg 2005).

Classroom teachers, as significant adults in the lives of children, have addressed the development of the whole child as an important aspect of education (Collie et al. 2015; Graham et al. 2011; Nias 1999; Oswald, Johnson & Howard 1999; Pajares 1992; Poulou 2005; Reinke et al. 2011). As Harris (2007) affirms, teachers play a significant role in the establishment of positive and nurturing relationships with their students that can affect their
social and emotional development and learning process. This view is also supported in the theoretical pro-social classroom model proposed by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), pointing out the link between teachers’ level of social and emotional competence and positive teacher-student relationship building. Development and maintenance of supportive teacher-student relationships can contribute to creating a pro-social classroom climate that promotes students’ positive developmental outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg 2009). Considering the significant influence on the lives of their students (Boorn, Dunn & Page 2010; Brackett et al. 2012; Collie et al. 2015; Kress & Elias 2006; Lynn, McKay & Atkins 2003; Pajares 1992), it is important to explore teachers’ understandings of their role in supporting children’s social and emotional wellbeing. Teachers’ perceptions of their confidence and efficacy to provide SEL guidance to the students can potentially influence the effect of SEL on children’s emotional health and their learning process (Bandura 1997; Buchanan et al. 2009; Graham et al. 2011; Lindahl 2006; Pajares 1992).

At present, there is little research–based information about how teachers view SEL in their classrooms and ‘the extent to which these views are linked to their teaching practice’ (Sanger 2001, p.700). Recognising that educational settings are essential to providing environments that facilitate students’ social and emotional wellbeing, it is important to gain insight into teachers’ perspectives and classroom practices in regards to SEL. Greater understanding of teachers’ views and practices related to SEL can provide valuable information into how best to implement relevant professional development for teachers and enhance their work and efficiency in this important area.

Although there is a national recognition of the pivotal role of schools in increasing students’ social and emotional awareness (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2006; Graham et al. 2011; Rickwood 2005), to date, no empirical research could be found which investigated the position of SEL within the school curricula documents of the Australian government schools. Such research is clearly important because of the potential influence of the content of the school curricula documents on teachers’ pedagogical approaches and classroom practices related to SEL.
Significance of the Study

It is in the interest of a nation to have a highly educated and skilled workforce, but to get to that stage students need to remain in schools long enough to acquire the skills that would enable them to become lifelong learners and productive citizens (Department of Education and Early Child Development 2009). Despite the growing research in the field of SEL (Durlak et al. 2011; Greenberg et al. 2003; Payton et al. 2000; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015), researchers know little about how teachers’ beliefs and understandings of SEL can relate to their teaching practices and students’ wellbeing (Graham et al. 2011). The link between teachers' beliefs and their practices is well supported by previous research (Collie et al. 2015; Fang 1996; Pajares 1992; Reinke et al. 2011; Wentzel 2002). As Wentzel (2002, p.297) declared: ‘It is likely that teachers can have a much greater influence on students’ motivation and behaviour displayed in their classrooms than parents,’ that in turn can significantly affect students' attitudes toward the learning process. Therefore, it is important to understand teachers’ views on the place of SEL in classrooms that could influence children’s emotional wellbeing and their learning engagement. Insights into teachers’ perspectives on SEL could also assist policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet teachers’ needs related to SEL in practice. Additionally, exploring the position of SEL within Victorian Education System can help curriculum developers to acknowledge the significance of addressing children’s social and emotional wellbeing within the curricula of the Victorian schools. This in turn, may further support promotion of children’s social and emotional wellbeing within the Victorian Education System to prevent the potential or existing mental health and behavioural problems in Victorian children.
Research Purpose and Aims

The primary purpose of this in-depth qualitative study was to explore teachers’ understandings and classroom practices related to SEL in context of the CASEL conceptual framework (CASEL 2013). Moreover, to gain a more comprehensive picture of the place and value of SEL within the Australian Education System, this study investigated the place and value of SEL within the school curricula documents and wellbeing programs in light of the CASEL framework.

The two major aims of this research project are to:

1. Investigate early years’ primary school teachers’ perspectives and understandings of SEL, and how they perceive it to be enacted in their classrooms.

2. Explore the place and value of SEL within the school curricula documents and programs of two Victorian government schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions pertaining to the participating teachers’ perspectives on the subject of SEL, as well as the place of SEL within the school curricula documents, guided this study.

Main research question:

- How is SEL understood and implemented in preparatory classrooms in two Victorian Primary schools in context of the CASEL framework?

Sub Questions:

- How is SEL positioned (placed and valued) within school policies, programs and documentation in context of the CASEL framework?
What do teachers see as the possible enablers and barriers to incorporating SEL within the school environment?

Investigating these research questions will deepen our understanding of how participating teachers interpret the concept of SEL and the extent to which they incorporate social and emotional education in their teaching practices. Moreover, further examining these research questions will enlighten the place and value of SEL within the school curricula documents and programs of the participating Victorian schools.

Definition of Terms

Cognition - the mental act or process by which knowledge is acquired, including perception, intuition and reasoning (retrieved 5 March 2015, http://www.thefreedictionary.com/social+science).

Emotional competence - refers to ‘the ability to effectively regulate one’s emotions to accomplish one’s goal’ (Squires, Bricker & Twombly 2003, p.6).

Emotion regulation refers to ‘the ability to effectively manage one’s emotions and control the outer expression of one’s internal state in the service of accomplishing one’s goals’ (Thompson 1994, p.28).

Empathy is ‘an affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another’s emotional state or condition, and that is similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel’ (Eisenberg 2002, p.135.)

Pedagogy - refers to ‘educators’ professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision making, teaching and learning’ (Early Years Framework for Australia (EYFA 2009, p.43.)

Persistence - refers to ‘[t]he ability to overcome delays and hindrances throughout difficult tasks...’ (Padilla-Walker et al. 2012, p.435.)
‘Self-regulation is the ability to regulate or adapt one’s behaviour, emotions and thinking according to the situation’ (Department of Education and Children’s Services Adelaide 2010, p.23.)

Self–Actualisation – refers to an ongoing process of developing fully one’s ‘talents, capacities, potentialities’ (Maslow 1954, p.150).

Self-concept- refers to the ability to ‘recognise one’s ‘personal characteristics, preferences, thoughts, and feelings’ (Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework 2011, p.9).

Social competence- refers to ‘the ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaving to achieve interpersonal goals and social outcomes’ (Kostelnik et al. 2006, p.2).

Social and emotional education – is defined as ‘educational process by which an individual develops intrapersonal and interpersonal competence and resilience skills in social, emotional and academic domains through curricular, embedded, relational and contextual approaches’ (Cefai & Cooper 2009, p. 23).

Social and Emotional Learning- refers to ‘the process of acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions; developing caring and concern for others; making responsible decisions; establishing positive relationships; and handling challenging situations capably ’ (Elias et al.1997, p.406).

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with an introductory overview of the problem under investigation and its background, followed by the main purpose and the research aims of this study. In addition, this chapter developed a rationale for this research project and discussed the significance of SEL for children’s
social, emotional and cognitive development. The following chapter provides a comprehensive and critical review of the literature in the field of SEL, exploring the issue under investigation in more detail.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to SEL

Embracing the scientific knowledge in several disciplines in the field of psychology, neuroscience and social sciences, Social and Emotional Learning has a reputable heritage. The SEL approach has emerged as an imperative in the field of education as it provides a fundamental basis for lifelong, enduring learning that enhances students’ academic outcomes, as well as individual wellbeing (Bird & Sultmann 2010; Daunic et al. 2013; Duncan & Magnuson 2011; Roffey 2008; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015; Zins & Elias 2006). More specifically, SEL encompasses essential competencies and attitudes children need in order to behave appropriately in social settings (Davidson 2011; Greenberg et al. 2003; Elias et al. 2007). This relates to the skills of collaboration and getting along well with others, emotion regulation skills, empathy, and responsible decision making (McCombs 2004; Zins et al. 2004). According to Berman (1997, p.260), these skills are fundamental for ‘the development of social consciousness’ and increased productivity of a nation (Durlak et al. 2011; Jonnson & Johson 2003; Payton et al. 2000).

Social and Emotional Learning is defined by its purveyors as ‘the process of acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions; developing caring and concern for others; making responsible decisions; establishing positive relationships; and handling challenging situations capably’ (Elias et al. 1997, p.406). Students with a high level of social and emotional competence have an increased self-motivation to learn and achieve within the school environment, thus resulting in improved academic performance, health-promoting behaviour and good citizenship (Durlak et al. 2011; Greenberg et al. 2003; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015). On the other hand, a compelling body of evidence (Catalano et al. 2002; Dryfoos 1997; Greenberg et al. 2003; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015; Moffitt et al. 2011) indicates that children with a low level of social and emotional skills are more likely at some point of
their life to engage in high risk behaviours, such as the misuse of drugs and alcohol, or involvement in violence and crime. For instance, one longitudinal study (Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015) conducted over a period of 19 years demonstrated significant correlation between children’s level of social and emotional competence in kindergarten and their outcomes in young adulthood across multiple domains of mental health, substance use, and their status of employment. Based on the results of this study, for every one point decrease in a child’s social and emotional competence score in kindergarten, there was an 82% higher rate of marijuana use, 52% increased rate of binge drinking, 82% higher chance of not getting a full-time employment at the age of 25, and 67% higher chance of being arrested as a result of crime in young adulthood.

The SEL approach has its roots in teachers’ endeavours to address students’ misbehaviour, interfering with their learning process (Bird & Sultmann 2010; Rudassil 2011; Wentzel 2002). In particular, the need for nurturing social and emotional wellbeing in schools grew from teachers’ realisation of the fact that many students demonstrate a lack of conflict resolution and problem solving skills, as well as low levels of self-regulation skills that often results in displaying aggressive behaviour in their social interactions (Bird & Sultmann 2010; Garner 2010; Kochenderfer –Ladd 2004). This belief was also supported in the work of McGinley and Carlo (2001) who contended that children who experience difficulties in verbal articulation and effective regulation of their own emotions, are more inclined towards physical expression. As Klein (2001) indicated, when children feel out of control, being unable to convey negative feelings in words, they usually become aggressive or withdrawn. As a consequence, children’s disruptive behaviours may increase the possibility of school failure, mental health difficulties and substance abuse (Centre for Community Child Health 2007; Eaton et al. 2008; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015).

A critical review of the literature points out that it is questionable whether SEL can be envisaged only as a combination of personality traits (Cassady & Eissa 2008; Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi 2000; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey 1999; Schulte, Ree & Carretta 2004; Schutte & Malouff 1999; Schutte et al.1998), or set of abilities (Bar-On & Parker 2000; Bar-On, R
2005; Boler 1999; Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi 2000; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey 1999). Some researchers (Bar-On & Parker 2000, p.148) suggested that SEL should be clearly distinguished from an individual’s personal attributes and regarded as ‘the ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and to use that knowledge to reason and solve problems’. However, other researchers (Boler 1999; Hargreaves 2000) questioned this conception of SEL, arguing that the proposed way to regulate one’s emotions is only another group of technical skills to be mastered through practice and training, thus limiting an individual’s capacity to understand and express one’s emotions authentically within human interactions. Therefore, Hargreaves (2000) contended that SEL should not be regarded either as a synthesis of personal features, or acquisition of certain skills, but as a process that encompasses understanding and management of one’s emotions in order to accomplish intended goals.

In an attempt to generate a comprehensive overview and better understanding of how SEL is constructed, Petrides and Furnham (2001) identified 15 constituents comprising the common theoretical framework of SEL. These facets include the following core personality features and abilities embedded in the notion of SEL: personal attributes (self-esteem, motivation, flexibility, resilience, low impulsivity, optimism, happiness), emotional skills (recognition, management and appropriate expression of one’s emotions), and social competences (social awareness, empathy, positive relationships and assertiveness). This is in line with other international interpretations of SEL proposed by various developmental researchers in recent years (Humphrey et al. 2007; Libbrecht, Lievens & Caretee 2014; Mayer, Roberts & Barsade 2008; Morris & Scott 2002; Petrides, Furnham & Frederickson 2004; Weare 2003).

Overview of the origin and evolution of SEL

The question of how to manage emotions and social interactions successfully has been a source of common interest across human history (Elias et al. 2007). The inception of SEL can been traced historically to Aristotle’s writings about the importance of social and emotional skills in The
Nicomachean Ethics that has been further explored in Darwin’s contemplation of the role of emotions in human evolution (Goleman 1995; Mayer 2001). Contemporary views related to the SEL approach are disclosed in Salovey and Mayer’s theory of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Thorndike’s outlook of social intelligence (Bar-On & Parker 2000, 2005).

The concept of Emotional Intelligence was first introduced in the academic work of Salovey and Mayer in 1990 who offered their landmark envision of this construct as ‘the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions’ (Salovey & Mayer 1990, p.189). They brought together their belief in the significance of both intrapersonal intelligence (understanding oneself) and interpersonal intelligence (understanding others). Moreover, in their research, they concluded that individuals who developed skills of how to perceive and express their own emotions effectively and recognise accurately emotions of others, were healthy, self-actualised individuals. Their perspectives correlate with Gardner’s (1993) outlook of intrapersonal, or emotional intelligence (an authentic understanding and effective management of one’s emotions) and social, or interpersonal intelligence (an ability to accurately identify others’ emotions, moods and motivations; Fogarty & Bellanca 1995; Gardner 1993). The conceptualisation of EI was later modified with a particular emphasis on an individual’s self-motivation and a capacity for social interactions, presented as ‘an array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures’ (Bar-On 1997 p.14). Hence, two different approaches of the EI construct emerged, the original one, focusing on accurate perception and understanding of one’s and others’ emotions, and the other approach blending together individual’s emotional and social skills and their motivation to succeed in life (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001). Both definitions give emphasis to the critical role emotional understanding plays in social interactions.

According to its original instigator (Thorndike 1920, p.228), social intelligence refers to ‘the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls, to act wisely in human relations’. Further explorations of the
concept of social intelligence are outlined in the work of Gesten and colleagues (1987, p.27) who defined this notion as ‘a summary judgment of performance across a range of interpersonal situations’. Central to the model of social intelligence is an individual’s capacity for flexibility, behaviour modification, and social adjustment (Cantor & Kihlstrom 1987; Davidson 2011; Roffey 2011). Therefore, social competence comprises core skills and attitudes necessary for an individual’s function and adaptation in diverse cultural settings (Consortium on the School –Based Promotion of Social Competence 1994; Davidson 2011; Denham et al. 2009). Socially competent children are considerate of the feelings of others, are able to collaborate with others, and to resolve conflicts peacefully (Beamish & Bryer 2015; Humphrey et al. 2010a; Denham et al. 2009; Squires 2003). Thus, children with highly developed social skills are able to interact in a socially appropriate way in school settings (Daunic et al. 2013; Denham et al. 2009), and establish positive and meaningful relationships with others (Denham et al. 2012; Humphrey et al. 2010a,b), that are necessary for their school adjustment and academic success (Durlak et al. 2011; Mendez, Fantuzzo & Cicchetti 2002; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015). On the other hand, children who are not able to socialise appropriately with their peers are perceived as disruptive, thus impeding their own school performance, as well as that of their peers (Bar-On & Parker 2000; Duncan & Magnuson 2011; Greenberg et al. 2003).

Social intelligence and emotional intelligence are distinct concepts but are closely interrelated (Bar-On, Handley & Fund 2005; Ciarrochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Denham et al. 2009; Goleman 1995; Heggestad 2008; Squires 2003). For example, there are many social situations that can elicit intense emotions (Goleman 1995). Hence, children need to learn to identify and manage their emotions effectively and to understand accurately others’ emotions in order to respond in a socially suitable way in such situations (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2012; Ciarrochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001). Therefore, some researchers (Hargreaves 2000; Landy 2006; Riggio 1986; Salovey & Mayer 1990; Shaffer & Kipp 2010) assert that emotional intelligence is an integral part of individual’s social effectiveness. In this regard, it is critical to point out that several developmental researchers (Bariola, Gullone & Hughes 2011; Bradley et al. 2009; Ciarrochi, Chan &
Bajgar 2001; Gardner 1983; 1993) believe that an individual’s level of interpersonal intelligence (how we interact with others) is predicted by one’s intrapersonal intelligence (how well we perceive, understand and manage our own emotions), thus pointing out to a close interrelationship between both concepts. However, no empirical research has explored the analogy and the boundaries of these two concepts (Cassady & Eissa 2008; Heggestad 2008).

In current times, a number of different terms are used internationally to indicate SEL, such as emotional literacy, emotional intelligence, emotional and social wellbeing, social and emotional competence and social and emotional learning (Department for Education and Skills, UK 2003). Many of these terms apply the language of academic discourse, suggesting the analogy between SEL and children’s educational achievement (Brunker 2008). For the purpose of this research, the term ‘Social and Emotional Learning’ (SEL) proposed by CASEL (2013), is employed. This is also in line with how the term SEL is defined and used within the Australian context (Kids Matter 2014).

**CASEL Framework: Core components and Sub-components**

The term Social and Emotional Learning was first instituted in the United States in 1994, when the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning was founded (CASEL 2013). Situated at the University of Illinois, at Chicago, CASEL emerged as a national and international centre with a mission to convey the increasing body of scientific research in the domain of SEL into educational policies, practices and learning standards that support children’s social, emotional and cognitive development (CASEL 2013). This organisation developed a new concept for school-based interventions with a proximal goal to implement SEL as an indispensable part of school education (Durlak et al. 2011, 2014; Elias et al.1997; Greenberg et al. 2003; Kress & Elias 2006). According to their conceptualisation, children equipped with the appropriate social and emotional skills would be more likely to make sensible decisions, refrain from deliberately harming others, and avoid participation in health damaging behaviours such as violence,
bullying or substance abuse (Elias et al. 1997; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015; Lemire & Arsenio 2000; Moffitt et al. 2011). This in turn, would help children to increase their self-awareness and awareness of others, and reach their maximum potential in life (CASEL 2013).

Since its foundation in 1994, CASEL (2013) constituted a framework that includes what it considers are the essential skills for meeting social and emotional needs in students in the following five domains:

1. **Self-awareness** - being able to accurately perceive one’s emotions and thoughts, to identify personal strengths and limitations, to establish and maintain a well-grounded sense of self-confidence, and to sustain a sense of optimism.

2. **Self-management** - being able to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts and behaviour effectively, to manage one’s impulses, to deal effectively with challenging situations, to motivate oneself, as well as to set and attain personal and academic goals;

3. **Responsible decision making** - being able to make sensible decisions about one’s behaviour and social interactions, and to evaluate realistically the consequences of one’s behaviour.

4. **Social awareness** - being able to take into consideration the perspectives of others and empathise with them, to recognise and appreciate others’ differences, to appreciate cultural diversity, and to identify the resources and supports available from one’s family, school and community.

5. **Relationship skills** – being able to develop and maintain positive relationships, to listen attentively and communicate clearly with others, to collaborate effectively, to provide and seek help when needed, to resolve conflicts constructively, and to resist inappropriate social pressure.

In what follows, a detailed account on each of the five sets of social and emotional components and related sub-components integrated into the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) is presented, illustrating the inextricable interdependence between them.
**Self-awareness**

Several developmental researchers (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Bariola, Gullone & Hughes 2011; Bradley et al. 2009; Shaffer & Kipp 2010) agree that self-awareness is the essential constituent of children's social and emotional development. ‘This awareness of emotions is the fundamental emotional competence on which others [other social and emotional skills] such as emotional self-control is built’ (Goleman 1995, p.51). Self-awareness embraces the following set of sub-skills: awareness of one’s emotions, understanding the causes for one's emotional experiences, and the role of emotions on the individual's mood and behaviour (Bariola, Gullone & Hughes 2011; Sharp 2001). Self-aware children are able to identify and utilise effectively personal strengths to achieve goals, are confident in their potential and efficacy, and have a sense of spirituality (Denham et al. 2003; Kress & Elias 2006).

Empirical research indicates that high level of self-awareness is associated with better emotional health (Daunic et al. 2013; Schutte et al. 1988, 2002), positive outlook on life (Durlak et al. 2014; Schutte et al.1988, 2002; Schutte, Schuettelpelz & Malouff 2010), and greater life satisfaction (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Caputi 2000; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015; Martinez –Pons 1997). Children who are aware of their own personal, social and emotional needs and know how to meet them effectively, frequently experience feelings of contentment and inner joy (Denham, Bassett & Zinssser 2012; Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001), which are paramount to their emotional health (Daunic et al. 2013; Schutte et al.1988, 2002). Furthermore, children who are able to recognise their own strengths and to compensate for their weaknesses have high self-regard, which in turn generates feelings of worth, confidence and capability (Maslow 1943). These feelings give rise to productivity, creativity and inventiveness, all of which play an important role in an individual’s inner drive to set and achieve goals (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001), and maintain a positive attitude towards life (Denham, Bassett & Zinssser 2012; Schutte et al.1988, 2002). A positive outlook on life usually generates feelings of happiness and optimism that motivate children with a high level of self-awareness to pursue and accomplish their highest
aspirations in life (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Frederickson 2009; Roffey 2011), and reach self-actualisation (Maslow 1954). Hence, the importance of instilling self-awareness skills in children from an early age may play a critical role in their emotional wellbeing (Schutte et al. 1988, 2002; Schutte, Schuettpelz & Malouff 2010), personal development (Schutte et al. 1988, 2002), and success in life (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Denham et al. 2011, 2014; Roffey 2011).

Self-management

Self-management encompasses the following set of abilities: effective regulation of one’s emotions, management of impulsivity and coping effectively with stress, setting achievable goals and mobilising one’s motivational forces to accomplish those goals, an ability to focus full attention on the tasks at hand, excellent time-management and organisational skills, as well as an ability to utilise constructive feedback received from others in order to improve one’s performance (Beamish & Bryer 2015; Cejovic 2011; Cole, Martin & Dennis 2004; Hourigan, Goodman & Southam-Gerrow 2011; Kress & Elias 2006).

Importantly, effective regulation of one’s emotions is an indispensable component of children’s self-management skills (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Hourigan, Goodman & Southam-Gerrow 2011), and a cornerstone of a healthy child’s development (Cole, Martin & Dennis 2004; Shonkoff & Phillips 2000). Effective regulation of both positive and negative emotions plays a pivotal role in children’s social, emotional and cognitive development (Cicchetti, Ganiban & Barnett 1991; Fogarty 2009; Schutte, Schuettelpeltz & Malouff 2010), and their academic achievement (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Garner 2010; Howard-Jones 2008; Trentacosta & Izard 2007). Children who lack emotion regulation competencies have poor study habits and experience difficulties in following teachers’ instructions (Blair & Razza 2007; Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Nelson et al. 1999). These children commonly experience attention problems and display hyperactive behaviour in educational settings (Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo 2004; Greenberg et al. 2003; Keogh & Burstein 1988). The rationale behind this assertion is that
children who are predominantly in a negative mood and get easily frustrated throughout a day, may experience difficulties in focusing their attention on the learning task and completing it on time (Howse et al. 2003). Therefore, a lack of self-regulation skills can severely affect a child’s academic performance and increase the risk of school dropout (Blair & Razza 2007; Daunic et al. 2013; Eaton et al. 2008; Ensmiger & Slusarick 1992; Howard-Jones 2008; Howse et al. 2003; Rose, Rose & Feldman 1989).

On the other hand, effective regulation of emotions is associated with school enjoyment and school success (Howard-Jones 2008; Shields et al. 2001; Miller et al. 2006). Children who can manage their emotions appropriately are able to engage positively in social interactions with their peers and teachers (Blair et al. 2004; Denham et al. 2003; Garner 2010), and are generally perceived as optimistic, helpful and empathetic individuals (Denham et al. 2012; Garner & Estep 2001; Fabes & Eisenberg 1992). Those children, in turn, are more likely to be accepted by their peers in the school environment (Bar-On & Parker 2000; Beamish & Bryer 2015; Howard-Jones 2008; Shields et al. 2001). Empirical evidence (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Ladd, Birch & Buhs 1999; Noonah et al. 2015; Wentzel 1994) suggests that peer acceptance can foster children’s school engagement and increase their motivation to pursue academic success. In addition, children with well-developed emotion regulation skills are regarded as attentive and academically advanced students by their teachers (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Eisenberg et al. 2005; Trentacosta & Izard 2007), as they can focus their full attention on the task until its completion, ignore classroom distractions and follow teacher’s instructions (Bodrova & Leong 2008). The rationale here is that emotionally competent children are able to minimise the influence of negative emotions in stressful situations (Schutte, Schuettpelz & Malouff 2010), and utilise positive emotions to increase their motivation to learn and attend to the academic task (Fogarty 2009; Izard 1991). This in turn, is related to teacher’s positive evaluation of their school performance (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012) that plays an important part in children’s academic success (Gillespie & Seibel 2006; Zins et al. 2004).

Another important aspect of self-management is developing effective organisational and time management skills (Kress & Elias 2006). Several
educational researchers (Anday-Porter, Henne & Horan 2000; Blair 2002; Cejovic 2011; Gambill, Moss & Vescogni 2008; Monahan, Ognibene & Torrisi 2000; Orr 1996) agree that children’s ability to get organised and manage learning tasks timely and effectively is an essential prerequisite for their academic success. Several studies conducted within educational context (Blair 2002; Cejovic 2011; Gambill, Moss & Vescogni 2008; Monahan, Ognibene & Torrisi 2000; Orr 1996) investigated the impact of implementing a program aimed to support students’ organisational skills on their learning engagement and academic performance. One study conducted in the USA (Monahan, Ognibene & Torrisi 2000) which involved 68 students in total (44 third graders from two classes and 24 ninth graders from two middle classes), confirmed that instruction in organisational and time-management skills resulted in improved student learning outcomes, including timely completion of their school tasks and increased amount of school work returned to the teacher. On a similar note, another American case study (Cejovic 2011) which included one class containing of 23 fifth grade students studies, confirmed that instruction in organisational skills resulted in improved children’s engagement in learning as evident by regular completion of their assignments, and increased return of their homework to the classroom teacher (Cejovic 2011). One of the recommendations of this study was that instruction in organisational skills ‘should be an imperative part of school curriculum’ (Cejovic 2011, p.141). Consistent with these findings, another study which explored the relationship between students’ organisational skills and their academic performance (Gambill, Moss & Vescogni 2008), demonstrated that students’ low academic achievement was a reflection of their poor organisational skills, including late work, not completing their homework on time, or being unprepared for their school tasks. The conclusion of the authors of this study (Gambill, Moss & Vescogni 2008, p. 1) was that students’ organisational skills should be viewed as ‘a prerequisite for [their academic] success…’ Highlighting the symbiotic relationship between students’ organisational abilities and their academic outcomes, Orr (1996, p.8) asserted: ‘…[T]hose [students] who do well in school are found to be more effective planners and organizers.’ Therefore, according to Sedita (1995) and Boller (2008), providing students with organisational support in
their early developmental years can enhance their inherent motivation to learn and achieve academically.

**Responsible decision making**

Responsible decision making skills relate to one’s ability to: evaluate situations accurately and respond constructively, identify and elucidate problems by employing self-reflection strategies and problem-solving skills, and conduct themselves in a morally and ethically responsible way (Beamish & Bryer 2015; Kress & Elias 2006). When making decisions in life, socially and emotionally competent children are able to distinguish which problems should be addressed by reducing the scope of options to be examined in various situations (McPhail 2004), and pay attention to the relevant information related to the problem (Beamish & Bryer 2015; Damasio 1994). Additionally, those children are able to contemplate the problems from different angles, and consider several alternatives of how to resolve those problems before taking any action (Zins et al. 2004; Beamish & Bryer 2015).

Empirical evidence (Elias & Weissberg 2000; Forgas 2000; Humphrey et al. 2007) points out the impact of responsible decision-making skills on children’s emotional wellbeing and behaviours. Children who have well-developed decision making skills are more likely to engage in behaviours that nurture their positive development, such as physical activity, healthy nutrition and self-care (Eaton et al. 2008). In addition, those children have increased understanding of the consequences of their behaviour (Fredericks 2003; Wilson, Gottfredson & Najaka 2001), which in turn is associated with a low incidence of conduct problems (Zins et al. 2004).

On the other hand, children who lack sound decision making and assertiveness skills are commonly subjected to peer pressure and therefore, are more likely to participate in health damaging behaviours, such as substance abuse and early sexual activity (Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015; Moffitt et al. 2011; Romasz, Kantor & Elias 2004). Furthermore, as Brackett, Mayer and Warner (2004) indicated, children who are not able to recognise their emotions and utilise them effectively to make sensible decisions, are at increased risk for developing antisocial behaviours, such as...
aggression, delinquency and violence. ‘Drug use, alcohol use, and tobacco use, pregnancy, poor nutrition and physical inactivity, and violence are all related to diminished school performance’ (McManis & Sorenson 2000, p.1). The rationale behind this affirmation is that these deviant behaviours can severely affect children’s ability to learn and can place them at risk of school absenteeism (Daunie et al. 2013; Washington Kids Count 2002). The general outcome of those inappropriate social behaviours is academic underachievement and school failure (Hawkins et al. 1999; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015), as well as an increased possibility of adjustment problems in adolescence and adulthood (Farmer et al. 2001; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015; Moffitt et al. 2011).

Social awareness

Social awareness includes the following groups of competencies: appreciating others’ differences, understanding and acknowledging others’ perspectives, expressing high regard to others, and showing sensitivity and empathy to the emotional experiences of others (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Beamish & Bryer 2015; Davidson 2011; Kress & Elias 2006). Moreover, social awareness correlates to an individual’s capacity for flexibility, behaviour modification and adaptability, depending on circumstances (Cantor & Kishlstrom 1987, 1989; Davidson 2011). Socially aware children manage to associate with a wide range of individuals in a broad scope of social situations (Bar-On & Parker 2000; Davidson 2011), because they display reverence towards their peers, parents and teachers (Warden & MacKinon 2003). Moreover, socially competent children are able to listen with full attention and genuine interest to the perspectives and opinions of others, without underestimating one’s worth and value (Roffey 2005, 2011).

Social awareness plays a fundamental role in an individual’s function and adaptation in diverse cultural settings in childhood and adulthood (Consortium on the School –Based Promotion of Social Competence 1994; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015). As Hartup (1992, p.1) indicates, ‘the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not school grades, and not classroom behaviour, but rather, the adequacy with which the child gets
along with other children’. This proclamation has additional support in contemporary research (Crick, Grotpeter & Bigbee 2002; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015; Moffitt et al. 2011) that acknowledges the relationship between children’s social awareness developed in early school years and their further social adjustment in higher education and in the workplace.

An essential ingredient of social awareness is the ability to understand how others feel in various circumstances, in other words, to empathise with others (Bruce 2010). Empathetic children are able to understand the feelings of others through the non-verbal messages they convey in conversation by observing their facial expressions, body language and the tone of the voice (Bahman & Maffini 2008). In this kind of social interaction both individuals are attuned with each other, feeling respected and understood (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Bruce 2010; Theobald et al. 2015). Goleman (1996, p.111) contends that ‘mastering this empathic ability smooths the way for classroom effectiveness’, resulting in better academic outcomes (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Davidson 2011; Denham et al. 2012).

On the contrary, lack of empathy can be a serious drawback (Bahman & Maffini 2008). For example, children who cannot empathise, are not capable to understand others’ perspectives and emotional experiences, and as a result they cannot connect with them (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Theobald et al. 2015). Therefore, those children may develop negative feelings and attitudes towards their peers, which in turn, may affect their social relationships (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Davidson 2011; Theobald et al. 2015). Moreover, they may feel insecure, misunderstood and unsupported, that can lead to emotional isolation from others (Bahman & Maffini 2008). Those unpleasant experiences associated with negative feelings may diminish children’s self-esteem, and as a consequence may affect their academic performance and educational outcomes (Bar-On & Parker 2000; Bahman & Maffini 2008; Durlak et al. 2011, 2014; Theobald et al. 2015). Interestingly, whilst Goleman (1998) declared that empathy requires maturity to evolve fully, other authors argued (Brown & Dunn 1996; Bruce 2010) that children are able to empathise since their 3rd or 4th year of life. Therefore, according to Bruce (2010), this crucial skill for successful social and emotional development should be instigated early in a child’s life.
Relationship skills

All previously mentioned social and emotional skills are a prerequisite for building positive relationships with others (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Denham et al. 2012; Parlakian 2003). Relationship skills embrace an array of abilities that help individuals to communicate openly and clearly, be assertive, express both positive and negative emotions in a socially appropriate way, work collaboratively with others, negotiate and manage conflicts peacefully, provide and ask for help when it is needed, and establish and maintain positive relationships with others (Beamish & Bryer 2015; Denham, Bassett & Zincser 2012; Kress & Elias 2006; Schutte, Schuettelpelz & Malouff 2010; Wight & Chapparo 2008).

Positive relationships embrace mutual understanding, trust, respect and reliability (Bolmer et al. 2005; Krause, Bochner & Duchesne 2006; Larrivee 2005). As Bolmer and colleagues (2005) indicated, engagement in positive peer relationships provides a sense of security, belonging, and support to children. These feelings, in turn, are associated with children’s positive attitude towards school and increased participation in the learning activities (Durlak et al. 2011, 2014; Hamre & Pianta 2001). Children’s attachment to school and increased motivation to achieve are the main predictors of higher academic achievement (Asher & Paquette 2003; Diener 2009; Durlak et al. 2011, 2014; Huppert 2009; Ladd & Troop-Gordon 2003).

Positive relationships with others are critical to children’s emotional health (Hattie 2009), as frequent positive interactions are closely related to one’s high self-esteem (Collins 2009; Wolfe, Wekerle & Scott 1997). Socially and emotionally competent children have a high level of self-esteem because they are able to develop quality relationships with others (Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi 2000; Denham, Bassett & Zincser 2012; Parlakian 2003), due to their capacity to express their feelings openly and appropriately (Kress & Elias 2006). On the other hand, children who are not able to interact in a warm and trusting manner with others may become isolated and lonely, ‘treating people as things, hurting others because they don’t expect to get what they want’ (Thomasmgard, Boreman & Metz 2004, p.122). Hence, children who experience emotional difficulties in their interactions have an increased
tendency to be engaged in antisocial behaviours (Garner 2010; Greco & Morris 2005), and are more likely to develop mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression (Cole et al. 1998; Daunic et al. 2013; Spence, Donovan & Brechman-Toussaint 1999).

To sum up, according to CASEL (2013), the proposed conceptual framework that includes the core SEL components and related sub-components is an imperative for enhancing children’s social and emotional skills. These skills, in turn, can raise one’s self-esteem, self-control, and independence, increasing children’s motivation to actualise their highest potential in life (Bruce 2010; Ciarrhochi et al. 2001; Frederickson 2009; Johnson 2003; Johnson & Johnson 2003; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015; Roffey 2011).

**Influence of affect on cognition**

In the field of education, for centuries, emotions have taken an inferior position to cognitive aspects of the individual (Bolton 2000; Hanoch 2002b; McPhail 2004). Emphasis exclusively on the cognitive standards in education, coupled with a perception of teachers having a limited understanding of the important dimensions of a child’s development, were the main historical reasons for minimising the influential role of affect on children’s learning (Hargreaves 2000). However, in the last two decades an increasing number of researchers (Ashkanasy, Hartel & Daus 2002; Bolton 2000; Damasio 1994; Hanoch 2002a,b; McPhail 2004; Okon-Singer et al. 2015) have indicated that emotions and cognition are intertwined, regarding emotions as main facilitators of cognitive processes. Hence, an interdependent predication emerged, considering both emotion and cognition as interrelated concepts (Humphrey et al. 2007; Okon-Singer et al. 2015).

The pivotal role of emotions on children’s academic outcomes has been well established in the neuroscientific research (Adolphs & Damasio 2001; Caine & Caine 1997; Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Forgas 2000; McCain, Mustard & Shanker 2007; Okon-Singer et al. 2015), confirming that affect can either expedite or impede children’s learning (Goswami 2010; OECD 2002). In their review of an extensive research on brain development,
Fogarty (2009) and Caine and Caine (1991) affirmed the powerful role of emotions in the process of learning, asserting that intense emotions generally compete for a space in the active working memory of the brain, thus interfering with the learning process (Goleman 2004; Okon-Singer et al. 2015). The rationale for this assertion is that the emotional centres of the brain which are located in the amygdala (part of the brain involved in emotional information processing), are closely related with the learning centres of the brain which are situated in the neocortex (part of the brain involved in high-level cognitive functions, such as conscious thinking and language development; Adolphs & Damasio 2001; Okon-Singer et al. 2015). According to Zins and colleagues (2004), the neocortex also plays a critical role in the process of cognitive learning. When children feel overwhelmed by upsetting emotions, the learning centres of the brain are temporarily inhibited, engrossing child’s attention with strong negative feelings, thus impeding their learning process (Elias et al. 1997; Okon-Singer et al. 2015; Zis et al. 2004). Therefore, children who feel anxious or distressed have a limited ability to concentrate on their learning tasks that in turn, might interfere with their academic capacity and educational attainment (Cain & Carnellor 2008; McCain, Mustard & Shanker 2007; Okon-Singer et al. 2015). On the contrary, positive emotions incite students’ attention, which in turn, engenders both their short-term and long-term memory (Caine & Caine 1991; Goswami 2015), and enhances their desire to learn and achieve academically (Zins et al. 2004). Hence, the need to teach children appropriate ways to regulate their emotions, starting from an early age (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Goswami 2015).

The influential role of affect on the process of thinking (Adolphs & Damasio 2001; McCain, Mustrad & Shanker 2007) has further implications on children’s cognitive capacity and educational achievement (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Goswami 2010). Positive affect generates an internally focused thinking style, when individuals pay attention to their internal thoughts and ideas (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Schutte, Schuettpelz & Malouff 2010). On the contrary, negative affect produces a way of thinking in which external information takes precedence over one’s internally generated thoughts (Bless 2000; Fielder 2001; McCain, Mustrad & Shanker 2007).
Cognitive neuroscience research indicates that socially and emotionally competent individuals are more likely to observe their inner emotional states by employing the higher brain centres located in the neocortex (Calkins & Bell 2010; Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001), and then they are able to manage their internal states to fit the environment (Humphrey et al. 2007). As these children are able to focus full attention to their internal ideas and bring them to fruition, they are able to express utmost creativity and inventiveness (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Goswami 2010).

By contrast, children who lack social and emotional skills, and are predominantly in a negative mood, have a tendency to view their immediate environment as potentially dangerous (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Forgas 1998), which takes priority over their internal feelings and creative ideas (Bless 2000; Fielder 2001). Consequently, this way of perception and interpretation of the environment may interfere with the cognitive ability and academic potential of those children (Calkins & Bell 2010; Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001), leading to low academic achievement (Bless 2000; Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo 2004). However, this process can be inverted, as soon as children become aware of their own affective states (Ciarrhochi, Chan & Bajgar 2001; Goswami 2010). Hence, the main goal of SEL is seen as assisting children to recognise and understand accurately their own emotional states (Humphrey et al. 2007), and effectively utilise positive affect to unleash their creativity and academic potential to the utmost level (Calkins & Bell 2010; Goswami 2010; Russ 1999; Shaw & Runco 1994; Roffey 2011; Zhai, Raver & Jones 2015).

**Relationship between Children’s Learning Environment and their Learning Process**

Learning is a complex process that is fostered through social interactions with others (Doidge 2010; Noona et al. 2015; Zins et al. 2004). A theoretical approach that examined the fundamental impact of social interactions on children’s cognitive, social and emotional development is Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory of human development. According to this theoretical perspective, the process of learning is closely related to
cognitive stimulation through social interactions with a significant adult (such as parent, or a teacher), or a more knowledgeable peer, who is able to instigate children’s cognitive, social and emotional development (Salkind 2004). Human interactions are fundamental to the process of learning, as new knowledge is acquired through sharing and verifying one’s ideas, opinions and beliefs in open conversations with others (Vygotsky 1978). As stated by Salkind (2004), the most important principle of Vygotsky’s theory is that individual’s intellectual development is related to ‘the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined by independent problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (Vygotsky 1978, p.55), referred to as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Within the ZPD, the teacher is able to maximise children’s personal development and learning outcomes by introducing new tasks challenging enough to stimulate their cognitive growth, without being frustrated by not being able to accomplish them alone. In a positive and collaborative relationship, the teacher can facilitate children to learn new things and achieve tasks they would not be able to complete alone. This notion integrates the psychological basis for children’s cognitive, social and emotional development with the teacher’s pedagogical ability for proper guidance, instruction and positive interactions (Boorn, Dunn & Page 2010; Hedegaard 1996; Noona et al. 2015; Pianta & Stuhlman 2004).

Considering the vast amount of time spent at school, classroom teachers can have a great impact on the emotional wellbeing, cognitive development and academic attainment of their students (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Collie et al. 2015; Cooper, Hegarty & Simco 1996; Frye & Mumpower 2001; Weare & Gray 2003). Essentially, when children feel secure and safe in their immediate environment, they will take the risk needed to explore and acquire new knowledge (Department of Education and Children’s Services 2010; Jalongo & Isenberg 2007; Pringle 1986). The sense of safety and security arises from nurturing and supportive environments where educators show sensitivity and care towards children’s social and emotional needs on a consistent basis (Boorn, Dunn & Page 2010; Cacioppo & Bernston 2004; Noona et al. 2015). When children are provided with emotional security they
need, when they feel accepted, valued and appreciated by their teacher, a positive relationship based on trust, shared understanding and mutual respect will be born (Collins 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Howes & Hamilton 1992; Noona et al. 2015; Pianta 1999). In this kind of relationship children are able to ‘express their feelings, concerns and points of view with no fear or hesitation’ (Bahman & Maffini 2008, p.20). Moreover, when teachers are able to respect and value children as they are, they also support the development of their self-worth (Bruce 2010). Children who are supported to develop their self-worth, emotion regulation skills and social competencies, are able to flourish into self-motivated and independent learners (Boorn, Dunn & Page 2010; Bruce 2010; Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Frederickson 2009; Jalongo & Isenberg 2004; Roffey 2011).

Many research studies (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Cooper, Hegarty & Simco 1996; Frye & Mumpower 2001; Hamre & Pianta 2001; McKain & Mustard 1999; Noona et al. 2015; Weare & Gray 2003) demonstrated that positive teacher-child relationships are associated with students’ positive attitude towards school, increased engagement in the learning process and higher academic achievement. A possible explanation for this claim is that students who believe that their teachers genuinely care about them, are more responsive to their directions (Gregory et al. 2010), feel motivated to make every effort to complete school assignments successfully (Benard 2004; Noona et al. 2015), and are able to reach their highest potential academically (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Harris 2007; Pianta 1999). Positive relationships with teachers have also been linked to proper language development and development of self-regulation skills (Ladd, Birch & Buhs 1999; Entwisle & Alexander 1999), thus exerting significant influence on students’ social and emotional adjustment in school (Bird & Sultmann 2010; Bruce 2010; Pianta & Stuhlman 2004). On the other hand, children who are involved in conflicting relationships with their teachers, and are frequently preoccupied with negative feelings, are more likely to be less engaged in their classroom activities (Ladd, Birch & Buhs 1999), and are at risk of poor academic outcomes (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Ladd & Burgess 2001). Highlighting the importance of building positive teacher-child relationships, Gordon (2005, p.201) indicated that ‘[C]hildren learn most from
human interaction and, within that, learn most from people who have positive regard for them’. Therefore, developing and maintaining positive relationships with students, ‘must be the utmost priority for teachers’ (Bahman & Maffini 2008, p.19).

In order to establish a positive learning environment, teachers need to listen attentively to children’s voices and respect their opinions, needs and individual interests (Darling-Hammond 2007; Noona et al. 2015). Additionally, by providing a well-planned classroom routine and reliable structure that make children feel confident to explore and learn (Boorn, Dunn & Page 2010; Pianta 1999), the students may begin ‘to feel some control over their environment and to internalise some control over their behaviour’ (Bennathan & Boxall 2000, p.8). A summary of research findings (Boorn, Dunn & Page 2010; Caine & Caine 1997; Doidge 2010; Greenfield 2000; McDonald 2001; Noona et al. 2015) confirmed that learning environments in which children are able to experience frequent positive interactions with their teachers and peers, and are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning process, significantly contribute to their cognitive engagement in classroom tasks. Thus, modifying teacher’s pedagogical approach in a way that is more inclusive, meaningful and caring for children is more likely to create a positive learning environment in the classroom (Bruce 2010; Noona et al. 2015). Positive classroom environment can facilitate children’s learning (Harris 2007) and enhance their academic potential (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Weare & Gray 2003).

**SEL in Education: School Practices around the World**

Numerous researchers and educators worldwide (Alvord & Grados 2005; Battistich, Schaps & Wilson 2004; Catalano et al. 2002; Christenson & Haysy 2004; Daunic et al. 2013; Durlak et al. 2011, 2014; Elias & Arnold 2006; Farrell & Travers 2005; Greenberg et al. 2003; Jones & Bouffard 2012; Koller & Svoboda 2002) have supported the notion of school-based enhancement of social, emotional and cognitive development of all children throughout their school years. This resulted in the emergence of a great deal
of school-based SEL initiatives globally (CASEL 2013) with the major evidence–based SEL programs being implemented in the education system in the United States of America (CASEL 2013), United Kingdom (Department for Education and Skills 2005), and Australia (Kids Matter –Commonwealth of Australia 2007).

Illinois (USA) was the first state in the world that addressed children’s social and emotional development in all school districts, providing a platform for integrative learning, and overall healthy development of all students (CASEL 2013). In 2005, the Illinois State Board of Education developed and approved the national education standards that imply mandatory incorporation of SEL in all government schools in the Illinois (Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership 2011). This state continues to support SEL embedment into the school culture and teachers’ professional development related to SEL in all 79 government schools in Illinois (Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership 2011). SEL has also been identified as a strategy of paramount pertinence to effective learning in A Curriculum for Excellence, Scotland (Scottish Government 2009) and in the Welsh Curriculum (Scottish Executive 2008). Other international endeavours attending to SEL as a way of fostering students’ social and emotional development and their educational achievement include the following countries: Singapore, Canada, Israel, Sweden, Netherlands, Spain, South Africa, Germany etc. (CASEL 2013). These countries have social and emotional learning content infused to a certain extent in their current educational practices (CASEL 2013) through systematic classroom instruction (Payton et al. 2000, 2008).

Several meta analyses (Durlak et al. 2011; Weissberg et al. 2007; Wilson & Lipsey 2007), systematic reviews (Adi et al. 2007 a,b; Blank et al. 2009; Weare & Nind 2011), and further empirical research initiatives (Elias et al. 1997; Hawkins et al. 2001; Wong, Li-Tsang & Siu 2014) conducted worldwide, examined the impact of research-based SEL programs on student’s social, emotional and cognitive skills. The recent meta-analysis (CASEL 2013) comprising of 76 controlled studies of research-based SEL programs implemented in several countries worldwide, revealed that the implementation of SEL in their education system resulted in increased social
and emotional competencies in students, better academic performance and significant decrease of conduct problems. These findings add to the growing body of compelling international evidence (Catalano et al. 2002; Greenberg et al. 2003; Zins et al. 2004) affirming the positive outcomes of evidence-based SEL programs on children’s emotional, social and cognitive development. In addition, a growing body of evidence from research and practice (Caprara et al. 2000; Catalano et al. 2004; Wong, Li-Tsang & Siu 2014; Zins et al. 2004) demonstrated the fundamental impact of SEL on children’s intrinsic motivation to achieve within the school, which in turn, resulted in higher academic achievement and better test scores (Flook, Repetti & Ullman 2005; Malecki & Elliott 2002; Shriver & Weissberg 2005). These findings correlate with the findings from three large scientific reviews of research undertaken by CASEL (Payton et al. 2008) which confirmed that the implementation of SEL programs in schools yielded multiple benefits on students, such as higher self esteem, improved attitudes about others, increased social and emotional skills, decreased conduct problems, reduced emotional distress, improved social behaviours and higher academic achievement. The conclusion of this review was that implementation of evidence-based SEL programs in educational settings were amongst the most effective developmental school programs offered to students.

However, there is a contradictory evidence base for these assertions (Zeidner, Roberts & Matthews 2002; Gott 2003; Humphrey et al. 2007; Humphrey 2009), with some researchers arguing that an insufficient and inconsistent evidence base has been provided for those claims (Humphrey et al. 2007; Humphrey 2009). For example, there is a disparity in the research findings regarding the purported link between SEL and students’ academic achievement (Humphrey et al. 2007). While some studies demonstrated the positive effects of various SEL programs on students’ academic success (Elias et al. 1997; Zins et al. 2004), other studies (Greenberg & Kusche 2006; Petrides, Furnham & Frederickson 2004) failed to prove a significant correlation between SEL and students’ educational accomplishment. For instance, Greenberg and Kusche (2006) were not able to demonstrate a significant difference in the academic achievement in both English and Mathematics subjects, between the primary schools students involved in the
SEL program Promoting Alternative Thinking Skills (PATHS), and the comparison group of students. In a similar context, in a study that examined the relationship between SEL and students’ educational accomplishment, Petrides, Furnham and Frederickson (2004) found that an improvement in children’s social and emotional competences did not have a significant influence on their cognitive ability and academic performance.

Additionally, several authors (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009; Hoffman 2009; Watson, Emery & Bayliss 2012) raised doubts about the recent approaches to supporting children’s social and emotional wellbeing within school environments. Namely, the authors argued that there are differing interpretations of children’s wellbeing arising from psychological, medical, spiritual and philosophical points of view. More specifically, they contended that many contemporary school policies use the term wellbeing to denote individual’s ability to regulate one’s emotions and behaviours effectively ‘within the confines of predetermined outcome indicators, often conflated with issues of discipline and compliance’ (Watson, Emery & Bayliss 2012, p.181). Therefore, they declared that many SEL interventions applied within educational settings are based on the notion that children need professional help and support to manage their own emotional lives (Ecclestone & Hayes 2009). Furthermore, the evidence of effectiveness of such school-based interventions is based predominantly on previously determined ‘targets outcomes, measures and success criteria’ outlined in the school policies on student wellbeing (Watson, Emery & Bayliss 2012, p.53). Hence, the authors concluded ‘that something of the essential essence of wellbeing has been lost in the large scale attempts to intervene’ (Watson, Emery & Bayliss 2012, p.181).

In addition, many published studies in the field of SEL have methodological flaws, including the lack of a control group in the program evaluation (Clabby & Elias 1999; Cook et al. 2008; Edwards et al. 2005; Lee, Tiley & White 2009), lack of monitoring during program implementation (Greenberg et al. 2005; Durlak & DuPre 2008), or the assessment of the effectiveness of a SEL program based exclusively on self-reported satisfaction levels of teachers (Borba 2005; Shriver, Schwab-Stone & DeFalco 1999). Thus, from the view espoused in the literature, the
conclusion of the experts in the field of SEL is that the ‘current findings [regarding the positive correlation between SEL and children’s academic outcomes] are not definitive’ (Durlak et al. 2011, p. 419).

**SEL in the Australian Education System**

In Australia, the growing need for mental health promotion and cultivation of children’s social and emotional development has been clearly acknowledged by the report of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007). According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) figures, 7-10% of children aged under 15 years were reported to have behavioural difficulties, such as attention problems, disruptive or aggressive behaviour, and long-term mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression. Moreover, the national need for increasing Australian children’s social and emotional skills has also been identified in a large longitudinal study conducted by Bernard, Stephanou and Urbach (2007) in the period from 2003-2007. This study was conducted on 11,526 students enrolled at different year levels in 81 schools across all states in Australia, with an aim to examine the various aspects of social and emotional wellbeing of students from both teachers’ and students’ perspectives. One of the major findings emerging from this study was that ‘40% of Australian primary and secondary school students have poor social and emotional skills’ (Bernard, Stephanou & Urbach 2007, p.106). Other interesting findings arising from this extensive research were that almost 50% of students proclaimed that they are not learning about their feelings and how to manage stress, while approximately 40% reported that they are not learning how to make friendships and how to solve their problems. These results are in line with the findings of another Australian study (Fuller & Wicking 2013) conducted on 16,439 children aged 9 to 17 years, which revealed that over half of the participating children lack social and emotional skills.

These proclamations have alerted the Australian Government to investigate avenues for promoting children’s social and emotional wellbeing to prevent the potential or existing mental health and behavioural problems (Brunker 2008; Stafford et al. 2007). Hence, policy makers in the new shape
of the Australian Curriculum emphasised the importance of fostering students’ wellbeing by enhancing their level of social and emotional competence (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA 2014)). Specifically, the Australian Curriculum highlights the importance of developing students’ general capabilities, including critical thinking, social competence, collaboration and embracing cultural diversity, skills which can be applied ‘across subject-based content and equip students to be lifelong learners’ (ACARA 2014). This view has been also supported in the Australian National Goals for Schooling, where along with academic competence, children’s social and emotional development has been highlighted as an important area in education (Department of Education, Science and Training 2005). Furthermore, according to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs Melbourne in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008, p.4), schools should provide a foundation for Australian students’ ‘physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development’ to foster social cohesion and ensure and economic prosperity of the nation. This in turn, is aligned with the national vision of Australian Government to equip all children by 2020 with the skills necessary for lifelong learning in order to ‘have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and the nation’ (ACECQA 2011, p.6). With a goal to address the national need for increasing children’s social and emotional competence and their academic achievement, the Council of Australian Governments developed the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF; DEEWR 2009). This framework was devised to promote the following five positive developmental and academic outcomes in all Australian children from birth to five years, including: development of a sense of personal identity, connectedness with and contribution to the community, maintenance of a sense of wellbeing, engagement in learning, and effective communication with others. As outlined in this framework (DEEWR 2009, p.9), children’s social and emotional wellbeing ‘and a strong sense of connection’ can facilitate their motivation to learn and achieve within educational settings and persist when faced with challenges. Hence, educator’s role is to support children’s social
and emotional development, which in turn, will facilitate their learning engagement and academic outcomes (DEEWR 2009).

However, despite the notion that the Australian National Goals for Education (MCEETYA 1999) acknowledges children’s social and emotional wellbeing as an imperative in education, Australian schools reveal a different picture in which SEL ‘has been absent from crucial educational initiatives’ (Brunker 2008, p.3). State Government efforts to support students’ social and emotional wellbeing have been focused only on facets of the school curriculum (NSWBS 1999) and SEL has not been viewed as a whole school approach (Brunker 2008).

With an aim to enhance young children’s social and emotional wellbeing and prevent the potential and existing behavioural and mental health problems (Stafford et al. 2007), in 2007 the Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative ‘Kids Matter’ (Kids Matter 2014) was founded. This national initiative offers a whole-school approach to SEL, providing all interested primary schools in Australia with resources (SEL program guides, implementation manual and information resources), with a proximal goal to improve students’ mental health and social and emotional wellbeing (Kids Matter 2014). In 2007 - 2008, Kids Matter Primary piloted several evidence-based SEL interventions in 101 schools around Australia, delivered by the participating primary school teachers. One important objective of this research initiative was to increase school personnel knowledge and skills in supporting children’s social and emotional development. The evaluation of this pilot study conducted over a period of two consecutive years in the selected schools, revealed that teachers’ understandings and competence related to SEL implementation in their classrooms increased significantly. According to this study, after SEL program delivery in the selected schools, 14% of the participating teachers agreed that they were more confident about helping children to develop their social and emotional skills (Kids Matter 2014). Additionally, parents confirmed that children’s social and emotional competencies had increased for approximately 80%, in particular their ability to regulate their emotions effectively, and to establish long-term positive relationships with others. The outcomes of the Kids Matter pilot are consistent with the growing body of international research that demonstrated
the positive impact of evidence-based SEL programs on children’s wellbeing (Kids Matter 2014).

Complementing the Kids Matter initiative, the Australian Government of Health founded the Response Ability approach (Response Ability 2015) with an intention to provide professional support, pre-service training, and free multimedia resources to educators across the country to enhance children’s social and emotional wellbeing. In addition, the National Safe Schools Framework introduced in the beginning of 2011, provides schools across Australia with set of guidelines and strategies to create school communities that ‘are safe from harassment, aggression, violence and bullying’ (MCEECDYA 2011, p.2).

The growing national need for raising social and emotional skills in students resulted in the development and implementation of several SEL programs across Australia in the last decade, such as ‘You Can Do It’, ‘Bounce Back’, ‘I can problem solve,’ ‘Quest for values’, ‘Skills for growing’, among others (Kids Matter 2014). Some of these programs have been evaluated and few demonstrated their evidence of effectiveness in meeting social and emotional needs of the students. One of the most effective research-proven SEL programs designed to increase Australian children’s social, emotional and academic capabilities, is the ‘You Can Do It’ (YCDI) program (Bernard 2003).

The ‘YCDI’ program (Bernard 2003) is a whole school approach to SEL that has been implemented in over 6000 primary and secondary schools in Australia. This program is based on cognitive-behavioural approach (Beck 1993) that is rooted in the fundamental assumption that individuals’ patterns of thinking in certain life situations can determine their emotional and behavioural responses. The aim of this SEL program is to enhance children’s social and emotional wellbeing by providing explicit teaching in the following five social and emotional domains, also known as the ‘Five Foundations’: Confidence, Persistence, Organisation, Getting along and Resilience. As Bernard (2003) elaborates, to strengthen the ‘Five Foundations,’ children need be encouraged to cultivate the twelve ‘Habits of Mind’, including: I Can Do It, Accepting Myself, Taking Risks, Being Independent, Giving Effort, Working Tough, Setting Goals, Planning My Time, Being Tolerant of Others,
Thinking First, Playing by the Rules, and Being Socially Responsible. According to Bernard (2003), the development of those ‘Habits of Mind’ is a cornerstone for children’s positive way of thinking that can consequently influence their feelings and behaviours. Hence, the central aim to the ‘YCDI’ approach is to equip children with the necessary skills to recognise their negative thinking patterns and replace them with more rational ways of thinking in such situations.

Several empirical studies (Ashdown & Bernard 2012; Bernard & Walton 2011; Bernard 2006) evaluated the impact of the ‘YCDI’ program (Bernard 2003) on primary school students’ social and emotional wellbeing, and their academic achievement. Collectively, these studies indicated that the ‘YCDI’ program demonstrated its effectiveness in raising children’s social and emotional competence and their academic engagement. For example, one study (Bernard & Walton 2011) investigated the impact of the ‘YCDI’ program on children’s social and emotional wellbeing, learning confidence and their relationships with peers. The participants in this study were 349 Grade five students attending six primary schools in Melbourne where the ‘YCDI’ program was implemented, and 208 students enrolled in six ‘matched’ primary schools without a SEL program in place. The results of this study based solely on students’ completion of the Student Attitude to School Survey (SASS), revealed that the students in the schools where the ‘YCDI’ was implemented, demonstrated lesser level of distress, increased feelings of optimism at school, and greater connectedness to their peers compared to the students in the non-YCDI schools (the comparison group). In addition, the students in those schools where the ‘YCDI’ was implemented showed increased level of self-confidence and self-motivation to learn and achieve, compared to the students who were not exposed to the ‘YCDI’ program. Similarly, another study (Ashdown & Bernard 2012) aimed to examine the effect of the ‘YCDI’ on the social and emotional wellbeing and academic achievement of 99 Preparatory and Grade One students enrolled in a Catholic school in Melbourne, Australia. The results of this study which were based on teachers’ ratings of students’ social and emotional wellbeing, revealed that the ‘YCDI’ was effective in increasing students’ social and emotional skills, in particular self-control, assertiveness and cooperation, as
well as their learning engagement. Regarding students’ academic achievement, the findings indicated that the ‘YCDI’ was effective in increasing the reading abilities of low achieving students.

However, there are several important limitations that need to be considered when interpreting these research findings. Namely, the results of the reviewed studies were based either on a single outcome measure, such as student self-report, or teacher report. Additionally, it is important to note the risk of possible bias for included studies, as the author of the ‘YCDI’ program (Bernard 2003) was also involved in the program evaluation. Despite these concerns, together, the findings of these studies provided further support for the effectiveness of the ‘YCDI’ program as a whole school approach in fostering children's social and emotional competence and their academic engagement.

The Role of Schools and Teachers in supporting Student SEL

The notion that schools can play a fundamental role in fostering children’s social and emotional wellbeing through a holistic approach in education is receiving growing worldwide acknowledgment (Burton & Shotton 2004; Daunic et al. 2013; Davidson 2011; Gardner 1993; Lindahl 2006; Payton et al. 2008; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox 2000). A holistic approach to education goes beyond students’ academic instruction and aims to embrace cognitive, emotional, social, physical and spiritual development of each child (Collie et al. 2015; Forbes 2003; Okon-Singer et al. 2015; Reinke et al. 2011).

Notably, the whole school approach to student wellbeing and learning is recognised as crucial for effective incorporation of social and emotional learning within educational settings (Durlak et al. 2011, 2014; Greenberg et al. 2003; Weare 2000, 2004; Wells, Barlow & Stewart-Brown 2003). A commitment to a holistic approach through promoting SEL in schools would include modifying ‘the school’s ethos, organisation, management structures, relationships, the physical environment, as well as the taught curriculum, so that the experience of school life is conducive to the health of all who learn and work there’ (Weare 2000, p.21). The proximal goal of such approach is
to encourage all students to participate actively in their self-directed and collaborative learning, while fostering the development of positive relationships at all levels within the school community (Battistitch et al. 1999; Beamish & Bryer 2015; Daunic et al. 2013; Elias et al. 1997; Greenberg et al. 2003; Weare 2000, 2004). Moreover, the main emphasis of this approach is to support the development of students’ social, emotional and cognitive skills within school settings in which these skills are constantly developed and applied (Brunker 2008; Duncan & Magnuson 2011; Hare 2010).

Within educational settings, classroom teachers play a pivotal role in children’s social, emotional and cognitive development (Cain & Carnellor 2008), because they tailor the social and emotional climate of the classroom (ACU National & Erebus International 2008; Fang 1996; Kagan 1992; Reinke et al. 2011). In general, teachers who encourage classroom participation and collaboration, initiate discussions about emotion regulation, provide clear classroom rules and are positive role models for respectful behaviour, can enhance children’s social and emotional wellbeing (Bernard, Stephanou & Urbach 2007; Collie et al. 2015; Jennings & Greenberg 2009; Weare & Gray 2003). Moreover, teachers who have increased awareness of the importance of their own and children’s emotions to their wellbeing and academic accomplishment and consistently address these issues in the classroom, may have significant implications on children’s social, emotional and cognitive development (Collie et al. 2015; Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Zembylas 2007; Hargreaves 2000). Namely, through active listening, sensitivity to children’s emotional, social and educational needs and development of mutual trust and empathy, teachers have a powerful impact on increasing children’s social and emotional skills (Bechara, Damasio & Bar-On 2007; Boorn, Dunn & Page 2010; Roberts 1995; Weare & Gray 2003). On the other hand, teachers who generally misinterpret children’s emotions, may misunderstand their emotional states and learning needs, which in turn, may severely threaten students’ social and emotional wellbeing and their academic outcomes (Fang 1996; Hargreaves 2000; Kagan 1992; Noona et al. 2015). Therefore, teachers’ support of students’ social and emotional wellbeing is considered ‘critical to achieving academic success’ (Catalano et al. 2004, p.259).
Considering the significant influence of classroom teachers on students' wellbeing and academic learning (Collie et al. 2015; Dencham et al. 2012; Humphrey 2003; Gordon & Turner 2001; Reinke et al. 2011; Rosenthal 1994), it is surprising that there is little empirical evidence on teachers' perspectives on their role in meeting children's social and emotional needs. A thorough literature review revealed that very few international efforts (Buchanan et al. 2009; Carey 2012; Collie et al. 2015; Noona et al. 2015; Wanless et al. 2013) and a handful of national studies (Mazzer & Rickwood 2015; Nolan, Taket & Stagnitti 2014; Graham et al. 2011; Brunker 2008) explored teachers' perspectives related to SEL.

In one qualitative study conducted in the USA (Buchanan et al. 2009) which surveyed 125 primary and 100 secondary school teachers (kindergarten to eight grade teachers) in regards to the place of SEL in education, 98,9% responded that SEL should be an essential part of students’ school life, while 96,2% acknowledged the link between SEL enhancement and children’s academic success. Interestingly, although the majority of the participating teachers in this study stated that they implement SEL program themselves in their classroom (54.5%), only a small percentage (22.0%) indicated that they were confident to deliver SEL instruction in their classroom.

A recent US study conducted by Wanless and colleagues (2013) which utilised a mixed-method approach, investigated 63 third grade teachers' perceptions of the possible factors that may enable SEL implementation within the educational environment. Data were collected through qualitative focus groups and a completion of a Setting-level Factors Questionnaire that included questions about the most influential factors to SEL promotion in schools. The results of this study showed that School Principal’s support of SEL, and individualised teachers’ coaching were the most influential factors that may enable SEL implementation in schools. These findings supported previous research in this field (Collie et al. 2015; Hallinger & Heck 1996; Kam, Greenberg & Walls 2003; Ransford et al. 2009; Reinke et al. 2011; Patti & Tobin 2006), pointing out that a key element for effective SEL incorporation in the school system is the extent to which school leadership and classroom teachers support the social and emotional wellbeing of
students. The evidence of those studies suggests that the effect of SEL implementation is the strongest when it is highly supported from the School Principal and the school personnel.

Another US study designed by Carey (2012) investigated urban primary school teachers’ perspectives on their role in regards to the promotion of SEL in their classrooms. The findings of this qualitative study showed that all 12 teachers participating in this study considered supporting students’ social and emotional wellbeing as an integral part of their role, however in their attempts to deliver SEL instruction to their students they are encountered with several obstacles. Based on their interview responses, lack of classroom time dedicated to social and emotional education, an insufficient professional development (PD) support, and lack of pre-service teachers’ training related to SEL were identified as major barriers to SEL implementation in their classroom.

Research about teachers’ perspectives related to the place of SEL in their classrooms is only beginning to emerge in Australia in recent years. Having said that, notable exceptions are few qualitative research initiatives (Brunker 2008; Graham et al. 2011; Mazzer & Rickwood 2015; Nolan, Taket & Stagnitti 2014) conducted recently in this area. For example, one recent in-depth qualitative study (Mazzer & Rickwood 2015) aimed to examine teachers’ perceived role and self-efficacy in supporting children’s mental health and wellbeing. This study included 21 teachers from six different co-educational schools in Canberra, and revealed that all interviewed teachers perceived supporting students’ mental health as an important dimension of their teaching role. However, the majority of the participating teachers perceived a deficit in their level of knowledge, experience and skills in mental health related issues, and further expressed the need of an additional training and professional development in mental health. As one teacher reported: ‘I think we need more [theoretical and practical knowledge about children’s wellbeing] . . . It is a necessity that all teachers have some sort of training in mental health’ (Mazzer & Rickwood 2015, p.37).

This is in line with the findings of another Australian study (Graham et al. 2011) in which participating teachers recognised mental health education as fundamental part of their role. In this large Australian study that included
508 primary and secondary teachers from ten randomly selected schools in NSW, 98% of the participating teachers considered mental health education as important, whereas 70% showed willingness to be involved in mental health education programs (Graham et al. 2011). On an important note, teachers who expressed concerns in relation to delivering mental health instruction (28% in total), highlighted several factors that may impede their involvement in student mental health education, including lack of pre-service teacher training, limited knowledge and confidence in this field, and time constraints. These research findings point out to the controversial facts of the recognised need of preventative mental health interventions in schools and the reality of limited training, expertise and professional development opportunities in this important domain (Graham et al. 2011). Hence, these findings illuminate the importance of teachers’ professional development and specific training in SEL as the key to supporting children’s social and emotional development.

Together, the reviewed studies highlighted the significant role of the teacher in nurturing students’ social and emotional learning and the reality of time constraints, limited training, expertise and professional development opportunities in this important domain (Cain & Carnellor 2008; Graham et al. 2011). However, these research findings are subject to several limitations. The most important limitation lies in the fact that the results of the reviewed studies were based solely on teacher self-reports. In addition, the analysis of the data was conducted in the light of the existing literature in the field of SEL, and not through a research-based framework on SEL, which in turn may question the validity of the final results. Another limitation of those studies was that the sample sizes were small, so the findings might not be transferrable to other settings. Despite their limitations, together the findings of the reviewed studies have been enlightening, pointing out the importance of several factors that may influence SEL integration in schools, and acknowledging the significant role of the teacher in nurturing students’ social and emotional education.

An important issue that was not addressed in those studies was the extent to which teachers’ perspectives on SEL ‘are linked to their teaching practice’ (Sanger 2001, p.700) and the place of SEL within the school
curricula documents and programs in light of a theoretical/empirical SEL framework. Hence, in light of the knowledge base highlighted above and the identified gaps in the literature, the purpose of this exploratory study was to examine Preparatory teachers’ understandings of what constitutes SEL and how they perceive it to be enacted in their classrooms in view of the CASEL conceptual framework (CASEL 2013). In addition, this study aimed to investigate how SEL is positioned within school policies, programs and documentation of the participating schools in context of the CASEL framework. Greater understanding of teachers’ perspectives and practices related to SEL can provide valuable information into how best to implement relevant professional development for teachers and enhance their work and efficiency in this important area.

Chapter Summary

Review of relevant literature in the field of SEL revealed a considerable amount of research and compelling empirical evidence about the impact of school-based SEL programs on children’s social, emotional and cognitive development and their academic achievement. In addition, research evidence validated the significant role of a school and a classroom teacher in nurturing children’s social and emotional wellbeing. However, a critical review of the literature revealed that little research has been conducted within Australian educational context into teachers’ understandings of the concept of SEL and associated classroom practices, with none conducted in context of a research-based SEL framework. Additionally, to date, there has been no empirical investigation of the position of SEL within school curricula documents and programs in the Australian Education context.

The following chapter describes the theoretical framework of this study, the research design, as well as the methods used to collect and analyse the data obtained for the purpose of this study.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter contains a thorough description of the purpose of this study, the research questions, the theoretical framework, the research design, as well as the procedures for data collection and data analysis. In addition, my role as a researcher, the ethical considerations pertaining to the participants in this study, and the issue of trustworthiness are also discussed.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this qualitative, exploratory study was to examine how six Preparatory teachers in two Victorian Primary schools understand and implement SEL in their classrooms. Moreover, this study aimed to investigate how SEL is positioned (paced and valued) within school curricula documents and programs of the participating schools.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study pertain to teachers’ understandings, pedagogical approaches and classroom practices related to SEL, as well as to the place of SEL within the school documents and programs of the participating schools in light of the CASEL conceptual framework (CASEL 2013).

Main Research Question:

- How is SEL understood and implemented in preparatory classrooms in two Victorian Primary schools in context of the CASEL framework?
Supporting research questions:

- How is SEL positioned (placed and valued) within school policies, programs and documentation in context of the CASEL framework?
- What do teachers see as the possible enablers and barriers to incorporating SEL within the school environment?

**Qualitative Research Approach**

To explore teachers’ understandings of SEL in the early school years, a qualitative research design was employed in this research project. As Mack and colleagues (2005) indicated, qualitative research is a type of scientific inquiry that aims to enhance our understanding of the phenomenon under investigation from the point of view of the research participants. Moreover, qualitative research allows investigators to uncover ‘the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved … [by] understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences’ (Merriam 2009, p. 5). Hence, the exploratory nature of this project was aligned with its primary purpose, which was to gain a detailed understanding of the perspectives of early years teachers in relation to SEL. This was the most salient reason for choosing a qualitative research design.

**Theoretical Framework**

With respect to the researchers’ views on the social reality (also called ontology) and the ways in which knowledge is produced (epistemology), it is important to determine the theoretical framework of a research project (Merriam 2009). The selection of a theoretical framework ‘clearly delimits a study,’ because it determines how the research project is approached and designed (Anfara & Mertz 2006, p.193). Hence, the researcher should derive a theoretical perspective that is most appropriate for the purpose of the study.
and most relevant to the proposed research questions in the investigation (Crotty 1998). Taking into consideration the purpose of this study and the research questions posed, it was appropriate to encapsulate this research project within the ontological position of constructivism, and the theoretical perspective of interpretivism. From the paradigm of constructivism, the social reality is constructed by the meanings attributed to the social phenomena by the participants (Matthews & Ross 2010). Hence, the focus of constructivism is to gain further understanding of individual interpretations of reality (Crotty 1998). As the aim of this research was to obtain a deeper understanding of teachers’ interpretations of the concept of SEL and how this was enacted within their classrooms, this study was positioned within this ontological position.

The ontological position of constructivism is closely related to the epistemological position of interpretivism (Matthews & Ross 2010). The fundamental assumption of this epistemological position is ‘that social reality is constructed by the individuals who participate in it…’ (Willis 2007, p.96). Hence, the main emphasis of interpretivism is on individuals’ understandings and interpretations of the social phenomenon, allowing exploration through multiple perspectives (Matthews & Ross 2010). According to Willis (2007, p.193), an in-depth inquiry of ‘multiple perspectives often lead to a better understanding of the situation.’ As the purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of early years teachers’ perspectives and their classroom practices in regard to Social and Emotional Learning, this theoretical approach was applied to this study. In this way, by ‘interpreting other people’s interpretations’ (Matthews & Ross 2010, p.28), in an attempt to uncover the subjective meaning ascribed to the phenomenon under investigation, I was able to obtain rich and detailed accounts regarding participating teachers’ conceptions of SEL, and how they perceive it to be enacted in their classrooms.
The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the crucial instrument in the process of collection and analysis of the generated data is the researcher (Merriam 2009). In this process, ‘settings are viewed, and realities are constructed through his or her eyes and ears’ (Litchman 2013, p.16). Therefore, the researcher’s construction of reality may interfere with the research participants’ interpretations of the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam 2002). For example, the researcher’s set of underlying beliefs, values and assumptions embedded in the interpretivist theoretical framework, if not examined previously, may influence the process of interpretation of the participants’ meanings, which in turn, may affect the outcomes of the investigation (Creswell 2003). Therefore, as Johnson and Christenson (2012, p. 265) stated, when conducting a qualitative inquiry, it is important that researcher’s biases and theoretical predispositions are identified and acknowledged through the process of ‘critical self-reflection’. Serving as a primary instrument for the process of data collection and analysis, I was aware that the meanings I assigned to the collected data were filtered through my own set of beliefs and assumptions regarding the focus of my inquiry. Hence, by regularly engaging in the process of self-reflection, I was able to approach the entire research process with an increased awareness of the possible impact of my personal values and beliefs on the subject of my investigation. Moreover, by adopting an interpretivist approach to this research project, I embraced the process of data collection and analysis with an openness and genuine aspiration to enter participating teachers’ worlds in an attempt to understand and discern their perspectives on the subject of my inquiry. In this way, I was able to obtain a set of interview data that constituted a rich, rigorous and meaningful collection.

Elaborating on the researcher’s role in qualitative research, Patton (2002, p.14) stated: ‘(T)he human element in qualitative research is both its strength and weakness.’ From his perspective, on one hand, it can be regarded as a strength because the researcher’s insight and knowledge allows for the development of new understandings of the phenomena under investigation. On the other hand, it can be considered as a weakness, as it
relies heavily upon the acquired skills, training and experience of the researcher and the possibility of subjective interpretation of the collected data. In the process of data collection for this research project, particularly when conducting the interviews with the participating teachers, I considered the skills and experience that I acquired during my medical training and clinical practice in interviewing patients, as strength in my role as researcher. More specifically, I was able to apply my well-developed interviewing and social skills while conducting the interviews with each participating teacher in this study.

Research Design and Rationale

For the purpose of this research project, a case study research methodology was employed. In essence, case study research is a particular kind of inquiry in which the researcher aims to explore, or describe the social phenomena under investigation within its natural context in order to gain a better understanding of the case(s) in real world conditions. Highlighting the importance of the scope of the investigation when designing a case study, as well as the indefinite boundaries between the phenomenon under study and its context, Yin (2009, p.18) offered the following comprehensive definition of a case study: ‘A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined.’ As Yin (2009) explicated further, a case study as a research strategy is usually applied when the research questions require an in-depth inquiry of the social phenomenon under investigation. The selection of a case study as a preferred method of investigation for this research project was inherently related to the research questions of this study, which in turn, allowed an in depth exploration of the perspectives and the classroom practices of Preparatory teachers in relation to SEL, as well as the position of SEL within the school curricula documents in two Victorian Primary Schools.

Three types of case study designs are distinguished by Yin (2003): explanatory, descriptive and exploratory. Explanatory case studies attempt to provide insights into the cause and effect relationships regarding the subject
of inquiry. Descriptive case studies aim to provide a detailed, structured and accurate portrayal of the phenomenon under investigation in order to reveal patterns and relationships that would have otherwise been overlooked. Exploratory case studies attempt to explore in depth the phenomenon under investigation and generate hypotheses, rather than to provide a collection of illustrations (Yin 2003). Exploratory case studies are most valuable when little research is conducted on the subject of inquiry with a purpose to provide new insights for further, more systematic investigation (Yin 2003). For the purpose of this study, an exploratory approach was employed, which in turn, allowed Preparatory teachers’ perspectives related to SEL to be explored in intricate detail, without being hindered, or restricted by outside influences, or theoretical propositions.

In regards to the main focus of investigation, the case study inquiry may entail ‘either a single case or a small number of cases but each case is explored in detail and great depth’ (Matthews & Ross 2010, p.128). In this context, Stake (2005) distinguishes three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. In intrinsic case study, the focus of inquiry is a single case, which is usually selected because it is extreme or unique in a certain way, and the investigator is particularly interested in that particular case, rather than in theory building, or generalisation of the findings. On the other hand, in an instrumental case study, the study is designed on the basis of a previously established theory, with the researcher’s primary interest being to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny, or to ‘redraw a generalization’ (Stake 2005, p.437). And the third type is a collective study design (Stake 2005), also known as a multiple-study design (Yin 2009; 1994) that allows the researcher to gain greater insight into the topic of inquiry by simultaneously studying multiple cases in one research study. The multiple case design of this study allowed me to explore how SEL is positioned, understood and implemented in two Victorian Primary schools. Yet, within the overall holistic case, the multiple case studies may consist of sub-cases embedded within the main case (Carson et al. 2001). When the purpose of the study is to view the phenomenon under scrutiny through multiple lenses, Yin (1994) advocates utilising an embedded case study design. This study employed an embedded
multiple case design in which Preparatory teachers’ perspectives on the concept of SEL were the embedded sub-cases within the greater context of the participating Victorian Primary schools. The embedded multiple case study design selected for this research project offered a way to create a rich and holistic account of the participating teachers’ perspectives related to SEL. In this way, it was possible to add to the knowledge in this field by illuminating the concept of SEL from differing perspectives, and taking it to a deeper level.

Data collection

This research employed a multi-method approach, encompassing semi-structured interviews as a primary data collection method, and document reviews as a complementary source of data. A semi-structured interview is ‘one of the most powerful tools in qualitative research’ (Goodman 2001, p.309), allowing the researcher ‘to enter into the inner world of another person’ (Johnson & Christenson 2012, p. 202), with a proximal goal ‘to elicit a vivid picture of the participant’s perspective on the research topic’ (Mack et al. 2005, p. 29). For the purpose of this study, it was critical that the voices of early years classroom teachers are heard and their perspectives related to SEL are explored in depth. Therefore, semi-structured interviews conducted with each teacher at different points in time during the data collection phases, were considered as a vital source of information for this study, allowing me to capture their thoughts, perceptions, feelings and beliefs about the concept of SEL and their related classroom practices.

In order to understand the multiple layers and dimensions of the value placed on SEL within the schools, and how those dimensions interplay holistically, additional data for this research were obtained from the published documents of school policies, curricula and programs of the participating schools. Upon request, the school curricula documents and programs were collected from both Principals of the participating schools at the time of conducting the first round of interviews with the informants.
Case Selections

To identify the participants for this research project, a purposive selection of samples was used. As Patton (2002, p.230) contended, ‘the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth.’ Purposive sampling is frequently used in small, qualitative studies which seek to explore individuals' perceptions and experiences about the subject of inquiry (Matthews & Ross 2010). As this case study was designed to explore in-depth early years teachers’ perspectives in relation to SEL, six Preparatory teachers in total were included in this study. In order to gain more comprehensive picture of the way in which SEL is understood and incorporated within the Victorian Government Education System, for the purpose of this study two Victorian Primary Schools were considered for inclusion: one where teachers already use a specific SEL program in their classrooms and another school with a behavioural program in place.

The schools considered for inclusion in this research were selected on the basis of the following criteria: operated by the Victorian government (a State school), and located in the outer suburbs in Melbourne. In this way, the potential impact on the final results of this study based on the differences in school systems (independent, church based) was avoided. The reason to recruit schools from the outer Melbourne suburbs was to reduce the need to travel long distances in the process of data collection. An additional important consideration when selecting the schools was to identify one school with an established formal SEL program in place and another school that has implemented a behavioural program. The rationale for including the latter criterion in the selection process was to gain greater insight into the place and value of SEL within the school curricula documents, as well as the various teachers’ pedagogical approaches in relation to SEL in a school that incorporated SEL program and another one with a behavioural program in place.

For the purpose of school recruitment, initially I visited the ‘Kids Matter’ website (Kids Matter 2014) in order to designate schools that instigate SEL program at a school-wide level. Then, I organised a meeting with each School Principal of the identified schools to discuss this research project.
Unexpectedly, the process of school recruitment proved to be a challenging experience. The main reason for this was the fact that at the time of data collection, a new law of the Teachers’ Protection Union of the rights of the teachers was endorsed, according to which teachers employed in the Victorian Education System were not allowed to allocate any extra time outside of their working hours. Hence, in the process of recruitment, after visiting four government schools in the Melbourne area, my endeavours proved unsuccessful. Eventually, my efforts were successful and I was able to ascertain the schools and the participants for this study.

Greenfield Primary School was identified through the ‘Kids Matter’ website (Kids Matter 2014), where this school was featured as the one that successfully implemented the ‘You Can Do It’ SEL program (Bernard 2003) as a whole school approach. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative ‘Kids Matter’ (2014) is a national initiative instigated by mental health professionals and educational experts that provides all interested primary schools in Australia with resources to enhance children’s social and emotional wellbeing. The reason for choosing ‘Kids Matter’ in the school selection process was that this organisation has promoted SEL in an increasing number of schools across all states in Australia, reaching a total number of 2726 Primary schools in 2015, with the highest proportion of 644 schools located in Victoria.

My first visit to Greenfield Primary School eventuated in making an appointment with the School Principal. At our first meeting, after providing a formal letter with detailed information about this research project (See Appendix D), the School Principal of Greenfield Primary School confirmed the participation of the school in this study, and signed the consent form (See Appendix E). The next step was to identify another government school in Melbourne with a behavioural program in place. At this stage, after a short discussion about this study with one of my university colleagues, I was introduced to the Principal of Rosefield Primary School with whom my colleague had a well-developed professional relationship. At the initial meeting with the School Principal of Rosefield Primary School, after providing comprehensive information about this research project, the
Principal agreed for the school to take part in the research and signed the consent form (See Appendix E).

The next step was to identify three Preparatory teachers from each school willing to participate in this study. The School Principals of the selected schools identified six Preparatory teachers in total (three teachers from each school) on the basis of their availability and willingness to participate, and invited them to take part in this study. The teachers willing to participate in this study were provided with an information letter about the purpose of this research and their role in terms of time and effort required (See Appendix B). Then the signed written informed consent forms were gained from each teacher participating in this study (See Appendix C).

**Ethical Considerations**

In the initial stage of this research project, an application for conducting human research was submitted and approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (See Appendix A).

During the entire process of data collection, abiding by the fundamental ethical principles and processes for conducting human research (Mack et al. 2005), all participants’ rights regarding their welfare, beliefs, perceptions, customs and cultural heritage were highly respected. In addition, all participants were informed of their right to withdraw from this project at any stage and for any reason without any consequences arising from this decision, because their participation was on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality of all information and data collected for the purpose of this study, was ensured at all times. For example, all identifying information of teachers and schools were removed from the data, after transcripts were checked by the participants, and replaced by pseudonyms. Moreover, adhering to the principles of the University’s Human Research Ethics Guidelines, the research participants were informed that all information collected for the purpose of this study would remain confidential and stored securely in a password protected location.
The in-depth nature of the interviews conducted with the respondents in this study was associated with revealing details of participants' experiences that would not be disclosed otherwise, if using a questionnaire for example. To address these ethical issues related to in-depth interviews, all informants in this study were provided with debriefing after each interview. Another ethical challenge was the possibility that some interview questions could evoke emotion-eliciting responses among the participants. Therefore, committed to the welfare of the research participants, my intention was to conduct the interviews with sensitivity and to demonstrate care and respect for participants’ feelings and opinions. Hence, in response to such ethical concerns encountered during the interviews, I engaged in ongoing reflexion on the interview process while attending sensitively to participants’ needs and concerns.

First Meeting with the Participating Teachers

The purpose of the initial meeting was to introduce and present myself as a researcher, as well as to provide the participants with some background information about this research project. At the same time, I was eager to meet all participating teachers in person and to use this opportunity to address any arising questions or concerns regarding this research. Therefore, at this first meeting an open discussion was initiated with the teachers, talking over the purpose of this research, as well as the potential benefits and risks of participating in this project. In addition, their specific questions regarding the interview process and their role in this study were addressed. At the end of the discussion, all teachers confirmed their willingness to participate. Hence, the signed consent forms were obtained from the participants. At the end of the first meeting, each teacher was given a copy of the signed consent forms. This meeting proved beneficial as it enabled me to establish a good rapport with the participants in this study, which may have eased any tension they were feeling about participating.
Interview guide for the First Round of Interviews

The initial interview guide prepared for the first round of interviews with the participating teachers was composed of 15 pre-determined questions aligned with the primary purpose and the research questions of this study (See Appendix F). The first set of five questions were intended to provide more background information on the participants’ teaching experience, their attendance of SEL Professional Development workshops and the extent to which SEL was incorporated into their initial teacher education courses. As Charmaz (2006, p.26) indicates, it is worthwhile to begin the interview with a ‘few broad, open-ended questions’ and then to proceed with questions that are more focused on the subject of interest as the interview process progresses. In this way, I was able not only to obtain valuable information about respondents’ teaching experience and their exposure to social and emotional education, but also to establish and maintain rapport with each participant at the beginning of the interview.

The second set of five interview questions was closely related to teachers’ conceptual understandings of Social and Emotional Learning and its influence on students’ academic learning. Finally, the last five questions of the interview guide were related to the participating teachers’ perceptions of their role in supporting students’ social and emotional wellbeing, the extent to which their beliefs and values may influence SEL implementation in the classroom, the participating teachers’ formal and informal SEL classroom practices, as well as teachers’ perspectives of the possible enablers and obstacles to incorporate SEL in primary school classrooms (See Table 3.1.).

Interview guide for the Second Round of Interviews

The interview guide for the second round of interviews consisted of questions that emerged from the preliminary analysis of the collected interview and documentary data (See Appendix G). The first set of questions was identical for each participant, while the remaining questions were tailored specifically to each participant and emerged from the preliminary data analysis (blue italics letters). The first set of questions were more
general questions and were related to the teachers’ perspectives of socially and emotionally intelligent teachers, the extent to which teachers’ values and beliefs may influence the emphasis of SEL in the classroom, and teachers’ views on the school leadership’s role in SEL incorporation in schools. On the other hand, the last set of interview questions were specific for each respondent and were related to their classroom practices related to SEL, as well as to clarify further teacher’s role in providing social and emotional education in their classrooms.

All interview questions were sent by an email to each participating teacher one week before conducting the interviews, in order to allow the teachers sufficient amount of time to think about their responses and to alleviate the stress common in interviews.

The following table (See Table 3.1.) illustrates how the research questions and the interview questions of this project are interrelated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions for the First Round of Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How is SEL understood and implemented in preparatory classrooms in two Victorian Primary schools in context of the CASEL framework?</td>
<td>1. How many years have you been teaching as a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How many years in total have you been working in this school?</td>
<td>2. How many years have you been teaching as a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Have you attended any professional development workshops related to Social and Emotional Learning?</td>
<td>3. Have you been teaching different grade levels?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Have you attended any professional development workshops related to Social and Emotional Learning?</td>
<td>4. What characteristics do you think socially and emotionally intelligent teachers have? How could these characteristics influence teachers' interactions with their students? Can you give an example?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How familiar are you with the term 'Social and Emotional Learning' or SEL? What is your understanding of SEL?</td>
<td>5. You mentioned that empathy is vital for emotional understanding of others. How can you as a teacher help your students to develop empathy? Can you give an example?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What characteristics do you think socially and emotionally intelligent teachers have? How could these characteristics influence teachers' interactions with their students? Can you give an example?</td>
<td>6. What characteristics do you think socially and emotionally intelligent teachers have? How could these characteristics influence teachers' interactions with their students? Can you give an example?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What characteristics do you think socially and emotionally intelligent teachers have? How could these characteristics influence teachers' interactions with their students? Can you give an example?</td>
<td>7. What characteristics do you think socially and emotionally intelligent teachers have? How could these characteristics influence teachers' interactions with their students? Can you give an example?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How do you see these characteristics influencing their social interactions and behavior at school? Why do you think that?</td>
<td>8. How do you see these characteristics influencing their social interactions and behavior at school? Why do you think that?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions
What is your view on parents’ responsibilities to foster social and emotional skills in their children?

Do you think there is any relationship between children’s social and emotional competencies and their learning in the classroom? Can you give me any examples?

What do you see as your role in supporting Social and Emotional Learning? What do you think has influenced your thinking in relation to this?

What part does school leadership play in how SEL is implemented in schools? Why do you think so?

What is the role of the school in SEL? How does your school support children’s SEL? Does this support differ based on the social and emotional needs of the student?

What do you think are the main obstacles to incorporating SEL in primary school classrooms?

What do you think are the possible enablers and main barriers to incorporating SEL within the school environment?

Teachers support those children’s social skills by reinforcing them with the peers at school. In what way can schools influence their social interactions with other children? To do so, it’s important for teachers to understand the level of SEL with their students and understand their level of SEL. How does a positive teacher-child relationship relate to SEL?

How does a positive teacher-child relationship relate to SEL?

Between children with low social skills and those with a higher level of social skills, can you give me an example?
Conducting the Interviews

The interviews were conducted in one of the Conference rooms of the participating schools. Since I was able to initiate a good rapport with each teacher at our first meeting, I ensured that the rapport was maintained throughout the first and the second round of interviews. As Merriam (1998, p.23) elucidated: ‘A good communicator empathizes with respondents, establishes rapport, asks good questions, and listens intently.’ Hence, in the interview process, I listened attentively and with genuine interest to the participating teachers’ viewpoints, provided prompts when necessary, and asked open and meaningful questions to explore in depth teachers’ perspectives on the subject of SEL. In this way, I was able to ‘set up a situation in which the individual being interviewed will reveal to you his or her feelings, intentions, meanings, sub contexts, or thoughts on a topic, situation, or idea’ (Litchman 2013, p.190). In such a situation, the participating teachers in this study appeared engaged in the interview conversation and expressed their views openly and extensively. In this way, I was able to obtain a rich set of interview data.

The second round of interviews was conducted three months after the initial round of interviews in order to gain more detailed information about teachers’ perspectives on SEL. The main purpose of the second round of interviews was to ask additional questions that had not been anticipated in the first round of interviews, and to attain further insights into some relevant issues that were raised during the first interview session and the process of initial analysis. The second round of interviews was conducted with the same participating teachers with an exception of one Preparatory teacher from Greenfield Primary School, Crystal, who went on maternity leave.

All interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes and were audio recorded after gaining teachers’ permission. Once I transcribed the interviews, all interview transcripts were sent by an email to the participating teachers. As participants in this research project, each teacher was offered an opportunity to check the transcript for accuracy and to modify or add any comments they mentioned during the interview. Once all interviewed teachers confirmed the accuracy of the interview transcripts, the interview data were treated to
rigorous ongoing thematic analysis (this process is described in detail below). The additional data obtained from the follow-up interviews provided further insights into participating teachers’ viewpoints, convictions and classroom practices in relation to SEL.

**School Curricula Documents**

In addition to the interviews, data were obtained from published documents of school policies, curricula and programs of the selected schools. According to Bowen (2009), pertinent information and insights drawn from the documents may serve multiple purposes, particularly in qualitative case studies. Namely, documents of all types can be used as valuable supplements to the knowledge base, as a means for providing context and content of the data gathered during the interviews, as a trigger to generate additional interview questions, or as a vehicle for corroboration of the findings derived from other data sources (Bowen 2009). In this multiple case study, data obtained from the school curricula documents supplemented and contextualised the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and provided valuable information supporting the initial findings obtained during the analysis of the interview transcripts.

Upon my request with a formal letter given to the Principals of the participating schools, copies of the school curricula documents were provided. For the purpose of this study, only those documents that contained information considered pertinent to the research objectives of this research were selected for review. More specifically, the documents that addressed the social and/or emotional aspects of SEL were reviewed. The following documents obtained from the Principal of Greenfield Primary School, were subject to critical scrutiny: ‘Student social competence development program,’ Greenfield Primary School Policy, the School Curriculum and the SEL program ‘You Can Do It’ (Bernard 2003). Additionally, the following documents obtained from The Principal of Rosefield Primary School were also reviewed: ‘The Student Wellbeing Policy’, ‘Learning and Teaching Policy’, ‘Student Engagement Policy’, and the behavioural program ‘School
Wide Positive Behaviour Strategies’ (See Table 3.2.). These documents were useful in providing background information of the participating schools. On the other hand, the reviews of the specific wellbeing programs incorporated within the participating schools provided a rich source of data for this study, complementing, supporting and enhancing the interview data. This in turn, allowed me to portray a more comprehensive picture of the place and value of SEL in the selected schools.

The following table (See Table 3.2.) displays the specific documents obtained from both participating schools for the purpose of this research project.
### Table 3.2. List of the Relevant Information obtained from the School Curricula Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School curricula documents</th>
<th>Relevant Information obtained for this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greenfield Primary School</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Social Competence Development Program (SSCDP)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outline and detailed description of Student Social Competence Program (SSCDP)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of the document</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goals and expected outcomes of SSDCP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ways of supporting students’ socially competent behaviours</strong></td>
<td><strong>The role of the Principal and the classroom teachers in supporting students’ socially acceptable behaviours</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The 'You Can Do It' (YCDI) program</strong></td>
<td><strong>Barriers to children’s learning and wellbeing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of the 'You Can Do It' (YCDI) Education</strong></td>
<td><strong>Five Foundations of 'YCDI' Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Mission of YCDI Education</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 Habits of Mind</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 Foundations of ‘YCDI’ Education</strong></td>
<td><strong>YCDI Education as a four level approach:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eliminating social and emotional blockers</strong></td>
<td><strong>‘YCDI’ Education for teachers in supporting students’ acceptable behaviours in classroom and school environments:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘YCDI’ Education for parents:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social and emotional development of students:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘YCDI’ Education for classrooms:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Basic principles of the students’ code of conduct:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘YCDI’ Education for students with special needs:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students’ rights and responsibilities:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Wide Positive Behaviour Strategies (SWPBS)</strong></td>
<td><strong>SWPBS in Rosefield Primary School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School focus on academic achievement and development of students’ interpersonal skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>School vision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Curriculum subjects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outline and detailed description of Student Engagement Program (YCDI)</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History and purpose of the document</strong></td>
<td><strong>School focus on academic achievement and development of students’ interpersonal skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intervention programs for students with special educational needs</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SWPBS in Rosefield Primary School</strong></td>
<td><strong>School vision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systematic development of students’ social skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Curriculum subjects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting development of students’ social skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching thinking strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting development of students’ social skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching thinking strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting development of students’ social skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching thinking strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting development of students’ social skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching thinking strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>School mission</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Greenfield Primary School (See Appendix H)
2. Greenfield Primary School (see Appendix H)
3. Student Social Competence Program (SSCDP)
4. The 'You Can Do It' (YCDI) Program

Note: Appendix H provides additional information from the School Curricula Documents.
The following table (See Table 3.3) presents the questions asked for the purpose of document analysis and their alignment with the research questions that guided this study.

Table 3.3. Alignment of Research Questions and Questions asked in the Document Analysis of the School Curricula Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Questions asked in the Document Analysis of the School Curricula Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. How is SEL positioned (placed and valued) within schools' policies, programs and documentation in context of the CASEL framework?</td>
<td>1. What is the purpose of the document?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. What are the foundational principles of this document?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. What is the position of SEL within the document in context of the CASEL framework?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Which component of the CASEL framework is given more consideration/emphasis in the document?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trustworthiness**

Without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility’ (Morse et al. 2002, p.2). In order to have ramifications ‘on either the practice or the theory in the field,’ it is an imperative to ensure rigor throughout the research process in qualitative inquiry (Merriam 2009, p.210). Morse and colleagues (2002) indicate that rigor in qualitative research aims for trustworthiness. According to Merriam (2009), trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the research generates valid and reliable knowledge. There are four verification strategies that are most frequently employed by case study researchers in pursuit of a trustworthy study: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin 2014, 2009). According to
Yin (2014), the concept of internal validity is applicable only for explanatory case studies in which hypothesis testing, rather than exploratory inquiry is used. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, the issue of internal validity was not pertinent and was not addressed in this case study.

**Construct Validity**

Construct validity denotes the degree to which the researcher is able to provide an accurate representation of the phenomenon under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Yin 2014). Hence, to address the issue of construct validity, case study researchers should provide sufficient and detailed explication of the procedures used in the process of data collection and data analysis (Yin 2014). The following strategies were employed to strengthen the construct validity of this case study: collecting data from multiple sources, member checking of the collected data by the key respondents, and the use of thick description.

Obtaining data from multiple sources can support the construct validity of a study by acquiring rich and diverse information (Yin 2014). The richness and diversity of information gathered from heterogeneous data sources might yield different insights into the subject of inquiry, thus increasing the likelihood of providing more convincing findings. Moreover, the collection of information gained from multiple data sources allows integration and convergence of the data, thus increasing the accuracy of the ultimate study findings. In this multiple case study, data were collected from several different sources, including interviews and follow-up interviews with the participating teachers as a major source of data and school curricula documentation as a supplementary source of evidence. Gathering extensive information from multifaceted perspectives in this case study ensured more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, by cross-checking and corroborating the information obtained from the interview and the documentary data, convergent evidence was developed, in order to strengthen the validity of this study.

Another important strategy that is commonly used by qualitative researchers to ensure the construct validity of a case study is 'member
Member checking is a way to verify the information obtained from the participants in the data collection phase, or to request feedback on the preliminary findings from the participants in the study. The member checking applied in this study, offered each participating teacher an opportunity to check the interview transcripts for accuracy and modify or make additional comments and suggestions.

An additional strategy that was employed to increase the construct validity of this case study was the use of thick description (Brantlinger et al. 2005; Yin 2003). According to Brantlinger and colleagues (2005, p.201), a thick description involves sufficient interview quotes and detailed ‘field note descriptions that provide evidence for researcher’s interpretations and conclusions.’ When using thick descriptions, ‘the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard...’ (Denzin 1989, p.83). Hence, when presenting the participating teachers’ viewpoints on the subject of inquiry, by incorporating the quotes of the participants and providing ‘as much detail as possible’ (Creswell & Miller 2000, p. 129), the construct validity of this study was maximised.

**External Validity**

External validity refers to the extent to which the research findings can be generalised to other settings, beyond the actual case study itself (Yin 2009, 1994). As Yin (2014, p.48) indicates, whilst quantitative researchers aim to generalise the findings to the external population, or to different settings (‘statistical generalization’), case study researchers strive to generalise ‘a particular set of results to some broader theory’ (‘analytical generalization’). As Yin (2014) explicates further, analytical generalisation may result in modifying or expanding theoretical concepts on which the research design of the study was founded, or development of new theoretical concepts that can emerge upon the completion of the case study. Hence, ‘the generalization will be at a conceptual level higher than that of the specific case’ (Yin 2014, p.41).

To ensure analytical generalisation, when selecting the cases in a multiple case research, researchers should follow replication logic approach.
The replication logic in a multiple case design entails selecting two or more cases that have similar settings and are expected to achieve similar outcomes (‘a literal replication’), or selecting cases with different settings, so that contrasting outcomes can be predicted in line with an existing theory (‘a theoretical replication’; Yin 2009, p.54). Therefore, case study researchers should provide an explicit rationale for the selection of the cases included in the investigation. The use of literal replication in this multiple case study, allowed me to uncover how SEL is understood and enacted in two Victorian schools that used whole-school approach to student social and emotional wellbeing, and to capture the anticipated similarities and variations.

**Reliability**

Reliability pertains to the degree to which the process of data collection and data analysis in a case study can be repeated and yield the exact same results (Yin 2014). As Yin (2014) suggests, to ascertain reliability in case study research, meticulous documentation of the entire research process is needed to enable other researchers to use the same steps when repeating the study. Hence, to address the issue of reliability, case study researchers should develop and follow an appropriate set of well-planned data gathering procedures and provide sufficient and detailed explication of the data collection and data analysis process. In this way, the reader can trace the path of any inference derived from the collected evidence.

The reliability of a case study can be enhanced through maintaining a chain of evidence (Yin 2014). The purpose of this strategy is to enable an external reviewer to trace the process of data gathering and data analysis in both directions, starting from the proposed research questions to the final conclusions of the study, or backwards from the conclusions to the initial research questions. In this case study, the chain of evidence was maintained through developing a case study database and a case study protocol. A case study database is a compilation of all actual data collected from a case study in a file that can be retrieved later by other researchers (Yin 2014). For the purpose of this study, an electronic case study database was created to organise all evidence collected to date, including the interview recordings,
interview transcripts, documentary data, field notes, and analytic memos. The collected data was classified in accordance to the major areas within this case study to allow easy access to other researchers to the case study evidence and to trace the path of evidence-gathering procedures.

A case study protocol is an overview document of the research project providing detailed and comprehensive information about all data gathering and data analysis procedures employed in a case study research (Yin 2014). The case study protocol developed for this multiple case study (See Appendix H) contains background information of this project, including the rationale and significance of the study, an overview of the research project including the research objectives and the research questions addressed by this study, a detailed description of the procedures applied in establishing contacts with the study participants, as well as an outline of the criteria for case selections, data collection and the procedures for data analysis. The case study protocol guided the entire research process, ensuring that same procedures in the process of data collection were applied in each case. For instance, the interview protocol designed for this study was utilised as a guide to the entire interview process, ensuring that consistent set of interview questions were asked in each interview with the participating teachers.

Analysis of the Interview Data

In order to develop a better understanding of the complex and rich set of data in this qualitative study, a combined technique of deductive and inductive approach through thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected set of interview and documentary data (Backett & Davison 1995; Creswell 2003; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006; Guest, MacQueen & Narmey 2012; Stolee et al.1999; Thomas 2006). Thematic analysis can be defined as a ‘comprehensive process of data coding and identification of themes’ pertinent to the phenomenon under investigation (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, p.4). It is ‘essentially a coding operation,’ with the process of coding being ‘the process of transforming raw data into a standardized form’ (Babbie 2001, p.309). In the process of thematic analysis, the researcher looks for relevant phrases, words or concepts in the raw material in order to
understand their meaning, as well as the relationships to each other (Matthews & Ross 2010). Thematic analysis has a theoretical foundation in the phenomenological and interpretive paradigms, with a particular emphasis ‘on constructivist approaches where there is no clear-cut objectivity or reality’ (Cassell & Symon 1994, p.2). This technique of determining patterns in the collected data can enlighten our understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Matthews & Ross 2010).

This analytical approach is considered as an indispensable tool ‘in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set’ (Guest, MacQueen & Narmey 2012, p.11). Hence, thematic analysis is commonly used in those qualitative studies which seek to gain a better understanding of the participants’ perspectives and experiences (Guest, MacQueen & Narmey 2012; Jebreen 2012). As the primary purpose of this study was to develop greater in-depth understanding of teachers’ perspectives and classroom practices related to SEL, this analytical approach was suitable for analysing the interview data in this study.

According to Thomas (2006), thematic analysis consists of the following five analytical steps: (1) preparation of the raw material (2) initial reading of the raw data (3) development of codes and categories (4) examining codes for overlap and redundancy, and (5) further revision and refinement of the categories in order to create a model that integrates the most significant categories. Following those analytical steps in the process of analysing the interview transcripts, I was able to identify the key categories and overarching themes which captured the essence of the participating teachers’ understandings and their classroom practices related to SEL.

In the initial stage of data analysis, the raw data were prepared by formatting it in a common format. More specifically, the raw data from all interview transcripts were placed in the left one-third of the page, allowing a space for the emerging codes and analytic memos in the right two thirds of the page.

In the second stage of analysis, all interview transcripts were read thoroughly and systematically several times in order to allow intimate familiarity with the interview data. After carefully considering the content of all interview transcripts, the segments of each interview transcript that contained
significant units relevant to the research questions and the objectives of this study were identified.

According to Yin (2009), when conducting a case study, the researcher can use an analytic tool when there is a clear goal of what to look for in the process of analysis. Hence, in order to gain better understanding of teachers’ perspectives and practices related to SEL, the analysis of the interview data was conducted through the lens of the CASEL conceptual framework (CASEL 2013). The rationale for using the CASEL framework as an analytic tool in this study was the notion that this is the most commonly used evidence-based approach with a strong theoretical foundation for raising children’s social and emotional skills (Zins et al. 2004).

For the purpose of analysis, a coding frame was developed in which the main categories and sub-categories were the five core components and related sub-components of the CASEL framework (See Chapter 2). According to Schreier (2012, p.63), a coding frame represents ‘a structure, a kind of a filter through which you view your material’. The coding frame created for the purpose of this study included a definition and description of each category and sub-category, followed by specific examples derived from participants’ interview responses. Aligned with the research objectives of this study, the coding frame allowed me to identify the relevant segments of the raw data on which the analysis was focused.

The next step in the analysis was to identify relevant participants’ phrases and words related to the previously determined main categories. At this stage, the relevant passages of the interview transcripts were examined for other concepts pertinent to SEL that are not addressed in the CASEL conceptual framework (CASEL 2013). Hence, in addition to the previously designed concept-driven coding frame, several data-driven categories which emerged from the data, were created. For example, when deliberating on the concept of SEL, some of the participating teachers mentioned the term ‘sense of identity’, which I could not assign under any of the previously determined categories and sub-categories. Therefore, a new category named ‘Concepts outside of the CASEL framework’ was created. Wearing an interpretative lens, the following step involved looking for participant phrases...
and words related to the main concept-driven and data-driven categories of the previously designed coding frame, assigning a code for each of them.

While coding the interview data, in an attempt to uncover the meaning of the participants’ statements, new ideas, insights and questions associated with the coded data, began to emerge. For example, when some of the respondents used the term ‘sense of identity’ to describe SEL, I asked myself the following questions: ‘Is children’s sense of identity pertinent to SEL? Do children with well-developed social and emotional skills have well-established sense of identity? If so, should ‘sense of identity’ be included as an additional component in the CASEL framework?’ Those emerging insights and reflections on the process of coding were documented in the form of analytic memos. Saldana (2009, p.33) describes analytic memo writing as an act of recording reflective thoughts, ideas, questions, or ‘insightful connections’ that emerge in the process of coding. Writing analytic memos was useful in the reflection on the choice of my codes and to crystallise my ideas and future directions by making connections between the codes.

In the process of coding the interview data, certain patterns were identified, such as applying certain codes consistently to particular topics of the interview. As Bernard (2006, p.452) succinctly states, analysis ‘is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place.’ Hence, the following step was to classify the codes with similar characteristics and meanings into several different categories until the core categories that conveyed the essence of participants’ viewpoints of SEL emerged from the coded data. In this stage of the analysis, by exploring the similarities and differences between the identified categories and considering the relationships between them, the emerging categories and subcategories were further conceptualised into four major themes.

In the final stage of the analysis, the identified overarching themes related to the research questions of this study were subsequently integrated into a conceptual model that included the essential aspects of the collected data. According to Thomas (2006, p.240), the development of such models exemplifies ‘an end point’ of the analysis.
Analysis of School Curricula Documents and Wellbeing Programs

With a proximal goal to illuminate and understand the place of SEL in the school policies and curricula of the selected schools, content analysis through the prism of the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) was used to evaluate the documentary data in this multiple case study. Content analysis ‘is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents’ (Bowen 2009, p.27) which requires thoughtful examination and interpretation of the data (Corbin & Strauss 2008) in order to elicit meaning, develop understanding and generate empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss 2008; Merriam 1998; Rapley 2007).

The rationale for employing content analysis of the documentary data in this research project was in its relevance to case study research and its pivotal role in methodological and data triangulation (Bowen 2009). Triangulation refers to a combination of diverse data sources and methods (Bowen 2009) in an attempt to provide ‘a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility’ (Eisner 1991, p.110). In this multiple case study, content analysis of the school curricula documents and programs was used as a complementary analytical procedure in support of methodological triangulation of the previously collected interview data. According to Charmaz (2003), document reviews can help the researcher to refine the initial conceptual ideas, and to verify the suitability of the previously constructed categories. In this case study, the identified categories and themes from the interview data were corroborated by evidence gathered from the analysis of the documentary data. In this way, the findings became more robust and well grounded.

Content analysis of documentary data entails ‘skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation’ of the raw data (Bowen 2009, p.32). In the process of content analysis, the researcher is engaged in ‘data coding and identification of themes’ pertinent to the phenomenon under scrutiny (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, p.4). In this process, researcher’s ability to determine which information is relevant to the study objectives, and to separate it from that which is not relevant is of utmost importance (Corbin & Strauss 2008; Strauss & Corbin 1998). Hence,
in the initial phase of the document analysis, the main focus was placed ‘on the factual content within a document’ in order to extract relevant information, pertinent to the research questions of this study (Matthews & Ross 2010, p.277). Then, after multiple readings of the documentary data, a priori codes determined by the core social and emotional dimensions of the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) were applied to relevant segments of the reviewed documents. Next, codes pertinent to SEL that were not addressed in the CASEL framework were identified, emerging directly from the textual data itself. By searching for patterns and commonalities in the developed codes, several categories were created that were clustered into major themes. The identified major themes related to the research questions of this study, embraced the most dominating patterns in the documentary data and illuminated the place and value of SEL within the school curricula documents and wellbeing programs.

When the evidence from all data sources collected for the purpose of this multiple case study, including the interviews, follow–up interviews and the school documents created a consistent portrayal of the way in which SEL is positioned, understood and enacted in early years classrooms, the process of data analysis was completed.

Chapter Summary

In summary, the primary purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how SEL is understood and implemented by Preparatory teachers in two Victorian Primary schools. In addition, this research aimed to investigate the position of SEL within the school curricula documents and programs incorporated in the participating schools. In an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the participating teachers’ interpretations of the concept of SEL and their associated classroom practices, this research project was approached from the ontological position of constructivism, and the theoretical perspective of interpretivism.

This multiple case study employed a multimethod approach, encompassing semi-structured interviews as a primary data collection method, enhanced by relevant school documents pertinent to SEL. For the
purpose of analysis, the CASEL conceptual framework (CASEL 2013) was used as a tool to analyse the collected set of interview and documentary data.

The thematic analysis of the raw data from the interview transcripts and the school documents progressed towards the development of overarching themes that captured the essence of teachers’ understandings and classroom practices related to SEL, as well as the position of SEL within the documentary data of the participating schools.

The following two chapters present the findings of the analysis of the data collected from the participating schools.
CHAPTER IV
GREENFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the analysis of the interviews with the participating teachers of Greenfield Primary School, and the ‘You Can Do It’ (YCDI) program (Bernard 2003) incorporated in this school. The chapter is divided in several sections. The first section provides a brief description of Greenfield Primary School, followed by an overview of the social and emotional learning program ‘YCDI’ implemented in this school. In the next section of this chapter the profiles of the three participating teachers from Greenfield Primary School are presented, followed by the findings of the analysis of the ‘YCDI’ program. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the key findings arising from the analysis of the collected data from Greenfield Primary School.

Brief Description of Greenfield Primary School

Greenfield Primary School is a contemporary and environmentally friendly government school, located in one of the southern suburbs of Melbourne. The school is situated in a very peaceful and natural environment, surrounded by majestic mountains and magnificent gum trees. Greenfield Primary School was established at the beginning of 2005 with 175 students enrolled initially. Unexpectedly, over the next ten years the number of students attending the school has grown considerably, exceeding 900 students in 2015. Some important reasons for this remarkable expansion of Greenfield Primary School included the population growth in the area and children enrolling in this school from local areas. The school has become increasingly popular over the last decade due to the construction of new and modern school facilities, including state-of-the-art theatre complex, multimedia room, contemporary music and art room, as well as large sport ovals and playgrounds. Moreover, the incorporation of wellbeing programs into teachers’ educational practices, such as the ‘YCDI’ program (Bernard
2003), ‘Mind Matters’ (2000) and ‘Better Buddies’ (McGrath 2006), intended to support all students’ wellbeing and learning, contributed to the school’s popularity.

**Overview of the ‘You Can Do It’ (YCDI) program**

The ‘You Can Do It’ program (YCDI) (Bernard 2003) is a social and emotional learning program that was developed by Bernard with an aim to support students’ social, emotional and academic outcomes at a school-wide level. This program is based on a cognitive-behavioural approach (CBT; Beck 1993) that is based on an assumption that individuals’ patterns of thinking can determine their emotional responses and behaviour. For instance, when a person encounters a challenging situation with a negative, irrational way of thinking, this can engender negative feelings and consequently lead to negative behaviour. This in turn, will have a substantial impact on the process of coping and adjustment to those situations. Hence, central to the CBT approach is to equip those individuals with the necessary skills to recognise their negative thinking patterns and replace them with more rational ways of thinking in such situations. The CBT approach is an important theoretical foundation underpinning the ‘YCDI’ program, instructing children to distinguish the irrational from rational patterns of thinking and using rational self-statements in various situations.

According to Bernard (2003), the purpose of the ‘YCDI’ program is to strengthen students’ social and emotional competences, including confidence, persistence, resilience, organisation and getting along, which are also known as the ‘Five Foundations’ (see Figure 4.1) As Bernard explicates further, to enhance students’ Five Foundations, they need to develop and nurture the 12 positive Habits of Mind (patterns of thinking), such as Social Responsibility, Thinking First, Setting Goals, Working Tough, Being Independent, Taking Risks etc. Well-developed positive Habits of Mind (outlined in Figure 4.2.) are associated with a positive way of thinking, feeling and behaving, which play a pivotal role in children’s emotional wellbeing, school adjustment and their academic success (Ellis & Bernard 2006). The
following figure (See Figure 4.1.) presents the goals of the ‘You Can Do It’ program (Bernard 2003).

Figure 4.1. Goals of You Can Do It! Education for All Students

On the other hand, as Bernard (2003) indicates, the presence of the ‘Five Blockers’, including Feeling Down, Feeling Anxious, Procrastination, No Paying Attention and Feeling Angry, may lead to social and emotional difficulties in students, and are commonly associated with students’ negative outcomes, such as unacceptable behaviours, or academic underachievement (See Figure 4.2). The Five Blockers are inextricably linked
to the 12 Negative Habits of Mind, including Social Irresponsibility, Acting Without Thinking, Planning Time Poorly, Giving Up, I Can’t Be Bothered etc. which fundamentally determine how students adjust, behave, and achieve in the school setting. The following figure (See Figure 4.2.) displays the Five Blockers identified by Bernard (2003) that can interfere with students’ social and emotional adjustment and their academic outcomes.

Figure 4.2. The 5 Blockers Leading to Negative Student Outcomes: The Barrier Model

Source: Adapted from YCDI (Bernard 2003, p. 3)

The ‘YCDI’ program is designed to be delivered by classroom teachers through explicit instruction of a specific skill (one of the five foundations), as well as by using the specific words that refer to a particular skill that a student display throughout the day in various classroom situations. According to Bernard (2003), classroom teachers need to verbally recognise students’
endeavours to display one of the foundations, and/or to present an award to
the students who have displayed some of foundations at the School
Assembly.

Data Analysis: Greenfield Primary School

As mentioned in the previous chapter (See Chapter 3), the analysis of
the interview and the documentary data was conducted through the lens of
the CASEL conceptual framework (CASEL 2103). The rationale for using this
framework as a guide for the analysis in this research project is the notion
that the CASEL framework is ‘the most widely recognized conceptualization’
for raising children’s social and emotional skills (Hagen 2013, p.4). To
facilitate reader’s understanding of the analysis outlined in this chapter, a
reminder of the conceptual framework posited by CASEL (CASEL 2013),
comprising the five core social and emotional components and their sub-
components is provided in the table below (See Table 4.1.).
Table 4.1. CASEL framework: Core social and emotional components and Sub-components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASEL Core components</th>
<th>CASEL Sub-components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Self-awareness**    | • Recognising accurately one’s emotions and thoughts  
                        | • Recognising one’s strengths and weaknesses  
                        | • Maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence  
                        | • Maintaining a sense of optimism |
| **Self-management**   | • Regulating effectively one’s emotions and thoughts  
                        | • Managing one’s behaviour effectively  
                        | • Controlling one’s impulses  
                        | • Managing challenging situations effectively  
                        | • Setting and achieving personal and academic goals  
                        | • Motivating oneself |
| **Responsible decision making** | • Making sensible decisions about one’s behaviour and social interactions  
                                        | • Evaluating realistically the consequences of one’s actions |
| **Social awareness**  | • Considering others’ perspectives  
                        | • Empathising with others  
                        | • Recognising and appreciating the differences of others  
                        | • Appreciating cultural diversity  
                        | • Recognising the resources and supports available from one’s family, school and community |
| **Relationship skills** | • Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others  
                                        | • Listening attentively to others  
                                        | • Communicating openly and clearly with others  
                                        | • Collaborating with others  
                                        | • Providing and seeking help when needed  
                                        | • Resolving conflicts constructively  
                                        | • Resisting inappropriate social pressure |

Source: Adapted from CASEL (CASEL 2013, p.9)

The analysis of the interview and documentary data conducted in context of the CASEL framework generated the following two major themes:
(1) Constructs within the CASEL framework; and (2) Constructs outside of the CASEL framework. An additional level of analysis conducted in view of the existing literature on SEL, produced the following themes: (3) Enablers to SEL at Greenfield Primary School; and (4) Barriers to SEL at Greenfield Primary School.

In the following section of this chapter the profiles of the interviewed teachers from Greenfield Primary School are illustrated. As noted in the previous chapter (See Chapter 3), for the purpose of confidentiality, teachers’ real names have been replaced by pseudonyms. The subheadings of each profile indicate the major themes that emerged from teachers’ interview responses, pertinent to the research questions and the objectives of this study. Each profile also includes brief information about respondents’ teaching experiences and a summary that captures the essential aspects of their responses pertinent to the research questions of this study. Given the research interest in teachers’ interpretations of SEL, each profile includes direct quotations from the interviews that represent teachers’ voices on the concept of SEL.

**Helen**

With nearly 22 years of teaching experience, Helen is the most experienced among the three participating teachers from Greenfield Primary School. During her teaching career, she had an opportunity to teach both adults and children across all grade levels. However, she spent the longest period of time teaching Preparatory children, over a period of approximately 9 years.

**Constructs within the CASEL framework**

*Relationship skills*

The major emphasis of Helen’s interpretation of the concept of SEL was on children’s relationship skills, particularly on their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with others. For example, in the first interview,
when asked to delineate the concept of SEL, Helen focused solely on children’s ability to relate positively with others. As she stated: ‘It [SEL] basically means children… who are able to interact with others in a positive way’ (T1.I1.p.4.). When prompted to outline more about what interacting ‘in a positive way’ entails, Helen elaborated: ‘…[S]o that… interactions can occur between two people or groups of people in a way that everyone feels that they are being heard or being respected…” (T1.I1.p.4.). Notably, Helen’s description of positive relationships correlates closely with the most widely accepted conceptualisation of this construct in the developmental literature. According to several developmental researchers (Darling-Hammond 2007; Huppert 2009; Larivee 2005; Reinke et al. 2011), positive relationships are described as interactions among individuals that are based on mutual respect, trust, and attentive listening.

When delineating the main characteristics of socially and emotionally competent children, further in the same interview, Helen’s discourse also focused on children’s ability to build positive relationships with peers and to make friendships effortlessly. As she stated: '[T]hey [socially and emotionally competent children] are able to make friends quite easily so they would have very good interpersonal skills, hmmm... they would have peer relating skills, so that they would be able to relate to their peers’ (T1.I1.p.4).

In view of the other sub-elements of relationship skills, Helen also mentioned children’s ability to communicate openly and clearly with others. In this regard, when exploring the link between children’s social and emotional competence and their learning in the classroom, Helen noted the propensity of socially competent children to articulate openly their learning needs and interests to the teacher. As she stated: ‘So, the more socially competent children will come to me and tell me the sorts of things that they are interested in’ (T1.I1.p.9.). According to Helen, children’s ability to communicate effectively with a teacher is closely related to their active engagement in learning. As she elaborated: ‘... [T]he children that have these competencies, are really able to... you know, foster... their learning and communicate [effectively] to the teacher and therefore they become better learners ...(T1.I1.p.9.). Consistent with this statement, empirical evidence (Bruce 2010; Frederickson 2009; Roffey 2011; Russ 1999; Zhai,
Raver & Jones 2015) indicates that socially and emotionally competent children are inclined to express clearly their learning needs to the teacher, and therefore, are able to unleash their academic potential to the utmost level.

In terms of the other sub-constituents of relationship skills, when elaborating on the main attributes of socially and emotionally competent children, Helen also mentioned their tendency to listen actively to others. Specifically, when asked to illustrate a situation where a child displayed social and emotional competence, Helen pointed out children’s tendency to listen attentively to the teacher and follow teacher’s instructions. This is outlined in the following passage of the interview: ‘… [S]ome of the children in my class who are particularly socially and emotionally… competent, are the ones who tend to follow directions ……hmm… teacher’s directions. They listen really well in the classroom …’(T1.I1.p.5).

When discussing her pedagogical approaches enacted to support students’ SEL, Helen highlighted the importance of developing positive relationships with the students in her classroom. In this regard, when asked to delineate her role in supporting SEL, Helen pointed out her endeavours to better understand each student’s needs and abilities in her classroom. As she exemplified: ‘That’s my role… it’s to try and see each child as an individual and to try to understand each child…’ (T1.I1.p.10.). At this point, Helen elaborated that by showing genuine interest and care, she is making a conscious effort to establish rapport with each child in her class. As Helen explained: ‘…I try to connect with each child by talking to them, by seeing what their interests are… by making them understand that I really care…’ (T1.I1.p.10.). According to Helen’s account, a teacher’s ability to establish rapport with the students in the classroom, by understanding and responding to their social and emotional needs, is an essential catalyst for their learning. As Helen asserted: ‘…I think that if …the teacher is not… being able to connect with the child, and if their social… or their emotional needs are not being met, they are not going to learn…’(T1.I1.p.8.). In line with this assertion, several educational researchers proclaimed (Cacioppo & Bernston 2004; Frederickson 2009; Roffey 2011) that teacher’s ability to show
sensitivity and care towards children’s social and emotional needs on a consistent basis is an essential prerequisite for their learning engagement.

**Empathy**

When describing the main attributes of socially and emotionally competent children, Helen placed considerable emphasis on their ability to empathise with peers. In particular, when asked to elaborate on the behaviours of socially and emotionally competent children, Helen proposed the following example of a child who displayed empathy in the classroom: ‘There was one child who was crying because she didn’t have a pencil and the more [socially and emotionally] competent child, you know, went over, sat next to her and said: ‘That’s okay, you can use mine” (T1.I1.p.6.). When I asked her specifically what this child demonstrated with this behaviour, Helen responded: ‘Well, she showed that she was able to empathise with the child who was upset…’ (T1.I1.p.6.). When prompted to explicate empathy, Helen provided the following explanation: ‘…[E]mpathy is putting yourself in the other person’s situation. So, if they are sad, you look at the situation from…from their eyes…’ (T1.I1.p.7.). This interpretation correlates strongly with the definition of empathy proposed by several authors (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Brown & Dunn 1996; Bruce 2010), delineating this construct as an individual’s ability to understand others’ emotional experiences. Pointing out that empathy plays a significant role in understanding the emotional states of others, Helen asserted: ‘It [empathy] is… vital really in order for you to have that emotional understanding [of others]…’ (T1.I1.p.7.).

With respect to her pedagogical approaches aimed to enhance students’ SEL, Helen also placed a major emphasis on strengthening children’s ability to empathise with others. As Helen indicated, she is fostering empathy among her students by bringing the concept of empathy to classroom discussions, by sharing her own life experiences, or by displaying empathy towards her students. Regarding her classroom approach aimed to enhance empathy, Helen stated that she encourages her students to explore their feelings in situations when someone behaves inappropriately towards them. This is depicted in the following quotation of the interview: ‘…[A]nd [I]
get them [the children] to talk about their own experiences … ‘Did anything like this has ever happened to you? Do you remember a time when someone took something from …someone took something that belonged to you? How did you feel? How did you react?’ (T1.I1.p.11.).

In addition, by generating full class discussions about the main characters’ feelings of a story, Helen encourages the students in her classroom to understand their feelings and empathise with those characters. As she explained: ‘[Using] lots of literature …is important … hmmmm …and using those characters, so that the children can understand …or try to understand the characters and try to empathise with them…’ (T1.I2.p.11.). To illustrate this, Helen provided an example of how she encourages her students to empathise with the ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’ story’s main characters. As she exemplified: ‘We’re trying to look at: O.k. the Giant’s reaction … to… Jack’s stealing from him and stealing the harp…He roared and he stomped … And we could talk to children: ‘Well, how do you feel if someone takes something from you?’’ (T1.I2.p.11.). According to Helen, in this way, she is able to help students to understand and acknowledge the emotions of others, and to empathise with them. As she stated: ‘So, we try to…get the children to understand that those emotions are...are important and they’re o.k. However, to...be trying to hurt someone is not o.k.’ (T1.I2.p.11.). When asked how teachers can help their students to develop empathy, Helen also pointed out the importance of sharing teachers’ experiences of empathy related responses to others. She said: ‘If... teachers give examples of how they empathise with somebody… So, they could talk about their [own] real experiences… in real life…’ (T1.I2.p.10.).

When delineating the characteristics of socially and emotionally competent teachers, Helen also talked about the importance of modelling empathy in front of the students in her classroom. As Helen explicated in the second interview, a teacher’s ability to identify the emotional states of the students and to display empathy, may facilitate students’ engagement in the classroom. As she stated:
… [I]f you can empathise with the child who is coming in the class and you know that the child may have had …..a …a bad night… hmm…or they’ve walked in and you can just see from their body posture that they’re not in a happy mood… hmmm… you first…you should be able then to just engage straight away [with that child]… (T1.I2.p.4.).

At this point, Helen provided an example of her empathetic concern to one of the students in her classroom who was feeling distressed. In this situation, Helen managed to engage the distressed child in a conversation with his best friend, while being actively involved in an enjoyable activity. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the interview:

… Well, the best thing for him is really to engage with another child … hmm…That for him is what he needs …He needs to be able to talk to another child …not about his problems, because he’s not going to do that …not at that age…but just to talk …talk and …and it’s through play (T1.I2.p.5.).

According to several researchers (Frye & Mumpower 2001; Hamre & Pianta 2001; McKain & Mustard 1999; Weare & Gray 2003), socially and emotionally competent teachers are able to recognise accurately the emotional experiences of their students, and to respond appropriately to their social, emotional and learning needs. This in turn, has a significant influence on students’ social and emotional adjustment in school (Pianta & Stuhlman 2004; Reinke et al. 2011), and consequently on their learning engagement and academic achievement (Boorn, Dunn & Page 2010; Pianta 1999).

Resilience

When delineating her pedagogical approaches and formal classroom practices utilised to foster SEL, Helen also drew attention to the importance of strengthening children’s ability to manage challenging situations effectively and display resilience. As Helen stated, she is able to foster students’
capacity to manage challenging situations effectively by initiating classroom discussions about resilience, and by modelling resilience in front of her students. She said: ‘So, initially I will talk with them about the [challenging] situation and then I would ask them: ‘What would you do in this situation?’ (T1.I1.p.13). In this regard, in the second interview Helen illustrated a situation where she facilitated a discussion with her students about the importance of resilience. As she elaborated: ‘... I try to explain to the children ... ‘It’s o.k. if your day doesn’t go according to your plan, because ...you know, you’re trying to plan things’ ...It’s all about being resilient. So, you talk to them about being resilient...” (T1.I2.p.14.).

When discussing her pedagogical approaches aimed to support students’ social and emotional skills, Helen also noted her propensity to manage challenging situations effectively and to demonstrate resilience. Specifically, Helen explained that by showing adjustment to an unpredictable classroom situation, she is able to model resilience in front of her students. She said: ‘It’s o.k. It doesn’t matter ...we haven’t done this [activity] today, we’ll finish [it] tomorrow...’ (T1.I2.p.14.). Highlighting the importance of modelling resilience in front of the students when encountering classroom setbacks, Helen affirmed: ‘So it’s really trying to model ...to the children ... that ...hmm ...[unpredictable] things [can] happen, but they need to be resilient and just move on...be more adaptable ...’ (T1.I2.p.14.).

In terms of her formal SEL classroom approaches, Helen mentioned that she utilises the ‘YCDI’ program (Bernard 2003) to increase children’s ability to manage challenging situations effectively and show resilience. She proclaimed: ‘Well, we have the ‘You Can Do It’ program so we implement that... and that’s talking to children about resilience ...’ (T1.I1.p.12.). As Helen elaborated further, she uses the ‘YCDI’ to facilitate children’s ability to manage challenging situations effectively by referring to some of the main characters of this program. As she stated: ‘... [S]o, we are reading a story about a child who is not confident...[And then I would say:] ‘Ooh...okay. That’s a bit like Cony Confidence from ‘You Can Do It.’ What would Cony Confidence do [in this challenging situation]?’ (T1.I1.p.14.).

In line with Helen’s classroom approach to fostering students’ resilience, according to Doll, Zucker and Brehm (2004), socially and
emotionally competent teachers are able to cultivate and support children’s resilience by facilitating classroom discussions about resilience strategies, implementation of a formal educational program, sharing their own personal experiences with the students, and through modelling resilience.

Interestingly, when describing the main characteristics of socially and emotionally children, Helen did not talk about their ability to display resilience.

*Emotion regulation skills*

When describing the main attributes of socially and emotionally competent children, Helen also noted children’s ability to regulate their emotions effectively. This is illustrated in the following section of the first interview: ‘[T]hey [socially and emotionally competent children] would be able to manage themselves as well, so they know when they are feeling angry or sad…’ (T1.I1.p.5.).

Similarly, when deliberating on her pedagogical approaches that foster SEL, Helen talked about enhancing students’ emotion regulation abilities. In particular, Helen highlighted the importance of modelling effective self-regulation in front of the students in her classroom. As she asserted: ‘I try to…model that… [emotion regulation] all the time in front of the children. So, they don’t see me getting frustrated…or, they don’t see me getting angry…’ (T1.I2.p.14.). At this point, by exemplifying a situation in which she managed to remain calm when one of the students in her classroom threw a temper tantrum, Helen demonstrated her ability to model emotion regulation in front of the students. This is portrayed in the following excerpt from the first interview:

One child was screaming and carrying on…he didn’t want to go to the library …So, he did …a huge tantrum …started screaming …started yelling…picked up a chair and wanted to throw it…Now, the children …the other children are looking to see my reaction …How am I going to react? The thing is that … they know …that’s not acceptable… but they
want to see how I’m going to react to that …And of course my reaction
to that is to be always calm …to be always in control… (T1.I2.p.14.).

As Helen elaborated further, in this way, the students are provided with
an opportunity to learn how to regulate their own emotions effectively when
faced with a tense situation in life. She explicated: ‘They [the students in my
classroom] are given the opportunity to see a better way ……you know …of
handling a stressful situation…so, that they hopefully will choose that’
(T1.I2.p.15.).

**Constructs outside of the CASEL framework**

*Persistence*

When discussing the concept of SEL, Helen addressed another
construct pertinent to SEL that is not aligned with the core social and
emotional dimensions of the CASEL framework. Namely, when delineating
socially and emotionally competent children, Helen pointed out their capacity
to persevere until the completion of the task. In regards to children’s
perseverance, when describing the behaviours of socially and emotionally
competent children, Helen focused specifically on their tendency to complete
school work in the classroom. As she declared: ‘They [socially and
emotionally competent children persist until they] finish their work, they finish
their work and it is just beautiful’ (T1.I1.p.5.). According to Helen’s account,
students’ tendency to persevere until they complete their school work is
associated with their own, as well as with their teacher’s satisfaction. As
Helen elaborated: ‘So, they [socially and emotionally competent children]
sometimes may complete the work and it’s pleasing to them, but then they
also would like to please… the teacher…’ (T1.I1.p.5.). More details about the
construct of persistence and its relevance to SEL are outlined in Chapter 6.

When elaborating on her pedagogical approaches related to SEL,
Helen did not mention any other construct outside of the CASEL framework.
Summary of Helen’s profile

In summary, viewed through the CASEL framework, when discussing the skills that constitute social and emotional competence, Helen placed major emphasis on children’s ability to develop positive relationships with others. On a similar note, when discussing her pedagogical approaches aimed to support children’s social and emotional competence, Helen highlighted the importance of developing positive teacher-child relationships. Furthermore, when delineating socially and emotionally competent children, Helen pointed out their ability to display empathy and to regulate their emotions effectively. Likewise, in terms of her pedagogical approaches related to SEL, Helen talked about modelling empathy and self-regulation in front of her students, facilitating classroom discussions that foster students’ empathy, and sharing her own experiences of empathy related responses. In regards to her formal classroom approaches related to SEL, Helen stated that she implements the ‘YCDI’ program in her classroom to facilitate students’ ability to manage challenging situations effectively and show resilience. Notably, when discussing the concept of SEL, Helen addressed another construct pertinent to SEL that is not included in the CASEL framework, and that is the construct of persistence.

Alyson

Alyson commenced her teaching career four years ago in another state in Australia, where she was teaching a Grade One/Two composite class. In the previous two consecutive years she has been teaching Preparatory children at Greenfield Primary School.

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Relationship skills

In her construal of SEL, Alyson focused predominantly on children’s relationship skills, highlighting their ability to establish and maintain positive
relationships with others. Namely, at the beginning of the first interview, when asked to illuminate the concept of SEL, Alyson paid particular attention to children’s ability to interact in a positive way. She said: ‘So, [SEL is about] being able to have those positive relationships with those around you...’ (T2.I1.p.5.). Likewise, in her description of socially and emotionally competent children, Alyson focused primarily on their ability to develop positive relationships with peers. She said: ‘I think that they’d [socially and emotionally competent children would] be able to... hmmm ... form friendships, and positive relationships with other students in their peer group...’(T2.I1.p.6). Emphasising the importance of children’s relationship building abilities, Alyson concluded her discussion on the concept of SEL with the following overarching statement: ‘...Basically, I think it’s [SEL is] all about [building] relationships...’ (T2.I1.p.6.).

In terms of the other sub-components of relationship skills, Alyson also talked about children’s ability to resolve conflict constructively. Specifically, when delineating the main characteristics of socially and emotionally competent children], Alyson drew attention to their conflict resolution skills. At this point, Alyson explicated that children’s ability to use words, rather than physical or vocal expression of their negative emotions in conflict situations, is a prerequisite for effective conflict resolution. As she explained:

...And also being able to... deal with conflict [constructively]... and if someone does something... that they don't like, then they [socially and emotionally competent children] would use their words to explain the situation: ‘I didn’t like that’, instead of just screaming, or hitting, or crying...' (T2.I1.p.6.).

Interestingly, when discussing her pedagogical approaches that foster SEL, Alyson did not mention any pedagogical approach intended to support students’ relationship skills.
Empathy

In her discourse on SEL, Alyson placed considerable emphasis on children’s ability to display empathy to others. For example, in the first interview, when asked to describe socially and emotionally competent children, Alyson pointed out their ability to recognise others’ feelings and empathise with them. She said:

...[Y]ou know ...[socially and emotionally competent children are] responding to situations...in the right way...not laughing...you know, when people hurt themselves... or that kind of thing ...Really understanding that emotions have a quite a place and being able to recognise [others’ emotional experiences] (T2.11.p.6.).

In this context, when asked to describe a specific situation where a child displayed social and emotional competence, Alyson provided an example of a child who was able to empathise with her upset classmate. This is portrayed in the following passage of the interview:

...I noticed that one of the girls in the class that I had, had head lice. So he [one student in my class] said to her: ‘I can see you have head lice running around your head.’ And for me that was a child that didn’t really had the social (laughs) ... competence and they were grade two... and he really didn’t have the social thing. But then the girl started crying hysterically, so she...you know, her emotional competence ...and that started ventilating. But then another girl came into the situation trying to calm her friend and just said: ‘It doesn’t matter what people say. You don’t have to get upset and they also feel sorry when they did something wrong’ (T2.11.p.7.).

In the same vein, when discussing the influence of children’s social and emotional competence on their social interactions, Alyson drew attention to their ability to empathise with peers. This is outlined in the following statement: ‘I guess... children who do have that social and emotional
competence …seem to be less likely to hurt other children…” (T2.I1.p.7.). This statement correlates with the view espoused in the existing literature on SEL (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Bruce 2010; Davidson 2011) that socially and emotionally competent children are able to infer others’ feelings by interpreting accurately their non-verbal messages that occur during a conversation, and tend to display empathetic understanding towards them.

Interestingly, Alyson did not mention any pedagogical approach utilised to foster empathy among the students in her classroom.

Resilience

When outlining the skills that represent social and emotional competence, Alyson also pointed out children’s capacity to manage challenging situations effectively and display resilience. She said: ‘…They [socially and emotionally competent children] have a little bit of resilience …’ (T2.I1.p.5.). Moreover, when delineating socially and emotionally competent children, on two occasions during the first interview, Alyson also referred to resilience, pointing out children’s ability to overcome academic challenges. On the first occasion, when delineating children’s emotional competence, Alyson focused on their ability to show resilience when experiencing ‘disappointments’ at school. As she elaborated:

I guess in terms of emotional competence it would be that having a child with a resilience that is able to have disappointments and it’s not always… doesn’t have to always get a reward and comes first, but he is able to think: ‘Okay, next time [I can get the reward]…’ or ‘I can work on that’ (T2.I1.p.6.).

On the second occasion, when discussing the influence of SEL on students’ academic learning, Alyson used the term resilience to designate children’s ability to accept their mistakes as part of the learning process. As she exemplified: ‘[Socially and emotionally competent children have] …more resilience to be able to accept that: ‘Okay, I’m able to make mistakes and I can keep going with it’’ (T2.I1.p.11.). In line with these statements, in the
educational literature (Barankin & Khanlou 2007; Masten 2007; Masten et al. 2008), the term resilience is delineated as an ability to cope with an adversity, or with a challenging situation effectively.

In her discourse on the formal classroom practices aimed to foster SEL, Alyson referred to the ‘YCDI’ program that she implements in her classroom to strengthen students’ resilience. As she declared: ‘I guess [I use the] ‘You Can Do It’ program which has the confidence, resilience, and all that kind of things’ (T2.I1.p.13.). Alyson explicated further that she integrates the ‘YCDI’ program in her teaching practices by facilitating weekly classroom discussions about its principles, as well as by delivering a particular lesson of the program on a weekly basis. She said: ‘In our classroom, well…we probably talk about it [about the ‘YCDI’] throughout the week and then we hold it… I do one explicit teaching throughout the week on that [specific] skill…’ (T2.I1.p.13.).

Appreciating the differences of others

In her portrayal of socially and emotionally competent children, Alyson also referred to children’s ability to embrace diversity in others. Specifically, Alyson stressed the ability of socially and emotionally competent children to associate with various individuals, by modifying their own behaviours and language accordingly. As she maintained:

And also [socially and emotionally competent children] have ...[the] ability to communicate with those outside of their peer groups, so... younger children, knowing that they have to... change their ...social language and actions, because there is suddenly a younger child in the room (T2.I1.p.6.).

Moreover, when delineating individual’s social competence, Alyson mentioned children’s ability to socialise with diverse groups of children. As she declared: ‘And also if a child is quite socially competent and being able to... play with the mix of different people... and not always having to be with one best friend…’ (T2.I1.p.6.).
On a similar note, when discussing her pedagogical approaches aimed to foster SEL, Alyson also focused on instilling students’ appreciation of the differences of others. Namely, in the first interview, when describing her role in developing children’s social and emotional competence, Alyson pointed out the importance of enhancing students’ awareness to appreciate the diversity of others. As she elaborated: ‘I guess, [my role is to teach children] things like getting along… with different people, regardless of where they’ve come from, or what differences they may have…’ (T2.I1.p.13.).

Constructs outside of the CASEL framework

Sense of identity

When deliberating on the concept of SEL, Alyson mentioned another aspect pertinent to SEL that is not included in the CASEL conceptual framework. Namely, in the first interview, when asked how familiar she is with the term SEL, Alyson mentioned the SEAL program that she implemented in another school in the beginning of her teaching career. As she explicated: ‘The only thing I can go back to is …my first year teaching… We run a program at the school and it was a UK program called ‘SEAL’, Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning, so I guess it is the same thing [as SEL] (laughs)’ (T2.I1.p.4.). When asked to elaborate further, Alyson explained that she utilised the ‘SEAL’ program in her classroom to enhance children’s sense of identity. Moreover, when delineating the skills that constitute social and emotional competence, apart from addressing children’s relationship skills, Alyson highlighted the importance of individual’s sense of personal identity. As she stated: ‘…Basically, I think it’s [SEL is] all about relationships and a sense of identity’ (T2.I1.p.6). This aspect pertinent to SEL will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.
Summary of Alyson’s profile

To sum up, in her discourse on SEL, Alyson highlighted children’s relationships skills, particularly their ability to develop positive relationships with others. Moreover, in her portrayal of socially and emotionally competent children, Alyson paid particular attention to their ability to empathise with others, to display resilience and to appreciate others’ differences. Interestingly, when deliberating on her pedagogical approaches aimed to foster SEL, Alyson focused only on supporting children’s ability to embrace diversity. In regards to her formal classroom practices related to SEL, Alyson declared that she incorporates the ‘YCDI’ program in her classroom to enhance children’s resilience. It is important to note that in her construal of the SEL concept, Alyson pointed out an individual’s sense of identity as another aspect pertinent to SEL, which is not addressed in the CASEL framework.

Crystal

Crystal has been working as a classroom teacher for 5 years in total, teaching exclusively at Greenfield Primary School. Throughout her teaching career she has taught multiple grades, including Prep, Grade One, Grade Five and Grade Six. However, in the last two years Crystal has been teaching only Preparatory students.

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Relationship skills

In light of the CASEL framework, a great deal of Crystal’s discourse on SEL was devoted to children’s’ relationship skills, particularly on their ability to establish positive relationships with others. For example, when discussing the influence of children’s social and emotional skills on their behaviours at school, pointing out their amiability, Crystal stated: ‘…[A]nd [socially and emotionally competent children are able to] make new friends and do all of
those sorts of things, because they have those skills’ (T3.I1.p.10.). With respect to relationship skills, in her discourse on SEL, Crystal also talked about children’s conflict resolution skills. Specifically, when asked to illustrate a situation where a child demonstrated social and emotional capabilities, alluding to children’s ability to resolve conflicts constructively, Crystal asserted:

…. [W]here you can see a child that …kind of …can listen to what other people are saying and can… sort it out [sort out the conflict] and use words to sort it out … in a five year old, I think shows…yeah… social and emotional competence (T3.I1.p.7.).

When discussing the concept of SEL, Crystal also talked about children’s ability to ask for help and offer help to those in need. In this regard, when talking about the influence of children’s social and emotional skills on their behaviours at school, Crystal noted children’s ability to request help from others when the need arises. As she affirmed: ‘[T]hey [socially and emotionally competent children] can ask for help if they need to…’ (T3.I1.p.8.). Further in the same interview, when discussing the relationship between children’s social and emotional competence and their learning in the classroom, Crystal also mentioned children’s tendency to offer help to those in need. As she stated: ‘…I guess…you know, helping other children is …you know, being… helpful member…[is another important social skill]’ (T3.I1.p.12.).

In her discourse on SEL, Crystal also referred to the propensity of socially and emotionally competent children to resist inappropriate social pressure. Namely, when discussing the influence of SEL on children’s social interactions, pertaining to children’s inclination to withstand inappropriate peer pressure, Crystal stated: ‘…Having confidence to stand up and say: ‘No, this is not okay…” (T3.I1.p.9.).

When elaborating on her pedagogical approaches that foster SEL, Crystal drew particular attention to building positive relationships with the students in her classroom. In this regard, at the beginning of the interview, when discussing the attendance of PD workshops related to SEL, Crystal
contended that creating positive teacher-student relationships should be an integral part of the teaching process. She stated: ‘[T]eaching is 100% about relationships … building positive relationships …’ (T3.I1.p.3.). At this point, when asked to elaborate on her relationship-building approach, Crystal explicated that she is able to develop positive teacher-student relationships by showing understanding and respect to the students in her classroom. As she explained: ‘I understand children when I’m working with them, I respect all of them, and I want to help them on their journey….’ (T3.I1.p.4.). Aligned with this statement, in the educational literature, positive teacher-child relationships are described as those ones that are based on a high level of respect, understanding, and closeness that ensure children’s feelings of safety, security and support (Baker 2006; Eisenhower, Baker & Blacher 2007; Ewing & Taylor 2009; Hamre & Pianta 2001; Pianta 1999; Rudasill 2011). Emphasising the importance of positive teacher-student relationships for children’s learning engagement, Crystal affirmed: ‘I find that…you know, if you have that [positive] relationship [with the students], then… they are going to respond so much better to you and you will get so much more out of them’ (T3.I1.p.4.).

Resilience

In her portrayal of socially and emotionally competent children, Crystal placed considerable emphasis on children’s ability to demonstrate resilience. As she stated: ‘[T]hey [socially and emotionally competent children]… are …resilient, so they bounce back from upsets’ (T3.I1.p.5.). Notably, Crystal referred to children’s ability to display resilience in several different contexts during the interview. For instance, at the beginning of the interview, when asked to describe a situation where a child displayed social and emotional competence, Crystal provided an example of a child who demonstrated resilience when faced with a personal setback in life. This is portrayed in the following extract of the interview: ‘It’s [SEL implies] things like recovering from setbacks, so …you know, this might sound silly but it’s everyday things like…….losing your dollar for the canteen. Do you know what I mean? And being able to say: ‘No, that’s okay’” (T3.I1.p.6.). Yet, in another context, when
outlining the behaviours of socially and emotionally competent children, Crystal noted children’s ability to overcome unpleasant emotional experiences in their social interactions. As she stated:

And a part of it [a part of SEL] is also bouncing back from situations like that...you know, being able to say: ‘Okay. Well, you know, they [the other children] said that and it was hurtful, but I need to put this into perspective’ (T3.I1.p.9.).

Moreover, Crystal referred to children’s ability to display resilience by describing a child who was able to ‘recover’, when faced with a setback in a classroom situation. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the interview:

... [O]ne girl in my classroom ......we kept on having things come up ....and there was no time for the ‘I box’ and I kept thinking: ‘Ooh my goodness ... there is no time... we’ve got to the end of the day’, and she has got: ‘What about the ‘I box?’ And I’ve thought: ‘Ooh my gosh, I am so sorry, but the bell is literally about to go and we can’t do the ‘I box.’ And you know what? She just said: ‘That’s okay.’ She was just able to go: ‘That’s all right.’ She did it two days in a row. And I just thought: ‘Yes, that’s the kid who can recover...’ (T3.I1.p.7.).

Referring to her pedagogical approaches enacted to raise students’ social and emotional skills, Crystal also drew attention to fostering their resiliency. Specifically, when describing her role in nurturing students’ SEL, Crystal affirmed her propensity to enhance children’s resilience through incorporation of explicit formal teaching strategies in the classroom. She said: ‘I can sometimes fill some of the [education] gaps especially through lessons ...So... actual specific teaching, or [using] strategies [to strengthen students’ resilience]...’ (T3.I1.p.13.). Highlighting further the importance of fostering resilience in students, Crystal asserted: ‘I think if we can have our kids be resilient then... we can have them to be happy’ (T3.I1.p.13.).
Making sensible decisions

When outlining the main attributes of socially and emotionally competent children, Crystal also referred to children’s ability to make sensible decisions about their behaviours. It is interesting to note that Crystal used the term self-regulation to designate children’s ability to make sensible decisions about their behaviours. As she maintained: ‘…[A]lso to make sure that you are able to self regulate and maintain yourself: ‘Okay, these people aren’t doing what they should be doing but I know that this is what I need to be doing…” (T3.I1.p.12.). At this point, when I asked her to interpret the term self-regulation, Crystal proclaimed that self-regulation pertains to children’s ability to make responsible decisions. She stated: ‘I guess by self-regulation is just being able to make those [sensible] choices…’ (T3.I1.p.12.). Notably, Crystal’s interpretation of self-regulation does not correlate with how this construct is delineated by developmental researchers (Cole, Martin & Dennis 2004; Garner 2010; Thompson 1994; Zeman et al. 2007). As an illustration, Thompson’s (1994, p.28.) definition of self-regulation that is the most frequently used description of this construct in emotion regulation studies, refers to self-regulation as ‘the ability to effectively manage one’s emotions and control the outer expression of one’s internal state in the service of accomplishing one’s goals’. 

In terms of her pedagogical approaches intended to support SEL, Crystal highlighted the importance of facilitating the students in her classroom to make sensible choices about their behaviour. This is elucidated in the following section of the interview:

This is one thing I really firmly believe…that is super, super important that teachers talk about choices, because it separates the child from the behaviour. And it makes it about this child being in control, so…[telling the child:] ‘That was a poor choice’ (T3.I1.p.12.).

To exemplify further this assertion, Crystal illustrated a classroom situation in which she raised a discussion with a student about his ‘poor choices’. This is portrayed in the following extract of the interview: ‘I do say
this to the children if they have made a poor choice, or if they are making ongoing poor choices and finding it difficult at school, to say: ‘You are a really good kid, but you are making some really poor choices at the moment’ (T3.I1.p.12.). As Crystal elucidated, in this way, students are provided with a learning opportunity to make better decisions in the future. As she affirmed: ‘…[A]nd they [the children] are actually saying: ‘So, that was my decision… and that may not be such a great decision, but next time I can make a better choice’’ (T3.I1.p.12).

**Self-awareness**

With regard to the five core components and related sub-components of the CASEL framework, Crystal also drew attention to children’s self-awareness, alluding to their emotional awareness. Namely, at the beginning of the interview, when deliberating on the concept of SEL, Crystal referred to children’s ability to accurately recognise their own emotions. As she proclaimed: ‘I think [SEL] probably is also about having an understanding about how you are feeling, and having an understanding about… your emotions…’ (T3.I1.p.5.). Moreover, referring to children’s self-awareness, when delineating the skills that comprise social and emotional competence, Crystal also mentioned the ability of socially and emotionally competent children to recognise their own talents and limitations. She said: ‘…[A]nd [socially and emotionally competent children] are self-aware at the same time, so they know what their strengths are and they know their weaknesses …’ (T3.I1.p.6.).

When discussing her pedagogical approaches employed to foster SEL, Crystal also talked about enhancing students’ emotional awareness. In this regard, when asked whether she facilitates discussions with the students about their emotions, Crystal affirmed that she initiates frequent emotionally-laden classroom discussions to increase their emotional awareness. She said: ‘[W]e talk about feelings [with the students in my classroom]. Yeah. Yeah. Often. Yeah…and being aware of their feelings and giving them the right language for their feelings’ (T3.I1.p.14.). At this point, Crystal explicated that by facilitating students’ participation in those classroom discussions, she
helps them to recognise their emotions, and to illuminate the causes for their emotional experiences. As she stated:

… [J]ust through discussion. Just through unpacking… [I would ask the students:] ‘How do you feel?’…Often they would just refer to feeling sad or feeling bad and trying to just coach them through: ‘Okay, well … what is it that’s making you feel bad?’ (T3.I1.p.15.).

**Constructs outside of the CASEL framework**

*Persistence*

When discussing her engagement with the ‘YCDI’ program, Crystal talked about one aspect pertinent to SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL framework, and that is persistence. For example, when elaborating on her formal classroom practices related to SEL, Crystal stated that she implements the ‘YCDI’ program in her classroom to foster children’s persistence. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the interview:

With ‘You Can Do It’ there is one thing that I do all of the time. Cause we have characters for the children when they are young, like Gabbi-Get along, Ricki -Resilience and …Peddy- Persistence, so we’ve got all these little characters and we have puppets for them… (T3.I1.p.18.).

The construct of persistence and its relevance to SEL will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

**Summary of Crystal’s profile**

In summary, when discussing the concept of SEL, Crystal emphasised children’s relationship skills, including their ability to develop positive relationships with others, to resolve conflicts constructively, to provide and seek help when needed, and to resist inappropriate social pressure. When elaborating on her pedagogical approaches that foster SEL, Crystal highlighted the importance of developing positive teacher-child relationships.
Furthermore, when delineating socially and emotionally competent children, Crystal addressed their resiliency, the ability to make sensible decisions, and their self-awareness. Similarly, when discussing her pedagogical approaches related to SEL, Crystal affirmed her propensity to enhance children’s resilience, to make sensible decisions and to foster their emotional awareness through incorporation of explicit formal teaching strategies and classroom discussions. On an important note, when elaborating on her engagement with the ‘YCDI’ program, Crystal pointed out one important aspect related to SEL that is not outlined in the CASEL framework, and that is persistence.

The following table (See Table 4.2.) presents Greenfield teachers’ understandings of SEL and associated pedagogical approaches in view of the CASEL framework.
Table 6.6. Greenfield teachers’ understandings and pedagogical approaches related to SEL viewed through the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASEL Components and Sub-components</th>
<th>Helen</th>
<th>Alyson</th>
<th>Crystal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of SEL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical approaches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of self-awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulating one’s emotions and thoughts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining a sense of optimism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of self-management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulating one’s emotions effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining a sense of optimism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of responsible decision making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making sensible decisions about one’s behaviour and social interactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating realistically the consequences of one’s actions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of social awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering others’ perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathizing with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing and appreciating the differences of others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating cultural diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing the resources and supports available from one’s family, school and community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of relationship skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and maintaining positive relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening attentively to others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating clearly with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing and seeking help when needed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving conflicts constructively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resisting inappropriate social pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.6: Greenfield teachers' understandings and pedagogical approaches related to SEL viewed through the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013)*
The following table (See Table 4.3.) presents Greenfield teachers’ formal classroom practices related to SEL in context of the CASEL framework.

Table 4.3. Greenfield teachers: Formal classroom practices related to SEL in view of the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASEL Core components</th>
<th>Helen</th>
<th>Alyson</th>
<th>Crystal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>Utilising the ‘YCDI’ program to facilitate classroom discussions about resilience</td>
<td>Utilising the ‘YCDI’ program to facilitate classroom discussions about resilience</td>
<td>Utilising the ‘YCDI’ program to facilitate classroom discussions about resilience, persistence and organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible decision making</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social awareness</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Position of SEL in the ‘You Can Do It’ (YCDI) program

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Relationship skills

When examining the ‘YCDI’ program (Bernard 2003) using the CASEL framework, a considerable emphasis is placed on relationship skills, particularly on students’ ability to develop positive relationships with others. In this context, when outlining the mission statement of the ‘YCDI’, this program points out the importance of establishing positive relationships with
students. As it states: ‘as a strength-building approach, YCDI also seeks to build the capabilities of adults (community, school, home) associated with positive outcomes in young people, including positive, caring relationships with young people…’ (D4.p.3.). Here, the ‘YCDI’ program indicates that building positive adult-child relationships can produce positive outcomes in young people. This view is supported by several developmental researchers (Beamish & Bryer 2015; Hattie 2009; Pianta & Stuhlman 2004; Wolfe, Wekerle & Scott 1997), affirming that frequent positive interactions with significant others are critical for children’s emotional health and are closely related to individual’s positive self-regard.

Concerning the other sub-elements of relationship skills, when outlining the five fundamental principles of the ‘YCDI’, this program also addresses students’ ability to listen attentively to others. This is illustrated in the following passage of the document: ‘…[Students are expected to be] listening and not interrupting when someone else is speaking…’ (D4.p.10.). Here, the ‘YCDI’ points out the importance of strengthening children’s listening skills as a prerequisite for developing positive relationships with others. This is in line with the conclusion of several research studies in the field of SEL (Criss et al. 2002; Frey, Hirschstein & Guzzo 2000; Stipek 2006), confirming that attentive listening is a fundamental aspect in relationship building.

In terms of the other sub-components of relationship skills, when discussing the basic principles of the ‘YCDI’, this program also draws attention to students’ ability to help others. This is reflected in the following excerpt of the document: ‘Examples of getting along behaviour are being helpful when working in a group…’ (D4.p.10.). Regarding the other sub-components of relationship skills, when delineating the skills required to get along with others, the ‘YCDI’ program also notes the importance of students’ ability to resolve conflicts effectively. As it proposes: ‘Getting along means working well with teachers and classmates, resolving disagreements peacefully…’ (D4.p.9.).
Resilience

The ‘YCDI’ program also pertains to students’ ability to demonstrate resilience. Specifically, when delineating the mission of the ‘YCDI’, this program refers to students’ resilience. As it notes: ‘…communicating and modelling of social and emotional capabilities including values and resilience…’ (D4.p.3.). In the ‘YCDI’ program, the term resilience is defined in the following way:

Resilience means knowing how to stay calm and being able to stop yourself from getting extremely angry, down, or worried when something ‘bad’ happens. It means being able to calm down and feel better when you get very upset. It also means being able to control your behaviour when you are very upset so that you bounce back from difficulty and return to work or play (D4.p.10.).

Notably, as outlined in the ‘YCDI’ program, resilience encompasses one’s ability to manage emotions and behaviour appropriately, which in turn can enhance individual’s ability to overcome challenging situations effectively. Aligned with the interpretation, several educational researchers (Barankin & Khanlou 2007; Masten 2007; Masten et al. 2008) examined the construct of resilience as individual’s ability to cope with an adversity, or with a challenging situation effectively. However, within the CASEL framework, individual’s ability to manage challenging situations effectively, to regulate their emotions, and to manage their behaviour effectively, are addressed as separate sub-components of self-management (See Table 4.1.).

Making sensible decisions

Taking into consideration the other social and emotional aspects of the CASEL framework, the ‘YCDI’ program also refers to children’s ability to make sensible decisions. Specifically, when outlining the mission of the ‘YCDI’, this program draws attention to strengthening students’ decision making skills. As the program proposes: ‘…involving young people in
decision-making and providing them with special responsibility …’ (D4.p.3.). Here, the ‘YCDI’ highlights the importance of enhancing children’s responsibility to participate actively in the process of making sensible decisions. Similarly, when describing the skills necessary for students to get along with others, the ‘YCDI’ also refers to students’ ability to make thoughtful decisions. This is elucidated in the following declaration: ‘…[Students are expected] to act responsibly by making good choices…’ (D4.p.10.). Moreover, when delineating the foundational skills that can help students to get on with others, the ‘YCDI’ also points out the significance of making sensible decisions about one’s behaviour and social interactions. As it notes: ‘First-thinking that when someone treats me badly I need to think about different ways I can react…’ (D4.p.10.). Here, the ‘YCDI’ points out that when someone behaves inappropriately, the students should think over alternative ways of responding to such behaviour.

Organisational skills

The ‘YCDI’ program also highlights the importance of children’s organisation for their school adjustment and educational accomplishment. This is illuminated in the following statement: ‘unless young people have the following social and emotional strengths, their achievement and adjustment will not be fully realized: Confidence, Persistence, Organisation…’ (D.4.p.4.). In the ‘YCDI,’ organisation is defined in the following way:

Organisation means setting a goal to do your best in your school work, listening carefully to your teachers’ instructions, planning your time so that you are not rushed, having all your supplies ready and keeping track of your assignments’ due dates (D.4.p.9.).

It is interesting to note that the definition of organisation, as outlined in the ‘YCDI’ program, encompasses not only individual’s capacity to set high academic goals, and to have effective time-management skills, but also the ability to listen attentively to the teacher. In line with this exposition, review of related educational literature revealed that the majority of studies in student
organisational skills (Anday-Porter, Henne & Horan 2000; Cejovic 2011; Gambill, Moss & Vescogni 2008; Sedita 1995) point out time-management and effective planning as essential elements of children’s organisation. However, the ability to listen attentively that is included in the definition of organisation in the ‘YCDI’ program is actually addressed as a sub-component of children’s relationship skills in the CASEL framework (See Table 4.1.)

The following table (See Table 4.4.) displays the constructs within the CASEL framework identified in the ‘YCDI’ program.
Table 4.4. CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) mapped onto the ‘YCDI’ program (Bernard 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASEL Core components</th>
<th>CASEL: Sub-components</th>
<th>YCDI program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Self-awareness**    | Recognising accurately one’s emotions and thoughts  
Recognising one’s strengths and weaknesses  
Maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence  
Maintaining a sense of optimism | Not mentioned |
| **Self-management**   | Regulating effectively one’s emotions and thoughts  
Managing one’s behaviour effectively  
Controlling one’s impulses  
Managing challenging situations effectively  
Setting and achieving personal and academic goals  
Motivating oneself | Managing challenging situations effectively  
Setting and achieving personal and academic goals |
| **Responsible decision making** | Making sensible decisions about one’s behaviour and social interactions  
Evaluating realistically the consequences of one’s actions | Making sensible decisions about one’s behaviour and social interactions |
| **Social awareness**  | Considering others’ perspectives  
Empathising with others  
Recognising and appreciating the differences of others  
Appreciating cultural diversity  
Recognising the resources and supports available from one’s family, school and community | Not mentioned |
| **Relationship skills** | Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others  
Listening attentively to others  
Communicating clearly with others  
Collaborating with others  
Providing and seeking help when needed  
Resolving conflicts constructively  
Resisting inappropriate social pressure | Developing positive relationships with others  
Listening attentively to others  
Providing help when needed  
Resolving conflicts constructively |
Constructs outside of the CASEL framework

Persistence

The analysis of the ‘YCDI’ identified one important construct related to SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL framework, and that is persistence. In this regard, when outlining the fundamental principles of the ‘YCDI’, this program points out the importance of fostering children’s persistence. As it states:

Our core purpose is the development of young people’s social and emotional capabilities, including:

1. Confidence (academic, social)
2. Persistence (D4.p.2.).

Moreover, this program highlights the importance of children’s persistence for their academic attainment and self-realisation. In the ‘YCDI’, persistence is defined as individual’s ability to make an extra effort to accomplish the task and refusing to give up when faced with difficulty. As it notes: ‘Persistence means trying hard to do your best and not giving up when something feels like it’s too difficult or boring’ (D.4.p.9.). This definition is in line with the following exposition of persistence proposed by Padilla Walker and colleagues (Padilla-Walker et al. 2012, p.435), referring to persistence as: ‘[t]he ability to overcome delays and hindrances throughout difficult tasks...’

Summary of the analysis of the ‘YCDI’ program

In summary, the analysis of the ‘YCDI’ program in light of the CASEL framework reveals that this SEL program places a considerable emphasis on students’ relationship skills, focusing on their ability to develop positive relationships with others, to listen attentively, to provide help when needed, and to resolve conflicts effectively. Moreover, the ‘YCDI’ points out students’ ability to make sensible decisions, get organised, and demonstrate
resilience. On an important note, the content analysis of the ‘YCDI’ identified one significant construct related to SEL that is not outlined in the CASEL framework, and that is the construct of persistence.

Position of SEL within Greenfield Primary School Policy

Greenfield Primary School Policy provides an overview of the mission and the school values of Greenfield Primary School, including: team work, caring for oneself and others, showing respect to others and demonstrating excellence by setting and achieving positive and realistic goals.

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Relationship skills

When analysing the school policy of Greenfield Primary School, the emphasis is placed on developing students’ relationship skills, focusing on their listening skills, communication and collaborative skills. For example, when addressing the core principles of Greenfield Primary School, this document indicates that developing and enhancing ‘listening and communication skills’ enables students to work together in a team. This is outlined in the following proclamation: ‘We [the students of Greenfield Primary School] demonstrate team work by: improving our listening and communication skills’ (D1.p.1.). Here the document points out that children’s ability to listen attentively and communicate clearly is fundamental for effective collaboration with others. According to several educational researchers (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Roffey 2005; Warden & MacKinon 2003), effective communication involves listening with full attention and showing genuine interest to others’ perspectives and ideas, without underestimating one’s worth. This kind of communication, which is based on mutual respect and understanding is the essence of effective collaboration with others (Bahman & Maffini 2008).
In terms of relationship skills, when discussing the basic school principles, this document also focuses on students’ ability to collaborate with others. As it proposes: ‘We [the students of Greenfield Primary School] demonstrate team work by: cooperating with others’ (D1.p.1.). Here the document affirms that students’ ability to collaborate with others is an essential ingredient for working together in teams.

Appreciation of others’ differences

When outlining the mission of Greenfield Primary School, this document also points out the importance of accepting individual differences. As it states: ‘Greenfield Primary School will provide a holistic education through: ‘[c]reating a diverse, safe and supportive learning environment that values students individuality’ (D1.p.1.). Here the document indicates that accepting individual differences at a school-wide level is fundamental for establishing nurturing learning environment.

In addition, when describing the foundational principles of Greenfield Primary School, this document also draws attention to fostering students’ acknowledgment of others’ differences. This is illuminated in the following statement: ‘We [the students of Greenfield Primary School] demonstrate respect by: accepting individuality’ (D1.p.2.). Here the document indicates that children are able to show respect towards others by appreciating everyone’s unique differences. In line with these statements, several researchers agree (Bar-On & Parker 2000; Beamish & Bryer 2015; Hartup 1992; Warden & MacKinon 2003) that individual’s capacity to acknowledge and embrace others’ differences is essential for cultivating mutual respect.

Position of SEL within the Curriculum of Greenfield Primary School

The Curriculum of Greenfield Primary School provides a brief overview of the following academic subjects included in the School Curriculum: Mathematics, Art, Music, Drama, Science, Nature Study, Technology, Social
Studies, Health and Physical Development, and Languages other than English.

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Notably, none of the five social and emotional components and related sub-components outlined in the CASEL framework is mentioned within the Curriculum of Greenfield Primary School.

Position of SEL within the Student Social Competence Development Program (SSCDP)

The Student Social Competence Program (SSCDP) provides a structured explanation of students’ socially appropriate behaviours within the school setting, as well as guidelines and procedures aimed to foster students’ social competence.

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Relationship skills

The analysis of the Student Social Competence Development Program (SSCDP) reveals that this document places the greatest emphasis on enhancing students’ relationship skills, particularly on their ability to establish positive relationships with others. For instance, when addressing the goals of the ‘SSCDP’, this document highlights the importance of facilitating students’ ability to develop meaningful relationships with others. This is illuminated in the following section of the document: ‘The program [the SSCP] encourages students to: form worthwhile relationships…’ (D3.p.4.). Here the document indicates that one of the goals of the ‘SSCDP’ program is to support students to establish and maintain positive relationships with others. Similarly, when discussing the criteria for recognising students’ positive behavioural efforts within the school setting, this document notes students’
ability to develop secure and fulfilling relationships with others. As it states: ‘You [the students of Greenfield Primary School] have exhibited some or all of the following: an ability to form satisfying and stable relationships’ (D3.p.6.). Here the document points out the significance of enhancing students’ ability to form positive relationships with others within the school environment.

In regard to relationship skills, this document also points out fostering students’ collaboration with others. More specifically, when outlining the main goals of the ‘SSCDP’, the document proclaims that this program promotes students’ collaboration with others. This is illustrated in the following statement: ‘The program [the ‘SSCDP’] encourages students to: cooperate with others in the school community’ (D3.p.4.). Here the document identifies the importance of students’ propensity to collaborate with others within the school environment.

In regards to the other constituents of relationship skills, this document also mentions students’ encouragement to ask for help from others. Namely, when discussing the goals of the ‘SSCDP’, the document points out that one of the proximal goals of this program is to provide opportunities for students to request help when necessary. This is elucidated in the following statement: ‘The program [the SSCDP] encourages students to: seek help and advice when needed’ (D3.p.4.).

Constructs outside of the CASEL framework

The analysis of the reviewed curricula and policy documents obtained from Greenfield Primary School does not reveal any other aspect pertinent to SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL framework.

The following table (See Table 4.5.) displays the position of SEL in the school curricula and policy documents obtained from Greenfield Primary School in context of the CASEL framework.
Table 4.5. CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) mapped onto Greenfield School Curricula and Policy Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASEL Core components</th>
<th>CASEL: Sub-components</th>
<th>Greenfield Primary School Policy</th>
<th>Greenfield Primary School Curriculum</th>
<th>Student Social Competence Development Program (SSCDP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-awareness</strong></td>
<td>Recognising accurately one’s emotions and thoughts Recognising one’s strengths and weaknesses Maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence Maintaining a sense of optimism</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-management</strong></td>
<td>Regulating effectively one’s emotions and thoughts Managing one’s behaviour effectively Controlling one’s impulses Managing challenging situations effectively Setting and achieving personal and academic goals Motivating oneself</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsible decision making</strong></td>
<td>Making sensible decisions about one’s behaviour and social interactions Evaluating realistically the consequences of one’s actions</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social awareness</strong></td>
<td>Considering others’ perspectives Empathising with others Recognising and appreciating the differences of others Appreciating cultural diversity Recognising the resources and supports available from one’s family, school and community</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship skills</strong></td>
<td>Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others Listening attentively to others Communicating clearly with others Collaborating with others Providing and seeking help when needed Resolving conflicts constructively Resisting inappropriate social pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td>Listening to others Communicating with others Collaborating with others</td>
<td>Developing positive relationships with others Collaborating with others Seeking help when needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of the Analysis of the School Curricula and Policies of Greenfield Primary School

To sum up, the analysis of the curricula documents and policies of Greenfield Primary School in view of the CASEL framework showed that collectively, these documents highlight children’s relationship skills. In terms of relationship skills, both documents, the Greenfield Primary School Policy and the Student Social Competence Development Program (SSCDP) point out children’s ability to collaborate with others. In addition, the School Policy of Greenfield Primary School draws attention to children’s listening and communication skills, whereas the ‘SSCDP’ highlights children’s ability to develop meaningful relationships with others, and to ask for help when needed. On an important note, none of the core components and related sub-components of the CASEL framework are addressed in the School Curriculum of Greenfield Primary School.

Enablers to SEL at Greenfield Primary School

According to the participating teachers from Greenfield Primary School, there are several factors that may enable SEL incorporation in schools, including: (1) teachers’ participation in professional development workshops related to SEL; (2) consistent whole school support for SEL; (3) congruent teachers’ values and beliefs related to SEL; (4) school leadership’s support of SEL; and (5) individual teacher’s contribution to promoting SEL in the school.

Regarding the potential enablers to incorporating SEL within school environment, all three teachers pointed out the importance of teachers’ attendance of SEL PD workshops. Specifically, when elaborating on the role of school leadership in how SEL is implemented in schools, Helen highlighted the importance of teachers’ participation in PD workshops related to SEL. She said: ‘I think that they [the school leadership] need to put more training …for teachers to understand social and emotional intelligence…’ (T1.I2.p.10.). In this regard, when deliberating on the possible enablers to SEL incorporation within the school environment, Crystal noted her
attendance at a professional development workshop pertaining to SEL. As she explicated:

...[L]ast year I did a short course in managing challenging behaviours for students, and I think that was about... providing like ...an assertive discipline programs so that it was ...okay, basically what I found was...what was happening with my teaching... and it just had a lot of stuff, a lot about Social and Emotional Learning and competencies and all that sort of stuff included into the course as really important [for supporting children's wellbeing] (T3.I1.p.2.).

On a similar note, Alyson confirmed her participation in several PD events pertinent to SEL that were organised by ‘Kids Matter.’ She said: ‘...[W]e had a couple... [of SEL PD workshops] that the school run last year on ...’Kids Matter’ ...’(T2.I1.p.2.). With further prompting, Alyson explicated that those PD workshops increased her awareness about the influence of teachers' and children’s emotional wellbeing on their daily functioning. This is elucidated in the following interview statement: ‘So, we sort of look to the [way of]...how... basically, how our emotional health and the mental health and things can have an impact on the way we function and also the fact that it can be like that for children too’ (T2.I1.p.2.). As noted in Chapter 1, in most Australian states and territories relevant PD workshops for teachers pertinent to SEL are available through the Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative ‘Kids Matter’ (Kids Matter 2014).

When discussing the factors that may enable SEL incorporation in primary schools, the interviewed Greenfield teachers highlighted the importance of a consistent whole school approach that supports SEL. This is elucidated in the following excerpt of the first interview with Helen: ‘I think we need to ensure that we have a consistent approach [that supports SEL] across the school ...’(T1.I1.p.16.).

When Crystal was asked to explicate how Greenfield Primary School supports students’ SEL, she mentioned the SEL program ‘YCDI’ that is embedded as a whole school approach within this school. As she declared: ‘Well, we have ‘You Can Do It ‘program and we also have... ‘Kids Matter’
...hmmm ....... And ...you know, I think every grade teacher leaves time for wellbeing ...’ (T3.I1.p.17.). In this regard, when discussing her view in relation to the influence of the ‘YCDI’ program on children’s social and emotional wellbeing, Alyson stressed the importance of using a consistent language and approaches related to SEL among all teachers at Greenfield Primary School. This is elucidated in the following interview statement:

... I think that [implementing a SEL program at a school wide level] allow[s] to ...sort of... to learn ... some skills and strategies that they will assist them [the children in their educational journey]... And also it’s taken from units instead of having one teacher calling it bouncing back and the next teachers calls it resilience, they’ve got that consistent language that they [the teachers] can use... (T2.I1.p.18.).

In line with this statements, other qualitative studies which explored teachers’ perspectives on SEL (Davis & Cooper 2013; Kelly et al. 2004; Zeidner, Roberts & Matthews 2002), demonstrated the importance of whole school approach to SEL for effective integration of social and emotional education within the school environment.

In terms of the other potential enablers to SEL incorporation in schools, both Helen and Alyson also noted the significant influence of teachers’ beliefs and values related to SEL on their associated classroom practices. As Helen stated: ‘So, I think, for me is... just two levels, you know... ensuring teachers’ beliefs and their values are the same, and also ensuring that we have a consistent plan across the school from Prep to year six’ (T1.I1.p.16.). With respect to her beliefs related to SEL, Alyson pointed out the need of SEL infusion within the school setting. She stated: ‘I think that it is [SEL is] something that should definitely be addressed regularly [in the classroom]’ (T2.I1.p.12.). When prompted to elaborate further, Alyson expressed her own belief about the importance of devoting a considerable amount of classroom time to SEL, particularly at the beginning of each school year. As she affirmed: ‘Well, [at] the beginning of the Prep year...I feel that it’s ...very important to spend a lot of time on those [SEL] aspects and not ...hmmm ... necessarily rush straight into... the academic curriculum’ (T2.I2.p.5.).
Consistent with these statements, empirical evidence (Collie et al. 2015; Kelly et al. 2004; Weare 2003; Weare & Gray 2003) indicates that an important factor for effective SEL integration within the school setting is the degree of alignment between teachers’ beliefs related to SEL and their classroom practices.

In regards to other prospective factors that may enable SEL incorporation in schools, Alyson also drew attention to the importance of school leadership’s support of SEL. As she affirmed:

I think it [the school leadership] has a strong part [in SEL implementation in schools] because …sometimes people don’t believe that it’s a…hmm…an important part, but if leadership …says that you need to do this [to deliver SEL program] in the classroom, well you have to do it… (T2.I2.p.5.).

When elaborating on other potential enablers to SEL incorporation in schools, Helen also mentioned her own contribution to fostering SEL in the school, by developing and introducing a strategy for resolving conflicts among Preparatory children. Namely, in the first interview, when discussing the role of the school in supporting students’ SEL, Helen referred to the ‘five hand rule’, as a conflict resolution strategy employed for those children who would start an argument in the school playground. This is illustrated in the following section of the interview:

…If there is going to be a conflict between two children, we say to them ‘the five hand rule’ which is five steps away from each other. It’s probably best at this point just to stay away, as they need to cool off…[to remain] five steps away [from each other] (T1.I1.p.17.).

As Helen explicated further, this strategy for conflict resolution has been accepted and applied for all Preparatory students at Greenfield Primary School.
Barriers to SEL at Greenfield Primary School

When deliberating on the possible factors that may impede implementation of SEL in schools, the participating teachers pointed out the following factors: (1) insufficient amount of time allocated to social and emotional education within the school curriculum; (2) insufficient inclusion of SEL into teacher education courses; and (3) teachers’ coercion for academic results.

When deliberating on the main obstacles to SEL incorporation in schools, all three teachers pointed out the insufficient amount of curriculum time allocated to SEL. As Alyson stated: ‘I think that’s [SEL is] probably… not highlighted enough within our [school] curriculums …’ (T2.I1.p.12.). Further in the same interview, Alyson declared that due to a limited amount of time allocated to SEL within the curriculum in her school, teachers often feel pressured to exclude social and emotional education from their educational practices. As she conceded: ‘To be honest, within teachers … when we are pushed for time, it’s [SEL is] one of the first things to go’ (T2.I1.p.12.). In the same vein, when discussing the main obstacles to SEL incorporation within educational settings, Crystal also pointed out the constraints of the overcrowded school curriculum. When prompted to elaborate further, Crystal explicated that the school curriculum design is heavily focused on providing students with skills in literacy and numeracy, thus limiting the time spent on the SEL program, ‘YCDI’. As she acknowledged:

...[We] have so many interruptions and...like... you know... my curriculum, and getting my Literacy and my Maths, and all of those... the pressure to get all of that achieved and done. ‘You Can Do It’ is one of them that sometimes gets… pushed to the way aside (T3.I1.p.17.).

In this context, Helen contended that social and emotional education should be integrated into the curriculum subjects, and infused in all aspects of classroom life. As she proclaimed:
In my opinion it [SEL] needs to be incorporated in everything we do. In everything we do. So, even if you are having an English lesson, you can be using it… in terms of the stories. But you can also be talking about emotional wellbeing and social skills in terms of sharing (T1.I1.p.15.).

Emphasising the importance of cultivating students’ social and emotional competence within the school environment, Crystal affirmed: ‘I think that if we aren’t …providing …hmmm… an effective [SEL] program or just reinforcing it…you know … giving them these opportunities to build their skills for Social and Emotional Learning, then they will waste their time a bit’ (T3.I1.p.17.).

According to the participating Greenfield teachers, another obstacle to SEL integration within school settings is an insufficient incorporation of SEL in teachers’ formal education courses. In this regard, Helen affirmed that she has not obtained sufficient education in relation to children’s social and emotional development at university. She said: ‘Not enough was done [in relation to SEL]…when I was at Uni…’ (T1.I1.p.3.). On a similar note, when discussing the obstacles to SEL incorporation in schools, Crystal also referred to the insufficient provision of SEL education at the undergraduate teacher education level. As Crystal stated: ‘I am sure that there was [some education about SEL], but I don’t think that was very extensive’ (T3.I1.p.3.). In this regard, when prompted to discuss the position of SEL in teacher education courses, Alyson acknowledged the importance of social and emotional education for pre-service teachers. As she asserted:

I think it’s [SEL is]… such an important part [of pre-service teacher training]… You don’t necessarily understand how you should be relating to children, or how you should be supporting them in that… aspect when you’re first coming out of university… particularly if you’re not used to being around children (T2.I1.p.3.).

In terms of other obstacles to SEL incorporation in schools, Alyson also referred to teachers’ coercion for academic results. Namely, in the first interview, Alyson declared that the pressure placed upon classroom teachers
to achieve academic targets for students may interfere with SEL implementation in their classrooms. Her view is portrayed in the following statement: ‘…Pressure for results… that also influences it [the implementation of SEL], because you feel like the children aren’t here [to acquire only social and emotional education]… you’ve got to really work on the academics instead …’ (T2.I1.p.16.).

The following table (See Table 4.6) displays the potential enablers and obstacles to SEL integration within educational environments identified by the interviewed Greenfield teachers.

Table 4.6. Enablers and Barriers to SEL incorporation at Greenfield Primary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablers to incorporating SEL</th>
<th>Barriers to incorporating SEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ participation in professional development workshops related to SEL</td>
<td>Insufficient amount of classroom time allocated to SEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent whole school approach that supports SEL</td>
<td>Insufficient inclusion of SEL education subjects into teacher education courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruent teachers’ values and beliefs related to SEL</td>
<td>Teachers’ coercion for academic results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leadership’s endorsement of SEL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual teacher’s contribution to promoting SEL in the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In view of the CASEL framework, when deliberating on the concept of SEL, all interviewed teachers from Greenfield Primary School emphasised children’s relationship skills, pointing out their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with others. Similarly, in terms of their associated pedagogical approaches, both Helen and Crystal highlighted the importance of building positive teacher-student relationships. In terms of the other dimensions of the CASEL framework, in their description of socially and emotionally competent children, both Alyson and Crystal drew attention to their propensity to display resilience. In this regard, when discussing their pedagogical approaches aimed to strengthen SEL, both Helen and Crystal pointed out their tendency to facilitate students’ resilience. With respect to their formal classroom practices aimed to foster students’ SEL, all three teachers stated that they implement the ‘YCDI’ program to strengthen students’ resiliency.

On an important note, the analysis of the interviews with the participating teachers revealed that some commonly shared aspects related to SEL extend beyond the content of the CASEL framework, including sense of identity and persistence. The constructs of sense of identity and persistence will be explored in more details in Chapter 6.

The content analysis of the ‘YCDI’ program conducted in context of the CASEL framework revealed that this program highlights students’ relationship skills, in particular their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with others. Similarly, the analysis of the school curricula and policy documents of Greenfield Primary School revealed that these documents draw particular attention to enhancing children’s relationship skills. Notably, the analysis showed that the Curriculum of Greenfield Primary School does not address any of the social and emotional aspects outlined in the CASEL framework.

When discussing the possible enablers to incorporating SEL within the school environment, all interviewed Greenfield teachers pointed out the importance of teachers’ participation in professional development workshops related to SEL and consistent whole school approach supportive to SEL. On
the other hand, when discussing the potential obstacles to implementing SEL in primary schools, collectively, all teachers drew particular attention to the insufficient amount of time allocated to SEL within the school curriculum, as well as the insufficient incorporation of SEL in teacher’s formal education courses.

**Chapter Summary**

To sum up, this chapter presented the analysis of the interview and documentary data collected from Greenfield Primary School. The upcoming chapter provides an overview of Rosefield Primary School and the behavioural program ‘School Wide Positive Behavioural Strategies’ (SWPBS) (Rosefield Primary School) incorporated in this school. Additionally, the next chapter presents the results of the analysis of the interview and documentary data obtained from Rosefield Primary School.
CHAPTER V
ROSEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

This chapter begins with a brief description of Rosefield Primary School, followed by an overview of the behavioral program ‘School Wide Positive Behavioural Strategies’ (SWPBS; Rosefield Primary School) that is implemented in this school. In addition, this chapter presents the findings of the analysis of the interviews conducted with the participating teachers of Rosefield Primary School, followed by the analysis of the ‘SWPBS’ program. As noted in the previous chapter (See Chapter 4), the analysis of the interview and documentary data was conducted in light of the CASEL conceptual framework (CASEL 2013).

The analysis of the interviews and the ‘SWPBS’ program generated the following two themes: (1) Constructs within the CASEL framework and (2) Constructs outside of the CASEL framework. An additional level of analysis in view of the existing literature on SEL generated the following themes: (3) Enablers to SEL at Rosefield Primary School; and (4) Barriers to SEL at Rosefield Primary School.

Brief description of Rosefield Primary School

Rosefield Primary School is a government co-educational school that was established in 1987. This school is situated in a low socio-economic area in one of the western suburbs in Melbourne, with current total enrolment of 560 students (Rosefield Primary School). The school has a culturally diverse school community consisting of many ESL (English as a Second Language) students that come from about 40 different countries, as well as children without previous preschool learning experience. To ensure a safe and positive learning environment for all students and staff members at Rosefield Primary School, this school instigated the ‘SWPBS’ program (Rosefield Primary School) in 2012.
Overview of the ‘School Wide Positive Behavioural Strategies’ (SWPBS)

The ‘SWPBS’ (Rosefield Primary School) is a systematic, whole-school approach that focuses on students’ behavioural management. The ultimate goal of the ‘SWPBS’ approach is to enhance students' behavioural and educational outcomes by reinforcement of the four foundational principles: be safe, be respectful, be responsible, and be a learner. The ‘SWPBS’ program is based on a positive reward system where students who display positive behaviours can earn tokens that can be exchanged for rewards at the Reward Shop located in the school. In addition to the reward system, by frequent verbal acknowledgment for displaying expected school behaviours at both the individual and class levels, teachers can reinforce school-wide positive student behaviours. On the other hand, for those students who frequently demonstrate unacceptable behaviours, there is a consequence system in place that may range from verbal reprimand to suspension, or even expulsion from school. The intended outcome of the ‘SWPBS’ program is to establish and maintain a school environment in which expected behavioural standards and target academic outcomes are endorsed and applied consistently by all students at a whole school level.

Data Analysis: Rosefield Primary School

In the following section of this chapter the profiles of the interviewed teachers from Rosefield Primary School are presented. For the purpose of confidentiality, the respondents’ names have been replaced by pseudonyms. Each profile includes general information about informants’ teaching experiences and a summary that captures the essential aspects of their responses related to the research questions and objectives of this study.

Grace

Grace started her teaching career three years ago at Rosefield Primary School, teaching only Prep/Grade One composite classes. With only three
years of teaching experience, Grace is the least experienced among the three interviewed teachers from Rosefield Primary School.

Constructs within the CASEL framework

*Relationship skills*

In view of the five social and emotional dimensions of the CASEL framework, Grace paid particular attention to children’s relationship skills, emphasising their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with others. Namely, in the first interview, when discussing the influence of children’s social and emotional competence on their social interactions and behaviours at school, Grace pointed out their tendency to form and retain friendships. As she maintained: ‘I think... a huge one [an important social skill] is making friends and keeping friends …’ (T4.I1.p.8.). At this point, Grace added that children’s deficiency in social competence might limit their ability ‘to maintain friendships.’ She said: ‘... [If a student doesn’t have social ...... learning, or ...good social skills it’s very difficult for them to maintain friendships...]’ (T4.I1.p.8.). This statement correlates with the assertion proposed by several researchers in the field of SEL (Bolmer et al. 2005; Davidson 2011; Hamre & Pianta 2001; Parlakian 2003), who proclaimed that children with low level of social competence appear to be less confident and less approachable in their social interactions, which in turn may interfere with their ability to form and retain long-term friendships. As Grace elaborated further, children’s inability to retain friendships may affect their sense of safety and security in the school environment, and consequently, their learning engagement. This is elucidated in the following interview statement:

... I think when students don’t have friends at school, they don’t feel ...safe in their environment, or welcomed in their environment, or ...just... comfortable in their environment. They’re much more ...it’s much more difficult for them to learn ...you know, because ...when they
don’t feel comfortable they’re not going to take risks in their learning…(T4.I1.p.8.).

In terms of the other sub-constituents of relationship skills, Grace also talked about children’s ability to communicate openly and clearly with the teacher. Specifically, in her discourse on the influence of children’s social and emotional competence on their behaviours at school, Grace drew attention to children’s tendency to articulate clearly their learning difficulties. As she stated: ‘Some children [socially and emotionally competent children] feel comfortable to put up the hand and ask if they can use words to express what’s going on, and why they can’t do their work…’ (T4.I1.p.12.). Grace illustrated this assertion by providing the following example:

[If]…they [the students] are finding their work too difficult, if they don’t have a coping strategy of … like being able to put the hand up and tell the teacher: ‘I can’t [do this]… I’m feeling, you know, sad right now because I don’t feel like I can do this’, you know, that’s a good coping strategy…(T4.I1.p.6.).

In line with this statement, a summary of research findings (Caine & Caine 1997; Daunic et al. 2013; Doidge 2010; Greenfield 2000; Harris 2007; McDonald 2001; Weare & Gray 2003) confirmed that socially and emotionally competent children feel confident to express their learning needs openly and clearly to the teacher, and take responsibility for their own learning. This in turn, is positively correlated to children’s motivation to achieve academically (Durlak et al. 2011, 2014; Harris 2007; Weare & Gray 2003).

With reference to the other sub-constituents of relationship skills, when delineating the skills that constitute social and emotional competence, Grace also mentioned children’s ability to use conflict resolution strategies when facing disagreements in their social interactions. As she exemplified: ‘… [Socially and emotionally competent children are] saying to that person that they don’t like it and [they are] talking about an alternative, or trying to fix it [to resolve the conflict]…’ (T4.I1.p.6.).
Interestingly, when delineating her pedagogical approaches intended to support children’s relationship skills, Grace focused solely on fostering their conflict resolution skills. Specifically, when describing her role in nurturing students’ SEL, Grace noted that she facilitates classroom discussions on how to manage their daily interpersonal conflicts constructively. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the interview:

… [W]hen the kids come back from after lunch and they’ve had a fight in the playground, that’s an opportunity to talk about what could you have done or what could you do next time to make this situation a better situation, rather than making each other sad and having a terrible lunch time (T4.I1.p.13.).

Emphasising the importance of teaching children how to resolve conflicts effectively, due to the significant influence of well-developed conflict resolution strategies on their academic learning and social interactions, Grace asserted:

… [I]f we don’t start teaching those [conflict resolution] strategies …then the children aren’t just going to learn them as they go through life. They’re going to continually revert back to… negative ways of dealing with things, or not dealing with things at all, because they don’t know how, and that’s going to influence their …their learning and their relationships constantly as they go through life (T4.I1.p.13.).

In line with these statements, empirical evidence (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Beamish & Bryer 2015; Bruce 2010; Frederickson 2009; Hamre & Pianta 2001; Roffey 2011) indicates that children who are supported to develop their conflict resolution skills, are able to establish positive and collaborative relationships with peers. This in turn, is associated with children’s positive attitude towards school and increased participation in their learning activities (Hamre & Pianta 2001; Roffey 2011).
Resilience

When asked to define the skills that constitute social and emotional competence, Grace also highlighted the importance of displaying resilience. She affirmed: 'I think...resilience is a very important one [very important skill] …' (T4.I1.p.6.). Furthermore, when referring to children’s propensity to show resilience, Grace talked about their ability to cope with unplanned, or difficult situations in the playground or in the classroom. As she stated: ‘I think …things like coping strategies, like when things go different to how they [the children] planned, or...things are more difficult than they expect…’ (T4.I1.p.5.). To illustrate these assertions, Grace provided the following examples of resilient children:

So, like …in the yard if someone ...is teasing them, knowing that: 'Okay. It’s not very nice, but I can move away.’ ‘I can go and play with some nice friends.' ‘I can tell a teacher.’ Or ... you know, in the classroom, if they’ve got something wrong, instead of crying about it .... or...refusing to [do it]...to try again: ‘Okay. I didn't get it right, let’s have another think about,’ or 'Look at the example, try again and see if I can get it right the next time’ (T4.I1.p.7.).

Pointing out the importance of children's ability to show resilience when approaching a challenging task at school, Grace affirmed: ‘...[S]o, that they can turn the [challenging] situation around so that, you know, can be something that they can do rather than just sitting there...’ (T4.I1.p.6.). When prompted to interpret resilience, referring to children’s ability to manage unpredictable situations in life, Grace offered the following definition: ‘I think resilience is...the ability to …move on ...or...deal with the situation when it's not ...necessarily positive, or going to plan like a child may want’ (T4.I1.p.7.). Aligned with this interpretation, several educational researchers (Barankin & Khanlou 2007; Masten 2007; Masten et al. 2008) delineated resilience as one’s ability to deal with adversity, or with challenging situations effectively.

Further in the same interview, when discussing the correlation between children’s social and emotional competence and their learning, Grace
highlighted the important role of resilience on children’s confidence in the classroom, and their learning engagement. This is illustrated in the following section of the interview:

...[W]hen they’ve learnt that resilience ...... hmmm... and when they have those coping strategies when things go wrong, they’re going to feel confident in the classroom they’re going to feel secure in the classroom, secure in who they are, and they’re going to have learnt how to take those risks. And learning is full of risks like you put yourself out there, when you guess what an answer might be... (T4.I1.p.10.).

**Emotion regulation skills**

With respect to her pedagogical approaches intended to foster SEL, Grace placed considerable emphasis on strengthening children’s emotion regulation skills. Specifically, in the first interview, Grace stated that she facilitates classroom wide discussions about emotion management. As she explained: ‘We have some chats in our classroom that ... hmm ...[we] list some things that you can do when you’re feeling angry, or upset ...we talk about finding a safe, quite place to move to when you are upset ...’ (T4.I1.p.14.). In this context, Grace also implied to the importance of modelling emotion regulation in front of the students in her classroom. As she stated: ‘I think it’s really important to show them ... your strategies for dealing with your emotions and to model those strategies to them ...’ (T4.I2.p.12.).

In terms of her pedagogical approaches employed to support students’ emotion regulation, Grace stated that she also offers an individual instruction to those students who experience difficulties to manage their emotions. To illustrate this, Grace provided an example of how she approached a child exhibiting an emotional outburst in her classroom. This is portrayed in the following extract of the first interview:

... [W]hen the child is throwing a tantrum, or, you know, getting really upset, because they feel like they’ve been ashamed, they don’t want
people to look at them, you know, calmly talking to them and trying to help them, work through how they’re feeling, and [saying]: ‘Okay, I know you’re feeling like this, this is what you can do… these are some good ways that you can express how you feel …’ (T4.I1.p.14.).

On a similar note, in the second interview, when asked to elaborate on the pedagogical approaches of socially and emotionally competent teachers, Grace recalled a situation where one student in her class was very upset because he could not sit to his friend. Her pedagogical approach to address the negative emotional state in a child exhibiting an emotional outburst, is well portrayed in the following example:

So…a way that a socially and emotionally intelligent teacher that has that knowledge could deal with that is… O.k. well… instead of just removing him, or …not dealing with the issue …we could deal with the issue straight away and talk about how it’s o.k. if you don’t get to sit next to your friend (T4.I2.p.3.).

Emphasising the importance of addressing the emotional causes of a child’s reaction, rather than focusing exclusively on his behaviour, Grace asserted: ‘…[S]eeing that… emotional issue behind his reaction … and trying to deal with that… social issue rather than just the behaviour that’s coming from that’ (T4.I2.p.3.).

Notably, Grace’s pedagogical approaches aimed to foster students’ self-regulation correlates with the strategies used by socially and emotionally competent teachers, as described in the educational literature. According to Garner (2013) and Noddings (1992), socially and emotionally competent teachers are able to provide and model emotional support and care to their students on a consistent basis, and frequently discuss emotion regulation strategies with the students in their classrooms. Teachers who provide emotion regulation coaching in the classroom, are able to increase children’s self-regulation capacity, as well as their ability to use more adaptive
emotional responses in various situations (Denham, Bassett & Zinsser 2012; Denham, Grant & Hamada 2002).

Interestingly, when delineating the skills that constitute social and emotional competence, Grace did not talk about children’s emotion regulation skills.

**Behaviour management**

When elaborating on her formal classroom approaches employed to support SEL, Grace referred to the ‘SWPBS’ program that she uses in her classroom to promote children’s behaviour management. In this context, Grace mentioned the use of video presentations designed by the developers of the ‘SWPBS’ program with a proximal goal to reinforce students’ positive behaviours within the school setting. As she stated:

…”[We’ve watched a few videos …hmmm….so… with this ‘School Wide Behaviours Strategies’…hmmm…they’ve made a video for each different area in the yard that shows you things that are good to do in the yard, and things that are not good to do…”(T4.I1.p.14.).

Interestingly, when discussing the concept of SEL and her pedagogical approaches related to SEL, Grace did not talk about children’s behaviour management.

**Constructs outside of the CASEL framework**

**Persistence**

When describing the main attributes of socially and emotionally competent children, Grace mentioned another aspect pertinent to SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL framework, and that is the construct of persistence. As she stated: ‘[W]hen they’re [the children are] unsure …hesitant to do something, and having that … hmmm … strength to …give it a go, you know, and attempt a task even though they might be hesitant about it’ (T4.I1.p.6.). Moreover, Grace alluded to children’s persistence when
describing their capacity to persevere when encountered with classroom tasks they find difficult. This is exemplified in the following section of the first interview: ‘...[I]n the classroom, if they’ve got something wrong, instead of crying about it ....or...refusing to [do it]...to try again: ‘Okay. I didn’t get it right, let’s have another think about’ or ‘Look at the example, try again and see if I can get it right the next time’ (T4.I1.p.7.). Additionally, when asked to describe a situation where a child displayed social and emotional competence, Grace provided an example of children showing perseverance when attempting to address their school task. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the first interview:

... [C]hildren would have come up to me and [say]: ‘It’s not right’, and so they would go back and I would say: ‘You know these are the things that you can do’, or they’ve even done themselves. You know, they went back, and made it again, like a Maths problem ... you know they’ve made it instead of just trying to do it in their heads (T4.I1.p.7.).

Alluding to children’s persistence, Grace pointed out their endeavours to accomplish the task at hand. As she affirmed: ‘They thought of another way they would make it by using blocks or something like that, and have another attempt...’ (T4.I1.p.7.).

Summary of Grace’s profile

To sum up, considering the main constituents and related sub-constituents of the CASEL framework, Grace emphasised children’s relationships skills, particularly their ability to develop positive relationships with others. In terms of relationship skills, Grace also drew attention to children’s ability to communicate openly and clearly with others, and to resolve conflicts constructively. In light of the other aspects of the CASEL framework, Grace also pointed out children’s ability to display resilience.
With respect to her pedagogical approaches utilised to foster SEL, Grace talked mainly about fostering students’ emotion regulation skills through modelling emotion regulation, individual instruction in emotion management, and facilitating classroom discussions about emotion regulation strategies. Regarding her formal classroom approaches employed to support SEL, Grace referred to the ‘SWPBS’ program that she uses in her classroom to reinforce children’s positive behaviours. Notably, in her portrayal of socially and emotionally competent children, Grace also talked about their ability to demonstrate persistence, a construct pertinent to SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL framework.

**Samantha**

Samantha has had 5 years teaching experience in total, including three years in the Australian Education System and two years in the English Educational System. She has been working as a classroom teacher in Rosefield Primary School for three years, teaching Prep/Grade one’s composite classes in the last two consecutive years.

**Constructs within the CASEL framework**

*Relationship skills*

When elaborating on the social dimension of the SEL concept, at the beginning of the first interview, Samantha addressed children’s relationship skills, focusing solely on their ability to communicate openly and clearly with others. This is reflected in the following extract of the interview: ‘What I understand Social and Emotional Learning, is… that socially the kids have to be quite stable as … whether they socially … how they can communicate [with others]…’ (T5.I1.p.3.). Additionally, in her description of socially and emotionally competent children, Samantha drew attention to their ability to communicate openly with others. She said: ‘… [T]hey [socially and emotionally competent children] come and talk to adults and different people …’ (T5.I1.p.4.).
With respect to her pedagogical approaches utilised to foster students’ SEL, Samantha pointed out her tendency to facilitate students’ relationship skills, focusing on their ability to ask for help when needed. As she said: ‘Well, we always encourage them [the students in my classroom] to ...ask others [for help]...’ (T5.I1.p.12.). In this context, Samantha indicated that through role-plays, she is able to encourage students to draw upon their peers, before asking their teacher for help. This is exemplified in the following excerpt of the interview:

We still do role models: ‘I’m changing my reader and I...I role model, I pretend to be a student, and then I’m like: ‘If I don’t know what to do, I...you know ...I look on the board and I [can see what to do]...’ So we always set up this clear visuals ... and then if you’ve done that, and if [you are not sure what to do] still, ask someone next to you, then you go up to a teacher (T5.I1.p.12.).

In terms of her pedagogical approaches aimed to increase students’ SEL, Samantha also mentioned the importance of establishing positive teacher-student relationships. In this regard, when discussing the role of a teacher in fostering SEL, in the second interview, Samantha stated: ‘You need to have real positive... interactions with the students’ (T5.I2.p.10.). Pointing out that building positive teacher-student relationships is an essential prerequisite for children’s ability to express their voices openly, Samantha affirmed: ‘They won’t share, or...tell you these things if they’re not feeling comfortable with you...’ (T5.I2.p.8.). As Samantha explicated further, developing positive and nurturing teacher-child relationships, helps students to express their feelings openly to the teacher. She said: ‘And they’re not going to share information [with the teacher]... saying: ‘Ooh, I ‘m not feeling ... you know, happy, or [I am feeling] sad’ (T5.I2.p.8.). Highlighting the importance of positive teacher-child relationships built on trust, Samantha affirmed: ‘So you’ve got to have that trust [in the relationship]’ (T5.I2.p.8.).
Behaviour management

Viewed through the prism of the CASEL framework, Samantha placed considerable emphasis on children’s behaviour management. Specifically, when encapsulating the concept of SEL in the first interview, focusing on children’s behaviour expression in different situations, Samantha stated: ‘...I understand it [the concept of SEL] as how they’re behaving in various situations’ (T5.I1.p.3.). Moreover, further in the same interview, referring to children’s behaviour management, Samantha added: ‘...[A]nd how they [the children] handle themselves in different situations, so that’s what I relate to Social and Emotional Learning’ (T5.I1.p.3.).

When deliberating on her pedagogical approaches that foster social and emotional education, Samantha also drew attention to promoting students’ behaviour management. For example, in the first interview, when delineating her role in supporting students’ SEL, Samantha pointed out her approach to reinforcing students’ positive behaviours in the classroom. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the interview:

... [S]ometimes I feel like I have to be their parent ...there are just basic manners and understanding that you don’t hit others, you treat others how you like to be treated, you don’t call them names, you don’t hurt them, and things like these, where we’re reinforcing [children’s positive behaviours] ... (T5.I1.p.11.).

On a similar note, when discussing her formal classroom practices related to SEL, Samantha mentioned the ‘School Wide Positive Behavioural Strategies’ (SWPBS) that she implements in her classroom to reinforce students’ positive behaviours. She said:

At school we have this thing called the... ‘School Wide Positive Behaviour Scheme’ and I find myself coming back to that a lot ... with...[the students], you know... be responsible, be respectful ...and ....and...safe and being a learner (T5.I2.p.6.).
At this point, Samantha elaborated that by using specific words pertinent to the fundamental values of the ‘SWPBS’ program, she is able to support students’ positive behaviours in her classroom. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the interview:

…[Y]ou make them [the children] feel like they’re doing a wonderful job and you’re always going back to that five [positive words] to one [negative]…’I really like the way you’re sharing’ …or using [your manners]… ‘You’ve been so responsible or … respectful’ (T5.I2.p.7.).

Consistent with these statements, the main purpose of the ‘SWPBS’ program is to encourage children’s positive behaviours by verbal acknowledgment of their behavioural efforts that are aligned with its foundational principles: be safe, be respectful, be responsible and be a learner. According to Samantha, students’ adherence to the principles that underpin the ‘SWPBS’ program, creates a foundation for their learning engagement in the classroom. As she stated: ‘So, if every single student is covering that [the main principles of the ‘SWPBS’], then… yeah…that creates a positive learning environment, so that they should be successful in the classroom’ (T5.I1.p.15.).

**Empathy**

In her construal of SEL, Samantha also paid particular attention to children’s ability to display empathy. For example, when delineating the main attributes of socially and emotionally competent children, Samantha emphasised their capacity to accurately recognise others’ emotional experiences and empathise with them. As she stated: ‘…[I]f someone’s crying, or is hurt, some kids don’t really understand that they might need help, and some kids are just in tune straight away’ (T5.I1.p.4.). Moreover, pointing out the symbiotic relationship between children’s level of emotional awareness and their ability to understand the emotions of others, Samantha asserted: ‘And usually if they are in tune with their emotions, they can
understand those of others’ (T5.I1.p.4.). These statements are consistent with the assertion proposed by several developmental researchers (Bahman & Maffini 2008; Bariola, Gullone & Hughes 2011; Ciarrochi, Chan & Caputi 2000; Schutte et al. 1988) that children’s capacity to identify their own emotions is an essential prerequisite for accurate perception of the emotions of others.

At this point, Samantha recalled a situation where one child in her classroom displayed empathy towards an unknown girl, who was overly upset. As she elucidated:

...[T]here is one girl who was quite visibly upset, crying, and a lot of the kids ...some of them didn’t really observe her... [that she was] needing help, and then another student ...went up to her and was confident ...you know, talking to her...And this is a stranger she never met, but she realised that this girl was upset ...she needed encouragement, and you know, she was kind of, latched on to her and said ...really took on that leadership role of: 'I’m going to help you', you know,’ It’s okay.’ And then, she kind of, read her feelings, and then when they started giggling, they’re having fun together, and I thought that was really good that she noticed that she was upset (T5.I1.p.5.).

When deliberating on her pedagogical approaches aimed to foster children’s social and emotional skills, Samantha focused her discourse on fostering children’s ability to empathise with others. Specifically, when delineating her role in supporting SEL in the first interview, Samantha stated that she educates the students in her classroom to consider the effect of their own words on others’ feelings. As she explained:‘...[T]hey need that ...need to be taught and explained to them that you don’t make others feel bad, you don’t use...you know, words negatively...’ (T5.I1.p.11.). As Samantha elaborated further in the second interview, teachers need to raise children’s awareness of the significant influence of their words and actions on others’ feelings. She said:
We need to teach students... that their words can hurt people and that... you know... that their actions can hurt people... So... they have to understand that... hurting... hurting is not just physical... You can hurt people... you know... [you can hurt] their feelings and that's very important... you know... that they have to have that [empathetic understanding for others] (T5.I2.p.15.).

In this way, according to Samantha’s account, children’s increased awareness of their own and others’ feelings can help them ‘make positive choices’ in life. She said: ‘...[I]f they’re aware of their feelings and how they [can] make others feel... then... they can make positive choices... They can make better choices and everyone can feel a lot happier’ (T5.I2.p.14.).

When prompted to explicate the concept of empathy, Samantha alluded to teacher’s increased ability to understand the causes of children’s behaviours. She stated:

So... have some understanding... as to why they’re behaving in that way rather than like [saying]: ‘No, do as I say!’... And really pushing them and driving them [away]... Some kids do need that... that... bit more of approach but then... if it’s a kid that is... behaving out of ordinary... you need to understand as to why they’re... doing that. So that’s the empathy... (T5.I2.p.2.).

Implying that empathy plays a significant role in the development of a positive learning environment, Samantha asserted: ‘This empathy and understanding [of others]... it creates a positive environment for learning and... the students feel happy...’ (T5.I2.p.2.).

It seems that Samantha’s perspective of the critical role of empathy in creating a positive classroom environment is also reflected in her pedagogical approaches intended to address empathy in the classroom. As Samantha explained, she does offer emotional support and positive
encouragement to the students who experience upsetting emotions. To exemplify this, Samantha recalled the following classroom situation:

I remember some Preps at the start of the year are crying, cause … just all is getting just too much and … you don't want to… hug them and 'baby' them too much, because then sets the precedent that if you cry, you get a lot of attention, so sometimes you've got to be, you know 'Come on, cheer up, it's okay,' you know, you need to be [supportive and encouraging]...(T5.I2.p.2).

**Constructs outside of the CASEL framework**

In her discourse on the concept of SEL and her associated pedagogical approaches and practices, Samantha did not talk about any other aspect pertinent to SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL framework.

**Summary of Samantha's profile**

In summary, in her construal of the SEL concept, Samantha placed major emphasis on children's relationship skills, particularly on their capacity to communicate openly and clearly with others. Regarding her pedagogical approaches employed to foster students’ relationship skills, Samantha pointed out her tendency to facilitate the students in her classroom to ask for help when needed. Furthermore, in her description of socially and emotionally competent children, Samantha pointed out their behaviour management skills. Similarly, when elaborating on her pedagogical approaches and formal classroom practices related to SEL, Samantha’s discourse was focused on promoting students’ behaviour management.

With respect to the other social and emotional components of the CASEL framework, when delineating the main attributes of socially and emotionally competent children, Samantha also addressed their propensity to
empathise with others. Likewise, when deliberating on her pedagogical approaches aimed to support SEL, Samantha stated that she facilitates classroom discussions that foster students’ empathy. Notably, Samantha did not talk about any other aspect related to SEL that is not included in the CASEL framework.

Mary

Mary has 18 years teaching experience in total, exclusively teaching children in early primary grades, including Prep, Grade One and Grade Two. At the beginning of her teaching career, for three consecutive years, she was teaching a group of children with a low level of social skills. Mary has been working as a Prep/Grade One composite classroom teacher in Rosefield Primary School for nearly 13 years.

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Relationship skills

With respect to the fundamental social and emotional components of the CASEL framework, Mary placed a major emphasis on children’s relationship skills, particularly on their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with others. For example, in the first interview, when outlining the main attributes that represent the essential facets of social and emotional competence, Mary drew attention to children’s tendency to socialise with a variety of individuals within the school. She said: ‘They [socially and emotionally competent children] can interact with anyone [in the school]…’ (T6.I1.p.6.). Furthermore, Mary pointed out children’s ability to interact with their peers. This is illustrated in the following section of the interview: ‘They [socially and emotionally competent children] mix with [other] kids in the classroom, they play outside, they have someone to play with, whether they’ve asked them, or whether someone else is asking them to join in’ (T6.I1.p.7.). According to Mary, socially and emotionally competent children
are also able to establish positive relationships with a teacher. To illustrate this assertion, Mary provided an example of one socially and emotionally competent child who was able to build a good ‘rapport’ with the teacher. She stated: ‘I’ve got a little girl in my room. She is in Grade One. She came in very shy, in the Prep [class]. . . .you know, talking with her, establishing that rapport, teacher-child relationship. . . . [occurred] straight away’ (T6.I1.p.8.).

Regarding the other sub-components of relationship skills, Mary referred to children’s tendency to communicate clearly and openly a variety of individuals. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the first interview: ‘. . .[T]hey [socially and emotionally competent children] want to talk to you, do you know what I mean? They come for a little chat, or they go and chat with somebody else’ (T6.I1.p.7.).

With reference to the other sub-constituents of relationship skills, Mary also paid attention to children’s inclination to cooperate with peers. In this context, when asked specifically how children’s social and emotional competence may influence their social interactions and behaviour at school, Mary focused on their ability to collaborate with others. She said: ‘They are cooperative . . .hmmm. . . .it’s funny, because they will actually teach the other kids [how to cooperate]’ (T6.I1.p.10.). To exemplify this, Mary pointed out children’s ability to cooperate in a group setting. She said: ‘. . .[T]hey [socially and emotionally competent children] show them [other children] cooperation. . . .yeah, they show them cooperation in groups’ (T6.I1.p.10.). In terms of the other sub-components of relationship skills, Mary also noted that socially and emotionally competent children have the ability to ask for help from others. This is illustrated in the following extract of the first interview: ‘They [socially and emotionally competent children] . . .are more able to . . .approach other people, to ask for things, to share . . .to ask: “Can you pass this, can you do that?”’ (T6.I1.p.6.).

Concerning the other sub-constituents of relationship skills, when describing the essential attributes of socially and emotionally competent children, Mary also mentioned their conflict resolution abilities. This is elucidated in the following interview statement:
A conflict resolution ...So, usually...they’re [socially and emotionally competent children are] the type of children that do cope because they will come up to you and they will say, you know: ‘He just snatched my pencil….while I was writing with that…’ (T6.I2.p.10.).

Interestingly, when discussing the pedagogical approaches utilised to enhance children’s relationship skills, Mary focused only on supporting children’s collaboration with peers. In this regard, when prompted to elaborate on her practical classroom strategies that she employs to strengthen children’s social and emotional skills, Mary drew attention to encouraging students’ collaboration in a group setting. As she explicated:

... [I]n term two, we’ve put them [the children] in groups of four ... and now they’re in charge of their own groups. They already know their expectations, and now they have to work in a small group of four ... to work together to get everybody a shared time done (T6.I1.p.16.).

In terms of her pedagogical approaches aimed to strengthen children’s relationship skills, Mary also pointed out the importance of developing an open communication between the teacher and the students. As she proclaimed:

They know that ... socially and emotionally [competent children know that]... if they are upset about something, or they want to talk to me, they can come and talk to either myself, or it doesn’t have to be me ...it can be my teaching partner ... which is all confidential...(T6.I1.p.6.).

*Behaviour management*

When outlining her pedagogical approaches intended to increase children’s social and emotional skills, Mary placed a great emphasis on promoting students’ positive behaviours. Namely, in the first interview, when asked to deliberate on the practical approaches employed to address SEL in
her classroom, Mary stated that by demonstrating appropriate ways to make a request, she is able to model and reinforce children's positive behaviours. As she exemplified:

If they [the children]...do something incorrectly, you don't have to growl at them ...if they haven't asked for something, or they've snatched from me, it's... [all about] correcting them in a nice way, [by saying]: 'You actually just ripped the pencil from my hand, you can ask me for the pencil. And I'll get it to you. You can ask me' (T6.I1.p.15.).

As Mary elaborated further, to reinforce students' positive behaviours, she also facilitates classroom discussions with her students about socially acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours. This is illustrated in the following extract of the interview: 'We do a lot of ...group work to start off with, so you then know what is socially acceptable [behaviour and] what's not, and how to act, you know, hands up, hands down. If you're talking, we are all listening...' (T6.I1.p.15.). Similarly, when discussing the formal classroom practices employed to increase children's social and emotional skills, Mary referred to the 'SWPBS' program that she utilises to support children's behaviour management. In this regard, Mary stated that she implements the 'SWPBS' in her classroom to instil the four foundational principles of this program into children's behaviours, including safety, respect, responsibility, and learning engagement. She said: ‘... So, we are focusing on...being safe, being respectful, being responsible and being a learner ' (T6.I1.p.4.). As Mary explicated further, by using specific words that refer to the four fundamental principles of the 'SWPBS', she is able to acknowledge children's positive behavioural efforts. This is exemplified in the following excerpt of the interview:

...I might have seen something really good ... yes ... someone might have picked up a few things of the floor. [I would say:] 'Thanks for being responsible for putting those in the bin. Lovely to see.' Do you know? You try and use that language as much as you can... (T6.I1.p.20.).
As Mary elaborated, when children exhibit positive behaviours that are related to the fundamental principles of the ‘SWPBS’ program, they receive ‘Bee tokens’ as a reward from their teachers. She said: ‘...The children can earn ‘Bee tokens’, for the four areas that we are focusing on ... so, we are focusing on...being safe, being respectful, being responsible and being a learner’ (T6.I1.p.4.). At this point Mary emphasised the importance of directly addressing the reason for rewarding the child by using the words that refer to the key principles of the ‘SWPBS’ program. This is elucidated in the following excerpt of the first interview: ‘But you must tell them the reason they’re getting it ... using our four key words, so if they are being responsible [you can tell them:] ‘You’ve been responsible because you ...[have done this]’ (T6.I1.p.5.).

Interestingly, when outlining the skills that constitute social and emotional competence, Mary did not mention children’s ability to manage their behaviour.

*Empathy*

When outlining the skills that represent children’s social and emotional competence, Mary also referred to their ability to display empathy to others. In this regard, when asked in the first interview to describe a situation where a child displayed social and emotional competence, Mary provided an example of one child in her classroom who was able to show empathetic concern for others’ feelings. As she stated:

...[I]f she sees someone [who is upset]...she will care for others. So, if she sees a Prep [student] that is crying, she wouldn’t hesitate to just...even though she is that quite, shy, person, she wouldn’t hesitate about going over [to that student]...to even say: ‘Are you okay?’ (T6.I1.p.11.).

At this point, when asked to address the particular attributes of this child, Mary pointed out her ability to display empathy to others. This is illustrated in the following interview statement: ‘...[S]he is compassionate,
she is caring ... hmmm...she feels empathy for others, I mean, she might even put herself in that situation...’ (T6.I1.p.11.). Mary’s portrayal of an empathetic child correlates closely with how socially and emotionally competent children are described in the educational literature. According to Bahman and Maffini (2008) and Bruce (2010), socially and emotionally competent children are capable of understanding others’ feelings by accurately perceiving their verbal and non-verbal messages they convey in the conversation, and are inclined to exhibit genuine care and empathetic concern for others.

With respect to her pedagogical approaches employed to promote SEL, Mary talked about facilitating students’ ability to empathise with others. Namely, in the second interview, when elaborating on her approach to emotional expression in the classroom, Mary recalled a situation in which one of the students in her classroom attacked one of his classmates physically. She said: ‘It’s like when...you know, five year olds...he is a five year old [who hit another child]...and you say: ‘Do you think you’ve hurt him?’ And he goes...’ Ooh, no...no.’ [And I asked him:]’How do you know?’ [And the child responded:] ‘Ooh, I know, it wasn’t hard’ (T6.I2.p.13.). Ironically, in this situation, Mary tried to educate the child to ‘understand’ the feelings of others, by equally hurting him. This is illustrated in the following extract of the interview: ‘I mean... I may come and punch you that hard. And the next thing they do ...they say: ‘Ooh, don’t. You’ve hurt me!’ So it’s trying to get them to understand their own feelings, but [also] how other people could be feeling [when they are hurt] ...’ (T6.I2.p.13.). From Mary’s point of view, in this way, the child involved in that situation can learn to appreciate others’ feelings. As she asserted: ‘So, that the other child can hopefully... understand ... ‘You’ve made me feel this way. Would you like if I did that back to you?’ (T6.I2.p.13.).

Based on her interview statements, it is evident that Mary’s approach to model empathy in this classroom situation was based on her assumption that children who exhibit aggressive behaviour towards others should be punished physically in order to learn how others feel when they are hurt. It is important to note here that Mary’s pedagogical approach to foster children’s empathy does not correlate with how socially and emotionally competent teachers are described in the educational literature. Several educational
researchers (Cacioppo & Bernston 2004; Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy 2004; Jennings & Greenberg 2009; Pianta et al. 2002) agree that socially and emotionally competent teachers are able to recognise accurately and respond appropriately to children’s emotions through careful observation of their non-verbal and verbal cues, as well as through attentive listening to their opinions. Hence, as influential role models, teachers’ responses to students’ emotions have direct implications on their prosocial behaviour in the classroom (Birch & Ladd 1997; Collie et al. 2015; La Paro & Pianta 2003).

Constructs outside of the CASEL framework

When deliberating on the concept of SEL, Mary did not refer to any other aspect related to children’s social and emotional competences that is not outlined in the CASEL framework.

Summary of Mary’s profile

In summary, when delineating socially and emotionally competent children, Mary prioritised children’s relationship skills, pointing out their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with others. In terms of her pedagogical approaches utilised to foster children’s relationship skills, Mary focused her discourse on supporting students’ collaboration with peers. Considering the other components and related sub-components of the CASEL framework, in her construal of SEL, Mary also drew attention to children’s ability to display empathy to others. In terms of her pedagogical approaches, Mary stated that she offers individual instruction on how to foster empathy among students, and encourages students’ positive behaviours. In her discourse on the formal classroom approaches utilised to foster SEL, Mary alluded to the ‘SWPBS’ program that she uses in her classroom to promote children’s behaviour management. Notably, Mary did not mention any other aspect related to SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL framework.
The following table (See Table 5.1.) displays Rosefield teachers’ understandings and pedagogical approaches related to SEL in view of the CASEL conceptual framework.
### Table 5.1: Rosefield teachers’ understandings and pedagogical approaches related to SEL viewed through the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASEL Components and Sub-components</th>
<th>Grace</th>
<th>Samantha</th>
<th>Mary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognising accurately one’s emotions and thoughts</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognising one’s strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining a sense of optimism</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulating effectively one’s emotions and thoughts</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing one’s behaviour effectively</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling one’s impulses</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing challenging situations effectively</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting and achieving personal and academic goals</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating oneself</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating resilience</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social awareness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering others’ perspectives</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathising with others</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognising and appreciating the differences of others</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating cultural diversity</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognising the resources and supports available from one’s family, school and community</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening attentively to others</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating clearly with others</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with others</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing and seeking help when needed</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving conflicts constructively</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resisting inappropriate social pressure</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogical approaches</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging students to engage in discussions or activities</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating classroom discussions to foster emotion regulation</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelling emotion regulation</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborating</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating openly and clearly</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging students to ask for help when needed</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building positive relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating openly and clearly</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving conflicts constructively</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking and offering help</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating with peers</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Rosefield teachers’ understandings and pedagogical approaches related to SEL viewed through the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013)
The following table (See Table 5.2.) presents Rosefield teachers’ formal classroom practices pertinent to SEL viewed through the CASEL framework.

Table 5.2. Rosefield teachers: Formal classroom practices related to SEL in context of the CASEL framework (CASEL 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASEL core components</th>
<th>Grace</th>
<th>Samantha</th>
<th>Mary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-awareness</strong></td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-management</strong></td>
<td>Utilising ‘SWPBS’ to reinforce students’ positive behaviours</td>
<td>Utilising ‘SWPBS’ to reinforce students’ positive behaviours</td>
<td>Utilising ‘SWPBS’ to reinforce students’ positive behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsible decision making</strong></td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social awareness</strong></td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship skills</strong></td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Position of SEL in the ‘School Wide Positive Behavioural Strategies’ (SWPBS)

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Behaviour management

With respect to the social and emotional components of the CASEL framework, the ‘SWPBS’ program (Rosefield Primary School) places major emphasis on students’ behaviour management. Namely, when outlining the primary purpose of the ‘School Wide Positive Behaviour Strategies’ (SWPBS), this document indicates that the main focus of this program is to reinforce students’ socially appropriate behavioural expression, as well as to foster their academic engagement. As the document states: ‘It [the ‘SWPBS’ program] focuses on everyone and all settings within the school and promotes a positive focus on academic and behavioural outcomes across the school’ (D9.p.7.). Here the document indicates that the primary focus of the ‘SWPBS’ program is on improving students’ academic outcomes and reinforcing their positive behaviour. In this context, when elaborating on the purpose of the ‘SWPBS’ program, this document explicates that to reinforce students’ positive behaviours, the expected behavioural efforts are recognised and awarded appropriately. This is elucidated in the following excerpt of this document:

Expected behaviours are acknowledged and rewarded at both an individual and class level. Students can earn ‘bee tokens’ as an individual which can be traded for prizes at a Reward Shop. Class group can earn ‘bee hive tokens’ for positive behaviour which they can trade for whole class rewards (D9.p.7.).

At this point, highlighting the significant influence of students’ positive behaviours on their learning outcomes and social interactions, this document indicates: ‘A set of rights and responsibilities outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is necessary in order for Rosefield Primary School to meet its educational and social goals’ (D9.p.8.). In line with this statement, a review of relevant literature (Bodrova & Leong 2008; Eisenberg et al. 2005;
Shields et al. 2001; Trentacosta & Izard 2007) points out that students’ positive behaviours are associated with peer acceptance, school enjoyment and academic success. The rationale here is that those students are regarded as empathetic by their peers (Duncan & Magnuson 2011; Shields et al. 2001), and are perceived as attentive and academically advanced by their teachers (Ladd, Birch & Buhs 1999; Denham et al. 2012; Gillespie & Seibel 2006; Noona et al. 2015; Wentzel 2012).

**Relationship skills**

When examining the ‘SWPBS’ program using the CASEL framework, this document also draws attention to fostering students’ relationship skills, focusing on their ability to develop respectful relationships with others and to resolve conflicts constructively. This is illuminated in the following statement: ‘Students have the following responsibilities: To treat others with respect and resolve differences through discussion and compromise and not conflict’ (D9.p.8.). Here the document highlights the importance of building positive relationships with others based on mutual respect and open communication. Moreover, the document points out that all students are responsible for resolving their conflicts constructively.

**Constructs outside the CASEL framework**

The content analysis of the ‘SWPBS’ program does not identify any other construct related to SEL that is not aligned with the core social and emotional dimensions of the CASEL framework.

The following table (See Table 5.3.) displays the core components and sub-components of the CASEL framework mapped onto the ‘SWPBS’ program.
Table 5.3. CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) mapped onto the ‘SWPBS’ program (Rosefield Primary School)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASEL Core Components</th>
<th>CASEL Sub-components</th>
<th>SWPBS program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-awareness</strong></td>
<td>Recognising accurately one’s emotions and thoughts</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognising one’s strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintaining a sense of optimism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-management</strong></td>
<td>Regulating effectively one’s emotions and thoughts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing one’s behaviour effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Controlling one’s impulses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing challenging situations effectively</td>
<td>Managing one’s behaviour effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setting and achieving personal and academic goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivating oneself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsible decision making</strong></td>
<td>Making sensible decisions about one’s behaviour and social interactions</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating realistically the consequences of one’s actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social awareness</strong></td>
<td>Considering others’ perspectives</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathising with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognising and appreciating the differences of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciating cultural diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognising the resources and supports available from one’s family, school and community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship skills</strong></td>
<td>Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening attentively to others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicating clearly with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborating with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing and seeking help when needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resolving conflicts constructively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resisting inappropriate social pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicating clearly with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resolving conflicts constructively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of the Analysis of the ‘SWPBS’ program

In summary, viewed through the prism of the CASEL framework, the ‘SWPBS’ program places considerable emphasis on promoting students’ behaviour management. Moreover, this program points out students’ relationship skills, drawing attention to their ability to develop positive relationships with others, to communicate openly and clearly, and to resolve conflicts constructively. On an important note, the analysis of the ‘SWPBS’ indicated that this program does not address any other aspect pertinent to SEL that is not included in the CASEL conceptual framework.

Position of SEL in the Student Wellbeing Policy of Rosefield Primary School

The Student Wellbeing Policy of Rosefield Primary School provides guidelines and strategies for developing a positive and supportive learning environment for all students at Rosefield Primary School, reflective of the school vision and pedagogical framework of the school, with particular emphasis on student emotional wellbeing.

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Relationship skills

In light of the CASEL framework, the Student Wellbeing Policy of Rosefield Primary School focuses only on students’ relationship skills. Specifically, when addressing the practical implementation of the policy within the school environment, this document focuses on enhancing students’ collaborative skills. As the document notes: ‘Implement the Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools through: encouraging a climate of [students’] cooperation…’ (D.6.p.1). Here the document highlights the necessity of all school staff to facilitate students’
collaboration with each other in order to create a supportive learning environment.

**Position of SEL in the Learning and Teaching Policy of Rosefield Primary School**

The Learning and Teaching Policy of Rosefield Primary School identifies the basic principles and practices implemented to support student learning that promote independence, interdependence and self-motivation to learn and achieve. Moreover, this document addresses development of student thinking strategies and focuses on enhancing their communication and collaboration skills.

**Constructs within the CASEL framework**

*Relationship skills*

When analysing the Learning and Teaching Policy of Rosefield Primary School using the CASEL framework, this document draws particular attention to promoting students’ relationship skills. In terms of relationship skills, when elaborating on the main purpose of Rosefield Primary School, this document points out children’s communication skills, collaboration with others, and conflict resolution skills. This is illuminated in the following statement: ‘The school will: [d]evelop a range of communication, negotiation, conflict resolution and cooperative team work skills’ (D7.p.3.). Here the document highlights the importance of encouraging all students at Rosefield Primary School to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts constructively and collaborate with others.
Position of SEL in the Student Engagement Policy of Rosefield Primary School

The Student Engagement Policy of Rosefield Primary School addresses students’ rights and responsibilities within the school environment, which are reflective of the school vision and the school core values, including: setting and achieving meaningful goals, collaboration with others, encouraging independence and taking responsibility for learning.

Constructs within the CASEL framework

Behaviour management

The content analysis of the Student Engagement Policy of Rosefield Primary School revealed that this document places considerable emphasis on students’ behaviour management. Specifically, when outlining students’ rights and responsibilities, this document indicates that all students are accountable for managing their own behaviour. As the document states: ‘The students at Rosefield Primary School are encouraged to take ownership over their learning, to reflect and self assess, and to take risks with their learning as well as be responsible for the behaviour and academic progress’ (D8.p.5.). Here the document notes that all students at Rosefield Primary School are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour, the process of learning and their academic outcomes. In this context, when elaborating on the school action plan to improve students’ engagement, this document points out that classroom teachers should recognise students’ academic efforts, as well as their appropriate behaviours within the school setting. This is illuminated in the following excerpt of the document: ‘Providing an array of opportunities for students to be acknowledged for the work they do and the positive behaviours they show’ (D8.p.6.). Here the document highlights the importance of recognising students’ positive behavioural and academic efforts.
Relationship skills

With regard to the other social and emotional dimensions of the CASEL framework, this document also draws attention to fostering children’s relationship skills, focusing on their collaborative and communication skills. In particular, when elaborating on the four values promoted at Rosefield Primary School, this document highlights the importance of supporting students’ ‘teamwork.’ As the document declares: ‘We Value Teamwork’ (D8.p.5.). Here the document states that encouraging students to collaborate together in a team is highly valued at this school.

With respect to the other sub-components of relationship skills, when delineating the school values, this document also addresses students’ communication skills. This is outlined in the following statement: ‘[All students should] [c]ommunicate effectively’ (D8.p.5). Here the document emphasises the significance of supporting students’ effective communication with others. According to Blair and colleagues (2004), children with well-developed communication skills are able to engage in positive relationships with peers and significant adults in their life. As Bolmer and colleagues (2005) elaborate further, engagement in positive peer relationships is associated with children’s positive attitude towards school and increased motivation to achieve academically.

Constructs outside the CASEL framework

The analysis of the curricula and policies documents obtained from Rosefield Primary School does not determined any other construct pertinent to SEL that is not aligned with the core components and related sub-components of the CASEL framework.

The following table (See Table 5.4.) presents the social and emotional aspects of the CASEL framework mapped onto the school policy documents of Rosefield Primary School.
Table 5.4. CASEL framework (CASEL 2013) mapped onto Rosefield Primary School Policy Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASEL Core components</th>
<th>CASEL Sub-components</th>
<th>Student Wellbeing Policy</th>
<th>Learning and Teaching Policy</th>
<th>Student Engagement Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-awareness</strong></td>
<td>Recognising accurately one’s emotions and thoughts Recognising one’s strengths and weaknesses Maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence Maintaining a sense of optimism</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-management</strong></td>
<td>Regulating effectively one’s emotions and thoughts Managing one’s behaviour effectively Controlling one’s impulses Managing challenging situations effectively Setting and achieving personal and academic goals Motivating oneself</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Managing one’s behaviour effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsible decision making</strong></td>
<td>Making sensible decisions about one’s behaviour and social interactions Evaluating realistically the consequences of one’s actions</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social awareness</strong></td>
<td>Considering others’ perspectives Empathising with others Recognising and appreciating the differences of others Appreciating cultural diversity Recognising the resources and supports available from one’s family, school and community</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship skills</strong></td>
<td>Developing and maintaining positive relationships with others Listening attentively to others Communicating clearly with others Collaborating with others Providing and seeking help when needed Resolving conflicts constructively Resisting inappropriate social pressure</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Communicating clearly with others Collaborating with others Resolving conflicts constructively</td>
<td>Communicating clearly with others Collaborating with others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of the Analysis of the Policies Documents of Rosefield Primary School

In summary, the reviewed documents of Rosefield Primary School, including the Student Wellbeing Policy, the Learning and Teaching Policy and the Student Engagement Policy, point out students’ relationship skills, including their communication and collaborative skills. In this regard, the Learning and Teaching Policy also addresses children’s conflict resolution skills. Additionally, the Student Engagement Policy draws attention to promoting children’s behaviour management. Notably, none of the reviewed school policies documents addresses any other construct related to SEL that is not included in the CASEL framework.

Enablers to SEL at Rosefield Primary School

According to the participating Rosefield teachers, there are a number of factors that can facilitate SEL infusion within the educational environment, including: (1) school leadership’s endorsement of SEL; (2) consistent whole school approach to SEL; (3) teachers’ values and beliefs consistent with SEL; and (4) teacher’s own contribution to supporting SEL in the school.

Remarkably, when discussing the possible enablers to SEL in primary schools, all three teachers pointed out the critical role of school leadership in providing social and emotional education within the school setting. For example, when elaborating on the role of the school management in SEL incorporation within the school environment, Samantha indicated that the school leadership determines the extent to which students’ social and emotional education will take place within the school. As she asserted:

‘So leadership …have…I feel they have …a big… hmm …a big [role in supporting SEL]……They kind of… set the tone [of the school] …as to whether … hmmmm …it’s [SEL is] going to…hmmm …be … adapted and implemented in the schools … ’ (T5.I2.p.7.).

On a similar note, when discussing the role of the school in supporting SEL, Mary also mentioned the major influence of school leadership’s support
of SEL. In this context, Grace proclaimed that the school leadership of Rosefield Primary School has cultivated a positive and supportive school climate for all teachers, as a main prerequisite for nurturing students’ social and emotional wellbeing. This is illustrated in the following excerpt of the first interview:

I think our school [leadership] created a very encouraging environment generally… amongst the teachers, so the teachers are encouraged [to support their own wellbeing], and that enables teachers to teach better. And then… we’re very much … hmmm … encouraged to …encourage the kids and be positive towards them and …so I think that has …you know, supported their Social and Emotional Learning (T4.I1.p.17.)

With respect to other possible enablers in achieving integration of social and emotional education in schools, both Samantha and Mary also drew attention to the importance of a consistent whole school approach to supporting students’ SEL. For instance, in the first interview, when discussing the role of the school in fostering SEL, Samantha emphasised the need of clear and consistent behavioural expectations for all students in the school. As she stated:

I think the school has to…set clear expectations and they …so that might be in behaviour and that might be in … [students’] learning [outcomes], that might be … with…you know, behaviour at the yard, in the classroom, but I think the school, like in the classroom, has to be consistent (T5.I1.p.14.).

In this context, Mary stated that Rosefield Primary School embraced an integrated whole school approach to social and emotional education, where the efforts of all staff members are directed towards a common goal. As she indicated: ‘… Now we have a whole school approach, and it’s … everybody working together towards the same goal’ (T6.I1.p.25.).

In regards to other possible factors that may enable SEL incorporation within the school environment, Grace also emphasised the importance of
teachers’ values and beliefs that are consistent with the SEL approach. Namely, in the second interview, when asked to discuss the extent to which teachers’ beliefs and values may influence the emphasis on SEL in the classroom, Grace pointed out the positive correlation between teachers’ individual beliefs and values related to SEL, and their classroom practices. As she asserted: ‘I think …yeah it definitely… heavily influences what you…what you value and believe in, it influences Social and Emotional [Learning]…and how that’s going to play out in the classroom …what your main focus is going to be…’ (T4.I2.p.5).

Notably, when discussing the factors that may enable SEL incorporation in schools, Mary also talked about individual teacher’s endeavours to foster SEL within the school setting. Specifically, when asked how Rosefield Primary School supports children’s SEL, Mary mentioned Grace’s initiative to facilitate a social program at a whole school level. As Mary explained, this social program was designed to support development of social competence in those children who exhibit deficient social skills. This is elucidated in the following excerpt of the first interview: ‘…Grace teaches them [those children with low social skills:]’We are going to play a game of cooperation today. This is how we’re going to do it.’ So, they are learning …they get an extra support with those social skills…” (T6.I1.p.27).

**Barriers to SEL at Rosefield Primary School**

In their discussion about the main constraints for implementing SEL in primary schools, the interviewed teachers addressed the following factors: (1) insufficient amount of classroom time allocated to SEL within the school curriculum; (2) lack of education subjects related to SEL incorporated into teacher education courses; and (3) insufficient provision of SEL PD workshops for primary school teachers.

All three teachers placed considerable emphasis on the insufficient amount of classroom time allocated to SEL. As Grace asserted: ‘I think…[the main barrier to SEL incorporation within schools is] time definitely. We are not allocated any time to teach it ’(T4.I1.p.17.). In the same vein, both Mary and Samantha drew attention to the lack of time available for students’ social
and emotional education. As Mary stated: ‘I would say that’s the biggest obstacle…[to SEL incorporation in the classroom is] time’ (T6.I1.p.24.). In this context, as Samantha explicat ed, the demands placed on classroom teachers to focus on their academic learning objectives, creates difficulties to allocate specific time for students’ social and emotional education. As she proclaimed: ‘…[Y]ou have to cover reading, you know, you have to do all these things… to have anything specifically allocated to that [to SEL], is very hard. It’s just not enough hours …’ (T5.I1.p.14.).

As Mary and Samantha indicated, another factor that may hinder SEL incorporation within the school environment is an insufficient SEL education in pre-service primary teacher education programs. Specifically, in the first interview, Mary mentioned the lack of education related to SEL at the University level. She said: ‘…No [at the University]…it was all …practical and theory… not social and emotional [education]…’ (T6.I1.p.3.). In the same vein, Samantha affirmed that there was a lack of specific subjects pertinent to students’ social and emotional education included in her teacher education course. She said: ‘I don’t think that there were any specific …courses or…subjects relating to that…[to SEL]’ (T5.I1.p.3.). At this point, implying the low position of SEL within teacher education courses, Samantha affirmed: ‘I think it’s [SEL is] undertoned in an education degree …’ (T5.I1.p.3.). There is a positive correlation between these statements and the assertions of some educational researchers (Hristofski 2011; Palomera Fernandez-Berrocal & Brackett 2008; Weare & Gray 2003), who argued that SEL must be addressed in pre-service teacher education programs. According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), teacher education programs should include techniques for increasing teachers’ own social and emotional competence, as well as teaching strategies for promoting children’s social and emotional skills.

From Grace’s perspective an additional barrier to effective SEL implementation in schools is the low proportion of SEL professional development (PD) workshops for teachers. Namely, when describing the role of school leadership in how SEL is incorporated in schools, Grace indicated that there is an insufficient provision of SEL PDs for classroom teachers. She said: ‘There are not lot of PDs about it [about SEL]…’(T4.I2.p.8.). Emphasising the importance of the provision and attendance of SEL PD
workshops, Grace affirmed: ‘[If] there was... some formal ...education on that [on SEL]...you could prevent a lot of issues from arising later on down the track ...than just dealing with them when they arise...’ (T4.I2.p.10.).

The following table (See Table 5.5.) presents the possible enablers and barriers to SEL implementation within school environments addressed by the participating Rosefield teachers.

Table 5.5. Enablers and Barriers to SEL incorporation at Rosefield Primary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablers to incorporating SEL</th>
<th>Barriers to incorporating SEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School leadership’s endorsement of SEL</td>
<td>Insufficient amount of classroom time allocated to SEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent whole school approach that supports SEL</td>
<td>Insufficient inclusion of SEL education subjects into teacher education courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ values and beliefs consistent with SEL</td>
<td>Insufficient provision of SEL PD workshops for primary school teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual teacher’s contribution to promoting SEL in the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Summary of Rosefield Primary School*

In light of the core social and emotional dimensions of the CASEL framework, when discussing the concept of SEL, all participating teachers from Rosefield Primary School placed major emphasis on children’s relationship skills, pointing out their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with others. Similarly, when discussing their pedagogical approaches aimed to promote SEL, all three teachers noted their endeavours to enhance children’s relationship skills. When discussing their formal classroom practices intended to foster students’ SEL, the participating
Rosefield teachers stated that they implement the ‘SWPBS’ program to promote children’s behaviour management.

The content analysis of the ‘SWPBS’ program showed that this program highlights students’ relationship skills and their behaviour management. On a similar note, the analysis of the policies of Rosefield Primary School revealed that collectively, the reviewed documents point out students’ relationship skills, in particular their communication and collaborative skills.

In their discussion about the factors that may enable SEL implementation in schools, all interviewed teachers form Rosefield Primary School highlighted the critical role of school leadership’s support in providing social and emotional education within school settings. On the other hand, when elaborating on the potential obstacles to implementing SEL in primary schools, all three teachers highlighted the insufficient amount of classroom time allocated to SEL. When addressing this question, both Samantha and Mary also drew attention to the lack of education subjects related to SEL incorporated into teacher education courses.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the analysis of the collected data from Rosefield Primary School. The following Chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the key findings of this multiple case study in light of the existing literature on SEL.
CHAPTER VI
DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the key findings of this multiple case study by addressing each research question that drove this study in light of the existing literature on SEL. In addition, overall limitations of the study and implications for educational practice and future research are discussed.

The primary purpose of this multiple case study was to investigate six Preparatory teachers’ perspectives and practices in relation to SEL in context of the CASEL framework. Moreover, this study sought to explore the position of SEL within the school curricula documents and programs of the participating schools in light of the CASEL framework. The following research questions guided this study:

Main research question:

- How is SEL understood and implemented in preparatory classrooms in two Victorian Primary schools in context of the CASEL framework?

Sub-questions:

- How is SEL positioned within school policies, programs and documentation in context of the CASEL framework?

- What do teachers see as the possible enablers and barriers to incorporating SEL within the school environment?

This study produced several research findings regarding teachers’ perspectives and practices related to SEL, as well as the position of SEL within school policies, programs and documentation. The main finding is that in view of the CASEL conceptual framework, teachers’ conceptual understandings of SEL seems limited in a way that the interviewed teachers emphasised the social dimension of this concept, whereas paying less attention to the emotional dimension of SEL.
A second finding is that there is a positive relationship between teachers’ conceptualisations of SEL and their pedagogical approaches used to strengthen students’ social and emotional skills.

Further, it was found that the constructs of sense of identity and persistence which are not addressed in the CASEL conceptual framework, are considered as relevant facets of SEL by some of the interviewed teachers.

Another important finding of this study is that SEL has a very limited place in the policies and the curricula documents of the participating schools, which in turn affects teachers’ practices related to SEL. Additionally, the wellbeing programs incorporated in the participating schools have a considerable influence on teachers’ understandings of SEL, their pedagogical approaches and their classroom practices related to SEL.

Finally, with regard to the potential enablers to SEL incorporation within the school environment, it was found that the whole school approach to SEL, participation in professional development workshops related to SEL, and school leadership support are of primary importance for the participating teachers in this multiple case study. On the other hand, major obstacles to SEL implementation in schools include insufficient class time allocated to SEL within the school curricula, and insufficient inclusion of SEL into teacher education courses.

The content analysis of the interview and documentary data identified the following common themes: (1) Constructs within the CASEL framework (2) Constructs outside of the CASEL framework; (3) Enablers to SEL incorporation within the school environment; and (4) Barriers to SEL incorporation within the school environment. The identified themes pertaining to each research question will be discussed in the following section.
RQ1: How is SEL understood and implemented in preparatory classrooms in two Victorian Primary schools in context of the CASEL framework?

**Constructs within the CASEL framework**

**Teachers’ understandings of SEL**

The analysis of the interview data showed that all interviewed teachers from both participating schools in this study did express some general knowledge about the skills that constitute social and emotional competence, as delineated by the CASEL framework. However, teachers’ understandings about the concept of SEL seems limited in a way that among the two dimensions of SEL, the participating teachers highlighted the social, rather than the emotional dimension of this concept, prioritising children’s relationship skills. In light of the existing literature on SEL, this finding is consistent with the results of a study which investigated primary school teachers’ perceptions on SEL (Triliva & Poulou 2006), in which majority of the interviewed teachers emphasised children’s social skills, focusing on their ability to establish positive relationships with others.

Considering the other core components of the CASEL framework, the interviewed teachers from Greenfield Primary School placed considerable emphasis on children’s ability to display empathy and to demonstrate resilience. On the other hand, when outlining the skills that constitute social and emotional competence, most of the interviewed teachers from Rosefield Primary School drew particular attention to children’s behaviour management and to their ability to empathise with others.

Notably, in their portrayal of socially and emotionally competent children, only one out of six teachers participating in this multiple case study addressed children’s self-awareness and their responsible decision making skills, pointing out their ability to identify one’s emotions accurately and to make sensible decisions. This finding may indicate that the interviewed teachers perceived the emotional aspect of SEL as embedded within its social context (Hargreaves 2000). Alternatively, this may imply that majority of the participating teachers in this study were less familiar with the emotional aspect of SEL compared to its social aspect.
It is important to note here that the existing literature on SEL considers children’s emotional competence as crucially important for their social competence. Specifically, several developmental researchers (Bariola, Gullone & Hughes 2011; Bradley et al. 2009; Denham et al. 2003; Shaffer & Kipp 2010) agree that children’s emotional competence, in particular the ability to identify one’s emotions accurately, forms a foundation for their social skill development and relationship formation. The rationale behind this assertion is that children who are able to recognise their own emotions accurately, are more likely to better understand the emotions of others and to empathise with them (Bariola, Gullone & Hughes 2011; Schaffer & Kipp 2010). Hence, children with a high level of emotional awareness are capable of building positive relationships with others and establishing a supportive social network (Bradley et al. 2009; Denham et al. 2003). This helps those children to surmount their life difficulties and cope better with stress (Bolmer et al. 2005; Durlak et al. 2014; House, Landis & Umberson 1988; Schutte et al. 2002), which in turn is related to better emotional health (House, Landis & Umberson 1988; Daunic et al. 2013; Jones, Greenberg & Crowley 2015).

**Teachers’ pedagogical approaches and formal classroom practices related to SEL**

The analysis of the interview data of this study revealed that there is a considerable overlap between teachers' conceptual understandings of SEL and their pedagogical approaches used to strengthen students’ social and emotional education. Namely, aligned with their construal of the concept of SEL, when discussing their pedagogical approaches, the majority of the interviewed teachers from Greenfield Primary School pointed out the importance of developing positive teacher-child relationships. Similarly, in line with their conceptions of SEL, most of the participating teachers from Rosefield Primary School paid particular attention to fostering students’ behaviour management and their ability to display empathy. These findings suggest that there is an intimate connection between teachers’ theoretical knowledge about SEL and their associated pedagogical approaches. A possible explanation for this consistency is a school wide commitment to supporting children’s wellbeing across both participating schools. In this
regard, the majority of the participating teachers pointed out the importance of using a consistent language and consistent pedagogical approaches at a school wide level. In line with this finding, a few educational studies (Bower, Kraayenoord & Carroll 2015; Cain & Carnellor 2008; Davis & Cooper 2013) demonstrated that whole school commitment to SEL and a consistent pedagogical framework used by teachers are the main influential factors for the evident congruence between teachers’ conceptual knowledge of SEL and related pedagogical approaches.

The analysis of the interview data suggested that another factor contributing to the consistency between teachers’ construal of SEL and their associated pedagogical approaches is a teacher’s participation in professional development workshops related to SEL. In this regard, all three teachers from Greenfield Primary School affirmed their attendance to several workshops pertinent to SEL, organised by the leadership of this school. In a similar vein, all of the interviewed teachers from Rosefield Primary School declared that they have been provided with an opportunity to participate in PD workshops related to school wide implementation of the ‘SWPBS’ program. Contrary to this finding, a study conducted by Carey (2012), revealed inconsistency between teachers’ understandings of what constitute SEL and related pedagogical approaches. According to Carey, the main contributors for this discrepancy were lack of relevant teacher training and expertise in the field of SEL.

Notably, when elaborating on their pedagogical approaches related to SEL, only one out of six teachers participating in this study talked about fostering children’s self-awareness and responsible decision making. More specifically, this teacher focused solely on increasing children’s emotional awareness and facilitating students to make sensible decisions. A possible explanation for this finding might be the fact that children’s self-awareness and responsible decision making are not mentioned in either the school curricula, nor in the policy documents of the participating schools. Moreover, self-awareness and responsible decision making are not addressed in the behavioural program ‘SWPBS’ incorporated in Rosefield Primary School. This may imply that a positive relationship exists between the content of the school programs and curricula documents and how SEL is integrated in teachers’ pedagogical approaches related to SEL.
When deliberating on their formal classroom practices, all teachers from Greenfield Primary School affirmed that they address students’ SEL through an implementation of the ‘You Can Do It’ program in their classrooms. More specifically, all three teachers declared that they integrate the ‘YCDI’ education in their teaching practices by facilitating weekly classroom discussions about children’s resilience. Alternatively, all teachers from Rosefield Primary School indicated that they implement the ‘SWPBS’ program in their classrooms to reinforce students’ positive behavioural efforts. In particular, all three Rosefield teachers pointed out their tendency to instil the four foundational principles of the ‘SWPBS’ program into children’s behaviours, such as safety, respect, responsibility, and learning engagement. This finding may indicate that there is a positive relationship between the content of the wellbeing programs integrated at the participating schools and teachers’ formal classroom practices employed to enhance students’ social and emotional education.

**Constructs outside of the CASEL framework**

The analysis of the interviews revealed that some commonly shared aspects related to SEL extend beyond the content of the CASEL framework. For example, some of the participating teachers in this study considered children’s sense of identity and persistence as important aspects of children’s social and emotional competence. These findings imply that other SEL constructs outside of the CASEL framework were expressed as being important through the voices of the interviewed teachers. In what follows, the constructs of personal identity and persistence and their relevance to SEL will be discussed in light of the existing literature on SEL.

**Sense of identity or Self-concept**

The term ‘sense of identity’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘self-concept’ in the developmental and educational literature (Schwartz et al. 2010). The conception of oneself refers to one’s ‘understanding of being him or herself’ (Nishikawa 2009, p.14). This is in line with the most commonly used definition in educational research, proposed by Rosenberg (1979, p.7),
referring to self-concept as ‘the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as object.’ Emphasising the important role of individual’s cognitive processes in the development of self-concept, Robertson (2013, p.464) defined self-concept as a ‘cognitive view of self’. At the heart of self-concept are the core beliefs and perceptions that an individual has developed about him or herself (Hattie 2014; Mercer 2011; Purkey 1988), which in turn can affect one’s thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviours (Hattie 2014; Mercer 2011; Markus & Wurf 1987; Purkey 1988). Therefore, an increased awareness of one’s beliefs, inner thoughts, and feelings, as well as an integration of those distinct facets of self is critical for developing a healthy self-concept (Hattie 2014).

Notably, although self-concept may imply self-awareness, some contemporary researchers (Hattie 2014; Robertson 2013; Nishikawa 2009) argue that the conception of oneself should be distinguished from self-awareness. Namely, Hattie (2014, p.57) contended that ‘[S]elf-concept is more than self-awareness,’ as the conception of oneself entails an integrated system composed of individual’s beliefs, thoughts and feelings about oneself (Robertson, 2013; Rosenberg 1979). On the other hand, self-awareness, as delineated within the context of the CASEL framework, is confined to individual's awareness of one’s emotions and thoughts, an awareness of one’s strengths and limitations, and one’s self-confidence. Hence, while self-concept integrates both the cognitive and the affective dimensions of oneself and how individual’s self-knowledge is defined (Hattie 2014; Robertson 2013; Rosenberg 1979), self-awareness, as outlined in the CASEL framework focuses predominantly on individual’s emotional and cognitive understanding, without taking into consideration one’s self-perception.

Within the Australian context, recognising the importance of children’s personal attributes for their healthy social and emotional development, the first developmental outcome of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF; DEEWR 2009, p.20), is to nurture young children’s ‘strong sense of identity’. As delineated within this framework (DEEWR 2009, p.20), children’s sense of identity refers to increased ‘understanding of themselves,’ by being increasingly aware of their own physical, cognitive, social, and emotional abilities. As outlined in the Australian framework, children with well-developed sense of self are able to regulate and express their emotions.
effectively, reflect on the consequences of their behaviours, show empathetic concern for others, and collaborate effectively. Moreover, children’s strong sense of identity is closely tied to their ability to build and sustain positive relationships with significant others in their life. In addition, children’s sense of identity can facilitate their motivation to learn and achieve within educational settings and persist when faced with challenges. In this way, children with a positive self-identity are more likely to become socially accountable individuals and engaged learners (DEEWR 2009). This in turn, can help those children to become productive members of their communities.

A summary of research findings (Craven & Marsh 2008; Hay & Ashman 2003; Vaughn, Elbaum & Boardman 2001; Harter 1999; Marsh 1991) confirmed that self-concept is a cornerstone of children’s social and emotional wellbeing, as it can significantly influence an individual’s feelings of self-worth and confidence in their social interactions. For example, children with high self-concept are perceived as emotionally stable, empathetic and cooperative by significant others in their life (Hay, Ashman & van Kraayenoord 1998). Hence, these children are more likely to be accepted by their peers (Shields et al. 2001), and to engage in positive relationships with others (Blair et al. 2004; Parlakian 2003). Moreover, children with high self-concept have well developed problem solving and conflict resolution skills (Bos & Vaughn 1998; Johnson & Johnson 1996; Pianta & Walsh 1996) that are essential in their functioning and adaptation in diverse settings (Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence 1994). On the other hand, children with low self-concept are less inclined to generate effective solutions to problems, or to resolve conflicts peacefully (Pianta & Walsh 1996), which in turn may have a negative impact on their social and emotional wellbeing (Hay, Asman & van Kraayenoord 1998).

The conception of oneself is considered as a significant construct within the field of education, as it has a major influence on children’s academic achievement (Hay et al.1999; Marsh & Craven 2006; Padhy, Rana & Mishra 2011; Valentine 2002). Several educational researchers (Byrne 1996; Marsh et al. 2005; Marsh, Debus & Bornholt 2005) offered an empirical support for the causal relationship between children’s self-concept and their academic outcomes. For instance, a study conducted by Marsh and colleagues (2005), established a positive correlation between students’ grades in eight
academic subjects and their self-concept. Similarly, the findings of a study that examined the relationship between students’ positive self-concept and their academic achievement (Kobal & Musek 2001), suggested that students’ self-concept is a significant predictor of their academic achievement. The reasoning behind these research insights is that individuals with positive self-concept have high academic aspirations and are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards school (Hay, Byrne & Butler 2000; Hinshaw 1992).

Although the findings of the studies that investigated self-concept relied mainly on students’ self-reports (Hattie 2014; Marsh, Byrne & Yeung 1999), a considerable body of empirical evidence (Craven & Marsh 2008; Hay & Ashman 2003; Marsh & Craven 2006; Padhy, Rana & Mishra 2011; Valentine 2002; Vaughn, Elbaum & Boardman 2001) indicates that this self-related construct is an important contributor to children’s social and emotional wellbeing and their academic achievement. This is consistent with the findings of this study, suggesting that self-concept is an important aspect of SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL conceptual framework.

**Persistence**

When outlining the main characteristics of socially and emotionally competent children, some of the participating teachers in this study also drew attention to a child’s ability to demonstrate persistence. According to some of the interviewed teachers, persistence refers to children’s ability to persevere when encountered with classroom tasks they find difficult. In line with teachers’ interpretations of this construct, in the ‘YCDI’ program, persistence is delineated as one’s capacity to make an effort to accomplish the task until its completion and refusing to give up when faced with difficulty. These definitions correlate with how the construct of persistence is described in the developmental literature. According to Padilla Walker and colleagues (Padilla Walker et al. 2012, p.435), persistence pertains to individual’s ‘ability to overcome delays and hindrances throughout difficult tasks…’

As Deci and Ryan (1985; 1991) contended, children’s intrinsic motivation to engage in a challenging task until its completion is a key determinant of their capacity to persevere despite the difficulties. Intrinsically motivated children are self-determined to complete the activity as they
experience feelings of satisfaction and a sense of purpose when performing an activity that is perceived as self-chosen (Deci & Ryan 1985; Ryan et al. 2008). Hence, those children who are self-motivated to participate in classroom activities on a voluntary basis ‘in the absence of material rewards or external constraints,’ are more likely to show greater persistence (Pelletier et al.1995, p.36). In contrast, when children engage in a task motivated by external means such as rewards, fear of punishment, obligation, or a pressure, but not out of self-motivation, they have a tendency to demonstrate less persistent efforts in achieving their goals (Niemiec, Ryan & Deci 2010).

In order to provide further clarification and summarise these ideas, Peterson and Seligman (2004, p.220) defined persistence as a ‘voluntary continuation of a goal-directed action in spite of obstacles, difficulties, or discouragement.’

Critical review of literature revealed that only a handful of international studies (Gillham et al. 2011; McClelland et al. 2013; Singh & Jha 2008; Park & Petreson 2006; Proctor et al. 2011) examined the relationship between persistence and children’s wellbeing. Overall, the results of these studies indicated that high level of perseverance is associated with a child’s better emotional wellbeing and increased life satisfaction. For example, a study (Park & Peterson 2006) which included 680 children aged 3 to 9 years of age, found that based on their parents’ reports, children’s persistence was positively associated with their level of happiness. Similarly, another study (Singh & Jha 2008) conducted on 254 students, showed that persistence was positively correlated with life satisfaction and happiness. Moreover, another longitudinal study (Gillham et al. 2011) which explored the impact of middle school students’ perseverance on their emotional wellbeing, demonstrated that higher levels of persistence at the beginning of the school year was associated with fewer episodes of depression and greater life satisfaction by the end of the year. One possible explanation for this relationship might be the notion that those individuals who are able to persevere and accomplish goals despite the obstacles, generally experience more positive feelings, which in turn can influence their satisfaction with life and their level of happiness (Singh & Jha 2008).

There is also strong empirical evidence in relation to the link between persistence and children’s academic outcomes. The educational literature (Berhenke et al. 2011; Brown et al. 2008; Duckworth & Quinn 2009; Duggan
suggests that a child’s level of persistence is an important predictor of their academic achievement. For example, one study (Berhenke et al. 2011), which included 131 children that attended kindergarten in one urban area in New England, found that a child’s high level of persistence as assessed by their capacity to complete the task at hand, resulted in higher teacher ratings of their reading abilities and math skills. Another longitudinal study (Martin, Ryan & Gunn 2013) investigated the impact of a child’s persistence at age 3 on their early academic success at age 5. The findings of this study showed that children who demonstrated high level of persistence as measured by their sustained learning engagement and task completion, achieved higher test scores in Literacy and Maths compared to those children who were less persistent. Consistent with these findings, another longitudinal study conducted in the USA (McClelland et al. 2013) which included 430 children in total, explored the link between persistence level and later educational attainment. The results of this study showed significant correlation between a child’s persistence at the age of 4 and their reading and maths scores at the age of 21. It is interesting to note that these studies revealed that an important predictor for children’s ability to persevere is their intrinsic motivation to complete the task at hand. ‘Highly motivated students will persist longer and will continue to put effort in the task, especially when they encounter unexpected obstacles’ (Lens et al. 2005, p.276).

Although some of these studies relied predominantly on parent reports of child persistence (McClelland et al. 2013; Padilla-Walker et al. 2012; Park & Peterson 2006; Smiley & Dweck 1994), or teacher ratings of child academic competence (Berhenke et al. 2011), altogether the reviewed studies suggest that children’s tendency to persevere in face of difficulties is an important predictor of their academic achievement. These results are consistent with the findings of the present study which identified individual’s persistence as an important construct pertinent to SEL and children’s academic attainment.
A proposed expansion of the CASEL conceptual framework

Taking into consideration the findings of this study and the literature supporting the link between children’s self-concept and persistence and SEL, an expansion of the existing CASEL framework is proposed. The proposed framework (See Figure 6.1.) acknowledges the complex interplay between the core components of SEL and points out children’s self-concept as a foundation for their social and emotional wellbeing. As Graven and Marsh (2008, p.104) indicated, self-concept is ‘vital to psychological wellbeing’ as it influences the way children think and feel about themselves. This in turn, can affect children’s ability to acknowledge their own strengths and weaknesses, recognise their emotional experiences, influence their emotional responses and decision making process, as well as their social capability and adjustment in various situations. Hence, self-concept should be considered as a cornerstone of a child’s social and emotional wellbeing.

Based on the empirical evidence that persistence is closely related to child’s motivation, the construct of persistence is included as an additional sub-component of self-management within the expanded CASEL framework. It is important to note here that all other social and emotional aspects outlined in the CASEL conceptual framework remain unchanged within the new proposed SEL framework. This comprehensive framework intended to conceptualise and enhance children’s social and emotional skills can provide a strong foundation for their healthy social, emotional and cognitive development.

The following figure (See Figure 6.1.) displays the proposed SEL framework for strengthening children’s social and emotional competence.
RQ2. How is SEL positioned within the school programs, policies, and documentation in context of the CASEL framework?

To the best of my knowledge, no specific studies were identified which addressed the position of SEL within the school curricula, policies and wellbeing programs within Australian Education context. Hence, the findings related to this research question can not be discussed in light of any other relevant empirical evidence.
Constructs within the CASEL framework

The analysis of the wellbeing programs incorporated in the schools participating in this study indicated that both programs place considerable emphasis on the social aspect of SEL. Specifically, in view of the core components of the CASEL framework, both the ‘YCDI’ program incorporated in Greenfield Primary School, and the ‘SWPBS’ program integrated in Rosefield Primary School draw particular attention to students’ relationship skills. Taking into consideration the other social and emotional aspects of the CASEL framework, the ‘YCDI’ program also addresses students’ resilience, as well as the capacity to make sensible decisions, whereas the ‘SWPBS’ program also pertains to reinforcing students’ positive behaviours. It is important to note here that the analysis indicated that there is a positive relationship between the content of the wellbeing programs incorporated at the participating schools and teachers’ conceptual understandings, pedagogical approaches and classroom practices in relation to SEL.

The analysis of the school policies, curricula and other relevant documents obtained from both participating schools in this study suggested that SEL has a very limited place in those documents. In the context of the social and emotional components of the CASEL framework, collectively, the reviewed documents from Greenfield Primary School focus solely on the social dimension of the concept of SEL. In this regard, both the Greenfield Primary School Policy, and the Student Social Competence Development Program (SSCDP), place considerable emphasis on students’ relationship skills. In regard to the other aspects of the CASEL framework, the Greenfield Primary School Policy also refers to students’ ability to appreciate the differences of others. Interestingly, the analysis revealed that the social aspects of the CASEL framework outlined in the reviewed policy documents are consistent with the interviewed teachers’ perceptions of SEL, with one notable exception: one teacher from Greenfield Primary School paid attention to students’ emotional competence, focusing on their self-awareness and responsible decision making skills.

Notably, the analysis of the School Curriculum of Greenfield Primary School revealed that none of the five social and emotional components and related sub-components included in the CASEL framework are mentioned in
this document. In line with this finding, all interviewed Greenfield teachers pointed out that one of the major obstacles to SEL integration within the school environment is an insufficient amount of time allocated to SEL within the school curriculum. Responses from the participating teachers in this study suggested that due to the limited amount of time allocated to SEL within the school curriculum, teachers often felt pressured to exclude social and emotional education from their educational practices.

The content analysis of the policy documents obtained from Rosefield Primary School, noted mainly the social aspect of SEL. In this regard, all reviewed documents, including the Student Wellbeing Policy, the Learning and Teaching Policy and the Student Engagement Policy of Rosefield Primary School focus mainly on the promotion of students' relationship skills. With regard to the other social and emotional dimensions of the CASEL framework, the Student Engagement Policy of Rosefield Primary School also draws attention to promoting students' behaviour management.Aligned with the content of these documents, all three teachers from Rosefield Primary School pointed out the importance of a child’s relationship skills. These findings imply that the content of the school policy documents of Rosefield Primary School to a certain extent may influence teachers’ understandings’ and their pedagogical approaches aimed to foster students’ SEL in their classrooms.

**Constructs outside of the CASEL framework**

The content analysis of the ‘YCDI’ program identified one important construct related to SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL framework, which is persistence. This finding was consistent with the responses of the interviewed Greenfield teachers. Hence, the analysis indicated that there appears to be a positive relationship between the content of the ‘YCDI’ program and how SEL is understood and implemented in the preparatory classrooms of Greenfield Primary School. The construct of persistence and its relevance to SEL has been discussed in details in the previous section of this chapter in relation to the main research question.
The analysis of the ‘SWPBS’ program did not determine any other construct pertinent to SEL that is not aligned with the core components and related sub-components of the CASEL framework. In the same vein, the analysis of the relevant curricula and policy documents obtained from both schools participating in this study revealed that none of those documents address any other aspect pertinent to SEL that is not included in the CASEL conceptual framework. This is aligned with the responses of the participating teachers from Rosefield Primary School, with an exception of only one respondent, who pointed out children’s persistence as an important aspect of SEL that is not addressed in the CASEL framework. Hence, the analysis of the interview and documentary data indicated that there seem to be a positive relationship between teachers’ conceptualisations of SEL and their associated pedagogical approaches, and the content of the school policy documents and programs incorporated at the participating schools.

RQ3. What do teachers see as the possible enablers and barriers to incorporating SEL within the school environment?

Enablers to SEL within the school environment

When discussing the possible factors that may enable SEL incorporation in primary schools, most of the participating teachers from Greenfield Primary School highlighted the importance of consistent whole school commitment to SEL. In this regard, most of the interviewed Rosefield teachers emphasised the need of clear and consistent behavioural expectations for all students in the school. As one respondent noted, an integrated whole school approach to students’ SEL enables the efforts of all staff members to be directed towards a common goal.

In light of the existing literature, several studies which explored teachers’ perceptions on their conceptual understandings of SEL (Bower, Kraayenoord & Carroll 2015; Buchanan et al. 2009; Cain & Carnellor 2008), demonstrated that there is a positive link between school-wide incorporation of an evidence-based SEL program and a teacher’s construction of the concept of SEL. For example, in one American study (Buchanan et al. 2009) which included 225 teachers in total (125 primary and 100 secondary school
teachers) from schools in which an SEL program was incorporated as a whole school approach, approximately half of the respondents (44.7%) reported that they were confident in their theoretical knowledge about SEL. Another Australian study (Cain & Carnellor 2008) which examined the impact of school-wide SEL program implementation on teachers’ knowledge and understandings of the SEL concept, indicated that classroom incorporation of an evidence-based SEL program improved participating teachers’ understandings of what constitutes SEL. As one respondent participating in this study stated: ‘…[A]s my own emotional intelligence grows…I am increasingly aware that many of us need direct teaching/learning [in SEL]…’ (Cain & Carnellor 2008, p.63).

The analysis also suggested that whole school approach to supporting students’ wellbeing enables consistency among teachers’ understandings and their pedagogical approaches related to SEL. In line with this finding, empirical research (Buchanan et al. 2009; Cain & Carnellor 2008; Davis & Cooper 2013) indicated that in schools that foster whole school commitment to children’s social and emotional wellbeing through integration of a research based SEL program, teachers demonstrate high level of confidence in their knowledge and understandings of the concept of SEL that is also reflected in their pedagogical approaches and classroom practices related to SEL. Whole-school commitment to SEL plays a vital part in promoting children’s social, emotional and cognitive development (Jennings & Greenberg 2009), and therefore, ‘needs to become part of the normal mainstream practices’ (Doyle 2003, p.257).

In regards to the other enablers to SEL integration within educational settings, the importance of teachers’ attendance of professional development workshops pertinent to SEL was highlighted. These findings suggest that ongoing professional development will assist teachers to increase their awareness and understandings of the importance of nurturing their own and children’s wellbeing and how it affects their daily functioning. Consistent with this finding, Buchanan and colleagues (2009) found that the majority of the participants in their study viewed teacher involvement in PD training related to SEL as one of the most influential factors that enables effective SEL promotion within school settings. According to Brackett and colleagues (2012) the professional development of teachers can enhance their
confidence and ability to incorporate SEL programs successfully in the classroom and to model the skills that constitute social and emotional competence in front of their students. Hence, teachers’ professional development related to SEL should be considered as an integral part of teachers’ continuing education and provided on a regular basis within the school environment (Zins et al. 2001).

The current study results also recognised the pivotal role of school leadership support for integrating wellbeing programs within the school setting, which is consistent with other educational studies in the literature (Brunker 2008; Collie et al. 2015; Greenberg et al. 2005; Kam, Greenberg & Walls 2003; Pajares 1992; Ransford et al. 2009; Wanless et al. 2013). In a study conducted by Wanless and colleagues (2013), it was found that 70% of the participating teachers pointed out the pivotal role of the school principal’s support in SEL program integration within the school. Other empirical evidence (Kam, Greenberg & Walls 2003; Ransford et al. 2009) suggests that the effect of SEL implementation within school environment is the strongest when it is highly supported from the School Principal. ‘A top down approach to educational reform can influence considerably teachers’ classroom practices enacted to strengthen students’ social and emotional competence’ (Brunker 2008, p.3).

**Barriers to SEL within the school environment**

With regard to potential obstacles to implementing SEL in primary schools, it was consistently found that insufficient amount of time allocated to SEL within the school curriculum is a barrier. The results of this study indicated that due to the growing pressure on classroom teachers to abide by the curriculum design, which is heavily focused on providing children with skills in literacy and numeracy, occasionally, the wellbeing programs are given less consideration in the classroom. In line with these findings, a few studies (Buchanan et al. 2009; Perry, Lennie & Humphrey 2008) found that teachers considered a lack of available classroom time for SEL as one of the main barriers to SEL implementation in primary classrooms. This is consistent with the views of several developmental researchers (Brunker 2008; Greenberg et al. 2003; Roeser, Eccles & Sameroff 2000; Weare 2000)
who proclaimed that SEL should be embedded in all parts of school life, including the school curriculum, the school climate, and the school approach towards the social, emotional and cognitive development of students. This would enable SEL to form the foundation of all school activities and provide a positive learning environment for all students (Brunker 2008), which in turn can optimise their academic learning and development (Bird & Sultmann 2010).

On an important note, the majority of the participating teachers indicated that another barrier to SEL incorporation within the school environment is an insufficient inclusion of SEL education within teacher education programs. Specifically, the participating teachers in this study agreed that there was a lack of specific subjects pertinent to students’ social and emotional education included in their teacher education course. Consistent with these statements, recent empirical evidence (Brunker 2008; Garner 2010; Lopes et al. 2012; Marlow & Inman 2002; Mazer & Rickwood 2014; Poulou 2005; Reinke et al. 2011) indicated that teachers obtain insufficient pre-service training on supporting children’s social and emotional competence. This is contrary to the notion that many Australian teachers consider SEL as an important part of children’s formal education, expressing willingness to support students’ social and emotional wellbeing in schools (Brunker 2008; Graham et al. 2011; Mazer & Rickwood 2014). To ensure effective promotion of SEL within Australian education context, teachers should acquire relevant knowledge and skills on how to meet children’s social and emotional needs in their classrooms through pre-service teacher training (Temple & Emmett 2013).

Further Implications and Practical Recommendations

The findings of the present study brought forth several implications for theory, practice, and educational policies pertinent to children’s Social and Emotional Learning within Australian Education System.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL 2013) outlined five core social and emotional competencies that are
considered as important foundations for children’s social and emotional wellbeing and their academic learning, including self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills. Based on the results of this study and the supporting evidence drawn from the literature about the significance of self-concept and persistence for children’s wellbeing and their academic outcomes (Craven & Marsh 2008; Park & Peterson 2006; Shields et al. 2001; Singh & Jha 2008), an expansion of the existing CASEL conceptual framework is proposed. The proposed SEL framework can form a foundation for designing future school-based programs which will incorporate not only the five social and emotional components outlined in the CASEL framework, but will also address development of a healthy self-concept and fostering child’s perseverance. Classroom delivery of such comprehensive SEL programs within educational settings can result in enhanced children’s social and emotional wellbeing, higher self-esteem, better social adjustment and improved school performance.

Implications for Policy

1. Need for educational reform

Schools of the 21st century have an important role to play in raising healthy and well-balanced children by fostering not only their cognitive development, but also focusing on their social and emotional development (Alvord & Grados 2005; Blackmore et al. 2010; Daunic et al. 2013). It has been posited that universal school-based efforts to promote Social and Emotional Learning represent a promising approach to enhancing children’s wellbeing and their academic success (Durlak et al. 2011; Elias et al. 1997; Guerra & Bradshaw 2008; Kidger et al. 2010; Shriver & Weissberg 2005; Zins & Elias 2006).

Taking into consideration the large amount of empirical evidence that points out the significant impact of well developed social and emotional skills on children’s mental health, social functioning and academic accomplishment, and highlighting the importance of whole school commitment to SEL, the present study provides compelling support for educational reform. The proposed educational reform within Australian
context should include a shift in school policies. Empirical evidence (Kidger et al. 2010; Zins & Elias 2006) indicates that one important element of a whole school approach is likely to be the construction and implementation of school curricula and school policies that address SEL. Contrary to these assertions, this study revealed that SEL has a very limited place in the policies and the curricula documents of the participating Victorian schools. Hence, the focus of policy makers and curriculum developers should be on integrating SEL into the curricula and policies of Australian schools. Effective school curricula should support SEL through educating children to develop a healthy sense of personal identity, to validate and express their emotions effectively, as well as to develop good social skills, and persistence. Recent evidence (Cejovic 2011; Hattie 2014; Martin, Ryan & Gunn 2013; Nishikawa 2009; Robertson 2013) suggested that development of these personal, social and emotional attributes can improve students’ emotional wellbeing and increase their receptivity to learn and achieve academically.

2. Increased need for pre-service teachers’ training in SEL

Given that the lack of pre-service teacher training in social and emotional education is viewed as one of the major obstacles to SEL incorporation within educational environments, university based training in social and emotional education can provide a foundation for teachers’ theoretical knowledge and skills related to SEL (Davies & Cooper 2013). These advanced skills taught and developed through teacher training can be applied in their pedagogical approaches and classroom practices. Hence, preparing teachers to support children’s Social and Emotional Learning in their classrooms should be addressed from the onset of their formal teacher training. According to several educational researchers (Palomera, Fernandez-Berrocal & Brackett 2008; Hristofski 2011), training in SEL must be a compulsory part of every teacher education course. Such training should address both the social and emotional aspects of SEL, with a particular focus on developing teachers’ greater emotional awareness and increased understanding of children’s emotional experiences. According to Ersay (2007), teachers with a high level of emotional awareness are more likely to accurately understand children’s emotions, and offer appropriate
emotional support to their students, which in turn is associated with a child’s increased ability to regulate their emotions effectively (Denham, Basset & Zinsser 2012; Jennings & Greenberg 2009). Those teachers are able to develop and maintain positive relationships with their students and to ‘manage their classrooms more effectively’ (Denham, Basset & Zinsser 2012, p.64). This in turn, is associated with a child’s increased motivation to learn and achieve academically (Denham, Basset & Zinsser 2012; Jennings & Greenberg 2009). Thus, to promote SEL successfully within Australian Education context, social and emotional education should become an integral facet of formal pre-service teacher training. As Hargreaves (2000, p.825) contended:

If we are serious about educational standards, we must become serious about emotions too, and increase emotional understanding between teachers and students. By focusing only on cognitive standards and on processes to achieve them, we actually undermine the emotional understanding which is in fact the foundation in achieving these standards.

Relevant training for pre-service teachers can expand their knowledge in the field of SEL, which in turn can illuminate the path to better social and emotional wellbeing and greater educational accomplishment of all Australian children in the future.

**Overall Limitations of the Study**

The major limitation of this multiple case-study pertains to the small sample size, consisting of six Preparatory teachers in total. In addition to the small sample size, all participants in this study were recruited from two Victorian government schools located in geographically diverse urban areas. Hence, the results of this study could not be generalised in a wider context such as rural areas, and are not representative of the entire respective population. However, considering the main purpose of this study that was to gain an in-depth insight into how SEL is understood and implemented in two Victorian schools, the semi-structured interviews conducted with the
participating teachers, supplemented with a collection of the relevant school documents, intensified the richness of the collected data. This in turn, enabled diversity of information and provided a more comprehensive picture of how SEL is understood and positioned within the participating Victorian schools.

Another limitation is that the results of this study were predominantly based on participating teachers’ interview statements that relied on their subjective perceptions about SEL. In this regard, inclusion of classroom observations, or quantitative measures of teachers’ interpretations of SEL and their associated classroom approaches, such as surveys or questionnaires could have also been applied. However, considering the main focus of this inquiry to elicit greater understanding of teachers’ perspectives on SEL, the use of qualitative approach enabled teachers’ voices and opinions regarding their construal, pedagogical approaches and classrooms practices related to SEL to be solicited.

Another important limitation to consider is that although an effort was made during the interview process to be objective, researcher's presence during data gathering, as well as how the interview questions have been asked, may have affected subjects' responses.

Finally, another limitation that needs to be recognised is that this study was conducted because of the researcher’s personal interest in the subject of SEL. Hence, it is likely that the results of the analysis, and how the discussion was organised could be influenced by the researchers’ personal biases regarding the subject of investigation.

**Future Research**

This multiple case study enhanced our understanding of how SEL was valued, interpreted and implemented in two Victorian government schools. However, the scope of this research was limited to a small sample of urban teachers, and their perceptions on the concept of SEL. Perhaps teachers working in rural areas could have expressed differing views due to some factors that could potentially influence their perspectives and classroom practices related to SEL, such as less workload, and less opportunities for professional development workshops. Hence, in future research, the
inclusion of teachers from rural areas may contribute to a broader representation of the respective population. In addition, the inclusion of increased number of teachers from both government and private school settings could be a consideration for future research.

As noted above, another limitation of this study was that teachers’ interview statements were based on their subjective interpretations on the concept of SEL. Therefore, further research could combine teachers’ interviews with classroom observations of their pedagogical approaches and classroom practices related to SEL, in order to inquire more reliably teachers’ actual classroom approaches towards students’ SEL.

Considering the notion that Australian teachers’ voices have been underexplored to date (Brunker 2008; Graham et al. 2011), more research focusing on teachers’ conceptualisations and their classroom practices related to SEL is needed in the future. In this regard, future studies can also include quantitative measures of teachers’ construal and their practices pertinent to SEL. This can help to further support the arguments presented in this thesis. In addition, this may also increase teachers’ level of awareness and understanding about the importance of this issue on children’s wellbeing and their academic achievement.

The purpose of this research was to explore the perspectives of general education teachers teaching Preparatory students on the subject of SEL. Thus, further research focusing on examining the perceptions of teachers working with particular student population, such as students with special needs, ESL students, gifted students, or economically disadvantaged students would offer an additional insight on their experiences and perceptions on the concept of SEL.

Future research may also focus on exploring other contributing factors to effective delivery of SEL within school environments, including teachers’ level of social and emotional competence, their teaching experiences, as well as the amount of SEL training received and its implication on teachers’ pedagogical approaches and practices related to SEL.

The current study found that the constructs of self-concept and persistence are important aspects of SEL in view of the interviewed teachers. Future studies can further explore these constructs in relation to SEL, as well
as their importance for children’s social and emotional wellbeing and their academic accomplishment.

Conclusion

I will conclude this thesis by summarising the key objectives of this study, outlining the key findings, and presenting the original contributions of this research in the area of Social and Emotional Learning.

This research project investigated early years primary school teachers’ perspectives on the concept of SEL, and how they perceived it to be enacted in their classrooms. In addition, this study examined the place and value of SEL within the wellbeing programs, policies and curricula documents of two Victorian primary schools. Importantly, this was all conducted in the context of the CASEL conceptual framework.

The findings of this study suggested that all teachers participating in this research demonstrated a good theoretical knowledge of the concept of SEL. However, viewed through the prism of the CASEL framework, in their conceptualisations of SEL, the interviewed teachers emphasised the social aspect of this concept, focusing mainly on children’s relationship skills. This study also found that the wellbeing programs incorporated in the participating schools have a considerable influence on teachers’ understandings of the concept of SEL and their associated pedagogical approaches and classroom practices. In addition, the results of this study indicated that SEL has a very limited place in the policies and the curricula documents of the participating schools, which in turn affects teachers’ practices related to SEL.

This thesis contributes to strengthening the knowledge base in this important area by advancing our understanding of how SEL is interpreted, positioned and implemented in two Victorian government schools. Furthermore, this study proposes an expansion of the most widely recognised conceptual framework (CASEL 2013) for enhancing children’s social and emotional competence by including the construct of self-concept and persistence in this SEL framework. Additionally, this research highlights the need of addressing SEL within the school curricula of the Australian Schools, and emphasises the importance of integrating social and emotional education in the teacher education courses within Australian context.
To conclude, this thesis signifies the importance of nurturing children’s social, emotional and personal attributes within educational context that should become a strong consideration for Australian teachers’ educational practices. As Bird and Sultman (2010, p.143) affirmed: ‘Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is an educational imperative as it provides a platform for quality learning and outcomes integral to enduring, integrative learning and overall human development’. 
REFERENCES


Anfara, VA & Mertz, NT 2006, Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.


Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) 2011, Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA, Sydney, Australia.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2012, Australia’s health 2012, 
*Australia’s health series* no.13. Cat. no. AUS 156, AIHW, Canberra.

declaration on national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century*, retrieved 05 August 2015, 
//http://www.mceetya.edu.au/nationalgoals/natgoals.htm//.

Babbie, Earl 2001, *The practice of social research* (9th ed.), Wadsworth, 
Belmont.

Backett, KC & Davison, C 1995, ‘Lifecourse and lifestyle: The social and 
cultural location of health behaviours’, *Social Science & Medicine*, vol.40, 
no.5, pp. 629-638.

Bahman, S & Maffini, H 2008, *Developing Children’s Emotional Intelligence*, 
Continuum International Publishing Group, New York.

Baker, JA 2006, ‘Contributions of teacher-child relationships to positive 
school adjustment during elementary school’, *Journal of School 
Psychology*, vol.44, pp.211-229.

York, NY.

Bar-On, R 1997, *The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i): a test of emotional 
inelligence*, Multi-Health Systems, Inc., Toronto, Canada.

Farnandez-Berrocal and N Extremera (Guest Editor), Special issues on 

intelligence on performance,’ In V, Druskat, F, Sala & G, Mount (eds.)
Linking emotional intelligence and performance at work: Current research evidence, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.


Barankin, T & Khanlou, N 2007, Growing up resilient: ways to build resilience in children and youth, CAMH (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health), Toronto, CAN.


Benard, B 2004, *Resiliency: what we have learned*, WestEd, San Francisco, USA.


Bernard, ME 2006, ‘It’s time we teach social-emotional competence as well as we teach academic competence,’ *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, vol.22, no.2, pp.103-119.


Blum, RW, McNeely, CA & Rinehart, PM 2002, Improving the odds: The untapped power of schools to improve the health of teens, University of Minnesota, Center for Adolescent Health and Development, Minneapolis, MN.


Borba, M 2005, ‘Effectiveness of implementing an esteem building program on elementary age students’ behavior and academic self-concept,’ Submitted for publication to American Psychological Association.


Calkins, SD & Bell, MA (eds.) 2010, *Child development at the intersection of emotion and cognition*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.


Cicchetti, D, Ganiban, J & Barnett, D 1991, ‘Contributions from the study of high-risk populations to understanding the development of emotional


Dafty, D & Dafty H (eds.) 1994, Holistic education: some Australian explorations, Australian Curriculum Studies Association, Belconnen, ACT.


Davidson, H 2011, Kidzmix: Helping kids become social heroes ages 5-12 years, Kidzmix Publishing (online).


Denham, SA, Bassett, HH, Sirotkin, YS & Zinsser, K 2012, Head Start preschoolers’ emotional positivity and emotion regulation predict their
classroom adjustment, social behavior, and early school success, invited poster, 12th Head Start Research Conference, Washington, DC.


Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments (DEEWR) 2009, Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, DEEWR, Canberra, ACT.


Department of Education, Science and Training 2005, Values for Australian schooling professional learning resources, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton South, Australia.


Durlak, JA & Weissberg, RP 2005, A major meta-analysis of positive youth development programs, Invited presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.


Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLFA) 2009, Belonging, Being and Becoming, Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, Australia.


Ersay, E 2007, Preschool teachers’ emotional experience traits, awareness of their own emotions and their emotional socialization practices, Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database (AAT 3266106).


Fredericks, L 2003, *Making the case for social and emotional learning and service-learning*, Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO.


Goleman, D 2004, *Emotional Intelligence, why it can matter more than IQ & Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Bloomsbury, Omnibus.


Greenberg, MT, Domitrovich, CE, Graczyk, PA & Zins, JE 2005, ‘The study of implementation in school-based preventive interventions: Theory, research, and practice, (vol. 3)’, Center for Mental Health Services,
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Rockville, MD.


Hagen, MA 2013, Social and Emotional Learning: Comparing frameworks, Youth Development Issue Brief, University of Minnesota, MN.


Hartup, W 1992, Having friends, making friends, and keeping friends: Relationships as educational contexts, ERIC Digest, ED 345 854,ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Champaign, IL.


Hay, I, Ashman, AF & van Kraayenoord, CE 1998,’ The educational characteristics of students with high or low self-concept,’ *Psychology in the Schools*, vol.35, pp.391–400.


Hristofski, F 2011, ‘An investigation of early career teachers’ integration of the principles of student social and emotional wellbeing into their professional practice’, In GD, Dodd (Ed), Moving, learning and achieving: Edited proceedings of the 27th ACHPER International Conference (pp. 12–23), Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER), Hindmarsh.


Johnson, DW & Johnson, F 2003, Joining together: Group theory and group skills, 8th edn, Allyn & Bacon, Boston.


Lynn, CJ, McKay, MM & Atkins, MS 2003, ‘School social work: Meeting the mental health needs of students through collaboration with teachers,’ Children & Schools, vol. 25, no.4, pp.197–209.


Marlow, L & Inman, D 2002, ‘Pro-social literacy? Are educators being prepared to teach social and emotional competence?,’ Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, Atlanta, GA.


Mazzer, KR & Rickwood, DJ 2015, Teachers’ role breadth and perceived efficacy in supporting student mental health,’ *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion*, vol.8, no.1, pp. 29-41.


McDonald, L 2001, *Successful Associate Teachers: Beliefs, attitudes and practices within a New Zealand context*, Project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Educational Administration, Massey University.


McManis, D & Sorenson, D 2000, The role of comprehensive school education programs in the link between health and academic performance: A literature review, Massachusetts Department of Education Learning Support Services, Malden, MA.


Merriam, SB 1998, Qualitative research and case study applications in education, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.


Merriam, SB 2009, Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.


Morse, J, Barrett, M, Mayan, M, Olson, K & Spiers, J 2002, ‘Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research’,


Nishikawa, S 2009, Japanese Adolescents’ Self-Concept and Well-being in comparison with other countries, Division of Psychiatry and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Print & Media, Umea, Sweden.


Parlakian, R 2003, *Before the ABCs: Promoting school readiness in infants and toddlers*, Zero To Three, Washington, DC.


Shaw, MP & Runco, MA 1994, *Creativity and affect*, Ablex, Norwood, NJ.


Weissberg, RP & Greenberg, MT 1998, ‘School and community competence-enhancement and prevention programs’, In W Damon (Series ed.) & IE


Wentzel, KR 1994, ‘Relations of social goal pursuit to social acceptance, classroom behavior, and perceived social support,’ *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol.86, pp.173-182.

Wentzel, KR 2002, *Teachers’ beliefs about pedagogical caring*, Unpublished manuscript, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.


Yin, RK 2014, Case study research: design and methods (5th ed.), Sage Publications, Los Angeles, CA.


Appendix A

Research and Analysis Division
Application Form

Instructions to applicants:
- This application form is for researchers seeking approval to approach Victorian government schools and/or early childhood settings to conduct a research project, and/or who wish to access data sets owned or managed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
- For researchers seeking approval to conduct research in schools and/or early childhood settings, please refer to the Guidelines for conducting research in Victorian government schools and early childhood settings.
- Please complete ALL questions. You may use the spaces provided and/or attach additional pages as necessary.
- Please double click to check ☒ all relevant boxes.

Section 1: General details

1. Research category
- Select the category of research
- Indicate whether or not access to Department-owned data is required

| a) Research in schools | ☒ | Complete form and submit according to instructions under Submitting Application |
| b) Research in early childhood settings | | |
| c) Research in both schools and early childhood settings | | |

Is access to Department-owned data required for the project indicated in the above research categories? Yes ☐

Details of Research and Analysis Division contact

Name:
Discussion level:

Please contact Research and Analysis Division by telephone: +61 3 9637 2802 or email: doe.research@edumail.vic.gov.au
Submit application according to instructions under Submitting Application

2. Research Project title (max. 50 words)

“Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning: Multiple case study”

Keywords (select one to three from the Attached List)

1. Student wellbeing 2. Teaching practices 3. Early childhood learning & development

3. Details of principal researcher
- If a student researcher, please include your supervisor as the associate researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Dr</th>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Snezhana Popordanoska</th>
<th>Djambazova-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualification(s):</td>
<td>Medical Doctor, G Dip.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

255
Faculty/ Department: School of Education/ Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development
Organisation/ University: Victoria University
Postal Address: 6/83 Whiteman Street, Southbank, Melbourne, 3006 (personal address)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Mobile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61 3 96823230</td>
<td>0415 929662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Email: Snezhana.djambazovapopordanoska@live.vu.edu.au

4. Details of associate researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Assoc. Prof.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Qualification(s)</th>
<th>Assoc. Professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/ Department</td>
<td>School of Education/ Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation/ University</td>
<td>Victoria University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal Address</td>
<td>St Albans Campus, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, 8001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Mobile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61 3 9919 7579</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Email: andrea.nolan@vu.edu.au

- If there are more than two researchers, please list their names only.

Name: Dr Anna Kilderry

5. Details of main contact person

- Please nominate one person to be the main contact person if any communication is required about this application.

As above Principal Researcher  As above Associate Researcher

Other contact person – provide details below

Name: 
Phone: 
Mobile: 
Email: 
Postal Address: 

6. Type of application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>If Student, please specify degree being sought</th>
<th>Academic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multi-centre: Local government: Non-government: Commercial:
7. Estimated timeline

- Please provide proposed commencement and completion dates (dd/mm/yyyy) for data collection, analysis and reporting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Finish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data collection:</td>
<td>April, 2013</td>
<td>November, 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Details of DEECD contact

- Has DEECD commissioned this project?  
  Yes ☐ No ☒

  - For projects commissioned by DEECD, provide information about the Branch/Division, funding and contact person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Division:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total DEECD funding:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEECD contact person:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Please provide the details of any other personnel within DEECD with whom you have discussed your proposal. Briefly describe the level of discussion. Contact with DEECD personnel is an optional recommendation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Branch/Division:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion level:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Other funding arrangements for the project

- Please provide information about funding sources; e.g. funded by a State Department (other than DEECD), Federal Government Department, ARC etc.

  RST place at Victoria University, Melbourne

10. Previous related research

- Have you previously applied to conduct this or similar research in Victorian Government schools or early childhood settings?

  Yes ☐ No ☒

  If Yes, state title, where and when:

  Departmental reference number:

Section 2: Benefit and value

- In this section describe how the project will benefit the Department, its clients, staff or schools and the contribution it will make to the education, health, safety and/or welfare of children.

11. Aim and research question(s)

- Express the aim of the project by listing up to three research questions it seeks to answer.
The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine early years primary school teachers’ perceptions and practices related to social and emotional learning (SEL) implementation in their classrooms.

In this research project the researchers will address the following research questions:

- How is SEL understood and implemented in preparatory classrooms in two Victorian schools in context of the CASEL framework?
- How is SEL positioned (placed and valued) within schools’ policies, programs and documentation in context of the CASEL framework?
- What do teachers see as the possible enablers and barriers to incorporating SEL in their classrooms?

(no more than 100 words)

12. Background and rationale

- Outline the background, rationale and objectives of the project.

Background of the study

Whilst teachers in Australia are frequently required to address students’ social and emotional needs, there is a lack of research-based information as to their capacity (expertise and confidence) to effectively support students’ social and emotional wellbeing in their classrooms (Koller & Bertel 2006). This research project will explore teachers’ perceptions, pedagogical approaches and classroom practices related to SEL, uncovering the enablers and potential barriers that may influence SEL implementation in the schools and early years classrooms.

Rationale of the study

Recognising that primary school teachers play a significant role in facilitating students’ social and emotional wellbeing, it is important to examine teachers’ perspectives and classroom practices in regards to SEL. Insights into teachers’ perceptions of SEL would provide valuable information for policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet teachers’ needs regarding SEL implementation in schools.

Objectives of the study:

1. Investigate early years primary school teachers’ perspectives and understandings of SEL, and how they perceive it to be enacted in their classrooms.
2. Explore the position of SEL within the school curricula documents and programs

(no more than 100 words)
13. Project outcomes

- What benefits to the school(s), early childhood services, educators, parents/guardians, children, or educational community, if any, will result?
- What educational or developmental impacts, if any, will result?

Benefits to the community:

- Enable the researchers to gain a better understanding of how teachers’ beliefs and perceptions of SEL can influence their teaching practices.
- Enable the researchers to infer how teachers’ views and understanding of the place of SEL in classrooms could influence children’s emotional wellbeing and their learning process.
- Give voice to the teachers that could assist policy makers and SEL programs developers to better understand and meet teachers’ and students’ SEL needs in practice.
- Grant teachers a sense of empowerment, validation of their opinions and further contribution to knowledge in the field of SEL.

Educational impact:

Insights into teachers’ attitudes and perspectives of SEL could also assist policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet students’ SEL needs in practice.

(no more than 100 words)

14. Alignment to DEECD corporate priorities

- Select the priority the project most closely aligns to:
  - [x] Increase access to high quality early childhood health, care and education services
  - [ ] Strengthen public confidence in a world-class school education system, with a strong government school sector at its core
  - [ ] Integrate services for children and families
  - [ ] Improve outcomes for disadvantaged young Victorians
- If the project does not align to one of these four corporate priorities, please provide a brief description below.

Other:

15. Outputs

- List the planned products of the project. Consider what can be fed back to the school, centre, community or DEECD. For example, e.g. evaluation or research report, journal article, media publicity, information kit, conference or school presentation; professional development program, thesis, other (provide detail).

PhD thesis, journal articles, conferences presentations, professional development programs for teachers.

(no more than 50 words)

16. Approval by a Human Research Ethics Committee

- Researchers are reminded that any proposal which is more than 'low risk' as defined by the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research requires an HREC review.
- Please advise if you have lodged an application to conduct this research with a formally constituted HREC, and the status of the application.
- If the HREC requests amendments please provide DEECD with details.
Section 3: Methodology

In this section, please provide a detailed description of the strategy you will use to answer your research questions including:

- sampling strategies and recruitment process
- instruments for data collection
- procedures for data collection and the impact they will have on sites
- techniques for data analysis

17. Sampling strategies

- Please explain how you will select schools, centres and participant groups

For the purpose of this research, two government schools in Melbourne will be selected, one of which implements a specific SEL program. The reason for this selection of schools is to explore individual teachers’ understanding and practices related to SEL from teachers who have experience with SEL program implementation and those with no such experience. After introducing the research project to the teachers, this researcher will identify three Preparatory teachers from each school (six teachers in total) who express their willingness to participate in this research.

(no more than 50 words)

Participant details: Preparatory classroom teachers

Number of participants: 6
Number of schools/sites/centres: 2

Active participants (please select)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principals/Directors</th>
<th>Teachers/Staff</th>
<th>Parents/Guardians</th>
<th>Students/Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Age groups of students/children actively participating (please select)

0<5 years  
5<11 years  
11<15 years  
15+ years

Other:

Department regions from which sample will be drawn (please select)

- Eastern Metropolitan
- Northern Metropolitan
- Southern Metropolitan
- Western Metropolitan
- Barwon South Western
- Grampians
- Hume
- Gippsland
- Loddon Mallee

18. Recruitment process

- Please describe how you will recruit potential participants (including administrative details).

The student researcher will ask permission from the Principals at both schools to approach the Preparatory teachers to introduce this research project and seek their interest to participate where they will be given an information sheet about the project. Teachers willing to participate in this study will be requested to sign a written consent form.

(no more than 50 words)
19. Methods of data collection

- List and provide detail the method or approach you will use to collect data or information, e.g. action research, case studies, drill-down, evaluation, feasibility study, focus groups, interviews, longitudinal study, market research, observation, pilot study, qualitative, quantitative, questionnaires, secondary data analysis, surveys, trials, video, other.

For the purpose of this research project, case study research methodology will be employed. In order to explore in depth teachers’ perceptions and experiences related to SEL in the classroom, semi-structured interviews will be conducted as a primary research method. Each teacher will be interviewed twice during the project. In addition to the interviews, data will be obtained from school policies and curricula related documents of the participating schools to ascertain how SEL is presented within these documents.

(no more than 100 words)

20. Instruments for data collection

- List the instruments you will use and a brief description. Note: copies of the actual instruments must be attached.

- Draft Interview guide for the participants in this research project

This instrument includes open-ended questions for the first and the follow-up interview with the selected teachers participating in this research project in order for the researchers to gain more understanding of the classroom teachers’ perspectives and practices related to SEL.

(no more than 100 words)

21. Impact on sites

- Please indicate the activities staff, teachers, students, children and parents/guardians will participate in.
- Use one line for each activity and add extra rows as needed.

### a) Participants in each school/centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity (e.g. survey, interview, video, observation)</th>
<th>Participants at each site (number &amp; type, e.g. 50 Year 10 students, 15 children, 2 teachers)</th>
<th>Amount of time activity will take (e.g. 30 minutes)</th>
<th>When activity will take place (e.g. in class time, Term 1 2009, during health check-up)</th>
<th>Participation strategy (e.g. whole class, students withdrawn, in waiting room)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>6 Preparatory teachers</td>
<td>40 minutes for each interview</td>
<td>After class time</td>
<td>In staff room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up interview</td>
<td>6 Preparatory teachers</td>
<td>40 minutes for each interview</td>
<td>After class time</td>
<td>In staff room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### b) Administrative and other support expected from each site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative activity or other support required (e.g. distribute and collect consent forms, administer survey)</th>
<th>Personnel to be involved</th>
<th>Amount of time administrative activity will take</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Procedure for obtaining informed consent

- Describe the procedure for obtaining consent of participants and when necessary, from parents or guardians for their children.

Each potential participant will be given an information sheet and consent form prior to the project beginning. Additionally, the researcher will ensure that these potential participants have an adequate understanding of this research project and of the informed consent process by explaining the project to them. They can then make an informed choice as to whether or not to participate in the research project.
23. Protection from harm: intrusive or sensitive issues

- Provide detail on any questions or issues with the potential to be intrusive, upsetting or incriminating to participants.

Some interview questions about participants' teaching practices might arouse powerful emotions in the participants. Furthermore, there is a possibility of a disclosure of sensitive information of the participants during in-depth interviews that might cause an embarrassment and psychological distress.

For example: "What do you see as your role in supporting your students Social and Emotional Learning? What do you think has influenced your thinking in relation to this?"

24. Additional support available

- Outline the additional support available to participants in the event of any disturbance resulting from intrusive questions or issues.

Participants will be reminded that they have a choice not to disclose any information or feelings that might cause any discomfort or embarrassment. In the event that a participant becomes distressed, they will be given the name of the University counsellor with whom they can discuss their concerns in confidence. Participants will be given the transcripts of their interviews for checking so that they can decide whether they are comfortable for certain information they disclose to be included in the study.

Section 4: Access to Department-owned data

- If you do not wish to access existing data owned or managed by the Department, please go to Q27.

25. Which data source do you wish to access?

- Department-owned data is classified and held at school and departmental levels. Before completing this section, it is highly recommended that you speak to the Research and Analysis Division regarding your data requirements and access processes.

- A list of data sources is available on the Submitting Application page.

26. Which variables within the data source do you wish to access?

27. Are there any other specific requirements?

28. Techniques for data analysis

- Describe how you will analyse your data to answer the research questions.

Data from the interviews will be analyzed by thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is commonly used in those qualitative studies which seek to gain a better understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences (Jebreen 2012). Data from the relevant school policies and curricula related documents will be analysed using content analysis, which helps to 'reveal public opinion about particular issues by summarizing related texts into explanatory categories' (Silverman 2011, p.66). The rationale for using policy
analysis in this research project lies in the fact that documents provide supplementary research data that can generate valuable additional information adding to the knowledge base (Bowen 2009).

(no more than 100 words)

29. Strategies to maintain confidentiality

- Outline how you will ensure the confidentiality of information provided and protect the anonymity of participants and sites in relation to:
  - data collection and storage
  - publication/reporting of results.
- If applicable, describe and justify any limitations to confidentiality and anonymity.

Data will be coded and re-identifiable. Personally identifying information will be kept separately to participants’ data and can be used to identify participants such as in the case of an adverse event. All data will be stored either on a password protected computer or in a lockable filing cabinet in room C204, School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University, Footscray Park. The research report will be presented in the form of exploration of participants’ perspectives and practices with no identity disclosed. All information provided in the interviews will be kept confidential and no individual will be identified by their name or their workplace in any publications resulting from this study. In the case of the interviews all participants’ names will be changed to protect each individual’s identity. The names of the participating schools will also be changed.

(no more than 100 words)
Research Agreement

Privacy
The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is committed to protecting the privacy of personal and health information.

☒ The researcher(s) acknowledge and agree to be bound by the Information Privacy Principles under the Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic.), and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic.).
☒ The researcher(s) agree to maintain confidentiality of information in accordance with these principles and obtain consent from participating teachers/staff and from parents/guardians for participating students/children.

Insurance
DEECD must ensure any research activity does not expose students/children, parents/guardians, staff or the Department to any unreasonable risk.
☒ The researcher(s) (or their institution or employer) hold public liability and, where appropriate, workers compensation insurance for the term of the research project.

DEECD laws, policies and procedures
☒ The researcher(s) agree to abide by all DEECD laws, policies and procedures relating to the delivery of educational programs.

Reports of completed research
As principal researcher, I agree:
☒ to provide DEECD with a concise 2-3 page electronic summary report and its key findings;
☒ to provide a report to the participating school(s)/centre(s) in a format agreed to by the principal(s)/head(s) of those participating;
☒ to acknowledge the support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in any publications arising from the research; and
☒ to provide DEECD with the opportunity to provide comment on any materials generated from the research prior to formal publication. It is expected that if there are any differences of opinion related to the research outcomes between the Department and me, that these differences will be acknowledged in any publications, presentations and public forums.

I agree to the publication of the 2-3 page summary in the DEECD Research Register on the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website, which is accessible and viewable by the public.

Please note: if DEECD has commissioned this project, the responsible Branch/Division must approve the publication of any material on the Department’s Research Register.

The researcher(s) declare the information provided in this application to conduct research in schools and/or early childhood settings to be true and correct.

Signature Redacted by Library
Signature (Principal Researcher) Date 02 / 11 / 2012

Signature Redacted by Library
Signature (Associate Researcher) Date 01 / 11 / 2012
Appendix B

INFORMATION TO TEACHERS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled ‘Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning: Multiple case study’. This project is being conducted by a student researcher, Snezhan Djambazova –Popordanoska, M.D., Dip. Couns., as part of PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Associate Professor Andrea Nolan and Dr Anna Kilderry from School of Education.

Project explanation

The purpose of this research project is to explore how teachers understand and attend to children’s social and emotional learning (SEL) in their classrooms. Recognising that primary schools play a significant role in providing environments that facilitate students’ social and emotional wellbeing, it is important to gain insight into teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices in regards to this. Greater understanding of teachers’ beliefs and practices related to social and emotional learning can provide valuable information into how best to implement relevant professional development for teachers and enhance their work and effectiveness in this important area. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, two state government schools in Melbourne will be selected, one of which implements a specific SEL program. In order to inquire in depth about teachers’ understanding and experiences related to SEL, interviews and follow-up interviews with Preparatory school teachers will be conducted, supplemented by policy analysis of school curricula and school documents of both participating schools.

What will I be asked to do?

Initially, the student researcher will ask permission from the Principals at both schools to approach the Preparatory teachers to introduce this research project and seek their interest to participate. The student researcher hopes that three Preparatory teachers from your school and three Preparatory teachers from the other school will express their willingness to participate in this research. If more than six teachers in total express their interest to participate in this research project, the teachers who have more teaching experience and/or professional development or training in the field of SEL will be selected. This information will be obtained from the Principal of your school. In the case when less than three teachers in one of the selected schools express their willingness to participate in this project, they will be accepted and the remaining number of teachers will be selected from another government school willing to participate in this research project.

What will I gain from participating?

Participation in this research project will assist you to reflect on your thoughts and practice regarding children’s social and emotional learning. Additionally, the overall findings of the research could assist policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet students’ SEL needs.

How will the information I give be used?

The information will be used as part of the student researcher’s PhD thesis which will be submitted for examination. Based on the findings of the research, journal articles will be written/published and the student researcher will present at conferences. Participants’ identity, and that of the schools will be kept anonymous. A summary report of the research findings will be made available to you upon request.
What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

There are no anticipated risks or any burdens to you as a participant in this research project as your participation is voluntary. The research report will be presented in the form of exploration of participants’ perspectives and practices with no identity disclosed. All information provided in the interviews will be kept confidential and no individual will be identified by their name or their workplace in any publications resulting from this study. In the case of the interviews all participants’ names will be changed to protect each individual’s identity. Furthermore, you will be reminded of your right to withdraw from this project at any stage and for any reason without any further consequences. However, once you have checked the transcript of the interview the data cannot be withdrawn from the project.

There is a slight risk that during the interviews you may disclose some sensitive information that might cause you to feel embarrassed or anxious. To address this concern, you will be reminded that you have a choice not to disclose any information that might cause any discomfort or embarrassment. In the event that you become distressed, you will be given the name of the University counsellor with whom you can discuss your concerns in confidence.

How will this project be conducted?

If you are interested to participate in this study, you will be requested to sign a written consent form. Then you will be interviewed once at the beginning of the study (between April and May, 2013) and again later in the year (between October and November, 2013). It is anticipated that each interview will take approximately 40 minutes and will be held at a time and place acceptable to you. These interviews will not impact on your classroom time. The interviews will focus on your understanding and perceptions related to social and emotional learning and your classroom practice in regards to this. In addition, if you agree, the interviews will be audio recorded. All interviews will be transcribed and the transcripts will be given back to you for checking.

As stated the project will be conducted using interviews and analysis of written and published documents of school policy and curriculum of your school. The above-mentioned methods have demonstrated to be effective in collecting rich and descriptive data related to the participants’ understandings, beliefs and insights. This can help the researchers to gain more understanding of the place and value of social and emotional learning in your school and the Australian Education System.

Who is conducting the study?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief investigator:</th>
<th>Ass. Prof. Andrea Nolan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Department/University:</td>
<td>School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>61 3 9919 7579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andrea.nolan@vu.edu.au">andrea.nolan@vu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associate investigator:</th>
<th>Dr Anna Kilderry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Department/University:</td>
<td>School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>61 3 9919 2918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anna.kilderry@vu.edu.au">anna.kilderry@vu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student researcher:</th>
<th>Dr Snezhana Djambazova –Popordanoska, M.D., G Dip. Couns.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Department/University:</td>
<td>School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>0415 929662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:snezhana.djambazovapopordanoska@live.vu.edu.au">snezhana.djambazovapopordanoska@live.vu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Student researcher: | Dr Snezhana Djambazova –Popordanoska, M.D., Dip. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>School/Department/University:</strong></th>
<th>School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone:</strong></td>
<td>0415 929662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Email address:</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:snezhanadjambazovapopordanoska@live.vu.edu.au">snezhanadjambazovapopordanoska@live.vu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief investigator listed above.
Appendix C

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

You are invited to be a part of a study that investigates classroom teachers’ perspectives and practices related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and young children’s learning. The research project will identify how early years primary school teachers understand and implement Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in their classrooms. It is hoped that the outcomes of this research will help to inform the policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet teachers’ needs regarding SEL implementation in schools. All data collected will remain confidential, the school you work at will not be named and participants will not be referred to by name.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, ___________________________________________________________________________________________

of ___________________________________________________________________________________________

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study: ‘Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and young children’s learning: Classroom teachers’ perspectives and practices’, being conducted by a student researcher, Snezhana Djambazova – Popordanoska (M.D., Dip. Couns.) as part of her PhD at Victoria University under the supervision of Associate Professor Andrea Nolan and Dr Anna Kilderry from the School of Education.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by: Snezhana Djambazova –Popordanoska and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- Participating in two interviews (which will be audio taped if I give verbal consent at the time of each interview).

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief investigator:</th>
<th>Ass. Prof. Andrea Nolan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Department/University:</td>
<td>School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>61 3 9919 7579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andrea.nolan@vu.edu.au">andrea.nolan@vu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

INFORMATION TO PRINCIPALS

Your school is invited to participate

Your school is invited to participate in a research project entitled ‘Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning’. This project is being conducted by a student researcher, Snezhana Djambazova –Popordanoska (M.D., Dip. Couns.) as part of her PhD at Victoria University under the supervision of Associate Professor Andrea Nolan and Dr Anna Kilderry from the School of Education.

Project explanation

The purpose of this research project is to explore how teachers understand and attend to children’s social and emotional learning (SEL) in their classrooms. Recognising that primary schools play a significant role in providing environments that facilitate students’ social and emotional wellbeing, it is important to gain insight into teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices in regards to this. Greater understanding of teachers’ beliefs and practices related to social and emotional learning can provide valuable information into how best to implement relevant professional development for teachers and enhance their work and effectiveness in this important area. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, two state government schools in Melbourne will be selected, one of which implements a specific SEL program. In order to inquire in depth about teachers’ understanding, beliefs and experiences related to SEL and its influence on the students’ learning, interviews and follow-up interviews with Preparatory school teachers will be conducted, supplemented by policy analysis of school curricula and school documents of both participating schools.

What will I be asked to do?

Initially, the student researcher will ask permission from the Principals at both schools to approach the Preparatory teachers to introduce this research project and seek their interest to participate. The student researcher hopes that three Preparatory teachers from your school and three Preparatory teachers from the other school will express their willingness to participate in this research. If more than six teachers in total express their interest to participate in this research project, the teachers who have more teaching experience and/or professional development or training in the field of SEL will be selected. This information will be obtained from you as the Principal of the school. In the case when less than three teachers in one of the selected schools express their willingness to participate in this project, they will be accepted and the remaining number of teachers will be selected from another government school willing to participate in this research project.

What will be gained from participating?

Participation in this research project will assist the participating Preparatory teachers to reflect on their thoughts and practice regarding children’s social and emotional learning. Additionally, the overall findings of the research could assist policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet students’ SEL needs.

How will the information given be used?

The information will be used as part of the student researcher’s PhD thesis which will be submitted for examination. Based on the findings of the research, journal articles will be written/published and the student researcher will present at conferences. Participants’ identities, and the name of the schools will be kept anonymous. A summary report of the research findings will be made available to you upon request.
What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

There are no anticipated risks or any burdens to the participants in this research project as their participation is voluntary. The research report will be presented in the form of exploration of participants’ perspectives and practices with no identity disclosed. All information provided from the participants will be kept confidential and no individual will be identified by their name or their workplace in any publications resulting from this study. In the case of the interviews all participants’ names will be changed to protect each individual’s identity. Furthermore, all teachers participating in this research will be reminded of their right to withdraw from this project at any stage and for any reason without any further consequences. However, once the teacher has checked the transcript of the interview the data cannot be withdrawn from the project.

There is a slight risk that during the interviews teachers may disclose some sensitive information that might cause them to feel embarrassed or anxious. To address this concern, teachers will be reminded that they have a choice not to disclose any information that might cause any discomfort or embarrassment. In the event that participants are distressed, they will be given the name of the University counsellor with whom they can discuss their concerns in confidence.

How will this project be conducted?

Teachers willing to participate in this study will be requested to sign a written consent form. Then teachers who agree to participate in this research project will be interviewed once at the beginning of the study (between April and May, 2013) and again later in the year (between October and November, 2013). It is anticipated that each interview will take approximately 40 minutes and will be held at a time and place acceptable to the interviewee. These interviews will not impact on the classroom time of the teachers. The interviews will focus on teachers’ understanding and perceptions related to social and emotional learning and their classroom practices in regards to this. In addition, the interviews will be audio recorded if the teacher being interviewed agrees. All interviews will be transcribed and the transcripts will be given back to each interviewee for checking. As stated the project will be conducted using interviews and analysis of written and published documents of school policy and curriculum of your school. The above-mentioned methods have demonstrated to be effective in collecting rich and descriptive data related to the participants’ understandings, beliefs and insights. This can help the researchers to gain more understanding of the place and value of social and emotional learning in your school and the Australian Education System.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief investigator:</th>
<th>Assoc. Prof. Andrea Nolan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Department/University:</td>
<td>School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>61 3 9919 7579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andrea.nolan@vu.edu.au">andrea.nolan@vu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associate investigator:</th>
<th>Dr Anna Kilderry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Department/University:</td>
<td>School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>61 3 9919 2918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:anna.kilderry@vu.edu.au">anna.kilderry@vu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student researcher:</th>
<th>Dr Snezhana Djambazova –Popordanoska, M.D., Dip. Couns.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Department/University:</td>
<td>School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>0415 929662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:snezhana.djambazovapopordanoska@live.vu.edu.au">snezhana.djambazovapopordanoska@live.vu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above.
Appendix E

CONSENT FORM FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

INFORMATION TO PRINCIPALS:

Your school is invited to be part of a study that investigates classroom teachers’ perspectives and practices related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and young children’s learning. The research project will identify how early years primary school teachers understand and implement Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in their classrooms. It is hoped that the outcomes of this research will help to inform the policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet teachers’ needs regarding SEL implementation in schools. All data collected will remain confidential, your school will not be named and participants will not be referred to by name.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, ____________________________________________________________

of ____________________________________________________________

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent for the teachers at my school to participate in the study: ‘Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning: Multiple case study’, if they choose. I understand that this study is being conducted by a student researcher, Snezhana Djambazova –Popordanoska (M.D., Dip. Couns.) as part of her PhD at Victoria University under the supervision of Associate Professor Andrea Nolan and Dr Anna Kilderry from the School of Education.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by: Snezhana Djambazova –Popordanoska, and the Preparatory teachers of the school who choose to be part of the research will be involved in the below mentioned procedures:

- Participating in two interviews (which will be audio taped if the participating teachers give verbal consent at the time of each interview).

I also freely consent for the student researcher to have access to published documents related to school policy and school curriculum.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that the teachers can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise them or the school in any way.

Signed: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief investigator:</th>
<th>Assoc. Prof. Andrea Nolan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Department/University:</td>
<td>School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development, Victoria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td>61 3 9919 7579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:andrea.nolan@vu.edu.au">andrea.nolan@vu.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 or phone (03) 9919 4781.
Appendix F

Interview guide for the participants in the research project entitled:
‘Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning:
Multiple case study’

Questions for the first interview:

1. How many years have you been working as a teacher in this school?
2. How many years in total have you been working as a teacher?
3. Have you been teaching different grade levels? If so, which ones?
4. Have you attended any professional development workshops related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?
5. Was SEL incorporated in your Graduate Diploma education?
6. How familiar are you with the term ‘Social and Emotional Learning’ or SEL? What is your understanding of Social and Emotional Learning?
7. What characteristics do socially and emotionally competent children have? Can you describe a situation where a child has displayed social and emotional competence?
8. How do you see these characteristics influencing their social interactions and behaviour at school? Why do you think that?
9. What is your view on parents’ responsibilities to foster social and emotional skills in their children?
10. Do you think there is any relation between children’s social and emotional competencies and their learning in the classroom? What do you notice about this in your classroom? Can you give me any examples?
11. What do you see as your role in supporting your students Social and Emotional Learning? What do you think has influenced your thinking in relation to this?
12. What do you think are the main obstacles to incorporating SEL in primary school classrooms?
13. What is the role of the school in SEL learning? How does your school support children’s SEL? Does this support differ depending on the social and emotional needs of the student?
14. Does your school have a policy about SEL?
15. Is there anything else you wish to add about SEL?
Appendix G

Interview guide for the participants in the research project entitled:
‘Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning: Multiple case study’
Questions for the second interview:

GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR ALL TEACHERS

1. What characteristics do you think socially and emotionally intelligent teachers have? How could these characteristics influence teachers’ interactions with their students? Can you give me an example?
2. How could teachers foster their own social and emotional wellbeing?
3. To what extent do you believe that teachers’ values and beliefs influence the emphasis on SEL in the classroom? Can you give me an example?
4. What part does school leadership play in how SEL is implemented in schools? Why do you think so?

Specific questions for each teacher from Greenfield Primary School

NEW INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR HELEN

1. You mentioned that empathy is vital for emotional understanding of others. How can you as a teacher help your students to develop empathy? Can you give me an example?
2. In the first interview you mentioned that you talk with your students about different characters of the ‘You Can Do It’ Program’ and their feelings. Do you also talk about and express your feelings in the classroom? Can you give me an example? What impact do you think this has on your students?
3. You mentioned that you haven’t received enough relevant SEL education in your teacher education course. How should SEL be incorporated into teacher education courses?
NEW INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ALYSON

1. In the first interview you mentioned that SEL should be addressed regularly and taught explicitly in schools. What is your view on a classroom delivery of a formal SEL program as opposed to an informal SEL instruction? Why do you think so?

2. You mentioned that the ‘You Can Do It’ Program supports children’s expression of their feelings in the classroom. Do you talk about and express your feelings in the classroom? Can you give me an example? What impact do you think this has on your students?

3. You mentioned that you haven’t received enough relevant SEL education in your teacher education course and that SEL should be definitely incorporated in this course. How should SEL be incorporated into teacher education courses?

Specific questions for each teacher from Rosefield Primary School

NEW INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GRACE

1. You mentioned that teachers need more education about SEL. What kind of professional development related to SEL would be beneficial for you as a teacher?

2. You stated that the role of the teacher is to deliver explicit SEL education to their students. What is your view on a classroom delivery of a formal SEL program as opposed to an informal SEL instruction? Why do you think so?

3. You mentioned that amongst other classroom strategies related to SEL you discuss with your students the use of strategies to deal with their negative feelings. Do you also talk about and express your feelings in the classroom? Can you give me an example? What impact do you think this has on your students?
NEW INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SAMANTHA

1. You mentioned that teachers should be in tune with their students and understand their level of SEL. How does a positive teacher-child relationship relate to being in tune with the students? Can you give me an example?
2. You made an interesting statement that ESL children find it difficult to express themselves in another language that in turn may influence their social interactions with the peers at school. In what way can teachers support those children’s social skills?
3. In the first interview you mentioned that one of your classroom strategies related to SEL is role-modelling. Do you talk about and express your feelings in the classroom? Can you give me an example? What impact do you think this has on your students?

NEW INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MARY

1. You mentioned that you have been teaching a group of children with low social skills. What is the difference between children with low social skills and those with a high level of social skills? Can you give me an example?
2. In the first interview you mentioned that your most significant classroom strategy related to SEL is role-modelling. Do you talk about and express your feelings in the classroom? Can you give me example? What impact do you think this has on your students?
3. You mentioned that you haven’t received enough relevant SEL education in your teacher education course. How should SEL be incorporated into teacher education courses?
Appendix H

Case Study Protocol

**TITLE:** ‘Teachers’ perspectives and practices on Social and Emotional Learning: Multiple case study’

**INVESTIGATORS:**
PhD Candidate: Snezhana Djambazova-Popordanoska, M.D., G Dip. Couns.
Principal Supervisor: Prof. Matthew Clarke
External Supervisor: Dr Frank Muscara

**1. ABSTRACT**

The primary purpose of this exploratory study is to examine how Preparatory teachers in two Victorian Primary schools understand and implement SEL in their classrooms. Moreover, this study aims to investigate how SEL is positioned (placed and valued) within schools’ policies, programs and documentation of the participating schools. Recognising that primary school teachers play a significant role in facilitating students’ social and emotional wellbeing, it is important to examine teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices in regards to SEL. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, two state government schools in Melbourne will be selected, one where Preparatory teachers use specific SEL program and another school in which there is no such program in use. In order to inquire in depth about teachers’ understanding and experiences related to SEL, semi-structured interviews will be conducted, supplemented by school curricula and school documents of the selected schools. Insights into teachers’ perceptions of SEL would provide valuable information for policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet teachers’ needs regarding SEL implementation in schools.
2. BACKGROUND

Schools of the 21st century have witnessed a subtle shift in education in recent years. Focus on academic accomplishment alone that has been emphasized traditionally in schools in the last few decades has been shown not to be sufficient to produce responsible and considerate students, self-motivated learners and productive citizens (Payton, Wardlaw, Graczyk, Bloodworth, Tompsett & Weissberg 2000). On the other hand, a holistic approach encompassing academic and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) that offers all students an opportunity to develop their potential optimally, has demonstrated its positive impact on students' mental health and their school success (Durlak et al. 2011).

The term SEL was first introduced in the United States in 1994, when the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was instituted (CASEL 2013). This organisation developed a new concept for school-based interventions with a proximal goal to implement SEL as an indispensable part of school education (Elias et al.1997; Greenberg et al. 2003; Kress & Elias 2006). Social and Emotional Learning is defined by its purveyors as ‘the process of acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions; developing caring and concern for others; making responsible decisions; establishing positive relationships; and handling challenging situations capably ’ (Elias et al.1997, p. 406). In current times, a number of different terms are used internationally to indicate SEL, such as, emotional literacy, emotional intelligence, emotional and social wellbeing, social and emotional competence and social and emotional learning (Department for Education and Skills UK, 2005). For the purpose of this research, the term ‘Social and Emotional Learning’ (SEL), proposed by CASEL (1994), would be used. This is also in line with how the term SEL is defined and used in the Australian context (Kids Matter 2014).

There is a growing body of scientific research undertaken internationally (Eisenberg 2006; Guerra & Bradshaw 2008; Masten & Coatsworth 1998; Weissberg & Greenberg 1998) that presented the multiple benefits of teaching children SEL in schools starting from an early age. This
extensive research indicated that successful attainment of social and emotional competencies is correlated with better emotional wellbeing and higher academic achievement while on the contrary, lack of social and emotional skills can result in many personal, social and academic problems. For example, the findings from a meta-analysis (Durlak et al. 2011) of 213 school-based SEL programs across the world including 270,034 kindergarten through high school students illustrated improved social and emotional competencies, prosocial behaviour (kind, considerate and helpful behaviour), improved attitudes about self and others, reduced level of emotional distress and behavioural problems and 11 percentile gain in academic achievement. These findings added to the growing body of compelling evidence affirming the positive outcomes of SEL on students (Catalano et al. 2002; Greenberg et al. 2003; Zins et al. 2004).

In Australia, in recent years, teachers are commonly confronted with behavioural problems among students such as bullying, violence or substance abuse (Masia-Warner, Nagle & Hansen 2006; Vevers 2007). Moreover, the number of Australian students with attention deficit problems, poor social and emotional skills, anxiety or depression is increasing rapidly (Bernard, Stephanou & Ubach 2007). According to the ABS (2007) figures, 7-10% of children aged under 15 years were reported to have long-term mental health or behavioural problems, such as attention problems, disruptive or aggressive behaviour, as well as anxiety and depression. Additionally, Bernard (2007, p.106) in a study conducted on 11 526 Australian students at different year levels that examined various aspects of social and emotional wellbeing of students from teachers’ and students’ perspective, revealed that: ‘40% of Australian primary and secondary school students have poor social and emotional skills’. Hence, introduced by an Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative “Kids Matter” (2014) in most Australian states and territories, the promotion of SEL in education systems has received growing attention recently. This has resulted in increased expectations on classroom teachers to support student's social and emotional wellbeing in many schools across Australia (Kay-Lambkin et al. 2007). However, whilst teachers are frequently required to address students’ social and emotional needs, there is a lack of research-based
information as to their capacity (expertise and confidence) to effectively support students’ social and emotional wellbeing in their classrooms (Koller & Bertel 2006). Therefore, it is important to understand teachers’ views and understanding on the place of SEL in early years classrooms that could influence children’s emotional wellbeing and their learning process. Insights into teachers’ attitudes and perspectives of SEL could also assist policy makers and SEL program developers to better understand and meet teachers’ needs related to SEL in practice. Moreover, by investigating how SEL is positioned within the school curricula documents of two Victorian Primary Schools, this research project would offer more comprehensive understanding of the value placed on SEL within Victorian Education System.

3. RESEARCH AIMS

The primary purpose of this exploratory study is to examine how Preparatory teachers in two Victorian Primary schools understand and implement SEL in their classrooms. Moreover, this study aims to investigate how SEL is positioned within schools’ policies, programs and documentation of the participating schools.

The two major aims of this research project are to:
1. Explore early years primary school teachers’ perspectives and understandings of SEL, and how they perceive it to be enacted in their classrooms.
2. Investigate the place and value of SEL within the school curricula documents and wellbeing programs of the participating schools.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question that guided this study pertained to teachers’ understandings and classroom practices related to SEL, as well as to the place of SEL within the school curricula documents of the participating schools.
Main Research Question:

- How is SEL understood and implemented in preparatory classrooms in two Victorian Primary schools in context of the CASEL framework?

In order to answer this broad research question, the following set of supporting research questions was addressed:

- How is SEL positioned (placed and valued) within schools’ policies, programs and documentation in context of the CASEL framework?

- What do teachers see as the possible enablers and barriers to incorporating SEL within the school environment?

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

For the purpose of this research project, a case study research methodology will be employed. In essence, a case study research refers to a particular kind of inquiry in which the researcher aims to explore or describe the social phenomena under investigation within its natural context in order to gain a better understanding of the case(s) in real world conditions. As Yin (2009) stated, a case study as a research strategy is usually applied when the research questions require an in-depth inquiry of the social phenomenon under investigation. The selection of a case study as a preferred method of investigation for this research project is inherently related to the research questions of this study, which in turn, will allow an in depth exploration of the perspectives and the classroom practices of Preparatory teachers in relation to SEL, as well as an inquiry of the place and influence of SEL within the school curricula in two Victorian Primary schools. For the purpose of this study, an exploratory approach will be employed, which in turn, will allow Preparatory teachers’ perspectives related to SEL to be explored in intricate detail, without being hindered or restricted by outside influences.
5. DATA COLLECTION

This research will employ a multimethod approach, encompassing semi-structured interviews as a primary data collection method, and document reviews as a complementary source of data. For the purpose of this study, it is critical that the voices of early years classroom teachers are heard and their perspectives related to SEL are explored in depth. Therefore, semi-structured interviews conducted with each teacher at two points in time during the data collection phases, will be considered as a vital source of information for this study, allowing me to capture their thoughts, perceptions, feelings and beliefs about their classroom practices regarding SEL.

In order to understand the multiple layers and dimensions of the value placed on SEL within the schools, and how those dimensions interplay holistically, additional data for this research will be obtained from the written and published documents of school policies, curricula and programs of the participating schools. Upon request, the school curricula documents will be collected from both Principals of the participating schools at the time of conducting the first round of interviews.

6. CASE SELECTIONS

To identify the participants for this research project, a purposive selection of samples will be used. As Patton (2002, p.230) contended, ‘the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth.’ Hence, the schools considered for inclusion in this research will be selected on the basis of the following criteria: operated by the Victorian government (a State school), and located in the outer suburbs in Melbourne. In this way, I will try to avoid the potential impact on the final results of this study based on the differences in school systems (independent, church based). The reason to recruit schools from the outer Melbourne suburbs is to reduce the need to travel long distances in the process of data collection. An additional important consideration when selecting the schools is to identify one school with an established formal SEL program in place and another school without such a program. The rationale
for including the latter criterion in the selection process is to gain greater insight into the place and value of SEL within the school curricula documents as well as the various teachers' pedagogical approaches in relation to SEL in a school that already incorporated SEL program and another one without such a program.

After gaining approval from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to conduct the study, I will approach the Principals of the selected schools to discuss the research project. Then I will ask each Principal for permission to invite all Preparatory teachers in the selected schools to participate in this research. After introducing the research project to the teachers, I will identify three Preparatory teachers from each school (six teachers in total) who express their willingness to participate in this research. The rationale for choosing Preparatory teachers is to attain deeper understanding of how teachers in the early school years approach SEL in their classrooms that is the purpose of this research project. Moreover, by investigating teachers' understanding to SEL from those teachers who have already implemented specific SEL program in their classroom and those who didn’t, I will be able to gain insights into various teachers’ pedagogies and values they place on different aspects of SEL.

7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the initial stage of this research project, an application for conducting human research will be submitted to the University's Human Research Ethics Committee and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Before commencing the data collection process, signed consent forms will be obtained from both Principals of the selected schools and all participating teachers in this research.

During the entire process of data collection, abiding by the fundamental ethical principles and processes for conducting human research (Mack et al. 2005), all participants' rights regarding their welfare, beliefs, perceptions, customs and cultural heritage were highly respected. In addition, all participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from this project at any stage and for any reason without any consequences arising from this
decision, because their participation is on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality of all information and data collected for the purpose of this study, will be ensured at all times. For example, all identifying information of teachers and schools will removed from the data, after transcripts are checked by the participants, and replaced by pseudonyms. Moreover, adhering to the principles of the University’s Human Research Ethics Guidelines, the research participants will be informed that all information collected for the purpose of this study would remain confidential and stored securely in a password protected location.

8. DATA ANALYSIS

In order to develop a better understanding of the complex and rich set of data in this qualitative study, an inductive approach through thematic analysis will be used to analyse the collected set of interview data (Guest, MacQueen & Narmey 2012; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Thomas 2006, Creswell 2002; Backett & Davison 1995; Stolee et al. 1999). Thematic analysis is a ‘comprehensive process of data coding and identification of themes’ pertinent to the phenomenon under investigation (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, p.4). As the primary purpose of this study is to develop greater in-depth understanding of teachers’ perspectives and classroom practices related to SEL, this analytical approach is suitable for analyzing the interview data in this study.

With a proximal goal to illuminate and understand the place of SEL in the school policies and curricula of the selected schools, discourse analysis will be used to evaluate the documentary data in this study. This can help this researcher to gain more understanding of the place and value of SEL in the Victorian Education System.

9. BUDGET

Costs related to data collection, storage and analysis will be covered by myself as a necessary expense incurred as part of undertaking a PhD study. The following other minor expenses may be disbursed:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Transcribing/typing interview data</td>
<td>$540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 hrs x $ 30.00  = $ 240 (9 hrs recorded time)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone calls</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>Digital Dictaphone for interview recordings</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approximately 10 blank discs to store interview data</td>
<td>$160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Approximately 12 journeys to gain interviews at average of 30 km each=360km.</td>
<td>$170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>360km x .047c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumable Materials</td>
<td>Photocopying</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Printing and binding of Theses 4 copies ($80 each)</td>
<td>$320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. REFERENCES:


Arnold, R 2005, Empathic Intelligence, University of New South Wales Press Ltd., Sydney, Australia.


Bhamani, AK 2005, *Using interviews as research instruments*, Language Institute, Chulalongkom University.


Doidge, N 2010, *The brain that changes itself*, revised edition, Scribe


Goleman, D 1995, Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ, Bloomsbury, London.


Greenberg, MT, Dimitrovich, CE, Graczyk, PA, & Zins, JE 2003, ‘The study of implementation in school-based prevention research: Implications for theory, research, and practice’, Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Rockville, MD.


Lantieri, L & Goleman, D 2008, Building Emotional Intelligence, Sounds True, Boulder Colorado.


Skilbeck, M & Connell, H 2004, ‘Teachers for the future – the changing nature of society and related issues for the teaching workforce,’ A report to the teacher quality and educational leadership taskforce of the ministerial council for education, employment training and youth affairs, Canberra: MCEETYA.


