Teachers' experiences of facilitating competency-based social-emotional learning in the Foundation Phase

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ABSTRACT

Schools should be safe and enabling learning environments where learner well-being is promoted through educating the whole child with an equal focus on the importance of academic achievement, social and emotional development as well as health and civic engagement.

The South African schooling system is plagued with many challenges. The ability for teachers to manage their classrooms that are often overcrowded and lacking in resources is a continual problem. These classroom environments are not conducive to learning where on-going and persistent learner misbehaviour causes stress and anxiety that ultimately impacts on teacher commitment and motivation and explains the high levels of teacher burnout. All of these factors contribute to a failing educational system with poor academic outcomes. South African learners deserve an education that develops both academic and social and emotional competence to build the resilience that the youth of today need to thrive and develop when faced with our current and future life challenges. In light of this, equipping teachers with the tools to manage their classrooms becomes a critical component to consider.

Competency-based social and emotional learning is an innovative intervention approach that offers teachers’ the tools to build strong and trusting bi-directional relationships that ultimately change the relational dynamics between teachers, learners and peers. Through this, classrooms are transformed into positive learning environments where learners feel safe to explore and try out new behaviours. This process enables children and adults to apply a set of skills or competencies to navigate through life to ensure success initially in school, later in the workplace, and ultimately, as constructive and responsible members of society. These competencies are: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making.
The advantages of competency-based, well-implemented social and emotional learning are evident in research supporting social and emotional development, at teacher and student level, as a precursor to positive classroom outcomes such as quality teacher classroom management, improved academic achievement, strengthened relationships in classrooms, all of which positively impact student behaviour and emotional health and overall teacher and student commitment to school.

In the South African school context, limited attention has been given to competency-based, social and emotional learning despite its multiple benefits. In response to this limitation, this qualitative phenomenological study explores teacher experiences of facilitating competency-based social-emotional learning in the Foundation Phase in the hope that the research will contribute to seeing an increase in effective, competency-based social and emotional learning integration in South African classrooms.

In accordance with the qualitative phenomenological nature of the research, the data in this study was collected in two ways from eighteen participants who were purposely selected and consented to partake in the research. Firstly, open-ended individual interviews were conducted with each participant. Secondly, all of the participants were requested to write reflections on their personal experiences of facilitating a competency-based social and emotional learning process over the past two and a half years. The data in all data sets obtained in this study were analysed by means of thematic analysis.

The findings were reported with reference to three main themes:

- Teachers’ perceptions of CBSEL based on their involvement in the programme
- Applying a programme-based approach to the facilitation of CBSEL
- The impact of the facilitation of CBSEL
With reference to *Teachers’ perceptions of CBSEL based on their involvement in the programme*, the subthemes indicated a need to contextualise the participants’ experiences through defining CBSEL and exploring participant validation of the need for CBSEL, along with the participants’ personal strengths and competencies associated with the facilitation of CBSEL.

With reference to *Applying a programme-based approach to the facilitation of CBSEL*, the subthemes explored the effectiveness of the primary and secondary resources and activities applied within the programme along with the advantages and challenges of a programme-based approach to CBSEL.

With reference to *The impact of the facilitation of CBSEL*, the subthemes assessed the positive relational dynamics experienced in the classroom and playground through CBSEL. Short and long-term benefits of CBSEL were also addressed.

This study aims to contributing to creating an awareness of the value of introducing competency-based social and emotional learning in schools in the Western Cape. Through this study, the benefits and challenges of CBSEL for South African schooling communities were explored and understood, giving insight into the next steps that need to be taken, such as comprehensive teacher professional development training and school leadership buy in for CBSEL. It is hoped that this research will contribute to seeing an increase in effective, competency-based social and emotional learning in South African classrooms as an integrated process requiring support at multiple levels.

Keywords: Social and Emotional Learning; Competency-based social-emotional learning; Foundation Phase.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and orientation to the study

1.1 Introduction

Schools, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2013), should be enabling spaces in which children’s well-being, is promoted (Sánchez, Colón & Esparza, 2005; Konu and Rimpela, 2002). Cefai and Cavioni (2015) argue that today’s learners need an education that develops both academic and social and emotional competence to build the resilience that the youth of today need to thrive and develop when faced with current and future life challenges. Research by Raver and Knitzer (2002), suggests a clear link between obtaining social-emotional competence and well-being in young children. Social and emotional competence, according to Elias (1997) refers to the development of social and emotional coping skills to manage everyday life tasks such as learning, problem solving, relationship management and the ability to manage the demands of growth and development. Mastery of these competencies imparts the ability to visualise outcomes of behaviours through making positive, informed choices to reach desired goals, while appreciating the perspectives of others (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Greenberg, & Haynes, 1997; Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004; Payton, 2000; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Competency-based social-emotional learning has been conceptualised following extensive research and involves the facilitation of five interrelated sets of emotional, cognitive and behavioural competencies, namely: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making (CASEL, 2013; Elias et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2004; Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004; Durlak, 2011).
Research literature indicates that when these competencies have been mastered, positive social behaviour and academic achievement is more evident (Greenberg, Weissberg, O’Brien, Zins, Fredericks, & Resnik, 2003; Haynes, Ben-Avie & Ensign, 2003; Malecki & Elliott, 2002; Welsch et al., 2001; Zins et al., 2004). The advantages of competency-based, well-implemented social and emotional learning are evident in research on student outcomes. Durlak et al., (2011), published the research findings of a meta-analysis of over 213 experimental-control group studies, looking at the effects of school-based, social emotional learning programming on student behaviour and academic performance. Against controls, academically, students achieved an average increase of 11 percentile points. Students also showed improved levels of social and emotional competence. This impacted on self-concept and relationship skills that positively affected children’s attitudes towards and behaviour at school. Children showed greater attachment, engagement and commitment to school. Fewer conduct problems, such as disruptive classroom behaviour or bullying, were reported. Reduction in classroom anxiety, depression and social withdrawal was also evident. Similar evidence from further research on the positive link between competency – based, social and emotional learning, education, academic achievement and student behaviour is also evident in other findings (Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

Globally, educators, parents and the broader community acknowledge the need for a set of educational goals for 21\textsuperscript{st} century youth. Educating the ‘whole child’ focuses on the importance of academic achievement, social and emotional development as well as health and civic engagement (Cefai & Cavioni, 2015, Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). It is universally accepted that the core purpose of education is to ensure that academically, students leave school being literate in spoken and written English and with enough development in the areas of science and mathematics to have the skills for critical and creative thinking, along with reasonable problem - solving abilities (Zins, 2006).

Schools should also aim to produce students who have developed social and emotional skills to navigate adequately through life. Socially, students need to have
developed relationship skills so that they can interact collectively in group settings within the family unit, with their peers, schooling staff and the broader community. Schools are also charged with the emotional development of students who need to show caring and empathy for others. Education aims to develop students who can contribute responsibly to society through exhibiting sound character and good moral values, practicing positive work habits and safe and healthy behaviours (Dymnicki, Sambolt & Kidron, 2013). The desired overall outcome is a student who is sufficiently equipped to understand and accept his role as a functioning member of society, for his own future progress and that of society (Zins, 2006; Dymnicki et al., 2013, Elias et al., 1997; Greenberg et al., 2003; Schaps and Weissberg, 2015). Research shows that the success of these aims of education is dependent on the nature of the schooling environment where effective learning is most successful in safe, caring, nurturing school settings. (Greenberg 2003, Zigler and Bishop-Josef, 2006, Zins, Elias, Greenberg and Weissberg, 2000).

The goals-set for education is complex and requires a collaboration between schools, parents and the broader community. Based on the the multiple benefits that competency-based, social and emotional learning have on children from an early age, Durlak and Weissberg (2011), recommend that schools should take responsibility for developing these competencies in collaboration with families and the broader community. It can be seen that globally there is a drive toward incorporating a Social and Emotional Learning Model into education for the benefit of teachers and learners alike (AIR, 2014).

In the South African school context, limited attention has been given to competency-based, social and emotional learning. Yet it is evident that the many challenges teachers face in achieving the desired academic outcomes in their classrooms relate to limited social and emotional competence displayed by learners through their behaviour and attitudes towards school (Elias et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2004; Lopes and Salovey, 2004). In response to this limitation, there are schools who have taken the responsibility of voluntarily integrating competency-based, social and emotional learning into the curriculum by applying resources and activities that enhance the learning of the competencies that have
been well researched and widely implemented in other countries. In most instances, teachers are responsible for the facilitation of these processes. The role of the teacher in shaping a student’s academic, social and emotional schooling experience is key to this educational agenda. Research by Askell-Williams & Cefai (2014) shows that teachers support this role but require training for effective teaching of social and emotional competence to learners.

The focus of this study is on teachers’ experiences of their involvement in the facilitation of competency-based, social and emotional learning in the Foundation Phase. The purpose of this study is to understand teacher experiences in the hope that the research will contribute to seeing an increase in effective, competency-based social and emotional learning integration in South African classrooms.

1.2 Stating the problem

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Nelson Mandela)

A sound education provides learners with the skills and competencies to function productively in society. The intention behind educating the whole child is not only to teach the knowledge and skills necessary to reach this end but, equally important, to develop the social and emotional fashioning values and attitudes that create responsible, active and productive citizens (UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2004).

Within the South African context, there are factors that have a negative impact on the quality of education in South Africa and these include: the poor socio-economic status and educational level of many families which limits the educational advancement of their children in that adult illiteracy and poverty can avert parent involvement in the education process (NGO Pulse, 2013); under-qualified teachers with poor subject knowledge who lack commitment to the educational process; a general shortage of school resources and the

The situation is exacerbated further by negative classroom factors which affect the quality of teaching so central to the crisis in education (Bloch, 2009). Overcrowded classrooms of forty, at times, even up to seventy, learners per classroom (Engelbrecht, Nel, & Tlale, 2015) are a reality in many South African public schools, particularly in the poorer rural areas. These are not conducive learning environments (Kumalo, & Mji, 2014; Marais, 2016). It is very difficult for students to engage and participate in the learning process when student misbehaviour and other disciplinary problems are rife in the classroom (Cortes, Moussa and Weinstein, 2012; Qasim & Arif, 2014). The implementation of inclusive education means that these overcrowded classrooms become a multi-cultural, multi-lingual collection of students with diverse learning and social and emotional needs (Engelbrecht et al., 2015).

Evidence suggests that South African teachers lack the resources to manage such diverse classrooms effectively (Marais, 2012). Classroom behaviour is mismanaged and remains disruptive as discipline, cited as ‘inconsistent’ and ‘autocratic’, negatively reinforces the cycle of disruption (Segalo, 2015). Research conducted by Marais (2012) on 112 trainee-teacher experiences in overcrowded classrooms, cited student bullying, shouting, hitting and vandalism as having a negative influence on discipline. Evidence shows that when teachers lack the resources to manage their students, classrooms become negatively affected, both academically (Bayat, Louw & Rena, 2014) and behaviourally (Marzano, 2005). Poor classroom management has a negative effect on learner motivation, and increases the teacher stress load which impacts job satisfaction and retention (Marais, 2016). A poorly managed classroom causes high levels of stress for the teacher who becomes emotionally exhausted and as this cycle escalates, job satisfaction is threatened, and teacher-burnout becomes evident in commitment attitudes towards work (Osher et al., 2007).
Traditional teacher education does not prepare teachers to manage these classrooms as the teaching of social and emotional development skills is limited in the South African educational curriculum. The introduction of Life Orientation education into the NCS in 1997 was an attempt by the Department of Education to care for the social and emotional development of children by teaching them basic life skills. The Foundation Phase curriculum covers topics such as: my body, safety, feelings, and keeping my body safe (CAPS R-3, 2011). The teaching of the five core competencies: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making (CASEL, 2013; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004) which promote healthy social and emotional development in children, is limited in the Life Orientation curriculum which may be deemed dated and does not meet the changing needs of South Africa’s 21st Century youth. An appraisal of the curriculum to include the teaching of the essential social and emotional competencies should be considered as it would impart critical life skills’ techniques to young people in South Africa to enable them to navigate effectively through life, given the many challenges that they face.

Comprehensive research supports social and emotional development at teacher and student level as a precursor to positive classroom outcomes such as: quality teacher classroom management; improved academic achievement; strengthened relationships in classrooms which positively impacts on student behaviour, emotional health and overall teacher and student commitment to school. Research indicates that newly qualified teachers whose curriculum includes social, emotional and educational instruction are more able to provide effective teaching and learning support to students despite a lack of general resources (Engelbrecht, 2013; Rouse & Florian, 2012).

The implementation of competency-based social and emotional education with its positive outcomes could address a fragment of the educational crisis in the South African schooling system. Competency-based social and emotional learning is an innovative intervention approach that offers possible solutions to poor academic achievement and behavioural problems that many South African teachers are forced to handle on a daily basis.
in their classrooms. Yet, in South Africa, limited attention has been given to competency
based social and emotional learning in classrooms. Some teachers have adopted social and
emotional learning strategies through teaching activities in their classrooms although
research evidence is very limited in this regard.

Based on the findings reported in the research literature on the value of competency-
based social and emotional learning, it seems evident that the facilitation of competency-
based social and emotional learning could prove invaluable in assisting teachers to deal with
the challenges that they face in their classroom. The implementation of such competency-
based social and emotional learning has proved even more efficient if implemented at the
onset of schooling in the Foundation Phase.

Some schools in South Africa currently incorporate additional work to facilitate
competency-based social and emotional learning through applying a variety of available
resources and activities.

Irrespective of the resources or programmes used, teachers play a vital role in
facilitating competency-based social and emotional learning in these contexts. They are
expected to do this in an integrated manner within the daily curriculum and classroom
routines as suggested by Brusnahan and Gatti (2011). In this study, the position of these
teachers as facilitators of competency-based social and emotional learning is problematized
and investigated by exploring how they experience their involvement in the process. Due to
the limited attention to social and emotional learning in the South African context, very
limited research has been conducted in this regard. To address this gap in the knowledge, the
researcher explored the experiences of teachers who, at the time of the study, were
facilitating competency-based social and emotional learning in the Foundation Phase. The
researcher was motivated to explore teacher experiences within the South African context to
understand the possible impact that competency-based social-emotional learning could have
on South African classrooms. Informed by the theoretical perspectives on social and
emotional learning (Elias et al., 1997, Elias et al., 2003; Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et al.,
2003; Payton et al., 2000; & Zins et al., 2004), the research conducted in this study was guided by the following question:

*How do teachers experience the facilitation of competency-based social and emotional learning in the Foundation Phase?*

1.3 **Aim of the study**

The aim of the study was to explore the experience of a group of South African teachers who facilitate competency-based social and emotional learning in the Foundation Phase in their school, using a qualitative phenomenological research design.

1.4 **Research design and methodology**

A brief overview of the research design and methodology is presented in this section that is detailed in Chapter 4.

1.4.1 **Research design**

A qualitative phenomenological research design (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 2009; DeVos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2011), was applied in this study. Phenomenological psychological research, according to Giorgi and Giorgi (2003), aims to clarify situations as lived through by people who have first-hand experience of a particular situation, in this case, teachers involved in facilitating the integration of competency-based social and emotional learning in the Foundation Phase. The study aimed to capture the lived experiences of Foundation Phase teachers as experienced in the context of this process.

1.4.2 **Selection of the participants**
The research was conducted in three government primary schools in the Western Cape. The population for the research was selected from Foundation Phase (Grade 1 – 3) teachers who have been involved in the facilitation of the same competency-based social-emotional learning over a three-year period.

Within this group, participants were purposively selected to participate in individual interviews based on the following criteria: teachers had a minimum of 3 years teaching experience in the Foundation Phase; teachers had been involved in the facilitation of competency-based social-emotional learning for three years; all participants were willing to make themselves available for interviews after school hours and agreed to having these interviews recorded.

Following ethical clearance to conduct the research, a letter to obtain permission to conduct research was sent to the principals of the respective schools to inform them about the proposed research and request their collaboration. A meeting was then held with each principal where the research plan was outlined. Once signed permission was granted, the principal of the school set up a meeting with the teachers where they were briefed and the researcher discussed the intention of the research process, expectations, voluntary participation and ethical considerations.

Consent forms were signed and placed in an unmarked, sealed envelope in a reply box in the secretaries’ office. Eighteen participants voluntarily agreed to partake in the study.

1.4.3 Data gathering

In accordance with the qualitative phenomenological nature of the research (Creswell, 2009; De Vos et al., 2011), data in this study was collected from individuals who experienced the phenomenon in the following ways:
Firstly, open-ended individual interviews were conducted with the eighteen participants. Open-ended individual interviews, according to Niewenhuis (2007), take the form of a conversation that assists the researcher to explore with each participant how they experienced the facilitation process over a prolonged period of time.

Each open-ended individual interview was scheduled for a maximum of 45 minutes and conducted in a room at the school allowing for privacy and confidentiality. Following consultation with the supervisor, the researcher asked the following open-ended question: 
*Tell me about your experience of facilitating competency–based social emotional learning in the Foundation Phase?*

Secondly, all the participants were requested to write reflections on their personal experiences of facilitating a competency-based social-emotional learning process over the past two and a half years. The intention was to obtain a recollection of the participants’ experiences both over the last two years and in the current year of facilitation (Shenton, 2004). These reflections ensured that the voices of less experienced teachers were also accommodated. The researcher conducted a brief session at each school to explain what the reflections should encompass and answered participants’ questions in this regard. The teachers were asked to share whatever those experiences were honestly, in writing. They were given the freedom to decide whether to write their reflections by hand or submit them electronically. The reflections were coded to ensure anonymity of the participants.

**1.4.4 Data Analysis**

The data in all data sets obtained in this study were analysed by means of thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009). Thematic analysis was applied due to the flexibility of the method, which allowed for a dual psychological and social understanding of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This unrestricted data analysis method was needed for the retrieving of meaningful insights from teachers involved in the facilitation process. The researcher organised and prepared the raw data for analysis through transcribing and coding
all recordings and emails. Following the thematic analysis process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) the researcher became familiar with the data through reading and re-reading the data and classifying or categorising individual fragments of the data into initial codes, themes and sub-themes (Babbie, 2007). The themes were reviewed, defined and named based on the guidelines provided by Willig (2008) for phenomenological analyses. Member checking was applied as part of ensuring the rigor of the study by presenting the final themes in writing to 3 participants, one at each school. These participants were requested to comment on the themes within a week to verify and check that they agreed with the themes before disseminating the data, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

1.4.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured through using an analysis method called Crystallisation. Crystallisation is a process that includes a combination of various forms of analysis and representations of different kinds of data which in turn delivers in-depth descriptions of a particular phenomenon through which we obtain an understanding of others’ lived experiences (Ellingson, 2009; Tracy, 2010).

1.4.6 Ethical Considerations

Strictly adhering to research ethics safeguards the research participants during the research process in the search for meaning and understanding of social phenomena. Before commencing with the research, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the ethics committee (HREC) of the Faculty of Health Sciences, and the ethical clearance number is NWU – 00046-15-S1. Written permission was received from the Western Cape Department of Education (ADDENDUM A). The ethical considerations adhered to in this study will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

1.5 Key terms
1.5.1 Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

As an umbrella term in the field of psychology and human development, SEL has been defined in a variety of ways to address areas with particular focus on pro-social behavioural skills, and management and regulation of emotions through numerous types of interventions such as programmes for bully prevention, social skills training or conflict resolution (Humphrey et al., 2011). Contemporary positive psychology has expanded the definition of SEL to include critical creative thinking, mindfulness and positive self-talk as completing the circle to well-being in learners (Cefai & Cavioni, 2015). For the purpose of this study, CASEL’s definition of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is adopted.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the process through which children and adults learn to apply a set of skills to navigate through life to succeed initially in school, later in the workplace, and, ultimately, as constructive and responsible members of society (CASEL, 2013). Social Emotional Learning teaches a specific set of competencies to achieve this end.

1.5.2 Social and Emotional Competence (SEC)

Social and Emotional Competence (SEC) refers to a specific set of skills that are taught. CASEL’s universally recognised five core competencies are addressed in this research. They are: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making (CASEL, 2013; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Hence the term: Competency-Based Social and Emotional Learning (CBSEL)

1.5.3 Foundation Phase Learners and Teachers

The Department of Basic Education is the governing body that oversees the education for primary school learners in South Africa. Primary school education is divided into three phases, namely, the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior phases. This study focuses on Foundation phase learners and from Grade 1 to 3. Typically, the ages of the learners range from age seven to nine.
CHAPTER 2

Theoretical framework for the study

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a theoretical framework for the study is presented. The framework includes the conceptual model developed by CASEL, which is based in Erikson’s psychosocial development theory and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory. These three frameworks are inter-related. To conceptualise age appropriate behavioural expectations from learners in the Foundation Phase, Erikson’s psychosocial theory of human development is employed. Aligning with CASEL’s SEL school-wide approach and Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Systemic approach, Erikson considers the impact and interconnection that external factors such as schooling systems, parents and society have on the development of the individual child.

2.2 CASEL’S Model

Social Emotional Learning occurs within the school environment, be it in the classroom, during break-time or on the sports field. It is formulated through the relationships that develop between the students and their teachers; among school staff members; and students and peer groups.

These relationships, the ways in which they developed and the short-term outcomes, were primarily the focus of traditional research on SEL, and resulted in the development and implementation of many classroom-based interventions to teach students social and
emotional competence (CASEL, 2013). More recently, there has been a drive to expand this continuum from classroom to school-wide and community-wide involvement in SEL programming, in the belief that effective and well planned SEL implementation at each level will produce effective and sustainable results in social emotional competence (Beets et al., 2008; Kam, Greenberg, & Walls, 2003).

CASEL (2013, 2015) developed a systemic SEL framework for effective SEL programming as illustrated below. The major shift in this systemic approach extends to higher levels of the educational system requiring commitment at Provincial and National level for implementation and resource support (Weissberg et al., 2015).

**Figure 1: A conceptual model of SEL in educational settings (Weissberg et al., 2015).**

CASELS framework expounds:
1. The five core social and emotional competencies: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making. These competences, when taught, provide the foundations for success at school and in life.

2. The short and long-term student outcomes in student behaviour and attitudes that result from the implementation of competency-based SEL programming.

3. Systemic interconnection between classroom practice, school policy and family involvement to develop children’s social and emotional competence and academic performance.

4. The policies and strategies at district and state level to promote quality SEL implementation for positive results.

2.2.1 Social Emotional Learning and Erikson’s psycho-social theory of development

This research focuses on Foundation Phase learners and teachers within the South African schooling system. Within this system, the Foundation Phase pertains to Grades R to 3, the children being typically between the ages of 5 to 9. To conceptualise age appropriate behavioural expectations from learners in the Foundation Phase, Erikson’s psychosocial theory of human development is employed. Aligning with CASEL’s SEL school-wide approach and Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Systemic approach, Erikson considers the impact and interconnection that external factors such as schooling systems, parents and society have on the development of the individual child.

Erikson’s fourth stage of development is called Industry vs Inferiority. This stage begins as the child most typically enters into formal schooling around the age of 5 and continues through to age 12. For the purpose of this research Foundation Phase learners in from Grades 1 – 3, aged 7 to 9 were studied. This is a social stage of development where there is a shift in focus from home to school. Within this context children are learning and
accomplishing new skills and knowledge individually. They are developing a sense of industry and are also becoming aware of their own uniqueness, their strengths and limitations all of which form part of the development of their self-worth. This develops within the context of the school environment. The relationships and friendships between the child, teachers and other staff members, external to the home environment, become important influences on the development of a child’s self-esteem. Foundation Phase children are social and want to be accepted by their peers. If a child is industrious and experiences a sense of achievement, both academically and socially, he will feel personally competent and have a sound self-esteem. Adversely, feelings of inadequacy and inferiority academically and socially will result in psycho-social problems most often played out through negative behavioural patterns. The virtue attained with success in this stage of development is a feeling of competence. (Erikson, 1968).

The awareness of this psychosocial stage of development is important when considering the development of the five core social and emotional competencies central to CASEL’s model. The teaching of age appropriate social and emotional competence in Foundation Phase learners is especially relevant as children enter into formal schooling and form new relationships with teachers and peers. Teaching social and emotional skills will give them the competence to meet the new demands of the classroom. Social and emotional competence also influences a child’s ability to engage fully in learning (Campbell & von Stauffberg, 2008: Denham, Brown, & Domitrovich, 2010). The benefits of social and emotional development at Foundation Phase level is linked to successful student performance in numerous research findings (Denham & Weissberg, 2004; Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010 – Nestus). The core social and emotional competencies and how skill development benefits the Foundation Phase learner will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The overall short and long-term benefits of competence building are outlined in CASEL’s model (See Figure 1).

2.2.2 Social Emotional Learning and Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Systems Theory
CASEL’s SEL approach draws on the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Model (1997) to examine how the various systems present in a child’s environment impact on a child’s learning ability, physical, social and emotional development through the varying degree of support, guidance and structure of the society in which they live.

At the centre of this model are the core individual social and emotional competencies that affect the individual child’s behaviour at school, in the classroom with teachers and peers and at home with parents and siblings.

CASEL’s framework is aligned with Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological systems theory of human development by locating the child at the centre of a number of environmental systems and linking SEL competency skills and the short- and long-term outcomes of a child’s biological temperament and the interactions and inter-connections with the several environmental factors and systems operating in the child’s life (Allen, 2010). SEL skill building is therefore linked to school contexts including schooling policy on SEL, teacher and staff attitude towards SEL, and family involvement with schools and community services that promote SEL development. Furthermore, student SEL skills are influenced by teacher social and emotional awareness and competence. Therefore, it can be argued, that SEL skills develop within a complex system of contexts, interactions and relationships. As is apparent in this framework, schools must adopt a systemic approach to promoting SEL that must be formulated to meet the school individual needs.

Through incorporating Bronfenbrenner’s theory of human development with CASEL’s framework for effective SEL Programming, this research argues a full systemic approach to social and emotional learning. To be clear on the environmental impact for effective SEL programming, Bronfenbrenner’s basal theory on human development will be reviewed briefly.
This model asserts that the child develops through experiencing a complex system of relationships that occur as a process of progressively more complex, mutual and repetitive interactions, called proximal processes, between the child and another person or group of people in his immediate surroundings, that is, the primary physical, social and psychological environment with which the child has regular and direct contact (Berk, 2000). These proximal processes occur between a parent and child, teacher and child, or between a child and another child and are influenced by the child’s stage of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). These people exist in various layered environmental systems or ecological levels around the child (Swart & Pettipher, 2011; Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Bronfenbrenner (1997) expounds that the effectiveness of proximal processes are bi-directional being determined by the biological temperament of the child, how he perceives, reacts and responds to the person with whom he is interacting, and vice versa (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Paquette & Ryan, 2001). An individual does not operate in a vacuum, and human development is affected by the relationship that the child has with the person in the interaction, individual bi-directional temperaments, and also, where the interaction is taking place and the conditions of the context at the time. Bronfenbrenner referred to these surrounding circumstances affecting human development as process, person, context and time (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). These dynamic eco-systems overlap and interconnect, meaning that changes or conflict in any one layer will impact on the other layers. Bronfenbrenner called them the micro, meso, exo and macro systems that evolve within a time frame called the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Each system has its own roles, norms and rules that shape human development. The interaction of structures within a level and between levels is key to Bronfenbrenner’s theory. Therefore, interactions at outer levels will impact on the micro-systemic level (Paquette & Ryan 2001).

It is the intention of this research to argue the importance of systemic interconnections for effective SEL implementation as outlined in CASEL’s model. To explore this systemic approach, the ecological contexts and inter-relationships within and between the classroom, school, family and community wherein children learn and develop, will be addressed.
2.2.2.1 The Micro-systemic classroom level

The school is a microsystem that, according to Bronfenbrenner, includes the child, the teacher and all teaching staff and peer groups (Donald et al., 2010; Pacquette & Ryan, 2001). In other words, these are the primary bi-directional relationships with which the child comes into contact on a repetitive basis that affect human development. At classroom level, for instance, a child will be affected by the teaching methods employed; in a similar way, the teacher will also select the teaching techniques used, based on what best suits the temperament of the child. Bi-directional relationships are the strongest at microsystemic level and therefore have the greatest impact on the child.

Teaching and learning within schools and classrooms is a social process that occurs within the context of these bi-directional relationships comprising social, emotional and academic elements (Elbertson, Brackett, & Weissberg, 2010; Elias, 1997; Payton et al., 2000). Learning is a co-operative process occurring as students interact with their teachers, peers and school staff through a process of collaboration and negotiation within this social context (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2004).

Research indicates a link between strong bi-directional classroom relationships and positive social, emotional and academic outcomes for students. For instance, the positive impact of strong relationships between teacher-student and student-student nurtures student commitment to school and academic success as documented in research by Jennings & Greenberg (2009).

Evidence supports the positive impact that solid communication bonds and social attachment between teachers and students have on a child’s attention span, learning ability and motivation to learn (Kusche & Greenberg, 2006; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Similarly, students with a strong emotional attachment to teachers and peers will have a positive attitude towards learning and achieving academically (Blum & Rhinehart, 2004). Furthermore, students who achieve academically are noted as experiencing a sense of belonging at school, characterized by positive relationships (Osterman, 2000). Research shows that children who are socially and emotionally competent are more integrated into the
school and classroom context and are more focused on their academic tasks, as compared to children who are socially and emotionally challenged (Elias & Haynes, 2008; Payton et al., 2000; Zins et al., 2007; Zins & Elias, 2006). Therefore, positive engagement in school on social, emotional and academic level leads to school and life success (Elbertson et al., 2010). Lastly, safe, caring and nurturing classroom environments provide the context for academic achievement as explained by Marzano (2003).

The effectiveness of SEL implementation is determined by the quality of these relationships. At classroom level, teachers facilitate SEL through teaching social-emotional skills, nurturing and promoting social skills between students, and positively reacting to interpersonal classroom situations to enhance these skills (Bierman & Motamedi, 2015; Bierman et al., 2008; CASEL, 2013, 2015; Rimm-Kaufmann & Hulleman, 2015). SEL competencies can be facilitated and taught in various ways. Broadly speaking, teachers can infuse SEL into their academic curricula in subjects that require students to explore and understand emotions, behaviours or relationships, for instance, in English literature or life skills (Brown, Jones, LaRusso, & Aber, 2010; Jones, Brown, & Lawrence Aber, 2011; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Yoder, 2013; Zins et al., 2004). Teachers can further strengthen what is taught in more formalized competency based social-emotional learning programmes through modeling and role-playing to reinforce social emotional skill development. Through this, students develop the foundations for practicing these new behaviours throughout their school day (CASEL, 2013; Durlak et al., 2011).

2.2.2.2 The Micro-systemic school climate, policies and practices

Within CASEL’s framework, the school-wide approach necessitates that at school level policies are put into place that create a positive and supportive school culture: an environment that is conducive to academic, social and emotional development (Cohen, 2006; Jones & Bouffard, 2012, Meyers et al., 2015). For instance, professional training development for teachers and staff gives them resources to implement SEL strategies within the entire schooling community; establishing a school code of conduct to outline expected social, emotional and behavioural norms; establishing a general code of pro-social behaviour
such as being kind and caring and showing appreciation and gratitude between students and staff; and constructive disciplinary practices with clear boundaries and consequences. To accomplish this, all school staff need to be included in SEL development practices (Weissberg et al., 2015). By adopting these policies, schools stand in support of effective SEL implementation at classroom level by creating the infrastructure needed for sound SEL instruction.

2.2.2.3 Micro-systemic family, school and community partnerships

For this to be effective, family education in SEL is essential (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2004). Parental involvement at Foundation Phase level is crucial because at this age children are in a transitional phase where their focus is shifting from the family to the school. This process is gradual and family support socially, emotionally and academically, ensures a smooth transition. Strong teacher-parent partnerships are key to this success. Genuine school-family partnerships promote mutually reciprocated communication and involvement between teachers and parents. Parental participation in their child’s education at school and home ensures consistency in the messages that learners receive and the practices that they experience.

At community level, any programmes that are run give children the opportunity to apply the SEL skills that they have learnt in school and at home (Garbacz et al., 2015).

2.2.2.4 Exo and macro-systemic district and state level policies and strategies

CASEL’s school-wide/community-wide model contends that for SEL programming to be successful, effective and sustainable, there must be support from higher District Levels such as our Department of Education. At national level policies can be drafted, creating the foundations for successful SEL programme implementation. With clear guideline implementation, strategies and professional development, plans become achievable.
2.3. Mental health promotion in school: a school-based, school-directed framework – Cefai & Cavioni

Cefai and Cavioni (2015) support and include CASEL’s model, Bronfenbrenner’s ecosystemic theory and Developmental Psychology in their framework for SEL competency development. However, they expand the framework into positive, contemporary psychology to include skills that teach critical and creative thinking, to enable independent learning, positive self-talk to regulate own emotions and spiritual development and mindfulness as qualities that need to be taught to meet the needs of the a 21st century lifestyle.

2.4 Summary

This study draws on three approaches, namely CASEL’s model, Erikson’s psycho-social theory of development and Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological systems theory to examine how the various systems such as the classroom, schooling community and the family and the quality of the bi-directional relationships that exist between the child and the systems determine how effective a child will learn SEL skills and cope with daily life challenges. SEL skills develop through a complex system of contexts, interactions and relationships occurring between an individual and the environment. The effectiveness of SEL instruction is determined by the quality of the relationships and through the support and guidance that the child receives from adults and peers within given contexts. For instance, when teacher/learner relationships are sound and authentic and based on open and honest communication, emotional attachments are formed, and the child experiences positive attachment towards learning and school in general. Cefai and Cavioni expand this framework effectively to include the teaching of skills sets relative to the needs for 21st century lifestyles.
CHAPTER 3

Competency-based Social and Emotional Learning – Literature overview

3.1 Introduction

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has earned attention in education over the last two decades (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta, 2015). Research reviews, investigating the many programmes and strategies promoting and teaching SEL, conclude that SEL is an essential factor which impacts on learning and life success (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015). Research has linked soundly executed SEL programming in schools to positive social, emotional, behavioural and academic results that make schools important settings for promoting SEL ((Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Sklad, Diekstra, Ritter, Ben, & Gravesteijn, 2012).

Current trends in SEL education are suggesting a whole-school approach to SEL in addition to classroom-based programmes (Cefai & Cavioni, 2015; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Meyers et al., 2015; Weare, 2000; Weissberg et al., 2015). This systemic approach describes the entire school community as the system to drive effective change through integrating SEL into daily interactions and practices using combined efforts between staff, teachers, families and students (Cefai & Cavioni, 2015; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Meyers et al., 2015). An organized and all-inclusive approach that is well planned and implemented will move schools away from a history of disjointed or fragmented implementation of SEL, according to Greenberg et al., (2003).

Success in the implementation of school-wide SEL is dependent on an educational system that acknowledges the importance of student social and emotional development
(Mart, Weissberg, & Kendziora, 2015). Bryk et al., (2010), in supporting whole school inclusion of SEL, published a summary of 15 years of research that outlined the key factors contributing to successful SEL implementation. The key components for successful implementation were cited as strong school leadership supporting SEL implementation through resource allocation for teacher professional development and implementation training; and a supportive, safe and nurturing learning environment for students. Bryk and colleagues also stressed the importance of parent and community involvement as a critical factor to effective school-wide SEL implementation. This is supported by CASEL (2013) in their SEL implementation guide for schools. They stress the importance of school-family collaboration and community involvement as contributing to overall feelings of student connectedness and positive engagement.

It is universally accepted that young people should leave high school as well-rounded young citizens, academically sound, with the social and emotional competence necessary to navigate their own personal and career paths into early adulthood (Greenberg et al., 2003). For this shared vision to reach fruition SEL needs to receive attention and resources need to reach more schools and classrooms (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Within this school-wide approach, teachers have been identified as the key facilitators of SEL in schools (Brackett et al., 2012). The role that teachers play in student learning has progressed from a purely academic focus to an acknowledgement in research of the importance of teacher facilitation in the social and emotional development of students. Diekstra (2008) supports this argument, explaining that classroom teachers are able to integrate the social and emotional competencies that they teach into the daily academic curriculum while teaching various subjects with their learners. Elias and Snyder (2008) maintain that this method of integrating curricula is an effective way to learn and sustain social and emotional competency skills and infuse them into daily learning and everyday social behaviour. Furthermore, Durlak et al. (2011) discovered that students performed better academically only in circumstances where the classroom teacher conducted the programme.
Many teachers see the benefits of SEL and how it can benefit teaching practice and classroom management. They are therefore eager to incorporate SEL into their classrooms but they lack the support, resources and training for effective implementation (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013; Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrel, 2009). Cefai and Cavioni (2015) highlight the importance of initial and on-going teacher training to develop teacher competence and confidence in the facilitation of programmes. Furthermore, teachers who feel confident in implementing SEL in their classrooms have also reported feeling less stressed, which improves teacher effectiveness and overall job satisfaction (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). Systemic support at a national and provincial level will enable schools to achieve this end (CASEL, 2015; Meyers et al., 2015).

For the past two decades, the Institute for Collaborative Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has strived, through evidence based research and policy, to advance SEL science in education. Its aim is to expand effective SEL practice through establishing frameworks and implementation strategies for SEL programming for schools, from pre-school to high school, to enhance both social, emotional and academic developments in students (Weissberg & Cascarina, 2013).

Although much of the research cited is based from the United States, the past decade has witnessed buy-in to school-wide SEL programming in countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia (Torrente, Alimchandani, & Aber, 2015). For example, the UK government funds a national strategy to schools for executing a whole-school approach to SEL called ‘Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning’ (SEAL) to develop social and emotional well-being, mental health and behaviour skills in schools (Humphrey, Lendrum, & Wigelsworth, 2013). These schools are supported through training implementation by their local authorities at no cost (Department for Children, Schools, & Families, 2009). Humphrey et al., (2010) reported that by 2010 SEAL had been implemented into two-thirds of primary schools in the UK, along with 15% of secondary schools. Following suit, the Australian Government funded a national strategy called KidsMatter (Slee et al., 2009, 2012). KidsMatter is a school-wide framework for SEL implementation that has been rolled out in over 2000 primary schools. Within the South African context competency-based
social and emotional learning is not integrated into the prescribed learning curriculum.

The effectiveness of SEL in educational contexts is driven by evidence-based research that links SEL in schools to improve academic achievement and pro-social behaviour and overall school commitment. Research also showed reduction in behavioural stress, anxiety and aggression (Durlak et al., 2011). This motivated policy-makers, stakeholders and communities to support SEL development to give children the opportunities to develop, learn and practice social-emotional skills in educational settings (Humphrey, Kalambouka, Bolton, et al., 2008; Weare, 2000, Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg, 2004).

3.2 Defining Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

“The Missing Piece in the Educational Puzzle”
(Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013)

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is broadly defined as a process through which students and adults develop awareness and management of their cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes through learning and practising the social and emotional competencies needed for succeeding in school and life (Greenberg et al., 2003; Osher, Sprague, Weissberg, Keenan, & Zins, 2008; Payton et al., 2000; Zins et al., 2004). Research supports that successful students, citizens and workers rely on these social and emotional skills (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013) which link social emotional competence to academic achievement and lifelong success (Zins, Weissberg, Wang and Walberg 2004).

3.3 Defining Social and Emotional Competence (SEC)

Children who are proficient in core SEL competencies are able to integrate feelings, thinking and behaviour to master important tasks in school and life (Zins et al., 2004). The five core intrapersonal, interpersonal and cognitive competencies that are interconnected and
mirror the cognitive, emotional and behavioural fields of SEL as identified by CASEL are: Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making (CASEL, 2013; Payton et al., 2000; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2007; Elias et al., 1997).

### 3.3.1 Self-Awareness

High levels of self-awareness teach the child to identify and accurately label emotions and understand how they influence thinking and behaviour. A child who is self-aware understands the interconnection between these cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects. Self-awareness incorporates awareness of personal strengths, limitations, needs and values. When attained, a well-grounded sense of self-confidence can be apparent.

### 3.3.2 Self-Management

Self-management involves the capacity to control emotions, thoughts and behaviours effectually and appropriately, including self-regulation (managing stress, impulse control and self-motivation) and setting and monitoring progress towards achieving personal and academic goals. Emotion regulation refers to the ability to manage, control and change emotional intensity in any given situation (Gross, 2002). Self-regulation is needed for both positive and negative emotions, however, self-management of negative emotions is more important and challenging (Barrett, Gross, Christensen, & Benvenuto, 2001).

### 3.3.3 Social Awareness

Social awareness pertains to the awareness of others. It is the ability to be able to take the perspective of and empathize with others, appreciating diversity through having the capacity to recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities and differences, comprehending social and ethical norms and making the best use of family, school and community support systems and resources (Zins & Elias, 2011).
3.3.4 Relationship Skills

Relationship skills enable children to shape and maintain positive, healthy rewarding relationships based on clear communication, active listening skills and a co-operative attitude. Children are able to resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate constructively during interpersonal conflict and provide and seek help when needed. Sound and well-developed relationship skills are critical in the social domain of the classroom, particularly for group work.

3.3.5 Responsible Decision Making

Responsible decision-making enables children to make positive choices regarding their own behavior; in social interactions with others they will consider the well-being of both self and others, and the likely consequences of various actions. It gives them the ability to make decisions based on the consideration of acceptable social and behavioural norms as well as safety and ethical standards. They apply these decision-making skills in academic and social situations.

Decision-making is a process of considering the options available when faced with a choice. To be a competent decision maker, the child would make choices based on a multiple of factors, such as ethics, respect for others and safety issues when deciding on the outcome. This competency includes the ability to foresee and identify possible problems and to make decisions on the solutions to the problems that could be either social or academic (Payton et al., 2000).

The following table is provided for ease of reference and relates to the teaching of the five core social and emotional competencies and the skills that are learnt relating to each competency.
3.3.6 Social Emotional Competence (SEC) and related skills

Table 1: Social Emotional Competencies and social emotional skills related to each competency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Emotional Competency</th>
<th>Social Emotional Learning Skills Related to Each Competency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>• Label and recognise, own the other’s emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify what triggers own emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyse emotions and how they affect others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Accurately recognise own strengths and limitations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Identify own needs and values</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Possess self efficacy and self esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Management</td>
<td>• Set plans and work toward goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Overcome obstacles and create strategies for more long-term goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitor progress toward personal</td>
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and academic short and long term goals

- Regulate emotions such as impulses, aggression and self destructive behaviour
- Manage personal and interpersonal stress
- Attention control (maintain optimal work performance)
- Use feedback constructively
- Exhibit positive motivation, hope and optimism
- Seek help when needed
- Display grit, determination and perseverance

| Social Awareness          |• Identify social cues (verbal, physical) to determine how others feel  
• Predict others’ feelings and reactions  
• Evaluate others’ emotional reactions  
• Respect others (e.g. listen) |
| Relationship Management | carefully and accurately)  
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understand other points of view and perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Appreciate diversity (recognise individual and group similarities and differences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify and use resources of family, school and community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate capacity to make friends</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exhibit co-operative learning and working toward group goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluate own skills to communicate with others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Manage and express emotions in relationships, respecting diverse viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communicate effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cultivate relationships with those who can be resources when help is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide help to those who need it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible decision making</td>
<td>when necessary, being assertive and persuasive</td>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prevent interpersonal conflict, but manage and resolve it when it does occur</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Resist inappropriate social pressures</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Identify decisions one makes at school
- Discuss strategies used to resist peer pressure
- Reflect on how current choices affect future
- Identify problems when making decisions, and generate alternatives
- Implement problem-solving skills when making decisions, when appropriate
- Become self-reflective and self-evaluative
- Make decisions based on moral, personal, and ethical standards
3.3.7 The benefits of developed Social Emotional Competence skills for students

The development of social and emotional competence has numerous benefits at classroom level for teachers’ and their learners’. In the same way that learners need to master academic content, they also need to learn social-emotional competencies. For example, learners do not enter school knowing exactly how to interact with teachers and peers appropriately, how to understand the way emotions influence their classroom interactions (e.g. feeling challenged by boredom or failure), or how to regulate stressful academic situations (Osher et al., 2008). Competency-based social and emotional learning should therefore be seen as the foundation upon which academic success can be built (Adelman & Taylor, 2008). In other words, with the skills taught through CBSEL, students are more receptive to learning and able to perform better academically because they have the ability to regulate their emotions when feeling stressed or frustrated, they can problem solve more effectively, they stay on target with tasks and return to the goal at hand if distracted. Socially, these students show care and empathy for their peers and therefore working together is productive and effective.

A child who has developed social emotional competence (SEC) skills can identify and control emotions, form healthy relationships with peers and adults, set attainable and positive personal goals, meet individual and social needs, and make responsible and ethical choices (Elias et al., 1997). Developed social emotional competence has positive outcomes at school level. A child with competence in the core social emotional learning skills communicates effectively with peers and teachers, sets and achieves academic goals and self
motivates for learning. These positive attributes can increase commitment to school and are important aspects of thriving in the school context (Zins et al., 2004).

Becoming skilled in social emotional competencies has short and long-term outcomes for students.

The short-term student outcomes at school level are improvements in:

- Academic performance
- Social and emotional skills
- Positive attitudes towards self, others and tasks
- Positive social behaviours and relationships
- Fewer conduct problems
- Reduced emotional distress

The long-term student outcomes at tertiary level are improvements in:

- High school graduation
- College and career readiness
- Health relationships
- Mental health
- Reduced criminal behavior
- Engaged citizenship

(Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Durlak et al., 2011; Farrington et al., 2012; Payton et al., 2008; Sklad et al., 2012).
To support the long-term benefits of social emotional competence development, a longitudinal study on 808 children in the ‘Seattle Social Development Project’ (see://www.ssdp-tip.org) from adolescence to age 33, showed that well developed social and emotional competence was linked to the long-term student outcomes in SEL as outlined above. For instance, social emotional competence was linked to increased chances for tertiary education, career success, sound mental health and engaged citizenship (Hawkins et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2014). In addition, a recent meta-analytic study of more than 80 school-based universal intervention evaluations revealed that positive student outcomes could be sustained for at least six months after the programme was completed, supporting the long-term effectiveness of SEL interventions (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2015).

3.4 Linking social, emotional and academic learning

A common and valid perception in education is that investing time in the social and emotional skills in the classroom detracts from the time needed to complete the academic curriculum. Traditionally, this has been the main goal of schooling, i.e., academic achievement (Malecki & Elliot, 2002), where academic and social emotional skills were viewed as two separate fields. This limits the focus on the social and emotional development of children because of the pressure that schools are under to produce academically. Teachers are reluctant to sacrifice curriculum time for social emotional learning, whether they support it or not. However, research supports that these two domains are interrelated and do support one another (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, Hertzman, & Zumbo, 2014; Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill, & Abbott, 2008).

The impact on SEL and academic success is evident in three large, rigorously conducted meta-analytic reviews (Durlak et al., 2011; January, Casey, & Paulson, 2011; Sklad et al., 2012). Specifically, it was revealed that students who were taught social emotional competencies in the classroom by their teacher showed improved academic results by 11 percentile points compared to controls. Additional benefits to social and emotional programming in the classroom included reduced levels of anxiety and aggression in students
and increased positive attitudes towards self, others and school.

Durlak et al., (2011) explain how social and emotional competence at a person-centered level promotes academic success in students. For instance, self-regulation and the ability to control thoughts, feelings and behaviours has been linked to academic achievement in numerous studies. Students who are more self-aware and confident about their learning capacities try harder and persist in the face of challenges (Aronson, 2002; cited in Durlak et al., 2011). Students who set high academic goals, have self-discipline, motivate themselves, manage stress and organize their approach to work. They learn more and get better grades (Ducksworth & Seligman, 2005; Elliot & Dweck, 2005; cited in Durlak et al., 2011). Finally, students who use problem-solving skills to overcome obstacles and make responsible decisions about studying and completing homework do better academically (Zins & Elias, 2006; cited in Durlak et al., 2011).

3.5 The benefits of SEL instruction for teachers

The main body of research on social emotional learning has focused on the long and short-term benefits of SEL programming for students. A growing body of empirical research outlines the benefits of social emotional learning for teachers (Cain & Carnellor, 2008). Improved classroom management has been noted in research as one of the main benefits for teachers who effectively implement social emotional learning in their classrooms (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). For instance, against controls, teachers who implemented a one-year integrated SEL programme into their classroom, along with a positive behavioural programme, reported higher levels of classroom efficiency and personal accomplishment when compared to the control group (Domitrovich et al., 2015).

By comparison, when teachers do not have the resources or knowledge to manage the social and emotional challenges that are present in every classroom, they tend to resort to old school reactive disciplinary measures. The result is that children remain disruptive and they show lower levels of on-task behavior. Within the increasing negative, downward spiral the classroom climate deteriorates and many teachers become emotionally exhausted and burnt out (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Marzano, Marzano & Pickering, 2003).
3.6 Methods of competency-based SEL instruction in classrooms

3.6.1 Introduction

The term *Competency-Based Social and Emotional Learning* (CBSEL) implies that specific skills or competencies are taught to enhance the social and emotional development of children and adults (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Schools have many options available in terms of competency-based social emotional learning instruction. Generally, programmes vary widely in terms of content and purpose. What is of primary importance is that the plan that is collated to address the social and emotional landscape and well-being of a schooling community be tailored to meet the specific needs of that particular school. For instance, if a school recognises the value and importance of CBSEL and the aim is the overall social and emotional development of learners, the school would select a broad based intervention programme that would be implemented at each grade level to teach and build the five core competencies in SEL. However, if a specific class were experiencing consistent and repetitive challenging behaviours from some students, making teaching and learning difficult, then an 8-week social skills programme would be selected as a targeted, solution focused option to addressing the specific problem behaviours in that class. Alternatively, if the schooling community had recently experienced learners engaging in risky behaviours, then an appropriate programme would be selected to assist learners in making the correct choices.

Irrespective of how CBSEL is taught, a fundamental principle inherent in effective SEL instruction is the environmental context in which it takes place for greatest impact (Brackett et al., 2012). Zins & Elias (2006) stress the importance of SEL instruction occurring within positively handled, kind, caring supportive environments filled with mutually reciprocated co-operation with respect for classroom rules and norms. Such safe and trusting contexts inspire students to experiment with new ways of acting or behaving. In such safety, mistakes can be made, conversations can happen and students can practice and re-model outcomes. In this way, students learn how to choose positive behavioural outcomes when faced with everyday choices (Durlak & Weissberg, Social and emotional programmes that
work).

Current research supports a combination of a programme-based approach to CBSEL implementation, run simultaneously with social and instructional teaching practices that promote students’ social and emotional competencies (Yoder, 2014). This chapter will therefore explore both avenues as options for effective CBSEL instruction.

3.6.2 Competency-based social and emotional learning programmes (CBSEL)

A competency-based social and emotional learning programme is defined as a structured programme, containing a facilitation manual and a programme outline with age appropriate lessons that integrate and apply social and emotional skills through experiential learning and other related activities (Durlak, 2011). The lessons are taught by an adult facilitator in schools, the first choice being the class teacher for that Grade. Part of the learning process is that the adult facilitators model skills and children have the opportunity to practice them through role-playing. This needs to happen in the security of caring and trusting learning environments where children feel safe enough to experiment, fail and try again.

For CBSEL programmes to be recognized as meeting the standards for implementation, they need to follow the SAFE approach (CASEL, 2005; Durlak, 2011). The characteristics of SAFE qualifies programmes to be:

- Sequenced: Theme driven with activities to develop SE skills that are co-ordinated and connected progressively;
- Active: Including active methods of learning, for example, role-playing and behavioural rehearsal enabling students to practice SE skills;
- Focused: Where the focus is on the development of social and emotional skills for at least 8 sessions;
- Explicit: Where each section is specifically developed to teach a particular
competency or skill that is explicit in the lesson outline.

In addition to the above, CBSEL programmes should start ideally in pre-school and continue year on year through into high school. Additionally, research indicates that multi-year CBSEL development is most effective when programmes are extended into multiple settings, for example, school, home and the community (Greenberg, 2003).

3.6.2.1 Types of SEL Programmes

Generally, CBSEL programmes can be categorised into intervention, preventative or after-school programmes.

Intervention programmes are the most common method of CBSEL instruction in classrooms. Teachers facilitate high-quality evidence-based intervention programmes (CASEL, 2003, 2013, 2015; Durlak et al., 2011) which are broad-based and are facilitated to enhance overall social and emotional competence for school and life success. Examples of such programmes are PATHS or Second Steps.

As an example, *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies* (PATHS) is a model primary school SEL programme that promotes a stop, think, act approach to conflict resolution and emotional expression (Greenberg, Kusche, & Mihalic, 1998). PATHS promotes social and emotional competence in students and teachers. It is designed to reduce aggression and behavioural problems that impact the classroom and learning environment. Research supports its effectiveness, documenting reduction in aggression and improvements in emotional express and academic test scores. It has also been shown to increase self-control levels in teachers (Greenberg et al., 1998, Greenberg et al., 2003).

Preventative programmes are designed to enhance competencies that encourage students to assess and to make the right choices when faced with challenges that can result in involvement in risky behaviour, for example, substance abuse, bullying or violent, aggressive behaviour.

After school programmes are most often small referral groups where children’s
social, emotional and behavioural difficulties result in their being constantly disruptive in the classroom.

3.6.3 Research in support of SEL Programmes

Durlak et al., (2011) conducted a universal scientific review on programmes that enhance children’s social and emotional development. In this review, over 700 studies including school, family and community interventions on students aged between 5 to 18 were assessed. Of the 700 reviews, 207 studies analyzed school based programmes involving 288 000 students.

This meta-analysis revealed significant positive effects of school-based SEL programming for students against controls:

- 11% academic improvement in test scores
- 23% improvement in social and emotional skills
- 9% improvement in school and classroom behaviour
- 9% improvement in attitudes about self and school
- 10% decrease in emotional distress, such as anxiety and depression
- 9% decrease in classroom problems such as classroom misbehaviour and aggression

Note that although the majority of these programmes were run during school time, they did not diminish but rather enhanced the academic performance of learners, taught by their class teacher, against controls, thereby supporting CBSEL programming in schools.

Other important findings that need mentioning are:

- High-quality, well implemented programmes showed improvement over all six of the outcomes studied above. This implies that schools must invest in training the facilitators of these programmes on implementation;
• Substantial improvements over all 6 of the domains were only seen in students where the class teacher was the facilitator of the programme;

• Programmes benefitted all school going students across all ethnic groups.

• Only programmes that qualified as SAFE achieved improvements over all 6 domains;

Further work supports Durlak and his colleagues robust body of research. Sklad et al., (2012) reviewed 75 studies of SEL Programmes and confirmed positive outcomes in the domains of: improvements in interpersonal social skills and behaviour, self-image, academic achievement and overall mental health and reductions in substance abuse and anti-social behaviour.

Longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of SEL programming over time showed that compared to controls, children who took part in school-based SEL programming sustained improvements in problem-solving skills (Espada, Griffin, Pereira, Orgilés, & García-Fernández, 2012), reductions in behavioural problems (Fraser, Lee, Kupper, & Day, 2011), and improved coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety (Kraag, Van Breukelen, Kok, & Hosman, 2009), 6 to 18 months after the programme was complete.

3.6.4 Teachers as facilitators of CBSEL programmes

Teachers, as the chosen primary facilitators of SEL programming, significantly impact on programme implementation and outcome factors (Brackett et al., 2012). Studies conducted by Brackett et al., (2012) on teachers as the facilitators of SEL programmes examining their beliefs on social emotional learning, revealed that programme delivery was influenced by teacher confidence, commitment and knowledge of CBSEL and the involvement of school culture and leadership support in driving a school-wide approach to SEL.

A report published in The Missing Piece (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013) surveyed 600 teachers nationally from pre-kindergarten through to high school to gain
insight into teacher attitudes and beliefs towards CBSEL, their confidence and commitment to facilitate programmes and assume and model the social and emotional competence behaviours that programmes teach.

The findings can be summarized as follows:

Teacher understanding of SEL is in line with CASEL’s definition being the process through which children and adults develop the skills needed for success in school and life. More specifically this teaching enables adults and students to make responsible choices through understanding and managing emotions, and being empathetic in interpersonal relationships (CASEL, 2013). Broadly, teachers defined SEL as “the ability to interact or get along with others, teamwork or cooperative learning, life skills or preparing for the real world, and self-control or managing one’s behaviours (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

The following statistics were revealed in the report:

• 93% of teachers believed that social and emotional skills should be part of the school curriculum

• 95% of teachers understood that SEL skills can be taught;

• 97% of teachers believed in the benefits of SEL instruction for all students from diverse backgrounds

• 94% of teachers believed that SEL could and probably would improve teacher-student relationships

• 77% believed in student improved academic achievement

• 93% believed that SEL instruction would reduce bullying in schools

• Only 8% of teachers believed that SEL should only be taught to children experiencing behavioural problems
What is interesting is the teacher statistics in high-poverty schools against schools with higher resources:

- 63% of teachers believed that social and emotional skills development would improve teacher-student relationships against 44% in higher income schools;
- 61% believed it would reduce bullying versus 51%
- 42% believed it would improve academic test scores versus 27%

In summary, the research indicates that teachers had a broad understanding of the term SEL in accordance with CASEL’S definition. It was evident that teachers saw the value of facilitating a CBSEL programme with their class and through this they envisaged that relational dynamics would improve at classroom level.

CASEL (2013) published the ‘Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs: Preschool and Elementary School Edition’ as a guide to assist schools in selecting evidence-based high quality programme options. The 23 selected programmes all have a sound theoretical model, training in implementation and overall SEL professional development, grade range specifications and proof of effectiveness. Within this programme guide, Yoder (2014) identified 5 social and emotional learning programmes that meet the CASEL requirements and support the 10 teaching practices that teachers can use in the classroom while teaching to enhance social and emotional competence in their students. These programmes are: Caring School Community, Raising Healthy Children, Responsive Classroom, RULER approach, Steps to Respect, Tribes Learning Community.

3.6.5 Teaching practices that promote social, emotional and academic skills

The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) piloted an in-depth appraisal on teaching methods that promote social, emotional and academic skills and identified 10 teaching practices to function as a framework for teachers’ promotion of social emotional learning in the classroom. These ten practices can be divided into two teaching
techniques, those that focus on social teaching methods and those that focus on instructional teaching methods (Yoder, 2014).

Figure 2: The relationship between teacher SEL skills and the SEL teaching practices:

Sourced in: Teaching the Whole Child: Instructional practices that support social-emotional learning in three teacher evaluation frameworks (Yoder, 2014)

To apply these practices effectively, teachers have to undergo professional development training in their own social and emotional competence. Teachers need these skills to manage their classrooms effectively. Through modeling their own behaviour they set guidelines and boundaries for emotional displays and in this way help students to manage their own emotions (AIR, 2014).

3.6.5.1 Teacher social and emotional competence

Teachers have an impact on their student social emotional learning through the teaching methods that they use in their classroom along with their own social and emotional
competence. Therefore, social emotional competence in teachers influences the quality of teacher-student relationships and classroom organisation and management (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013).

Socially and emotionally competent teachers are self-aware. They know their emotional capability, their strengths and limitations and they know how to use this to generate positive emotions to motivate learning in themselves and their students. They have high levels of social awareness and are able to build strong relationships based on mutual understanding and empathy. This gives them strong tools for managing conflict situations in the classroom. These teachers appreciate diversity and take cultural differences into consideration when dealing with parents, students and colleagues. They are able to make responsible decisions based on sound values and solid judgement. (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Teachers with high social emotional competence are in control of their own emotions and behaviour (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). They are able to regulate their emotions and behaviours to manage conflict situations positively, encourage emotional expression and respectful communication, and manage disruptive behaviour constructively. They are also able to motivate their students by creating a learning environment that encourages creative, autonomous thinking and reflection (Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Mashburn et al., 2008).

3.6.5.1 Self-Awareness

Self-awareness refers to a teacher’s ability to maintain a well-balanced sense of self-worth through an understanding of personal feelings, strengths, interests and values (Payton et al., 2008). Within the classroom context, self-aware teachers understand that their students' behaviour and how they teach and manage their classrooms are both influenced independently by personal factors such as temperament, feelings, thoughts and opinions. They are aware of their own limitations. The challenge for teachers is to manage these differences positively in order to build strong interpersonal relationships to enhance learning
(Yoder, 2014).

3.6.5.1.2 Self Management

Teachers are tasked with constantly managing and regulating personal and student emotions and emotional displays in the classroom. Teachers with developed emotional regulation can manage both positive and negative emotions in interactions with students, parents and colleagues for positive classroom outcomes. They promote pro-social behavior with a focus on learning in the classroom.

3.6.5.1.3 Social Awareness

Socially aware teachers purposefully build strong relationships based on mutual understanding and empathy with their students, parents and their colleagues. These authentic relationships are based on the ability to be able to take the perspective of others through appreciating diversity by having the capacity to recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities and differences. This benefits them when dealing with parents. It also gives them strong tools for managing conflict situation in the classroom. They are able to make responsible decisions based on sound values and solid judgement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Zins & Elias, 2011).

3.6.5.1.4 Relationship Skills

Strong relationship skills give teachers the ability to shape and maintain positive, healthy rewarding relationships with others, based on clear communication, active listening skills and a co-operative attitude. Healthy engagement in the classroom will happen if strong interpersonal skills exist. This will result in pro-social classroom behaviour, co-operation, empathetic interpersonal responses and general respect for others. Teachers with strong relationship skills will have a strong and healthy rapport with students, colleagues and parents. They will be strong trouble-shooters and resolve situational problems amicably with all concerned.
### 3.6.5.1.5 Responsible Decision Making

Teachers must often make split-second, in-the-moment decisions that govern their interactions with students and reactions to other factors, inside and outside the classroom. Decision making is a multi-step process which in classrooms is often enacted in the moment as teachers consider and process clues, draw information from long-term memory and make decisions enacted through words and behaviour. Socially and emotionally competent teachers use multiple forms of evidence to make decisions about instruction, classroom management, and interactions with students, parents and colleagues. They objectively consider the well-being, needs and academic goals of individual students and of their class as a whole and they balance awareness of students’ emotional and academic needs when making both long term plans and in the moment decisions.

### 3.6.6 Summary

When teachers have combined competency in all five social and emotional skills, they create classroom environments to encourage optimum social emotional development in students. This is achieved through focusing on building positive student-teacher and student-student relationships, strength-based lesson planning, coaching conflict situations, role modelling communication skills and general pro-social classroom behaviour towards learning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The result creates a harmonious classroom climate with manageable levels of conflict or disruptive behaviour, respectful communication and appropriate emotional expression, respect for individual differences and needs and a healthy focus on learning (La Paro & Pianta, 2003).

The above teacher traits could be considered as ultimate in an educational setting, however, limited attention has been given to supporting teachers’ social emotional competence (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).
3.7 Ten teaching practices that enhance social and emotional competence in students

3.7.1 Social Teaching Practices

3.7.1.1 Student-centered discipline

Research indicates that educators who establish firm boundaries, foster warm personal relationships in the classroom, and enable students to have an impact on their environment strengthen students’ attachment to school, including their interest in learning and positive changes in behaviour (Hawkins, Catalano, et al. 1992; Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, and Delucchi 1992).

Pro-active classroom management is created through collectively establishing clear classroom norms, values and rules through discussion with students on acceptable and unacceptable classroom behaviour. Students need a voice and must contribute to creating the classroom culture and rules to achieve student commitment (Cristenson & Havsy, 2004; Hawkins, Smith & Catalano, 2004).

The teacher must clearly define classroom management strategies or tools that will be used for discipline when classroom rules are broken. Punitive disciplinary measures are not implemented. Disciplinary measures must be developmentally appropriate and classroom rules must be set up collectively so that students are motivated to want to behave (Cristenson & Havsy, 2004; McCombs, 2004). Discipline must be consistent and directly related to the classroom rules and the behaviour that has been transgressed. For example, if a child pushes in line, he has transgressed a classroom rule and he must be disciplined for that by having to line up last for the rest of the week. Mutually established logical classroom norms and clearly defined and fair consequences to transgression of these rules, when consistently applied, teach children how to regulate their behavior and problem solve conflict situations in the classroom through making accurate choices (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). In this way, a child is strengthening personal competencies such as self-management and decision-making skills daily. Such a positive and predictable environment conveys
safety and care, and builds healthy relationships (Brusnahan and Gatti, 2011).

There are a variety of routines required to manage a classroom effectively, such as entering and exiting, keeping students engaged in learning activities while others are working with the teacher. Educators sometimes assume all students know how to carry out these routines when in fact these skills need to be taught just like academic skills in a SAFE (sequenced, active, focused and explicit) manner (CASEL, 2005). By teaching these behaviours, teachers are preventing predictable problems and increasing the opportunities for students to engage in appropriate behaviours and receive positive feedback. Over time there is a shift from these behaviours being predominantly controlled by external factors such as positive feedback, to internalized factors such as caring concern for others, making good decisions and taking responsibility for one’s behaviour (Bear & Watkins, 2006 in Brusnahan and Gatti for reference).

Programmes that discussed student-centered discipline included: Caring School Community; Raising Healthy Children and The Responsive Classroom

Student-Centered Discipline Example:

The RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, Regulating) Approach, one of the SEL programmes, provides an alternative strategy compared with the other SEL programs. This programme’s primary disciplinary approach involves the development of emotional literacy in students. Students are taught how to identify their emotions, understand the precursors to an emotional reaction, and be able to express and regulate their own emotions. Using this approach, educators teach students how to effectively problem-solve potential conflicts or personal issues that may arise in the classroom.

3.7.1.2 Teacher language

Teacher language refers to how teachers communicate with their students in the classroom. It is a critical skill that teachers need to develop. Work related language would
include encouragement for effort, and not simply praise, as well as explaining what needs to be done for improvement. For instance, instead of simply saying “well done”, the teacher would encourage the student by saying “I can see that you really worked hard on your project. When you think about your work and explain your thinking you can get better results”. Teachers must ask questions relating to how their students monitor and regulate their behavior, instead of reprimanding them for misbehaviour. For example, “What could you have done differently and should we role-play that option?”

Programmes and scholars that discussed teacher language included the Responsive Classroom

3.7.1.3 Responsibility and choice

To create a positive classroom environment conducive to co-operative learning, teachers engage with their students when deciding on classroom norms. Classroom standards would include discussions and choices on work ethic or attitude towards work as well as preferred methods of instruction to create an interactive learning climate (Hawkins et al, 2004). Student input in establishing classroom norms creates a commitment and responsible attitude towards their work in the classroom. This democratic approach to classroom management gives students controlled and meaningful choices on how to work and behave within the established rules of the classroom. Students are given specific choices from which they can select during lessons and activities and then they are held accountable for their decisions. Additionally, peer-tutoring can enhance feelings of responsibility in the classroom (Hawkings et al., 2004).

Programmes and scholars that discussed responsibility and choice included: Caring School Community, Responsive Classroom, Tribes Learning Community

3.7.1.4 Warmth and support (Teacher and Peer)

A warm, supportive and caring classroom climate is established in which positive interpersonal relationships are created when teachers show their students that they care in
academic and non-academic domains (Cristenson & Havsy, 2004; McCombs, 2004). The teacher does this by showing support, through positive affirmation, and positive regular communication, showing care through following up where there were concerns, asking questions about general well-being and being present (Cristenson & Havsy, 2004). The teacher must create opportunities in the classroom to encourage students to bond with each other and other teaching staff (Hawkins et al., 2004).

Programmes and scholars that discussed warmth and support included: Caring School Community, Responsive Classrooms, Tribes Learning Community

3.7.2 Instructional Teaching Practices

3.7.2.1 Co-operative learning

Co-operative learning refers to the implementation of teaching methods that encourage interactive learning (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg, 2004) An example of this would be project-based learning (Elias, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2004). The teacher provides goal directed tasks and the students are responsible for the planning and monitoring of the project as they actively work and learn together to achieve the goal (Elias, 2004; Zins et al., 2004). Students understand that they are individually accountable for their portion of the project and that the group is collectively accountable to meet the project deadline (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). This encourages co-operation and teamwork skills in students (Elias, 2004). Teachers include 5 elements in cooperative learning: positive interdependence, individual accountability, promoting one another’s successes, applying interpersonal and social skills, and group processing.

Programmes and scholars that discussed cooperative learning included: Caring School Community; Raising Healthy Children; Steps to Respect; Tribes Learning Community

3.7.2.2 Classroom discussions

Teachers provide the content knowledge in lessons and lead content discussions in the classroom in an open-ended way. Students explore this knowledge and are encouraged
to share their thoughts and to listen to and respond to the thoughts of their peers. Dialogue around content in these discussions becomes student driven, where teachers encourage students to build on their own thoughts. Communication and listening skills need to be developed in students so that they listen attentively and communicate around the main points of the learning content (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, et al 1997).

Programmes and scholars that discussed classroom discussions included: Caring School Community, Raising Healthy Children, Tribes Learning Community

3.7.2.3 Self-assessment and self-reflection

Students are required to assess and reflect on the quality of their work against performance standards provided by the teacher. Students also need to identify areas for improvement. Goals are set together for deadlines on work or projects so that students know what they are working to achieve. During this process students need to learn when to ask for help and where to search for resources (Elias et al., 1997)

Programmes and scholars that discussed self-reflection and self-assessment included: Caring School Community, Steps to Respect, Tribes Learning Community

3.7.2.4 Balanced instruction

Balanced instruction refers to a combination of teaching methods including direct content instruction from the teacher and active participation by the students in individual and collective collaboration. In this way, students are given the opportunity to learn directly about the material from the teacher and then engage with the material through classroom discussions. Most effective learning happens when students engage in the learning material in multiple ways through sequenced and focused lessons that are topic specific and build on knowledge in a sequenced manner (Cristenson & Havsey, 2004; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger; 2011). Varied instruction using learning tools such as storytelling, group discussions, active role-playing and rehearsal and academic games are examples of active learning strategies (Elias et al., 1997; Zins et al., 2004).
An example of an active form of instruction is project-based learning. In project-based learning, students are actively involved in solving a problem, which could be completed collaboratively or independently. Even during independent projects, students typically have to rely on others to find information. During the project, students should plan, monitor, and reflect on their progress toward completion. Programs and scholars that discussed balanced instruction included Caring School Community.

3.7.2.5 Academic press and expectations

Students need to understand the importance of achievement academically (Zins et al., 2004). They also need to understand that hard work is challenging and requires responsibility and commitment. Teachers need to be clear on the age appropriate academic standards and expectations required for the grade (Cristenson & Havy, 2004). Teachers also need to assess the academic potential of their individual students and recognize individual developmental differences and capabilities so that unrealistic expectations are not placed on certain students (McCombs, 2004).

Programmes that discussed academic press and expectations included: Caring School Community, Tribes Learning Community

3.7.2.6 Competence building

Social and emotional competence is developed in students while engaged in academic learning through the learning cycle by: setting goals and objectives for the lesson, through introducing new material; encouraging group and individual work and reflection on work done (Elias et al., 1997). Each part of the learning process is an opportunity for the teacher to integrate and reinforce relevant social and emotional competencies into the lesson (Elias et al., 1997). Throughout the lesson, the teacher should model appropriate pro-social behaviour by creating positive interpersonal personal relationship with and among students (Cristenson & Havy, 2004; McCombs, 2004). For example, during group work, the teacher encourages positive group behaviour and trains students in pro-social group skills. Positive reinforcement in the form of feedback to students on peer interaction and on task learning
achievement in important during this process. If problems arise with negative group behaviour or academic content, the teacher takes this opportunity to guide the students through problem-solving and conflict-resolution techniques (Johnson & Johnson, 2004).

Programmes which discussed competence building included: Responsive Classroom, Raising Healthy Children, Steps to Respect

3.8 Summary

Competency-based social and emotional learning can be taught in various ways. Irrespective of the methods and resources used, research shows the multiple benefits that CBSEL can achieve in both short and long-term outcomes for students. Teachers benefit from CBSEL work as classrooms become easier to manage. At the core of this dynamic process is a shift in relational dynamics, initially at an individual level and then collectively, as relationships with self and then the other improve. As individuals develop awareness of self, including strengths and limitations, they are able to build on their relationship skills with others. As this process evolves, relationships are strengthened as learners develop empathy and respect for each other. In the classroom, these qualities make classrooms easier to manage on two specific levels. Firstly, students have more control over themselves and their own emotions. They are able to self-regulate when feeling frustrated or anxious when faced with academic challenges. On a collective level, the classroom is easier to manage because, socially, learners are more respectful of one another. Conflicts can therefore be resolved amicably. Learner attitudes towards work also improve.

The most effective way for CBSEL to be introduced into classrooms is through programmes that are SAFE (sequenced, active, focused and explicit). These programmes teach through experiential and participative learning, teaching specific competencies to achieve personal and collective growth in that specific area.

To assist teachers in integrating CBSEL into the classroom, The Centre on Great Teachers and Leaders developed a framework on Social and Instructional teaching practices.
Thus, classrooms become safe and trusting learning environments where quality learning happens.
CHAPTER 4

Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

An overview of the research design and methodology was outlined in Chapter 1. This chapter details the study including the research paradigm. The design and methodology of the study is expounded, including the study context, participant selection, techniques used for data gathering and analysis, the research process and trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

4.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is an interrelated system of set practices specifically selected to guide the chosen research process depending on the nature of the study (Terre Blanck, Durrheim and Painter, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1994). This study assumes a social constructivist worldview (Cresswell, 2009) combined with an interpretative paradigm and aims to capture, interpret and understand the lived experiences of the participants (Henning, van Rensburg and Smit, 2011).

Within this paradigm, the ontological stance assumes to study the subjective experiences of the participants as they experience it, as this is their internal reality. This implies that people make assumptions about lived experiences to understand and give meaning to life within social contexts (Niewenhuis, 2007; Willig, 2008). In order to make meaning of the information obtained through the research process, the experiences of teacher facilitation were examined with the aim to explain the subjective experiences of this
social action (Terre Blanch et al., 2010). The meaning that is attached to the experience is subjective, multiple and varied and the research aims to examine this in all of its complexity (Creswell, 2012). This dialogue is shared with the researcher in the form of open-ended interviews which makes it available for interpretation. This dialogue has been created through the subjective and complex experiences of the participants as they have engaged in social interactions, hence the term *social constructivism* (Cresswell, 2009).

Working from an interpretive constructivist paradigm, knowledge is obtained through the subjective meanings people attach to their experiences. In this paradigm, the researcher and participants are actively involved in the research process through which the researcher aims to lessen the distance between herself and the person being researched (Cresswell, 2012). Knowledge is obtained through exploring the lived experiences of the participants and therefore the dynamic interaction between the researcher and participant is central to interpretive constructivist worldview (Ponterotto, 2005).

Epistemology is concerned with how knowledge is obtained (Creswell, 2012). An interactional epistemological stance was adopted by the researcher through the methodological choice of open-ended interviews that rely on the subjective relationship between the researcher and participants for data gathering. Through dialogue with the participants, a deeper understanding of the complexity of the experience is gleaned through interpretation of the experiences by the researcher (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher assumes the role of an active participant in this research, the primary roles being that of the sole interviewer and transcriber and analyser of the data. In addition to this the researcher will integrate and present the results of the research findings.

### 4.3 Context of the study

The context in which the research was conducted involved three government primary schools that accommodate learners across the socio-economic and ethnical groups within the
South African context in the Western Cape. All three primary schools are fee-paying co-education primary schools based in urban communities in the Western Cape.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explain that in qualitative research the researcher purposively selects the research sites. The research sites for this study were purposely selected based on the following: they have all administered the same competency-based social and emotional learning to their learners in the Foundation Phase over a three year period.

4.4 Research design and methodology

A qualitative phenomenological research design (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 2009; DeVos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2011), was applied in this study. Phenomenological psychological research, according to Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) aims to clarify situations as lived through by people who have first-hand experience of a particular situation, in this case, teachers involved in facilitating the integration of competency-based social emotional learning in the Foundation Phase. The study aimed to capture the lived experiences of Foundation Phase teachers as experienced in the context of this process.

The primary purpose of this study was to encourage teachers through open ended interviews to articulate their views of what is happening in their own classrooms regarding competency based social emotional learning by reconstructing their experiences to reflect their understanding about their roles as facilitators in this process.

4.5 Participants

The population for the research was Foundation Phase (Grade 1 – 3) teachers who had facilitated the same competency-based social emotional learning in their primary schools in the Western Cape Province over a three-year period. The participants selected for this study included 18 Foundation Phase teachers who consented to participation. These participants
were purposively selected to participate in individual interviews based on the following criteria: 1) they had more than 3 years of teaching experience in the Foundation Phase; 2) they had been involved in the facilitation of competency-based social emotional learning for a minimum period of three years. 3) the participants consented to and 4) were available for interviews after school hours.

To recruit the participants, a letter to obtain permission to conduct research was sent to the principals of the respective schools selected, to inform them about the proposed research, after ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee and permission granted by the Western Cape Education Department. Once they had signed the permission form included in this letter, the principals were requested to invite the Foundation Phase staff to an information session where the proposed research study was explained and the teachers were given the opportunity to have any questions regarding the research answered. Following this information session participants were assured that participation was voluntary and refraining from participation would not bear any negative consequences. It was further explained that all correspondence, verbal and written, would be in English as all participants were fluent in English and therefore there was no need for documentation to be translated. All the teachers who attended the information session were given informed consent forms to take with them and given one week to consider their participation.

The informed consent forms for the teachers contained information explaining the research process and the expectations as well as the ethical considerations of the research. The teachers who agreed to become research participants for this research process were requested to sign and return the informed consent form in an unmarked, sealed envelope placed in a reply box in the secretary’s office at their respective schools.
4.6 Data gathering

In accordance with the qualitative phenomenological nature of the research (Creswell, 2009; De Vos et al., 2011), data in this study was collected from individuals who experienced the phenomenon, in the following ways: Firstly, open-ended individual interviews were conducted with 18 participants. These, according to Niewenhuis (2007), take the form of a conversation that assists the researcher to explore with each participant how they experienced the facilitation process over a prolonged period of time.

Each open-ended individual interview was scheduled for a maximum of 45 minutes and conducted in a room at the school allowing for privacy and confidentiality. Following consultation with the supervisor, the researcher asked the following open-ended question: *Tell me about your experience of facilitating competency–based social emotional learning in the Foundation Phase?* As recommended by Creswell (2009), the researcher used prompts to ensure that the data gathering provided textual as well as structural descriptions of the experiences and provided an understanding of the common experiences of the participants. All the open-ended individual interviews were audio-recorded with the written permission of the participants. Each interview was allocated a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

Secondly, all the participants from the three research sites, who consented to participate, were requested to write reflections on their experiences of facilitating a competency-based social-emotional learning process over the past three years. The intention was to obtain a recollection of the participants’ experiences over that time (Shenton, 2004). These reflections furthermore ensured that the voices of less experienced teachers were also accommodated. The researcher conducted a brief session at each school to explain what the reflections should encompass and answered participants’ questions in this regard. It was explained that the reflections are a personal and individual account of the individual’s experiences of facilitation. The teachers were asked to share whatever those experiences
were honestly in writing. The participants were given the freedom to decide whether to write their reflections by hand or present them electronically. All reflections were given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity of the participants.

4.7 Data analysis

The researcher organized and prepared the raw data for analysis through transcribing and coding all recordings and emails. The data in all data sets obtained in this study were analysed by means of thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009). Thematic analysis was applied due to the flexibility of the method, which allowed for a dual psychological and social understanding of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This unrestricted data analysis method was needed for the retrieving of meaningful insights from teachers involved in the facilitation process. Following the thematic analysis process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) the researcher familiarised herself with the data by reading and re-reading the data while generating initial codes understood as classifying or categorising individual fragments of the data (Babbie, 2007). The codes were combined into themes and subthemes. The themes were reviewed, defined and named based on the guidelines provided by Willig (2008) for phenomenological analyses. Member checking was applied as part of ensuring the rigor of the study by presenting the final themes in writing to at least 3 participants (one in each school and preferably the most experienced teacher). These participants were requested to comment on the themes within a week to verify and check that they agreed with the themes before disseminating the data as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

4.8 Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a qualitative study must be trustworthy to be able to convince the readers that the findings are suitable for a specific study field. In this study, trustworthiness was ensured through crystallisation (Ellingson, 2009). Crystallisation is a process that includes a combination of various forms of analysis and representations of different kinds of data which in turn delivers in-depth descriptions of a particular
phenomenon through which we obtain an understanding of others lived experiences
(Ellingson, 2009; Tracy, 2010). The principles of crystallisation as outlined by Ellington
(2009) include the use of multiple qualitative methods of data collection to obtain deep and
meaningful data. Through the transcriptions of the data and the detailed thematic analysis,
the complexity of the interpretation of the data was achieved.

Furthermore, the following markers set by Tracy (2010) to ensure trustworthiness in
qualitative research were applied in this study:

- **Multiple methods for data collection.** This study used open ended interviews as
  the main source of data collection to obtain rich and meaningful data. The broad and
  open-ended questions enabled the participants to develop a deep and meaningful
  understanding of the question through dialogue with the researcher during the
  interview process (Cresswell, 2009). Participants then engaged in reflective
  journaling which is a subjective process and allowed them to reflect and record any
  additional information that they wanted to include in the data collection process.
- **Multivocality** was ensured in this study through collecting data from three
  heterogeneous sites from participants with differentiated experiences to ensure
  representation of the various contexts in which the research was conducted.
- **The bracketing of personal assumptions** to prevent researcher bias was achieved
  throughout this study through reflective discussions with the project supervisor as
  well as through member checking with fellow students studying in the field of social
  and emotional learning.
- **The credibility** of the research findings ensured through rich in-depth descriptions in
  the data analysis and findings sections of the study. The detail and complexity of the
  feedback ensures congruence between what the research participants said and how it
  was understood and represented by the researcher (Babbie, 2007). The outcome is a
  solid understanding of the experiences of the teachers who displayed different,
  multiple realities while working with and implementing competency based social
  and emotional learning in the classroom.
• **Rich rigour** was ensured thorough preparation and adequate time spent with the research participants during the individual interview processes. The researcher allocated 45 minutes to each participant interview. This ensured the collection of deep, meaningful and rich data from the field (Creswell, 2009).

### 4.9 Ethical considerations

In this research, the ethical principles of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) that serve to protect human rights and public safety were adhered to. Before commencing with the research, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the ethics committee (HREC) of the Faculty of Health Sciences, NWU – 00046-15-S1, written permission was also received from the Western Cape Department of Education (ADDENDUM A).

Three schools were identified for the research and a letter was written to the Principal of each school outlining the proposed research and what would be expected from the research participants (ADDENDUM B). A meeting was then held with each Principal and signed consent obtained to meet with the teachers to discuss the intended research. During the meeting with the teachers, the research intent and process was clearly outlined. To avoid any uncertainty about their involvement, the research procedure, including what was expected from the participants was clearly outlined. Participants were informed that they had the right to decline from answering any question posed to them that might be emotionally harmful or bring about conflict with another person in the group. It was explained that the participants would be given the contact details of professional services offered, at no cost, should involvement in the research experience result in emotional vulnerability. It was made clear that all participation in the study was voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the study at any point. It was highlighted that all data received from the participants would be strictly confidential. The teachers were handed a letter (ADDENDUM C) containing all of the relevant information and given one week to sign and anonymously return the letter in a sealed envelope to be placed in a box in the secretaries’ office.
After the study had been completed, the researcher would organize an opportunity for the participants to ask any questions and have any misconceptions dealt with and resolved (McBurney, 2001). If formal debriefing was implicated, the researcher would arrange a session with a professional person not involved in the study.

The researcher would submit a report in article format that would explain the findings of the study. The findings would also be shared with the participants and the Principals of the respective school research sites as a work session, on completion of the Masters study or as requested by the Department of Education.

This study adheres to the North-West University Code of Ethics of research that ensures, above all else, the health and safety of all participants by adhering to the following:

- **Do more good than harm:** The ethical rule of social research is that no physical or psychological harm must come to any research participant (Babbie, 2007). The possibility of harm was limited due to the nature of the enquiry. However, to avoid any uncertainty about their involvement, the research procedure, including what was expected from the participants, was explained clearly. Participants were also informed that they had the right to decline from answering any question posed to them which may be emotionally harmful or cause conflict with another participant. The participants were offered the contact details of professional services, at no cost, should they need for such a service based on their involvement in this research.

- **Voluntary participation:** Voluntary participation is an important norm in social research. This means that no participant can be forced to participate in a research project (Rubin & Babbie, 2005). It was emphasized that participation in the research study was voluntary and that participation could be terminated at any point during the study. Any teacher deciding to decline participation were assured that their decision would have no consequences in terms of their position as a Foundation Phase teacher. Teachers were requested to consider, sign and
return the teacher informed consent form anonymously in an unmarked, sealed envelope placed in a reply box in the secretaries’ office to ensure no bias was attached to their decision.

- **Written informed consent:** It is the researcher’s responsibility to make subjects aware of the research goal, length, process and procedure and possible risks of the research. The teacher consent forms included specific information on the study that the participants have verbally agreed to (Creswell, 2009). A teacher consent form was drafted according to the requirements of the study. Each participant signed a consent form and the researcher made sure that the content therein was adhered to.

- **No deception of subjects:** Deception refers to providing the participants with misleading information or withholding information relating to the study. The researcher pledged to be open and honest with the participants at all times. All correspondence with participants was recorded and stored securely as back up proof on the researcher’s computer, protected by a password.

- **No violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality:** All participants have the right to personal privacy and they therefore had the right to decide what information is shared with the researcher and the other participants of the study. The researcher transcribed the data. All hard copies of records of data collected have been stored in locked cabinets. Codes have also been used to maintain participant anonymity. Privacy was ensured during the interviews through having a confidential room as the venue that was booked specifically for the meeting. The room was well ventilated, and the furniture was comfortable.

- **Debriefing:** During debriefing, problems that generated by the research experience could be addressed and hopefully corrected (Babbie, 2007). After the completed study, the researcher would organize an opportunity for the participants to ask any questions and have any misconceptions dealt with and resolved (McBurney, 2001). If formal debriefing was implicated, the researcher would arrange a session with a professional person not involved in this study.
• Competence: The researcher has a responsibility to ensure that she is competent in the skills needed to complete the research process ethically and soundly (Walliman, 2006). She did so by completing the research modules and attending cohort supervision training. She is also trained as a social-emotional learning facilitator and currently trained by CASEL to administer social-emotional assessments in schools. She is supervised by a registered educational psychologist.

4.10 Summary

In this chapter, the research design and methodology was chosen specifically to enable the researcher to explore how Foundation Phase teachers experience the facilitation of competency based social and emotional learning through understanding their subjective experience of the process. Assuming a qualitative phenomenological research design assigned specific methodological processes to the data gathering process to glean this information. This was achieved through open ended interviews and reflective journaling. Thematic analysis was undertaken to analyse the data. Trustworthiness was ensured through data crystallisation as recommended by Ellingson (2209) and Tracy (2010). Ethical clearance was reached through adhering to the Ethical Standards.
CHAPTER 5
Presentation and discussion of the findings

5.1 Introduction

The findings of the study are presented and discussed in this chapter. The themes and subthemes identified in the data analysis process are indicated in the table below:

Table 1: Overview of themes and sub-themes

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Teachers’ perceptions of CBSEL based on their involvement in the programme

Applying a programme-based approach to the facilitation of CBSEL
5.2 Theme 1: Teachers’ perceptions of CBSEL based on their involvement in the programme

The theme refers to the way in which the participants perceive CBSEL, based on their experiences of presenting a programme at their respective schools. Their perceptions of CBSEL were evident in their definition of CBSEL, their validation of the need for Social and Emotional Learning in schools, as well as the personal strengths and capabilities that they deem necessary to succeed in the teaching of a CBSEL programme.

5.2.1. Defining CBSEL

Participants in the study define CBSEL as an educational process through which children obtain knowledge, attitudes and life skills to understand and manage their emotions, thereby equipping them with the skills to make informed decisions and choices on how to behave when faced with life challenges. It also teaches them the social skills to operate effectively in group settings and ultimately as responsible citizens in society. This is illustrated in the statements below:

*T15: Social and emotional learning is how children gain and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage their emotions, feelings and...*
empathy for their peers. It is very important for this to be taught in schools. It’s an important life skill. Children need to know how to deal with different emotions they feel and how to emphasise with others.

T16: Social and Emotional Learning is understanding personal emotions and feelings and getting to know and understand how to interact and operate effectively in a group and in society.

T17: Social Emotional Learning teaches learners the skills needed to help them make good decisions and choices by teaching them to become more aware of themselves and their feelings. It affects their relationship with others and how a learner reacts to individuals within the family, classroom and the outside world.

T13: It is about giving children tools and strategies to deal with social situations so that they can be at a place of social and emotional acceptance.

In the research literature, Competency-based Social and Emotional Learning (CBSEL) is broadly defined as a process through which learners and adults develop awareness and management of their cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes through learning and practicing the social and emotional competencies needed for succeeding in school and life (Greenberg et al., 2003; Osher, Sprague, Weissberg, Keenan, & Zins, 2008; Payton et al., 2000; Zins et al., 2004).

The findings indicate that the participants in the study display a broad understanding of competency- based social and emotional learning as defined in the research literature. They specifically emphasised that it encompasses an educational process through which learners obtain life skills to understand and manage their emotions and make informed decisions and choices on how to behave when faced with daily challenges.

However, it is important to note that they do not seem to have a clear understanding of the five core intrapersonal, interpersonal and cognitive competencies that are taught in the
fields of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) namely; Self-Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making as identified by CASEL (2013) based on the following researchers (Elias et al., 1997; Payton et al., 2000; Weissberg & Walberg, 2007; Zins, Bloodworth,) The participants also failed to mention that it is a process that is taught through modeling and re-modelling of behaviours that require repetitive practice and reinforcement.

In summary it seems that the participants have a broad understanding of the term Social and Emotional Learning but it appears that they lack the depth of knowledge to identify the specific competencies being taught and the most effective techniques used to achieve this end.

5.2.2 Validating the need for CBSEL

The participants validated the importance of social and emotional development work in schools, defined as social places where learning takes place through personal interactions between teachers, learners and peers. Based on their experiences, participants argued that effective learning cannot take place unless the social and emotional needs of learners are addressed, and a safe and caring learning environment consciously created.

T16: It is vitally important as school is a social place and people are emotional beings. Effective learning can only take place if children’s social and emotional states are cared for and developed.

T14: Children spend a large portion of their lives at school in social situations. School influences all areas of their learning.

T17: A child who has developed self-esteem and who is happy at school will want to learn more and becomes eager to please. A student who feels safe at school will participate more in lessons, whether that child is an introvert or extrovert.
T16: A child whose needs are met and socially and emotionally will be involved in many if not all learning opportunities he/she is offered in the classroom.

Participants emphasised the link between social and emotional well-being in learners and their ability to achieve academically. They experienced that children coping with emotional trauma cannot focus and this affects their ability to take in new information. The participants argued that more time should be spent on the social and emotional development of children as this will result in learners who are well adjusted, able to focus, accept new challenges and therefore engage in the learning process.

T3: I taught at a school where the pass rate was 12%. It was a very deprived area. The lives that these kids lived at home before they came to school often placed them in an emotional state and a state of trauma. They can’t learn at all. We see straight away when there are things going on at home. They are so transparent and they just cannot learn in that state. They are so busy just trying to survive and cope with their reality that they cannot learn. And it is so evident in their results and in their schoolwork.

T17: A child with social or emotional issues will find it difficult to focus in class, thus affecting their ability to learn. A child who is more confident and learns to deal with stress and anxiety will perform to the best of their ability.

T13: The way the children feel impacts on their ability to learn and take in information. We constantly need to use emotional language to motivate children to learn if they are having a tough day. Some children need to speak about their feelings before they are able to focus on academics.

T16: More time needs to be spent on this at school as effective learning can’t take place if children’s social and emotional state is compromised.
T14: An unhappy child will struggle to learn optimally and a well-adjusted child will be able to focus more, respond well to positive reinforcement.

T16: A happy well-rounded child is motivated to learn, is willing to try something challenging and is engaged in learning activities.

The participants furthermore observed that stress and anxiety, as displayed through different behaviours, affected the social and emotional climate of their classrooms. Applying CBSEL enabled them as teachers to support these children who seem to lack the ability to control their emotions at school, due to an inability to self-regulate their behaviour.

T7: So I’ve had loads of anxiety-ridden children in the last two years especially. I had a child yesterday who is a very anxious child. He ran from mini sports where he was doing athletics and I just heard. I’m useless! I’m useless! I had to tell him to be kind to himself and that we all have different strengths.

T12: I’ve got a little girl at the moment who is so emotionally stressed that she comes crying every day to school and then when her mom has left and she is literally sobbing. I sit down with her and we have the ‘chat’ but she can’t express why she gets these anxiety feelings.

T2: I’ve got a little one at the moment that is torn between parents. She has to go to her Dad and she doesn’t like it. So, when it’s coming to Dad’s weekend one word from someone and her whole world melts.

T2: Learners are needy. They call your name all the time. The self-regulation doesn’t happen easily anymore

The participants’ validation of the need for Social Emotional learning in school contexts is confirmed by the research literature. The participants recognise learning as a
social process, the success of which is dependent on the quality of the various relationships as supported in the research literature. Teaching and learning within schools and classrooms is a social process that occurs within the context of these bi-directional relationships comprising social, emotional and academic elements (Elbertson, Brackett, & Weissberg, 2010; Elias, 1997; Payton et al., 2000). Learning is a co-operative process occurring as students interact with their teachers, peers and school staff through a process of collaboration and negotiation within this social context (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2004). Further research indicates a link between strong bi-directional classroom relationships and positive social, emotional and academic outcomes for students. For instance, the positive impact of strong relationships between teacher-student and student-student nurtures student commitment to school and academic success as documented in research by Jennings & Greenberg (2009).

The participants’ understanding of the importance of social and emotional skills development work to develop the competencies for social, emotional and academic success is supported in the following research. Jones & Bouffard (2012) argue that teachers must explicitly teach learners the SEL skills that are necessary for learning academic content. Durlak et al., (2011) support this and explain how social and emotional competence at a person-centered level promotes academic success in learners. For instance, self-regulation and the ability to control thoughts, feelings and behaviours has been linked to academic achievement in numerous studies. Learners who are more self-aware and confident about their learning capacities try harder and persist in the face of challenges (Aronson, 2002; cited in Durlak et al., 2011). Learners who set high academic goals, have self-discipline, motivate themselves, manage stress and organize their approach to work learn more effectively and get better grades (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Elliot & Dweck, 2005; cited in Durlak et al., 2011). Finally, learners who use problem-solving skills to overcome obstacles and make responsible decisions about studying and completing homework do better academically (Zins & Elias, 2006; cited in Durlak et al., 2011).
5.2.3 Personal strengths and competencies associated with the facilitation of CBSEL

The participants identify the strengths and competencies that they needed to be able to create a safe and trusting classroom environment, where learners can develop skills such as self-awareness and confidence and a sense of safety, which will allow them to explore and find their own voice. The strengths that they refer to include the insight and understanding into the importance of creating this conducive learning environment through open communication and relationship building where children feel safe enough to test boundaries and flourish. The competencies needed for this include the ability to build strong and healthy relationships with learners and the skills to positively self-manage and regulate emotions when feeling challenged in the classroom.

T5: I personally value deeply and very strongly primarily to create a safe community and that’s my commitment in the first term is that children are allowed to develop a voice and that they have a safe space for learning.

T3: As a teacher you have an influence over creating a safe place where they all feel loved and nurtured and cared for and where they can speak openly and where they are safe to explore different behaviours but still have firm boundaries where they know the limits.

T9: Have I had an impact on the social and emotional side of these children? Have they grown in their confidence, in their self-awareness by the time that they leave my class? Have they have learnt to trust themselves? Have learnt to trust the process or try something and not be scared to fail? That is one of the issues that I really deal with a lot because I feel that that is so vital for children and people. You look at adults that are too scared because they haven’t had the opportunity to say it is ok to fail. Instead of having a slot where you deal with social and emotional issues I prefer a hands-on approach where you chat about issues as they come up because then it is relevant.
T3: To nurture them so that they feel that they know what they are good at but they are still going to do their best and try at the things that they find tough. To build them and to do that in a safe environment where you are building and showing them that they can do a bit more. I think that’s also where you see quite a lot of development. Their whole self-awareness develops.

Participants also highlighted self-management and self-regulation as two competencies associated with CBSEL that they made conscious use of. Participants agreed that through self-management they are able to bracket emotions to appear positive in challenging situations.

T3: You’re a teacher; you have to be in a positive and happy space and leave your issues at the door. I do think that is also quite a challenge sometimes depending on what is going on in your life at the time.

T16: I try to remain calm and positive (although I am sometimes thinking really angry thoughts). I also try to show positive energy by being upbeat and energetic in my manner. Often, I wait quietly while children are restless and not settling. Unfortunately, at times I do get angry and bang on the table or shout.

Participants indicated that they applied self-regulatory techniques to calm themselves and refocus when faced with challenges in the classroom. These techniques involve stopping and stepping out of the situation to regroup, deep breathing and communicating honestly about how they are feeling to their learners.

T14: I believe in breathing, taking a moment or consulting a colleague.

T3: I think just being able to step back. When you feel that you are starting to get a bit prickly or frustrated – just to be able to step back and just give yourself a moment to catch
your breath. All it has to be is literally a moment where you can take a breath and then carry on again.

T6: I think if things are not going well and I’m getting frustrated then I think that it is a good idea to just take a few breathes and maybe decide whether what we are busy with is worth continuing with or just stop what you are doing.

T13: Be honest with the children about how you feel, e.g. having limited sleep; sit them down and have a conversation about how it is impacting on the teacher’s emotions. Ask the question: “How do you think I feel when...”.

Teachers impact on their student social emotional learning through the teaching methods that they use in their classroom along with their own social and emotional competence. Therefore, social and emotional competence in teachers influences the quality of teacher-student relationships and classroom organisation and management (Jones et al., 2013).

Some participants claimed competence in the skills associated with building strong, trusting relationships with their learners. It was explained that this was achieved through purposefully opening channels of communication through conversations around social and emotional themes or topics. Participants stressed the importance of creating a classroom environment where children felt contained and safe enough to communicate openly about feelings and secure enough to test and practice the boundaries of new behaviours.

Zins & Elias (2006) stress the importance of SEL instruction occurring within positively handled, kind, caring supportive environments filled with mutually reciprocated cooperation with respect for classroom rules and norms. Such safe and trusting contexts inspire learners to experiment with new ways of acting or behaving. In such safety, mistakes can be made, conversations can happen and learners can practise and re-model outcomes. In this way, learners learn how to make positive behavioural choices when faced with everyday
challenges.

Other participants reported their strengths as being competence in self-management and self-regulatory skills. Participants explained that mastery of these personal competencies enabled them to bracket negative emotions to appear positive in challenging classroom situations. Participants furthermore explained that they controlled their emotions through applying self-regulatory techniques to calm themselves and refocus when faced with challenging behaviour in the classroom. These techniques involved activities such as stopping and stepping out of the situation to regroup, breathing exercises and communicating honestly about how their feelings to their learners.

Teachers with high social emotional competence are in control of their own emotions and behaviour (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). They are able to regulate their emotions and behaviour to positively manage conflict situations, encourage emotional expression and respectful communication and manage disruptive behaviour constructively. They are also able to motivate their learners by creating a learning environment that encourages creative, autonomous thinking and reflection (Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Mashburn et al., 2008).

5.3 Theme 2: Applying a programme-based approach to the facilitation of CBSEL

This theme focuses specifically on the teachers’ experiences of applying a formal program to facilitate CBSEL in the Foundation Phase. The participants mainly referred to the resources and activities that they considered effective and the additional resources that they added to compliment the programme. They also emphasised the advantages and challenges associated with the application of a programme-based approach to CBSEL.
5.3.1 The effectiveness of the resources and activities applied within the programme

There was consensus amongst participants that stories, as the primary resource, were very popular and played a significant role in the programme applied by the teachers in the study for various reasons. The participants indicated that they could use these as tools to open conversations and explore options and choices of alternative behaviour with the children. They experienced that these stories captured the learner’s attention at the onset of a lesson; apparently because the characters experience various age-appropriate challenges that relate to Foundation Phase learners own daily lives. The stories raise awareness of feelings and model everyday life events and challenges for these children.

T5: There is something about the stories that capture the children totally. It goes completely quiet in my class when I read the book. It’s like a total emersion.

T5: The conversations that follow in the activities ask all the questions relating to the theme and how the characters react to the situations that they are in. So it opens opportunities to have the conversations around how the learners would feel if they were in the same situation. So I ask the question: Do you remember what happened in the story? How does it relate to you? Do any of you recognise this feeling? Have you experienced this yourself before? Which then leads onto other questions such as; So, what did you do differently? or Has it inspired you in some other way?

T8: The programme gives us a framework when issues come up like, for example, bullying and nastiness with my Grade 3 girls. We can then revisit the relevant story. So when the girls end up arguing I can pull out the story and say do you remember? I then have the conversation with them.

T10: The stories that we read to the children they absolutely love. Because we introduce the characters and I really made a big deal about who the characters are. And they talk about
the stories and the characters in their day-to-day life. When issues come up in the
classroom we refer back to the story and how the characters would have handled the issue.

T11: Each child relates to one of those characters because they are all so different. Musa
Monkey is the sporty outgoing one. Sammie Squirrel is very quiet, shy and physically
different.

T11: All the characters feel something all the time. It's not the same character feeling the
same way all the time either which is nice for the kids to know that they are normal if they
feel like that.

The stories in the programme are rich in visualisations that enable participants to
encourage the children to use their imagination to connect to and express their feelings and
develop their emotional vocabulary. For instance, the children are asked to visualise a fizzy
cool drink and to name a feeling associated with that. Conversations around regulating
those feelings are then explored. This is once again used as an opportunity to open up
conversations and get the learners to understand their feelings and think about their
behaviour.

T7: I have used it as a tool. They can visualise what is happening in the story. It makes
them think about their behaviour. Visualisations helps to get the children to talk about the
way that they feel and not to keep it bottled up inside which is a great challenge. Like the
activity where they imagine a fizzy cool drink and how it can eventually explode. I ask them
to imagine that as a feeling and to name it – like feeling stressed – and then we talk about it
so that they don’t feel like they will explode. They respond very nicely to the activity and
then they come and tell me if they feel like they are about to explode.

T11: What’s nice about the stories is that it is visual and allows the children to use their
imagination. The visual activities they give us really helps.
The participants also highlighted the effectiveness of the motto’s or short phrases used in the stories as a tool to sustain and reinforce the themes that they work with in the programmes as a way of getting children to reflect on their choices and behaviour in everyday life.

T10: I often refer back to the programme and will say what was our motto for this term for the programme and they can recite it. I always have it displayed and the characters are up throughout the year.

T11: We are doing healthy eating and a lot of healthy conflict happens when somebody pulls out a muffin for a snack and it’s like that’s a whack! or whoops! which is great because they are actually applying what they have learnt.

T11: Talking about behaviour, I would ask them: Was that wild behaviour whack! behaviour or whoops! behaviour and they are quite eager to tell you: Oh, that was whoops! behaviour because it’s not my best behaviour.

The themes in the story are reinforced through creative activities and practiced through re-modelling and role-playing behaviours. This gives participants the opportunity to ask questions that allows learners to reflect on their behaviour and to possibly choose more appropriate behavioural options.

T9: I think it’s the talking and the experiencing. So, we will do a role-play and we will act it out and I will ask: How could we have done that in a different way? So a lot of role-playing works really well.

T17: I make use of a lot of role-playing and do overs. We then spend time discussing and sharing experiences and reflect and assess.

The participants highlighted the activities in the programme that taught the children self-regulatory techniques as being effective and sustainable over time. For instance,
breathing techniques were taught and children were able to calm themselves down when feelings were out of control.

T10: *There are so many ideas of how to calm yourself down that come from the story but the bubble breathing they do easily and quickly when someone is upset, angry, feeling sad or overwhelmed. When they need to calm down then we discuss – what can you do? Do you think that bubble breathing will help you? And it always calms them down. I take them all out in little groups and we do the bubble breathing and they each have their own cup with the water and we have such nice discussions around it.*

T8: *So, an example is a few weeks ago a little boy who is now in Grade 5 caught his fingers in the car door and they could not calm him down. I said to him do you remember how to do bubble breathing. I talked him through the bubble breathing and it was phenomenal the way it just calmed him down. It was such an eye opener that even after two or three years to be able to say – go back and think about it and put that into practice.*

T17: *I apply calming strategies like bubble-breathing and get the children to self-reflect through conversations.*

Weissberg and Greenberg (1997) argue the importance of delivering age and grade appropriate social emotional learning instruction to children at an early age to teach these new skills through regular exposure and practical repetition. They add that social and emotional learning skills development must be introduced as early as possible in a child’s schooling because these building blocks create the solid foundation needed for children to handle the increasingly more complex situations that they will face as they develop and grow.

The findings refer to the activities and resources that the participants found effective, and evidently storytelling which encouraged conversations about relevant themes was considered most effective. In the programme they applied, each short story has one main
theme and a motto. The grade teachers introduce the theme through the story, its motto and the selected lessons for the theme. The grade teacher is supported with a resourced manual that instructs the teacher on the various learning opportunities. The manual outlines the lesson plan with teacher prompts for conversations to have and questions to ask learner’s ensuring that learning outcomes for the lesson are achieved. The workbooks that the children use are filled with activities teaching skills relating to the theme and the learning opportunities. The workbook promotes family participation through story reading followed by family conversations and theme related games (Bruce & Cohen, 2011). The stories were considered as age appropriate and the themes modelled the everyday life events and challenges faced by their learners in the developmental phase.

The stories, in their opinion, became tools that opened channels of communication for conversations that raised awareness of feelings and built an emotional vocabulary with their learners. Through these conversations and the pre-scribed activities participants could further explore the regulation of these feelings with the children. In this way, the conversations and activities enabled the participants to develop the children’s self-awareness skills as well as the emotional vocabulary to explore, discuss and execute various choices and respond to life’s daily challenges. They furthermore noted that specific activities such as role-playing and re-modelling of behaviours associated with the particular theme explored in the story enabled them to effectively teach the relevant skills and competencies to the children. Through these activities, children were challenged to reflect on their behaviour and where necessary could choose and practice more appropriate behavioural options.

Evidence supporting research findings into the effectiveness of the resources and activities included in CBSEL programmes was not available in the research literature although there is research to support the effectiveness of storytelling as a primary vehicle of communication and learning as it is, traditionally, the most effective way of passing on wisdom and life knowledge to a child (Bruce & Cohen, 2011).
The participants also highlighted that activities in the programme that taught the children self-regulatory techniques were effective and sustainable over time. For instance, breathing techniques were taught and children were able to calm themselves down when feelings were out of control through following the participant instructions and slowly relaxing.

Internationally, research has been conducted into a number of school-based SEL intervention programmes e.g. Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) (Greenberg, Kische & Riggs, 2004; Sheard, Ross & Cheung, 2012), The Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution (4R) (Jones, Brown, & Aber 2011) and, more extensively, “FRIENDS for Life” (Liddle & Macmillan, 2010; Pahl & Barrett, 2010; Rodgers & Dunsmuir, 2015; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson & Goddard, 2008). Results of these studies indicate that social and emotional learning moderates problem behaviour as well as helping prepare students for life’s adversities and challenges.

5.3.2 Supportive resources and activities used by the teachers

In addition to the prescribed resources and activities, some participants used supportive resources and activities that they selected from their own repertoires. These additional supportive resources included carefully selected books on topics that are relevant to the social and emotional needs of the group at the time; specific card games that encourage conversations about life events, experiences and feelings as well as classroom activities for regulating behaviour such as visualisations and various forms of time-out.

_T3:_ I use books and literature as a gateway into discussions. _I pick the stories that I read to them quite carefully. Again, to address all sorts of issues or if you feel that there is something that they need to work on to develop._

_T6:_ We read lots of different stories from the library about losing people or how to make friends if you are new in the school. _Stories are the best way that we get our kids to talk_
because they just naturally love bringing up their problems or chatting to you or giving you their experiences.

The participants used a specific card game to open up conversations about circumstances or events that children are experiencing. This card game is seen as an effective way to get the children to share their experiences and talk about their feelings. This gives participants insight into where the children are socially and emotionally.

T6: Like a little boy lying in his bed, for example, and the background is black and there are bats and eyes and things. And then a kid who is busy having nightmares will say I have nightmares like this or I used to have nightmares or there will be a tombstone on the next one and then the one girl will say – I really miss my grandpa. So lots of stuff will just come up from that.

T4: I use cards with ‘How would you feel if...?’ questions on them. ‘How would you feel if people were laughing at you because you couldn’t swim?’ Some children said that it did not bother them, while others said that it would make them upset. So, it was very interesting getting different children’s perceptions and their different levels of resilience as well. Who’s more vulnerable and in which area.

Through talking about these experiences and feelings, participants feel that children can understand that life is a series of challenges and other children share similar experiences.

T6: To say that what is happening is normal and that they are not alone. So I think naturally everyone just starts sharing and then the child feels that they are not the only one going through this and that whatever is happening to them happens to everyone.

Participants also use various additional supportive activities in their classrooms to calm children down such as visualisations through imaginative journeys or various other strategies to assist children to self-regulate when that is needed. In this regard, participants
find activities such as removing the child from the group to their desk or getting them to lie over beanbags, stretching on monkey bars or stamping it out to twenty, work well.

*T7: It really is just to calm the children down. It's things like motion and smooth sort of floating feelings or swimming in the ocean. They use their imagination and start to feel themselves going down and they see a dolphin and they hold onto the dolphin and the dolphin takes them under the sea and they can breathe underwater and then they see a beautiful castle and they meet a mermaid and then eventually after a lot of things the mermaid takes them to a beautiful cave where there are many beautiful things and she gives them a box. And the box has a treasure in it and they open the box and they see their treasure. They take the treasure and they go back up to their bed eventually and they wake up and they tell us what their treasure was.*

*T2: I call it Island Dwellers. So, if you are interfering, you go to your desk. You are not excluded but you contribute from a distance. In that way, he regulates, and the others also get the opportunity to continue with the lesson.*

*T2: And if I see that he is looking as if he can’t, then he knows that he either goes and lies over the big bean bag until he feels better, or he stretches out on the monkey bars and that gives him a brain break and some fresh air or we stand up and stamp out to twenty and then sit down.*

The participants made use of additional resources and activities as strategies to teach SEL skills through selecting additional stories that related to the SEL theme that was relevant to the learners at the time. Bouffard et al. (2009) explain that through selecting stories around a relevant SEL theme, teachers can link stories and discussions to relevant everyday life events for learners.

The findings show that the participants taught the relevant SEL skills through using their own initiative by adding additional resources and activities to compliment the resources and activities already used in the programme. In support of stories as an effective CBSEL
resource and tool for opening up channels of communication in children through conversations, some participants carefully selected books from their own repertoires on topics relevant to the social and emotional needs of the children at the time. Participants also reported that they used specific card games as an additional resource to gauge the social and emotional needs of the learners and to encourage conversations about life events, experiences and feelings.

Participants furthermore indicated using various additional supportive activities in their classrooms to calm children down and to self-regulate when needed. In this regard, participants found activities such as removing the child from the group to their desk or getting them to lie over beanbags, stretching on monkey bars or stamping it out to twenty as effective additional activities. It can be argued that the participants, in response to being provided with resources, were encouraged to apply their own creativity and knowledge about child development to identify additional resources and activities that they selected to support the social and emotional development of their learners. However, it must be noted that the additional resources and activities selected by participants modelled the effective resources and activities from the CBSEL programme. Storytelling and activities for self-regulation of emotions were chosen by participants as additional to the CBSEL curriculum perhaps because of the effectiveness of these programme based resources and activities.

The findings indicate that the participants acknowledged the value in the resources and activities that were part of the programme as it appears that these guided the additional resources and activities that they selected to support the social and emotional development of their students. It can be argued that the participants acknowledge the effectiveness of the resources and activities in a programme based approach and therefore chose similar additional supportive resources and activities such as relevant stories, guided visualisations and self-regulatory activities to reinforce and achieve the same end.
5.3.3 Advantages of a programme-based approach to CBSEL

The participants identified the main advantage of the PB approach to facilitate CBSEL in the Foundation Phase as providing a structured framework to teach appropriate behaviours through methods such as re-modelling and role-playing. The structured framework also supports school policy intended to facilitate appropriate interaction and behaviour

T8: *I think that it has given the teachers a framework because it is aligned with school policy. It’s given teachers something to fall back on. To say well we don’t do that at our school.*

T5: *A Programme does work because you have the story, you have the characters, you have examples, you have a model of a possible way of choosing behaviours and it also describes the effect and the consequences of behaviours that is something that children can relate to.*

Participants explained that the structured framework became a tool that allowed them to guide and teach the children skills through modelling or role-playing.

T14: *Through the programme we can guide and model behaviours and give children strategies to help them develop socially and emotionally.*

T13: *The programme can guide through modelling situations, talking through emotions and assisting the children in accepting how they feel.*

T13: *It is important for children to be given the time to have discussions about emotions regularly during the day, and then given the opportunity to apply the strategies and skills taught in the programme to deal with various situations. Children then start to use the skills that have been modelled and explained to them, and are more able to sort out problems independently.*
A programme based approach provided the tool for participants to discuss and explore feelings with their learners. In turn this teaches learners to be empathetic towards their peers’ feelings. Through this kind of exploration, children learn about their own strengths and areas that need development.

*T4: I think that the programme made me more aware of getting the children to acknowledge themselves. That it’s ok to be who I am. It opened a door to say we all have feelings and we all go through things and its ok. We make mistakes, act silly or brag sometimes. I found that it was good to talk about things in general. We are human and we just have to be aware of what is a more socially and emotionally acceptable alternative.

*T10: The programme makes children more aware of each other’s emotions. They do the activities where they draw the little faces and say how they are feeling and that is followed by a discussion. Then I say to the children – when you go and put your face on the child today – have a look around. If you can see that somebody is feeling sad go up to them if you want to and ask them if they are ok during the day or if you have some time – draw a little picture, something special that you can do showing them that you care.

*T3: And believing in themselves and what they are good at and what they are not. Through the programme they become more aware of things that they find easier and that they are better at and things that they are struggling with and that is more difficult. So that whole self-awareness develops through that year particularly.

The participants stated that following a programme-based approach particularly over a three-year period has advantages for the learners as it gives them a framework for learning and experimenting with new behaviours that includes a rich emotional vocabulary that empowers them to manage their feelings.
T8: So, it was really interesting to see that after children had gone through three years of that, they had a framework or a scaffold on which to hang certain concepts.

T5: This is three years down the line and the Grade 4 teachers at the beginning of the year said that the children are able to name, express and describe their emotions. They can speak about, explain and describe how they are experiencing things. They have ideas and they are willing to risk and try things. It was in the first two weeks that she had a conversation with a group of children about how to be with each other and the causes and effects of things and choices and she was stunned. Very soon afterwards another teacher said the same thing.

T10: We have heard from the Grade 3 teachers now that they can see just how much more settled the children are when dealing with emotions.

Furthermore, the participants stated that the structure of a programme-based approach assisted the facilitation process in that the instruction manual was clear and comprehensive. Even with minimal training, the advantage of a comprehensive teacher manual enables successful facilitation.

T16: The programme is comprehensive and all planning has been done for us so it is easy to implement.

T6: The manual helps you a lot when facilitating the programme. It lays it out for you daily and lesson-by-lesson. I find it easier now because I am in the third year of it. The first year you are kind of getting yourself around it. It has been actually quite easy with this programme. It’s very appropriate for their age too so it makes it far easier for you as a teacher.

T11: You don’t get trained to do it. You get given the manual. But the manual is full of information. It’s so detailed that you actually don’t need to get trained for it.
The main advantages of a programme based approach identified in this study is that it provided a structured framework for participants to implement social and emotional education in their classrooms. This framework offered participants the tools needed to assist them in opening up conversations, teaching children a rich emotional vocabulary and empowering them to understand and manage their own feelings and emotions, strengths and areas needing development. Participants perceived the framework as an effective tool for teaching learners how to experiment with new and appropriate behaviours through methods such as re-modelling and role-playing. Furthermore, the participants stated that the structure of a programme-based approach assisted the facilitation process in that the instruction manual was clear and comprehensive. Even with minimal training the advantage of a comprehensive teacher manual enabled successful facilitation.

Whereas the multiple short and long-term benefits of CBSEL instruction is evident in research literature, the advantages of implementing CBSEL through a programme based approach could not be found.

5.3.4 Challenges of a programme-based approach

The participants experienced various challenges and limitations during the process. The first challenge identified by the participants was the lack of available time due to the immense pressure placed on them to get through the academic curriculum with their learners.

*T16: Time and curriculum pressure have been the drawback for me over the past 2 years.  
*T6: You’ve got to get through so much of your curriculum. You feel the pressure. Time is a major problem.  
*T2: To have the time in the day other than the demands of teaching to put the programme into practice. It’s a heavy load.*
T4: I think as teachers it’s the curriculum that you have to get through so that the children know the work. There is loads of pressure.

T9: I just find that I think we have this programme but how do I fit it into what I am doing.
T12: I just wish that I had more time for the programme.

Some teachers acknowledge that curriculum pressure and limited time prevents them from allocating time to the social and emotional needs of their learners outside of the programme.

T3: With all the curriculum pressure, brilliant social and emotional learning opportunities are skipped over because you feel that you have to get on with handwriting or something else. Where actually if they can’t write the R so well by the end of today, we can do it again tomorrow. Rather grab that chance when it comes up

Sometimes you just actually want to take a step back and say, “Come let’s go and sit down on the chair and read a story” or “I can see that you guys are tired and let’s just go and get some fresh air and have a change of scenery” and you know that’s vitally important that they can also acknowledge – ja, man I am tired, I’m hot, I’m bothered, you know.
Sometimes after break with this hot weather you can’t get 6-year olds to sit down and concentrate and do maths. You not going to get anywhere with it so you have to just pick the times when you do certain things and just know that it is ok to go and have a bit of change of scenery from time to time.

T6: Sometimes you feel that you are not doing enough for them emotionally and you are not giving them enough time to chat to you because sometimes you are the only person that they feel comfortable chatting to and then it has to be after hours and sometimes the moment is gone.
In an attempt to overcome the time constraints, some teachers took the initiative to change the format of the programme and condensed the theme for the term into one week. They then reinforced the theme in their everyday teaching for the balance of the term. They found this more manageable from a time and curriculum perspective.

*T4: In previous years we tried to do one lesson per week. We did it in one week this year that was really nice because there was a lot of focus on the programme. There was a lot of talking about feelings, focusing on the bubble breathing and practicing the bubble breathing. Children would often refer back to the story and how certain characters in the story felt. It was interesting to see how many of the children referred back to the story and related events in their own lives back to the story and how conversations that arose from that.*

*T10: But this Term we decided to do it in a week and see if there was a difference. And we feel that it had much more of an impact because we spoke about it every single day for a week. It was more intense but more powerful.*

Another critical challenge with any programme teaching CBSEL is sustainability. To address this challenge, participants indicated that they took the responsibility to reinforce the themes throughout the day in the classroom. Parents were also encouraged to take responsibility to strengthen the messages at home. Therefore, a parent meeting is held at the outset of the programme to explain that there will be homework sent home to do with their children. Despite this, teachers experienced a lack of commitment from parents in completing the homework that challenged the effectiveness of this programme-based approach.

*T14: Homework was not done regularly so teachers weren’t always supported by parents.*
T12: I have found with a lot of the children that when you ask them to do a family chat I can see by their faces that a lot of them haven’t done it and I don’t know whether it’s time pressure from the parents or they don’t see the value in it.

T13: Even though this learning is provided at school, it is not always a guarantee that children will follow through as it is not always modelled at home.

T7: You’ve got a mixed bag of parents when it comes to who’s going to do the chats. I had a parent who said I’m already on holiday. I’m not doing this stuff. So I mean that is what I think is part of the challenge.

The teachers acknowledged that the facilitator manual was comprehensive and self-explanatory. However, teachers felt that their facilitation process was limited as there was a lack of facilitator training. They were expected to navigate the process independently. They explained that this affected their feeling of confidence in implementing the programme that impacted on their personal motivation, confidence in and commitment to the facilitation process.

T4: In the first year it was a lot of trial and error. Being a brand-new programme we were expected to read through the lesson plan, have the resources ready, do the lesson and then do a post mortem afterwards. The following year it was a lot easier. I knew the material and what kind of feedback I was going to get. This year was probably the easiest because I was so familiar with the content. I knew the story. I could anticipate what was going to come up. It has become easier each year.

T12: My first year I was a bit “airy fairy”. I didn’t bite into it so well. But having been through it that first year for experience, I felt more confident to put it across.
T2: There is a lot more training that needs to take place. Unless you understand how to use the resources and realise their value there will be limited commitment. We also need to find the time in the day to put it into practice.

Concurrently, challenges were identified by participants. The programme-based approach to CBSEL is additional to the academic curriculum and participants noted time constraints and curriculum pressure as their major challenges. Some participants expressed that time constraints limited the attention that they gave to the social and emotional needs of their learners outside of the programme. In an effort to overcome time and curriculum pressure some participants took the initiative to condense the format of the programme into one week. They then reinforced the theme in their everyday teaching for the balance of the term. They felt that this was a constructive alternative.

Although the participants acknowledged that the facilitator manual was comprehensive and self-explanatory, the lack of facilitator training meant that the participants were expected to teach themselves the programme. This lack of training affected participant confidence in facilitation that impacted on their personal motivation and commitment to the facilitation process.

Teachers as the facilitators of CBSEL in classrooms need to be trained adequately to ensure time effective successful implementation of CBSEL. Teacher competence in this area will impact positively on commitment and motivation toward CBSEL implementation (Cefai & Cavioni, 2015).

5.4 Theme 3: Impact of the facilitation of CBSEL

The impact of the facilitation of CBSEL refers to the outcomes of the facilitation process in the classrooms. The impact was mainly experienced with reference to
the enhancement of relationships between teachers and learners and between learners and learners. The participants also indicated a shift towards a positive ethos in the classroom and on the playground as well as the acquisition of skills for present and future

5.4.1 Positive relational dynamics

The participants indicated that the facilitation of CBSEL developed a deepened understanding of the social and emotional dynamics in their class. They stated that they become more aware of the importance of the value of communication with the children which led to their being emotionally more attuned to the children’s strengths and challenges, which, in turn, enhanced trusting relationships between them. Participants felt that by being tuned in and taking the time to build and enrich those relationships consistently throughout the day, the children come to trust the relationship. This benefits the classroom climate when challenges are faced and disputes need to be resolved.

*T3: I think it is about grabbing those opportunities as they come up in the classroom and making time for those conversations. That you actually do have the discussions and the chats where they build a trust in you and you in them and that’s where you really get to know your kids.*

*T9: I find that I have a relationship with my children where I do a lot of chatting and interacting and backwards and forwards with them. So, for me, when the social and emotional things happen, we talk about it and deal with it. They need to know that you have got their backs.*

*T16: The teacher has a better understanding of her student’s strengths and needs and the children feel they can trust the teacher in dealing with issues when things go wrong in the classroom.*
The participants reported that they observed positive shifts in peer relationships and overall attitudes towards school throughout the presentation of the programme. Participants experienced that learners were more supportive towards each other. Stronger relationships were built based on mutual respect and empathy. The overall classroom climate was calmer because of less conflict.

*T16: Overall the children are positive towards their peers and happy to come to school to learn. The children are more supportive of each other and there is healthy competition and not winner takes all at other’s expense.*

*T15: It teaches them to have respect and empathy for one another. I noticed less conflict between their peers in the classroom.*

*T17: The learners are also able to gain a better understanding of each other. The skills taught enable teacher/student and student/student to build a better, positive relationship.*

Greenberg (2009) reasons that strong bi-directional relationships in classrooms have positive social and emotional outcomes for students. This is evident in the participant observations as outlined below.

Participants reported observing a progressive change in the nature of relationships between learners during the facilitation of the CBSEL programme and learners showing increased support towards one another. They observed positive shifts in peer relationships that showed rich qualities such as mutual respect and empathy.

The impact of the facilitation of CBSEL has been evident in the relationship dynamics within the context of classrooms. Participants reported that the resources in a programme-based approach to CBSEL opened up communication channels through the conversations that focused on feelings, emotions and choices of behaviour. Participants explained that during this facilitation process they became aware of the importance of authentic communication with their learners. This level of communication formed trusting
relationships based on recognising student individuality including both their strengths and challenges. As relationships strengthened participants could communicate authentically with learners who were experiencing emotional challenges and adapt their academic expectations of those learners accordingly. Overall, participants felt that the facilitation of CBSEL positively impacted on and enhanced relationships between themselves and their learners.

It is the participants’ opinion that enhanced relationships at this level positively impact on the classroom climate. Overall participants experienced their classroom’s to be calmer. Conflicts were more easily resolved. Participants explained that this positive classroom climate, with enhanced relationships based on mutual respect and understanding, created a climate conducive to learning. Overall, participants experienced a positive shift in student attitudes towards school.

5.4.2 A positive ethos in classrooms and on playgrounds

Participants indicated that CBSEL has a positive impact on the classroom environment. The participants identified positive shifts in the classroom climate as core outcome of CBSEL instruction. In their view children could contribute positively in the classroom through listening respectfully during discussions and showing caring and empathy towards peers. Children are more organised and take responsibility for their workspace.

T16: Children listen respectfully to their classmates during discussion time and contribute positively during this time.

T15: It teaches them to empathise with others and put themselves in others shoes and see conflicts from both sides. It helps them to be aware of their peers needs.

T16: They care about others and will alert the teacher should they see a classmate experiencing a challenge.
In the classroom children show responsibility for their belongings by keeping their space organised and are ready for each day.

The participants furthermore noted positive changes in playground behaviour as a further core outcome for CBSEL. In general, participants feel that through enhanced friendships children support each other and manage conflicts appropriately. Children adhere to the rules of the playground and can resist peer pressure. They engage in creative play.

On the playground they play fair, they understand the rules of play. They are good friends, they support each other and if they have an altercation they try to sort it out and then come to their teacher for help if what they are doing is not helping the situation. They think up games to play.

The children also learn to make wise choices regarding peer pressure and clashes. Learners continuously have to apply problem-solving skills.

As relationships are strengthened teachers could adapt their expectations of the learners who are experiencing emotional challenges. Generally, participants feel that socially and emotionally developed learners show a healthy attitude towards learning. They work well in groups, making decisions through mutual discussion.

It becomes your ethos, part of your classroom environment and school environment.

There is definitely a positive impact in the classroom. The teacher is able to gain a better understanding of the pupils, their feelings and needs and the effect their emotional state has on their ability to learn.

Just on the whole it seems that the children are a lot more settled and in tune with each other.
They work in a group well and are able to help make decisions in the group based on healthy discussion.

The participants identified positive shifts in the classroom climate as another core outcome of CBSEL instruction. In their view, children could contribute positively in the classroom through listening respectfully during discussions and showing caring and empathy towards peers. As relationships strengthened, teachers could adapt their expectations of the learners who were experiencing emotional challenges. Generally, participants felt that socially and emotionally developed learners show a healthy attitude towards learning. They work well in groups, making decisions through mutual discussion. Children are more organised and take responsibility for their workspace. The participants furthermore noted positive changes in playground behaviour as a further core outcome for CBSEL. In general, participants felt that through enhanced friendships children support each other and manage conflicts appropriately. Children adhere to the rules of the playground and can resist peer pressure. They engage in creative play.

In summary, participants noted an overall shift in pro-social behaviours by learners in the classroom in their attitude to work and to their peers. They observed the caring and co-operative behaviours in the classroom being filtered out to the playground.

### 5.4.3 Equipping learners with skills for present and future

Participants experienced that, in the short-term, CBSEL teaches basic life skills that enables children to understand their emotions and how emotions affect behaviour. They specifically emphasised that children were taught through role-plays and discussions on how to choose appropriate behaviours when faced with challenges. As children use these skills they are able to problem solve independently.
T16: Children are guided in their social emotional learning and are given tools to help them understand behaviour and name their feelings and with practice and discussion they will be able to functions as well developed empathetic human beings.

T13: Children learn that it’s ok to feel how they feel and they start to use the skills that have been modelled and explained to them, and are more able to sort out problems independently.

The participants were of the opinion that as children practise these life skills they will develop healthy qualities that lay the foundations for them to grow and develop into well-adjusted adults who can contribute positively to their society and ultimately the world.

T13: Enjoyed the program and seeing the children use the strategies and knowing they are going to take those into the future to help them with life’s challenges to manage emotions in later more turbulent teen years and to ultimately become functional adults.

T17: Learners are taught valuable skills and develop a better self-esteem. These are skills not only learnt and applied to in the classroom, but skills they can use for life.

T14: Long term allows them to be well-adjusted adults and good citizens.

T16: Children grow up to be empathetic, optimistic, well-functioning adults who become leaders or part of a group that impacts on the world in a positive way.

Participants observed the immediate benefits of the facilitation of CBSEL as teaching learners through authentic and open conversations, the life skills that raise the awareness and understanding of emotions and how emotions affect behaviour. Participants experienced role-playing and re-modelling of behaviour as an effective method for equipping learners with the skills to make positive choices when faced with options or challenges. Participants experienced observing learners mastering this through their ability
to problem solve independently. The participants were of the opinion that as their learners practice these life skills they develop healthy qualities that lay the foundations for them to grow and develop into well-adjusted adults who can contribute positively to their society and ultimately the world.

Becoming skilled in social emotional competencies has short and long-term outcomes for students.

The short-term student outcomes at school level are improvements in:

- Academic performance
- Social and emotional skills
- Positive attitudes towards self, others and tasks
- Positive social behaviours and relationships
- Fewer conduct problems
- Reduced emotional distress

The long-term student outcomes at tertiary level are improvements in:

- High school graduation
- College and career readiness
- Healthy relationships
- Mental health
- Reduced criminal behavior
- Engaged citizenship
(Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Durlak et al., 2011; Farrington et al., 2012; Payton et al., 2008; Sklad et al., 2012).

To support the long-term benefits of social emotional competence development, as discussed in Chapter 3, a longitudinal study on 808 children in the ‘Seattle Social Development Project” (see://www.ssdp-tip.org) from adolescence to age 33 showed that well developed social and emotional competence was linked to the long-term student outcomes in SEL as outline above. For instance, social emotional competence was linked to increased chances for tertiary education, career success, sound mental health and engaged citizenship (Hawkins et al., 2008; Hill et al., 2014). In addition, a recent meta-analytic study of more than 80 school-based universal intervention evaluations revealed that positive student outcomes could be sustained for at least six months after the programme was completed, supporting the long-term effectiveness of SEL interventions (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2015).

5.5 Summative discussion

This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding into how the participants experience the facilitation of a programme-based approach to CBSEL in the Foundation Phase. The summative findings will be discussed with reference to participants’ experiences of being prepared for the facilitation process, facilitating the process and the impact of the process at individual and relational level.

The implementation of the programme-based approach to CBSEL in the schools from which the participants were selected encompassed the following:

At the onset of the programme, the schools organised a parent/teacher briefing meeting where the why, what and how of CBSEL was discussed along with the need for
such a programme, the expected outcomes and the importance of parental involvement and commitment. A second meeting was held with the teachers to prepare them for the facilitation process. A comprehensive facilitator manual was made available to each participant. They were explained the outline of the manual, however, the responsibility was theirs to implement the programme according to a recommended outlined schedule.

The consequences of this limited training were evident in the participants’ interpretation of the definition of CBSEL. While general consensus amongst participants seemed to be that CBSEL is a process, teaching life skills to learners that, once mastered, leads to improved lifestyle and well-being through making the correct behavioural choices when faced with challenges. These life skills also change the way that children learn to interact with their peers and intrapersonal relationships are strengthened. However, the participants did not specify the importance of the specific competencies that were being taught to achieve this end. Evidently, their knowledge of CBSEL is limited to a broad definition of the term as a process that teaches life skills.

The participants furthermore viewed this programme as additional to the curriculum, since they were not guided to integrate the programme into the curriculum. This had negative effects on some participant’s commitment and motivation to the programme, due to time constraints and academic curriculum pressure. In an effort to overcome this, some participants condensed the material while others admitted that they did not follow the programme outline.

A common and valid perception in education is that investing time in the social and emotional skills in the classroom detracts from the time needed to complete the academic curriculum that has traditionally been the main goal of schooling, i.e., academic achievement (Malecki & Elliot, 2002). Traditionally, academics and social emotional skills were viewed as two separate fields. This limits the focus on the social and emotional development of children because of the pressure that schools are under to produce academically. Teachers
are reluctant to sacrifice curriculum time for social emotional learning, whether they support it or not. However, research supports that these two domains are interrelated and do support one another (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, Hertzman, & Zumbo, 2014; Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill, & Abbott, 2008). The impact on SEL and academic success is evident in three large, rigorously conducted meta-analytic reviews (Durlak et al., 2011; January, Casey, & Paulson, 2011; Sklad et al., 2012).

The participants also indicated that a lack of in-depth facilitator training affected their confidence levels with implementation as they were expected to navigate the process independently. This finding concurs with the research literature which indicates that teachers typically receive little training in how to promote SEL skills and related social and emotional issues because it is not part of the academic curriculum and schools remain focused on academic achievement. (Lopes, Mestre, Guil, Kremenitzer & Salovey, 2012). Brusnahan and Gatti argue that when social and emotional learning is in equal partnership with academic learning, educators will fit it all in and will develop learners who are better prepared for real success in society and life (2011).

The limited preparedness had consequences for the implementation of the programme as the participants appeared to externalise the process, adopting a fragmented ‘teaching’ attitude towards the facilitation. The findings indicate that they followed the programme curriculum as laid out in the Facilitator Manual. They taught the programme and could discuss the process and describe the changes in their learners’ social and emotional development over time. However, they did not give reference to any personal shifts or experiences relating to their knowledge regarding the social and emotional development and well-being, or their own personal development in this regard, during the process of facilitation.

Despite the concerns raised by participants regarding time constraints, curriculum pressure and lack of facilitator training they nevertheless see the value in a programme-based approach to CBSEL. They validate the programme-based approach to CBSEL as an
effective framework providing tools for them to use in their classrooms to manage common challenges such as inappropriate behaviours, conflict resolution and self-regulation for emotional concerns such as stress and anxiety. They value the importance of this process because social and emotional problems are common in all classrooms and viewed by the participants as definite obstacles to learning.

Participants emphasised the importance of implementing a CBSEL approach for creating a classroom environment conducive to nurturing the social and emotional needs of their learners, understood as a safe place where children can experiment and take on new challenges. Zins & Elias (2006) support safe and trusting classroom environments as the venue for children to practice and re-model behaviours on a regular basis. The participants took the responsibility of regulating their own feelings, emotions and behaviour to maintain this classroom environment through the deep breathing exercises for calming emotions that they have observed working in the programme. The majority of the participants also applied deep-breathing techniques to calm learners and themselves when things were out of control. They did not seem to apply any other mindful self-regulatory exercises or techniques.

The participants considered the structured framework as the main advantage of the programme-based approach to facilitating CBSEL. According to them it provided the tools through programme resources and activities that could be used as a guideline for instruction. The structure also assisted them to teach behaviour modification through methods such as role-playing and re-modelling or doing-over. The participants recognise that role-playing and re-modelling of behaviour as an activity was an effective method for repetitively practising new behaviours with learners. Weissberg and Greenberg (1997) explain that learning new skills requires regular exposure and practical repetition. In an effort to overcome this, some participants took the responsibility to reinforce the themes in the stories when the opportunities arose throughout the day in the classroom.

The building of quality relationships developed through the use of the programmes primary resource, storytelling. The use of the stories, with specific themes and motto’s
became the vehicle to open up the channels of communication between teachers, learners and peers. Storytelling enabled participants to explore, through conversations, specific themes that modelled the learner’s everyday life. These themes were age appropriate and covered topics for Foundation Phase learners such as: Feeling happy and safe (feelings, sharing, being kind and my circle of love and support), Being confident and responsible (being truthful, being confident, being responsible and bouncing back), and Discovering my inner world (my body, my brain, intuition and personality and talents).

As the characters in the stories experienced everyday relevant life challenges, the participants were able to engage in related conversations with their learners. The participants became aware of the value of communication as the quality and depth of these conversations provided them with valuable information and, in this way, they developed an understanding of the social and emotional climate of their classroom and their learners’ social and emotional strengths and challenges.

Participants observed that the changes that affected the collective relational dynamics in the classroom began at individual learner level. As learners were taught the skills and experienced how to identify, understand, regulate and express their feelings and emotions, growth in their own self-awareness changed their choices in how to behave towards their peers. Qualities such as active peer support, mutual respect and empathy were noted as core developmental areas. The programme-based approach taught learners specific activities to regulate and change behaviours.

It is interesting to note that although they specified that they made use of additional resources and activities independent to the programme, the resources were aligned with the key elements of the programmes framework. For instance, they made use of additional storybooks and specific card games, both to encourage communication and conversations around feelings and emotions. It seems as if the participants, through using more of the same resources that were prescribed in the framework, because they were beneficial to the
learners, limited their own creativity by not choosing alternative activities that suited their own teaching styles.

The participant approach to CBSEL once again seems fragmented. They created the classroom environment needed to support social and emotional development in learners so that children can achieve academically. However, they made no reference to creating an integrated learning environment using teaching techniques and skills to assist in this process. Such learning environments offer optimum opportunity for growth and development of learners and educators. Such an integrated approach creates a harmonious classroom climate with manageable levels of conflict or disruptive behaviour, respectful communication and appropriate emotional expression, respect for individual differences and needs and a healthy focus on learning (La Paro & Pianta, 2003).

Broadly speaking, the participants concurred that a programme-based approach to CBSEL did have a positive impact on the relational dynamics and behavioural outcomes in the classroom at all levels. The positive impact of improved relational dynamics at classroom room filtered out onto the playground. This finding concurs with the research, and indicates a link between strong bi-directional classroom relationships and positive social, emotional and academic outcomes for learners. For instance, the positive impact of strong relationships between teacher-student and student-student nurtures student commitment to school and academic success as documented in research by Jennings & Greenberg (2009).

The findings indicate that enhanced relationships at this level positively impacted on the classroom climate. Overall, participants experienced their classrooms to be calmer. Conflicts were more easily resolved. Participants explained that this positive classroom climate, with enhanced relationships based on mutual respect and understanding, created a climate conducive to learning. Participants also experienced a positive shift in student attitudes towards school.
CHAPTER 6
Summary, conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This conclusive chapter will briefly overview the research process and discuss the conclusive arguments based on the findings of the research. Thereafter, recommendations will be made with references to appropriate future practice, research and policy development. Finally, the limitations and the contribution of the study will be addressed.

6.2 Brief overview of the research

Schools should be safe and enabling learning environments where learner well-being is promoted through educating the whole child with an equal focus on the importance of academic achievement, social and emotional development as well as health and civic engagement (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The South African schooling system is plagued with many challenges. Some contributing factors such as the poor socio-economic status and educational levels of families are beyond the control of the education system. Other contributing factors include under-qualified teachers with poor subject knowledge, a general shortage of school resources and poor school leadership. Another major challenge in many South African schools is overcrowded classrooms that are not conducive learning environments and where teachers struggle to control student misbehaviour. All of these factors contribute to a failing educational system with poor academic outcomes. Equipping teachers with the tools to manage their classrooms therefore becomes a critical component to consider.
Comprehensive research supports social and emotional development, at teacher and student level, as a precursor to positive classroom outcomes such as: quality teacher classroom management, improved academic achievement and strengthened relationships in classrooms, all of which positively impacts on student behaviour and emotional health and overall teacher and student commitment to school (Jones & Bouffard, 2013). Competency-based social and emotional learning is an innovative intervention approach that offers possible solutions to poor academic achievement and behavioural problems that many South African teachers are forced to handle on a daily basis in their classrooms.

Based on the findings reported in the research literature on the value of competency-based social and emotional learning, this study set out to explore teacher facilitation of competency-based social and emotional learning in the hope that the research would contribute to seeing an increase in effective, competency-based social and emotional learning integration in South African classrooms.

The following research question was addressed in an effort to contribute to the body of knowledge aimed at understanding how the participants in the study experienced the facilitation process.

*How do teachers experience the facilitation of competency-based social and emotional learning in the Foundation Phase?*

To answer this question, a qualitative phenomenological research design was applied to understand teacher experiences of the facilitation process.

In accordance with the qualitative phenomenological nature of the research (Creswell, 2009; De Vos et al., 2011), the data in this study was collected in two ways from eighteen participants who had consented to part-take in the research. Firstly, open-ended individual interviews were conducted with each participant. Secondly, all of the participants
were requested to write reflections on their personal experiences of facilitating a competency-based social and emotional learning process over the past two and a half years.

The data in all data sets obtained in this study were analysed by means of thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009). Thematic analysis was applied due to the flexibility of the method, which allowed for a dual psychological and social understanding of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The findings were reported with reference to three main themes:

- The teachers’ perceptions of CBSEL, based on their involvement in the programme
- Applying a programme-based approach to the facilitation of CBSEL
- The impact of the facilitation of CBSEL

With reference to Teacher’s perceptions of CBSEL, based on their involvement in the programme the subthemes indicated a need to contextualise the participants experiences through defining CBSEL and exploring participant validation of the need for CBSEL, along with the participants’ personal strengths and competencies associated with the facilitation of CBSEL.

With reference to Applying a programme-based approach to the facilitation of CBSEL the subthemes explored the effectiveness of the primary and secondary resources and activities applied within the programme along with the advantages and challenges of a programme-based approach to CBSEL.

With reference to The impact of the facilitation of CBSEL the subthemes assessed the positive relational dynamics experienced in the classroom and playground through CBSEL. Short and long-term benefits of CBSEL were also addressed.
6.3 **Conclusions of the study**

The conclusions drawn from the findings of this study are discussed with reference to participant preparedness for and experience of the facilitation process. Further conclusions will be presented with reference to the impact of CBSEL on the relational dynamics across all levels.

As an explorative study, the conclusions in this research are not absolute but provide tentative guidelines for further work and research into CBSEL and teacher facilitation within the South African context.

6.3.1 **Conclusions based on participant preparedness for the facilitation process**

This research concludes that the participants were not sufficiently prepared for the facilitation process, evident in the findings. The meetings attended by the participants regarding the theoretical orientation and implementation process of CBSEL were inadequate.

The first was a teacher/parent meeting where the programme developer discussed the theoretical foundations and importance of CBSEL and the value of a programme-based approach. This meeting should have provided participants with a solid foundational understanding of CBSEL and the findings of this research suggest a limited understanding and theoretical knowledge of CBSEL.

The second was a teacher meeting where the programme developer went through the facilitation programme and lesson outline with the teachers. The teachers then became responsible for preparing themselves for the facilitation process. Curriculum pressure affected how much time the participants could spend on preparing themselves for this process. The lack of feeling adequately prepared affected their confidence levels during the
facilitation process and their commitment and motivation to the programme-based approach to CBSEL. As a result, the participants implemented the programme as directed through the facilitator manual. The following limitations to this fragmented, lesson-based approach to facilitation were evident. The participants could discuss the facilitation process and how they observed the changes in their learners’ social and emotional development over time. However, they gave no reference to any personal shifts or experiences relating to their own social and emotional development and well-being during the process of facilitation. This implies that the process of facilitation was not a subjective self-reflective experience in which participants examined their own personal qualities directly relating to the competencies and how development of these competencies could impact on the teaching of their learners. This fragmented approach implies a lack of understanding into the importance of their own personal development in this process and how personal shifts ultimately affect classroom relationships and dynamics. The strength of these relationships affects how the classroom functions and ultimately achieves both socially, emotionally and academically.

6.3.2 Conclusions based on participant experience of the facilitation process

Based on the findings, this study concludes that through the facilitation of a programme-based approach, the participants learnt new classroom management skills that positively impacted on their classrooms.

The facilitation process enabled the participants, with limited knowledge on CBSEL, to experience the value of working within a framework that provided tools in the form of resources and activities. Using this programme taught participants new skills for classroom management. As they taught the competencies to their learners, the participants observed changes in learner attitude and behaviour on an individual and collective level. With these positive shifts in relational dynamics, the participants felt it easier to maintain a safe, trusting and emotionally well-regulated learning environment.
The structured approach to the programme taught the participants certain skills such as ways to engage in authentic and meaningful conversations with their learners and how to encourage and teach new behaviours. The skills that were learnt contributed to the participants’ ability to manage their classrooms more effectively. This research argues that given the participants’ limited insight and knowledge into CBSEL the framework in the programme-based approach was simple and repetitive enough to ensure that these classroom management skills were successfully learnt and integrated into the classroom.

6.3.3 The impact of CBSEL on individual and relational dynamics across all levels

The overall conclusion of a programme-based approach to CBSEL is that it had a positive impact on the relational dynamics and behaviour between individuals at classroom and playground level. This is significant because strong bi-directional relationships form the cornerstone for positively functioning members of classrooms and ultimately schools. During the course of the programme, the building of relationships began at individual level. As learners developed their sense of self-awareness, they were able to understand and process their feelings and regulate and control their emotions which helped them to control their behaviour. From this point of growth, they were able to consider how the impact of their behaviour affected their peers.

These relationships developed during the course of the programme as the framework facilitated opening up channels of communication creating rich meaningful conversations between learners, their peers and the participants. Relationships strengthened between learners and peers as experiences were shared around everyday challenges for learners. An emotional vocabulary developed over time, learners understood their feelings and could empathise with their peers. The benefits of quality relationships in the classroom were observed by participants in the following ways. In conflict situations, for instance, learners were more willing and open to accept and own the consequences of their behaviour when discussed with the participants; generally, the classroom climate was experienced as calmer,
where conflicts were more easily resolved; with the development of empathy, the
participants observed learners interacting with mutual respect and understanding. The study
concludes that the enhancement of relationships at all levels contributed towards a more
positive attitude towards school from learners.

To conclude, although additional to the curriculum, the participants did acknowledge
the value in this programme-based approach. They experienced the programme-based
approach to CBSEL as the teaching of life skills to their learners through the facilitation of a
structured programme that provided them with resources and activities. The participants saw
value in this programme because through the programmes activities they were able to assist
learners to cope with common classroom stressors. The most significant impact noted by
participants during the process of facilitation was the changes in the relational dynamics at
classroom level. Participants recognised observing individual growth in learners that then
shifted into a relational dynamic as learners became aware of their impact on their peers.
This change in relational dynamic impacted positively on classroom behaviour that filtered
into the playground. Overall, participants felt that the strengthening of bi-directional
relationships developed during the process of facilitation had a positive impact on the
dynamics in the classroom that made it easier for them to manage their classrooms more
effectively. There was general consensus amongst participants that the training provided for
the facilitation process was inadequate and this affected their commitment and motivation to
the facilitation as they did not feel adequately prepared for the process.

The lack of training had an overall impact on how participants experienced the
facilitation process. A limited theoretical understanding by the participants categorised this
programme as a life skills course implemented by the participants to their learners through
following a facilitator instruction manual. Little or no attention was given to participant
creativity, individual teaching styles or the ability to deviate from the instruction manual
while still teaching the relevant competency. There seems to be a lack of interest or enquiry
into the content of the programme and how best it could be taught to the individual classes,
presuming that each classroom has a different dynamic and not all will respond or relate to the same method or style of teaching.

The participants failed to recognise that they had been taught skills for classroom management through the facilitation process. Through the programme they were shown how to use resources to open up channels of communication to create and develop deep and meaningful relationships amongst learners through the sharing of mutual experiences. They were given practical tools through activities to use when they and their learners needed to regulate behaviour. They also failed to recognise the personal progress that they made during the process of facilitation. The positive shifts in bi-directional relationships in the classroom were achieved through social and emotional development work that happened across all levels between participants, learners and peers. It is not possible that this happened in isolation.

In conclusion, this study shows that although participants did not receive sufficient training in CBSEL prior to the onset of the programme, they recognised the value in the importance of social and emotional development work in their classrooms. Through following the programme outline the participants experienced the facilitation process positively as it gave them tools and taught them skills to manage their classrooms more effectively. The positive outcomes were seen at classroom and playground level.

6.4 **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the findings in this study.

6.4.1 **Recommendations for practice**

The theoretical foundations underlying CBSEL are extensive and knowledge of such theory with a clear understanding of the benefits of CBSEL work is critical to the commitment and successful implementation and success of work in this area.
To address this need, teachers must receive training and insight into SEL theory so that they understand the importance of teaching the core social and emotional competencies and are clear on the expected classroom outcomes. Central to this training, given the academic pressure on schools, is explaining the link between academic achievement and CBSEL. Following this, training must address the positive classroom behaviour adjustments which social emotional learning can achieve so that teachers understand that effective SEL programme implementation can help them to achieve their learning objectives, improve classroom relationships and behaviours, thereby enhancing the overall classroom environment (Elbertson et al., 2010, Bridgeland et al., 2013, Yoder, 2014). Teachers also need to understand how their social and emotional competence directly affects how they interact with their students on social, emotional and teaching levels (Yoder, 2014). To achieve this end, professional development training in SEL and effective SEL programme implementation is critical (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013).

To prepare participants sufficiently for the effective facilitation and the integrated implementation of CBSEL, requires teacher training in three key areas: Theoretical Overview of CBSEL; Facilitation Training for a programme-based approach to CBSEL, and Integrating CBSEL into the teaching curriculum.

Firstly, Training in the Theoretical Overview of CBSEL should focus on the theory behind social and emotional learning and the competencies that it teaches both teachers and their learners. This training would address the seeming lack of teacher awareness into the value of CBSEL and competency building for themselves, as well as their students, and the mutually beneficial impact that this work has for both teacher and learner at individual and collective level. It would also clearly explain the link between successful learning and social and emotional competence, a key motivational factor for teachers given the on-going pressure for academic achievement in schools.

Secondly, Facilitation Training for a programme-based approach to CBSEL should be practical and interactive, and focus on the implementation of the programme-based
approach, incorporating practising the activities in the programme such as role-playing to ensure that the teachers feel confident with the material. This will help to motivate commitment to the programme. It will show them how to take the tools available in the programme and make use of them when faced with the normal classroom challenges. In this way, the activities to help manage classrooms become ingrained in the daily functioning of the group. An interactive workshop of this nature will also allow teachers to personalise activities, encouraging their own creative approach to the material to be incorporated with their own teaching styles to suit their particular learners.

Thirdly, teachers would be trained to integrate CBSEL into their teaching curriculum through training in social and instructional practices. Social training would focus on the importance of positive talk to self and others, mindfulness, positive detention, along with creating a safe and trusting learning environment where warmth of relationships and attitudes of mutual co-operation towards work exist. Training in the instructional practices would focus on methods of teaching that encourage learning in the classroom such as, how to have positive classroom discussions and successful and interactive group work. There would also be a focus on the need to achieve academically, how to challenge learners to push and motivate themselves to build positive work ethics.

A recent article in Education Week entitled: How teachers can find the time for social-emotional learning, Gehlbach (24 Oct, 2017) argues for the simplification of social-emotional learning for teachers. In summary, the article argues that evidence based research on SEL empowers policy makers and academics to push for a full integration of SEL into schooling communities. Gehlbach argues that this is too complicated for teachers to take-on, given the constant time and curriculum pressure. He proposes a simplification of the process through determining the desired core outcome areas for SEL in classrooms that will promote academic success and personal wellbeing. To achieve this end, he proposes a focus on student social connectedness, motivation and self-regulation.
This study concurs that time and curriculum pressure is an obstacle to the amount of attention that teachers can give to CBSEL. However, simplifying the process down to teaching three capabilities implies a lack of understanding into how integral the five core competencies are for learning the life skills that form the foundation of CBSEL. In the drive to steer away from this fragmented approach, perhaps the most sensible option would be to design training programmes that are simple and realistic, where teachers are trained and given the essential theoretical knowledge and practical input to make CBSEL work.

Another concern which arose when reviewing research literature, is the sustainability of this work. If CBSEL is not adopted as part of the school programme and implemented year on year, then it appears that its impact is limited. For instance, a recent meta-analytic study of more than 80 school-based universal intervention evaluations revealed that positive student outcomes could be sustained for at least six months after the programme was completed, (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2015). Based on this, schools need to support long term CBSEL implementation or provide teachers with on-going training in professional development so that they remain focused and continue to reinforce CBSEL.

6.4.2 Recommendations regarding policy development

CBSEL has been written into the curriculum of many schools in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and this continues to grow. The long-term goal would be that policies in South African schools would include CBSEL in the curriculum of all schooling communities. To achieve this goal requires buy-in from school leadership through providing teachers with the resources and training needed for high quality, well-implemented effective CBSEL programme intervention (Greenberg, 2003). Schools must also have policies in place which are in line with CBSEL. For instance, the school code of conduct must include expected behaviours to be in line with the social, emotional and behaviour norms of CBSEL. They should include positive behaviour towards all, showing kindness and caring, and being grateful and respectful to staff. Positive discipline with clear
boundaries and consequences is also important. It is important that school leadership has staff support to achieve all of this effectively (Weissberg et al., 2015).

### 6.4.3 Recommendations for future research

It is recommended that further research be conducted with South African teachers to understand their context in classrooms, given the diversity of our multi-cultural society and how effective broad-based CBSEL instruction would be within under-privileged communities. Research literature supports that any intervention is better than no intervention. CBSEL intervention programmes specifically designed for the South African schooling context is very limited and it would be interesting to research how much programme modification would be needed to make standard CBSEL intervention programmes effective within our context given our challenges.

### 6.5 Limitations of the study

The following limitations to the study must be mentioned:

Only schools in the Western Cape that were using the same programme-based approach to CBSEL were considered. The parameter in this study could have been expanded to include schools that were running other programmes, providing that they were competency-based SEL programmes in other areas. The study was limited to Foundation Phase (Grade 1 – 3) teachers and could possibly have included all primary school teachers (Grade 1 – 7), as the programme does extend to intermediate and senior phase learners. The teaching principles remain the same in higher grades, the material is adapted to ensure that it remains age appropriate. However, due to the limited scope of the master’s dissertation, only one phase was selected as a focus.

The involvement of the voices of the parents and the learners were absent in this study. Given the importance of parental involvement and commitment, and focus group
discussions with the parents to understand their perspective would have benefitted this study. Classroom discussions with the learners on their experiences of the CBSEL process would have further enriched this study.

6.6 Final word

This study contributes to creating an awareness of the value of introducing competency-based social and emotional learning in schools in the Western Cape. Through this study, the benefits and challenges of CBSEL for South African schooling communities were explored and an understanding gained, giving insight into future steps that need to be taken, such as comprehensive teacher professional development training and school leadership buy in for CBSEL. It is hoped that this research will contribute to seeing an increase in effective, competency-based social and emotional learning in South African classrooms as an integrated process requiring support at multiple levels.
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Slee, P., Murray-Harvey, R., Dix, K., Skrzypiec, G., Askell-Williams, H.,


Dear Mrs Bettina Marais

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES OF FACILITATION COMPETENCY-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators’ programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **20 August 2015 till 30 September 2015**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

   **The Director: Research Services**
   Western Cape Education Department
   Private Bag X9114
   CAPE TOWN
   8000
We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research
DATE: 20 August 2015
Addendum B

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM PRINCIPALS OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:
Teachers’ experiences of facilitating competency-based social-emotional learning in the Foundation Phase.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ms BMP Marais

ADDRESS: 23 Upper Sheelan Street, Newlands, 7700, Cape Town

CONTACT NUMBER: 071 463 0518

Dear

Your school has been identified as a potential research site for my Master of Arts in Psychology Degree because your school has for the past two years and is currently providing additional competency-based social-emotional learning to the Foundation Phase learner’s. In addition to this the teachers in the Foundation Phase are responsible for the facilitation.

This letter is a formal request to conduct research at your school for a period of 4 months from 1 July to 30 October 2016.
Below is an outline of the project information, which will explain the details and scope of this project.

This study has been approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU 00046-15-S1) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records.

**What is this research study all about?**

This study aims to explore how teachers’ experience facilitating competency-based social-emotional learning in the Foundation Phase.

**Why your school has been selected to participate?**

Your school has been selected as a potential research site because the teachers in your school have been facilitating competency-based social-emotional learning activities in the Foundation Phase over a period of two and a half years.

**What will the teacher participant responsibilities be?**

- Teachers who participate will be expected to write a reflection on their experiences of facilitating competency-based social emotional learning activities in their classrooms. These reflections will be based on their facilitation experience over the last two and a half years. They will be briefed by the researcher on what is expected and will be given 4 weeks to complete this assignment.

- If a teacher has 3 years or more experience of teaching in Foundation Phase she will be invited to participate in an open ended individual interview of between 30 and 45 minutes with the researcher. The interview will be scheduled at your school, outside of teaching hours, at her convenience.

**What are the benefits from taking part in this research?**

Participants in this project will be given the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences of facilitating and working with competency-based social-emotional learning material with their learners. In the process they will enhance
their own knowledge of and insight into ways to apply the universally accepted five interrelated sets of emotional, cognitive and behavioural competencies, namely: Self-Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making to teach learners the coping skills to manage everyday life challenges.

As a result of these interventions the following benefits might occur according to the research literature:
Learner’s in the classroom might show greater attachment and commitment to school and may show more positive behaviour in the classroom.
Their classroom environments might become less stressful as the relationships on various levels (teacher-learner/ learner-learner/ learner-parent/ teacher-parents) become more nurturing as a result of the process as suggested by the research literature.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research?

There are no direct risks envisaged in this research process. Ethical clearance protects participants from potential risk factors. The ethical rule of social research is that no physical or psychological harm must come to any research participant. The possibility of harm is very limited due to the nature of the enquiry. However, to avoid any uncertainty about participant involvement, the research procedure, including what is expected from participants, will be explained clearly at an orientation session set up at your school. During this session critical issues such as voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity and privacy principles in the research process will be addressed with the potential participants.

Will your school or the participants be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No remuneration will be paid for participation in this study but refreshments will be provided at the meetings with the researcher. All meetings will take place at the research site and therefore your school will incur no travel expenses. There will thus be no costs involved for your school, if you do take part.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

You can contact me at bettinam@iafrica.com or on 071 463 0518 if you have any further queries. I will follow up in one week with an email or phone call to ascertain your commitment to this project.
Thanking you in advance.

Regards

Bettina Marais
CONSENT FORMS FOR TEACHERS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:
Teachers’ experiences of facilitating competency-based social-emotional learning in the Foundation Phase.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ms B M P Marais

ADDRESS: 23 Upper Wheelan Street, Newlands, Cape Town, 7700

CONTACT NUMBER: 071 463 0518

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my Magister Artium Psychology degree. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU00046-15-S1) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be
necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

This study aims to explore how teachers experience facilitating competency-based social-emotional learning in the Foundation Phase to understand how this affects the overall well being in the classroom.

Why have you been invited to participate?

- You have been invited to participate because you facilitate competency-based social-emotional learning in the Foundation Phase in a school selected as a research site.
- You have also complied with the following inclusion criteria:
  - You have more than 3 years of teaching experience in the Foundation Phase;
  - You have facilitated this additional competency-based social-emotional process for the duration of 2014 and 2015 and you continue to do so in 2016;
  - You will consent to and are available for interviews after school hours and;
  - You are willing to have your interviews recorded.

What will your responsibilities be?

- If you agree to participate you will be expected to write a reflection on your experience of facilitating competency-based social-emotional learning activities in your classroom based on your experience of facilitation over the last two and a half years. You will be briefed by the researcher on what is expected and will be given 4 weeks to complete this assignment.

- If you have 3 years or more experience of teaching in Foundation Phase you may be invited to participate in an open ended individual interview of between 30 and 45 minutes with the researcher. The interview will be scheduled at your school, outside of teaching hours, at your convenience.

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?
Participants in this project will be given the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences of facilitating and working with competency-based social-emotional learning material with their learners. In the process they will enhance their own knowledge of and insight into ways to apply the universally accepted five interrelated sets of emotional, cognitive and behavioural competencies, namely: Self-Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision Making to teach learners the coping skills to manage everyday life challenges.

As a result of these interventions the following indirect benefits might occur according to the research literature:

- Learner’s in the classroom might show greater attachment and commitment to school and may show more positive behaviour in the classroom.
- The classroom environments might become less stressful as the relationships on various levels (teacher-learner/ learner-learner/ learner-parent/ teacher-parents) become more nurturing as a result of the process as suggested by the research literature.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research?

- There are minimal direct risks envisaged in this research process. Ethical clearance protects you from potential risk factors. The ethical rule of social research is that no physical or psychological harm must come to any research participant. The possibility of harm is very limited due to the nature of the enquiry. However, to avoid any uncertainty about your involvement, the research procedure, including what is expected from you, will be explained clearly. You have the right to decline from answering any question posed to you that may be emotionally harmful or bring about conflict with another person in the group. You are also allowed to indicate to the researcher if you want any information that you gave to be withdrawn from the research process.

What will happen in the unlikely event of some form of discomfort occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?

- Should you have the need for further discussions after the research process you will have access to the names of professionals who will be able to assist you at no cost.

Who will have access to the data?

- All participants have the right to anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore a code will be assigned to your name and used whenever the data is shared with any other person who has the right to access the data including the supervisor. These codes will also be used once the data is reported to ensure your personal privacy.
During the research process the data obtained will be kept safe and secure by locking hard copies and digital data in a filing cabinet and having a password to protect electronic data. As soon as data has been transcribed it will be deleted from all audio equipment.

On completion of the study all data will be stored in a safe at the North-West University for a period of seven years.

**Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?**

- No remuneration will be paid for participation in this study but refreshments will be provided at the meetings with the researcher. All meetings will take place at the research site and therefore no travel expenses will be incurred by you. There will thus be no costs involved for you, if you do take part.

**Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

- You can contact Bettina Marais at bettinam@iafrica.com or on 071 463 0518 if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.
- You can contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 2094; carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

**How will you know about the findings?**

- The findings of the research will be shared with you by the researcher Bettina Marais at a meeting once the research in complete. In case you cannot attend the meeting you will be briefed individually.

**Declaration by participant**

By signing below, I …………………………………………………………….. agree to take part in a research study entitled: Teachers’ experiences of facilitating competency-based social-emotional learning in the Foundation Phase.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
• I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
• I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
• I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) ........................................ on (date) ......................... 2016.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Signature of participant                             Signature of witness

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I Bettina Marais do declare that:

• I explained the information in this document to
  ........................................

• I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
• I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above

• I did/did not use a interpreter.

Signed at (place) ........................................ on (date) ......................... 2016

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Signature of person obtaining consent                             Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I (name) ........................................ declare that:
• I explained the information in this document to

• I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
• I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as
discussed above
• I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (place) ................................................. on (date) ........................... 2016

................................................................................................................
Signature of researcher  .................................................................

................................................................................................................
Signature of witness
Addendum E

48 Rhodes Drive
Hout Bay
7806
19 November 2017

To whom it may concern

Re: Editing and proofreading of Masters dissertation

Name: Bettina MP Marais Student number: 23299207

Title of dissertation: Teachers’ experiences of facilitation competency-based social-emotional learning in the Foundation Phase

I, Naedene Vine, hereby acknowledge editing and proofreading the above-mentioned dissertation to the satisfaction of the client, Bettina Marais.

The editing process commenced 23 October 2017 and unfolded in consultation with Ms Marais until the present day.

Yours sincerely

Naedene Vine
BA (Law) H.DE B.Ed (Hons) University of Cape Town
HOD English
St Cyprian’s School
Cape Town