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Infusing Social Emotional Learning into the Teacher Education Curriculum

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Research supports the importance of policies and interventions to infuse social emotional curricula in schools. The role of teachers in supporting young children's social and emotional readiness for classroom learning has been recognized, but instruction in children's well-being and social emotional competence is a low priority in teacher preparation programs. In this study we, used qualitative methods to examine whether we could successfully infuse an undergraduate curriculum and instructional course with social emotional learning content. The article reports on this effort, and considered the following questions: How can courses infused with SEL content impact prospective teachers' views on the overall role of emotions in the classroom? What is the influence of the course on preservice teachers' conceptions of SEL and its association with children's classroom learning and behavior? How can teacher preparation programs encourage prospective teachers to consider children's social emotional skills once they enter the classroom as teachers? At course end, the 15 enrolled students responded to predetermined questions as part of a self-reflection assignment. Using grounded theory methods, three themes were identified from participants' reflections, including the connection between SEL and academic learning, shifting from teacher- to student-centered pedagogy, and the desire for continued learning related to SEL. An in-depth examination of these themes revealed that SEL concepts can be successfully infused in an undergraduate course on curriculum and instruction. Implications for teacher training are discussed and future avenues for research are presented.

Keywords: social emotional learning, teacher training, emotional competence, teacher emotions, classroom emotions

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Introduction

During the past decade or so, researchers across the globe have shown a great interest in exploring the question of how emotion-related behavior and skills (i.e. emotional competence) relate to school outcomes across childhood (e.g., Garner, 2010; Weare, 2010). Emotional competence, one component of social emotional learning, includes the awareness of emotion, the ability to use and understand emotion-related vocabulary, knowledge of facial expressions and the situations that elicit them, knowledge of the cultural rules for displaying emotion, and skill in managing the intensity of one's emotional displays in ways that are appropriate to the audience and the situation (Cole, Martin, & Dennis, 2004; Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004; Garner, 2010). The role of emotional competence in predicting social and behavioral outcomes for children has been an active area of research, with many studies demonstrating that it is associated with a host of developmental outcomes, including peer popularity, friendship development, the ability to initiate social exchanges with others, and empathy-related behavior (Denham, 1986; Dunn, 1995; Fabes & Eisenberg, 1992; Garner & Estep, 2001).

The present focus of teacher certification standards in the United States is on developing the cognitive components associated with teaching, with very little attention being given to the social emotional development of teachers or their understanding of these skills in students (Gomez, Allen, & Clinton, 2004). However, meeting state curriculum standards should not compete with the goal of helping children develop social emotional skills, especially since these competencies are associated with academically-based learning outcomes (Kress, Norris, Schoenholz, Elias, & Seigle, 2004). Research has shown that social and emotional constructs, including prosocial behavior and other indicators of behavioral and self-regulation, are robust predictors of children's academic learning (Buckley, Storino, & Saarni, 2003; Larsson & Drugli, 2011; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). In addition, the awareness, appraisal, understanding, and regulation of emotion have been identified as critical to the creation of a classroom climate that encourages effective instructional engagement and long-term academic gains in both reading and math (Meyer & Turner, 2006; Perry, Donohue, & Weinstein, 2007). Emotionally competent children also tend to be more inquisitive, excited, and eager to learn than children with lesser affective skills (Rothbart & Jones, 1998), findings which appear to be stable across time (Rudasill, Gallagher, & White, 2010). Lack of skill in the social emotional arena has also proven to be a frequent cause for referral of school children for psychological services (Greenberg, Kusche, & Speltz, 1991; Whitted, 2011) and may be a major factor in the increasingly high national expulsion rates that have been recently reported for young children (Gilliam, 2005).

The recent explosion of information about the importance of emotion in predicting both social and academic outcomes has spawned the development of several intervention programs aimed at teaching specific and/or global social emotional competencies to children across childhood (e.g., Denham, & Burton, 1996; Geller, 1999; Greenberg, Kusche, Cook, & Quamma, 1995; Izard, Trentacosta, King, & Mostow, 2004). Overall, these programs have demonstrated that children's competence in the emotional arena can be enhanced through carefully planned instruction that is well executed (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007). While we await the development and adoption of robust local and national educational policies that

'call for' the development and implementation of affectively-based interventions in all schools and the appropriation of funds for this purpose, we must forge ahead with alternative ideas about how to train teachers to deal with emotions in the classroom.

Although issues of children's well-being and social-emotional competence are a low priority in teacher preparation programs (Adalbjarnardottir, 1994; Jennings, & Greenberg, 2009; Onchwari, 2010), researchers and practitioners alike are beginning to recognize the important role of teachers and other school personnel in actively teaching, modeling, and practicing these competencies in the classroom in both group and individualized sessions (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). Still, teachers often have minimal or even no formal training in the importance of social-emotional competence for classroom learning either in the form of coursework or workshops other than what they learn about overall classroom management. For example, Onchwari (2010) recently reported that, of the teachers surveyed, 66% acknowledged being either moderately or poorly prepared to deal with students' emotion. Typically, teacher preparation programs adopt the model of instructing preservice teachers in a classroom setting and then sending them out to apply their classroom learning in real-life educational settings (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Tom, 1997; Zeichner, 2010). Concern has been expressed that, once teachers leave the university classroom, the economic and time costs associated with training in classroom management or other programs aimed at enhancing positive academic, social, and emotional school-related outcomes for children (Foster, Johnson-Shelton, & Taylor, 2007).

Along these lines, we were especially interested in helping prospective teachers acquire an awareness and understanding of how emotions impact teaching and learning. As highlighted by Jones and Bouffard (2012), children's SEL is directly influenced by teachers' own social emotional competence as well as their pedagogical skills. Accordingly, integrating knowledge about SEL into teacher training may help to bring about a deeper understanding of the impact of emotion and emotion-related behavior in the learning and teaching that occurs in schools. It is also possible that developing SEL curriculum would help preservice teachers understand more about the social emotional issues that students face in the classroom.

This article uses a qualitative case study method to examine students' experiences in an undergraduate teacher preparation curriculum and instruction course infused with social emotional literacy. The course had several learning objectives, which included teaching prospective teachers how to: a) develop a variety of instructional materials and strategies based on established elements of curriculum design, b) identify and apply research-based literature for use in classroom teaching, and c) better understand the role of emotions and emotion-related behavior in teaching and learning. It was the latter of these objectives that was the focus of this article. According to case methodology, this study followed constructivist traditions including: emerging design, context-dependent inquiry, and inductive data analysis (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2002). Constructivism is a popular approach to qualitative research in education and the social sciences (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). It requires a focus on and immersion into the raw data (i.e., narratives of the participants) as the final research outcome. The main aim of this approach is to keep the participants' voices present in the analysis and in the search for the meaning that is constructed from their narratives (Charmaz, 2000). The following research questions were addressed by this qualitative case study: How can courses infused with SEL content impact prospective teachers' views on the overall role of emotions

in the classroom? What is the influence of the course on preservice teachers' conceptions of SEL and its association with children's classroom learning and behavior? and How can teacher preparation programs encourage prospective teachers to consider children's social emotional skills once they enter the classroom as teachers?

Method

Participants

Each student enrolled in a curriculum and instruction course titled '*Contemporary Approach to Curriculum Development*' at a public university in the mid-Atlantic consented to be part of this study and to allow researchers to examine their work products (i.e., reflective assignment). This project was submitted for IRB approval, but was considered IRB-Exempt. Twelve of the student participants were female and 3 were male and all were African American and between 20 and 24 years of age. All were in their senior year of an undergraduate teacher-training and preparation program. Seven of the 15 participants were preparing to be preschool teachers. Of these, 3 had childcare experience. Eight of the participants were pursuing careers as elementary school teachers. Of these, 2 of these participants had experience as interns in the public school system. Female participants were randomly assigned to the three groups and one male was randomly assigned to each of the three groups. Thus, there were three groups, each of which was comprised of five participants.

Instructors

The course adopted a practitioner-researcher approach. The primary instructor and first author was a Ph.D. trained expert in Curriculum and Instruction who has many years of teaching in the public schools as well as significant administrative experience in directing a university laboratory school and coordinating programs for Head Start. In addition, course development was guided by a psychologist who has done extensive research in the area of emotional competence and emotion socialization. A final scholar trained in qualitative methodology was involved in data coding and analyses. All three are university professors, but only the primary instructor was involved in the delivery of the course and interacted with the students.

Overall Description of the Course

Recall that this study is a description of a project aimed at infusing elements of social and emotional learning into an already existing teacher preparation course that is offered at a public university in the mid-Atlantic. Courses that we considered for this infusion were: *Instructional Design and Implementation*, *The Role of Teachers in Schools and Society*, *Teaching the Whole Child*, and *Contemporary Approach to Curriculum Development*. The curriculum course was chosen as the best opportunity for preparing to better understand the role of emotions and emotion-related behavior in classroom teaching and student learning. Our decision was informed by literature that indicates teachers' ability to contribute to the development of curriculum may enhance the overall quality of professionally developed interventions and improve the implementation of SEL programs, which are often staffed by teachers (Orphinas & Horne, 2004). Moreover,

when undergraduate students are active participants in curriculum development, they show enhanced critical thinking skills (Garcia & Roblin, 2008). Likewise, curriculum development is an important role for teachers and, therefore, should be shaped by the multiple social, emotional, and cultural contexts of individual classrooms and teachers (Nason & Whitty, 2007).

The course was organized into modules for which there were four phases: 1) preparation, 2) application, 3) presentation, and 4) assessment. These four phases were designed to mirror best-practices in curriculum and instructional design. The preparation phase introduced students to the theme of each module. Here, it was important to elicit interest so as to encourage a deeper and collaborative inquiry into the topic. The application phase was activity-based and focused on specific tasks and actions that required students to apply the knowledge gained in the previous phase of their project of designing a SEL curriculum. The presentation phase involved a teaching component that was organized as part of a collaborative presentation to the larger group on what was learned and how it can be applied. Finally, the assessment phase was focused on a consideration of participants' conceptual understanding of the material presented in the module and associated learning outcomes.

The course structure was based, in part, on a team-based learning approach. According to Michaelson, Knight, and Fink (2004), this type of learning works especially well in courses that require application of course content. The decision to design the course around student teams was also based on the fact that team-based learning allows for the coverage of more course content, increases in class attendance, is associated with greater adherence to course goals (Attle & Baker, 2007). For parsimony, a decision was made to include only three content areas since there were only three groups of students.

Results of a previous study informed the specific content areas selected. Specifically, Garner, Moses, and Waajid (2013) found that preservice teachers perceive social interactions with peers as an important classroom competency and view children's ability to understand and regulate emotions as an important component of academic competence. This earlier study was comprised of an independent sample of 102 prospective teachers who completed surveys and participated in narrative interviews. Although these teachers were matriculating at a different institution than the participants in the current study, we used the results of this research to put parameters around the SEL component of our project as the construct is so broad. To that end, the students were assigned three topics: emotion knowledge, emotion regulation, and peer-related social competence.

Before the modules began, students were introduced to three conceptual frameworks related to the three topics. The first, advanced by Halberstadt, Denham, and Dunsmore (2000), proposes that children develop emotional competencies in three broad areas that include: expressing, understanding, and experiencing emotion and these competencies fit together to create a coherent, testable whole. Because emotions are thought to be rooted in social relationships and interactions (Saarni, 1999; Thompson, 1991), students were next introduced to Pianta's CLASS conceptual framework for classroom interactions, which characterizes the structure and nature of teacher-child interactions as contributing positively to children's development as a consequence of classroom experiences (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

The final conceptual framework presented to the students was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model because a focus on emotional competence in the classroom would be incomplete without attention to social context. Moreover, this course challenged students to create contextually relevant unit plans that took into account assets and difficulties faced by children being reared in varying environmental circumstances. The conceptual frameworks were used to guide the students in recognizing that the child, the teacher, and the social context (e.g., the classroom) mutually influence one another. In addition, as described below, students received instruction in organizing and structuring lesson plans (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2010) and in learning styles and preferences (Sternberg & Zhang, 2001).

Module I: History and Theories of Curriculum and Instruction

During the preparation phase of the first module, students received formal instruction and participated in classroom discussions aimed at increasing their knowledge of the scholarly literature on the history and goals of the field of curriculum and instruction. To begin, the students were instructed in curriculum and instruction terms and how to recognize components of effective curricula, and how to apply curriculum and instructional theory to the task of developing instructional materials. In addition, students were instructed in theories of learning and development, including Piaget, cognitive and social-cognitive information processing frameworks, Vygotsky, behaviorism (traditional and modern), and biological/maturational theory. In the application phase, students were to choose an approach to learning that they could apply to the next module. They could choose to rely on one approach or integrate multiple approaches. The presentation phase involved having students present and defend their group philosophies of how children learn. During in-class team meetings, the instructor regularly provided feedback, encouragement, and direction. For the assessment phase, groups received written anonymous evaluations from their team members and were assessed by the course instructor using a formal rubric that was created for the course and that was specific to this project. This rubric was included in earlier iterations of the course and was used to assign a course grade and not as data for this study.

Module II: Social Emotional Learning

Recall that the overall goal of the course was to prepare the students for curriculum development and planning in their future role as classroom teachers. Participants were encouraged to use Bloom's (1956) highly regarded and well-validated Taxonomy of educational objectives in designing their modules to remind them to incorporate objectives, strategies for engaging students, and the needs of the learner in developing their teaching plans. Bloom's Taxonomy is often used by teachers to describe and state cognitive objectives as part of their lesson plans and course designs. This model categorizes children's learning behavior into three hierarchies of learning domains: cognitive (i.e., knowledge), affective (i.e., attitude) and psychomotor (i.e., skills). In addition, to increase their understanding of the field of curriculum and instruction overall and to promote the idea that lesson plans should be viewed as educative support, students used the text written by Wiggins and McTiche (2005). This text is organized around the premise that learning is enhanced when teachers think purposefully about curricular planning, that students learn best when they have an opportunity

to practice the concepts being taught, that desired outcomes should drive the curriculum planning process, and that teaching is about student learning. Next, participants received classroom instruction and practice in how to create optimal learning objectives.

As the major aim of this module was to instruct the students in SEL, each team of students was assigned the task of completing a comprehensive literature review on one of the three previously mentioned topics: emotion knowledge, emotion regulation, and peer-related social competence. As an aid, each team was given a list of well-published social emotional researchers, the URL for the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), and a preliminary list of pertinent articles and keywords that could be used to begin an initial library search. Adopting both a collaborative and individualized approach, every participant on each of the three teams was required to locate a minimum of five scholarly articles on the theme assigned to their team. From this effort, each team had a minimum of 25 articles. After instructor approval for rigor and relevancy, these articles were later shared among the members of the team and were included in the reference list for each of the finished curricula.

Students also received specific instruction centered on social and emotional learning (SEL) conceptual frameworks. The term SEL was first used in 1997 to describe learning associated with an individual's ability to understand, express, and regulate the social and emotional aspects of life in ways that contribute to positive developmental outcomes in the arenas of academic learning, forming and sustaining social relationships, social problem-solving, and appropriate self- and behavioral regulation in multiple social ecologies across the lifespan (Elias et al. 1997). As such, SEL programming is a generic term that has been applied to many types of programs aimed at teaching specific and/or global social emotional competencies to children in the context of programs that teach emotion-related competencies, anti-bullying, substance abuse prevention, and other skills aimed at reducing antisocial behavior and increasing prosocial behavior (e.g., Denham, & Burton, 1996; Geller, 1999; Joseph & Strain, 2003; Greenberg et al., 1995). Using the Halberstadt et al. (2000) article described above, students were taught the definition of SEL, why it is important, the distinction between the social and emotional elements of the construct, and what it looks like in preschool and elementary school children. In addition, The Pianta CLASS model was also used in this module to instruct students in the importance of SEL in the development of high quality teacher-student relationships.

Module III: Unit and Lesson Plans

Recall that the 15 students were organized into three groups. In this module, each of the three groups was tasked to develop a unit plan with five lessons. In the preparation phase of the module, students received formal instruction aimed at increasing understanding of unit plans as a block of lessons grouped together based on related skills, concepts, and themes. In addition, participants were taught to conceptualize lesson plans as a subcomponent of a unit in which a given set of objectives or concepts is taught (Orlich et al., 2010). It was during this module that students developed instructional strategies, activities, and resources, and other teaching materials. During the application phase, participants applied the techniques described above to develop unit plans with lessons that were specific to their assigned social-emotional curricula theme: a) an emotion understanding unit, which was aimed at preschoolers, b) an emotion regulation unit also aimed at

preschoolers and c) a peer relationships unit that included a sub-unit on bullying. The decision to focus on bullying was bolstered by findings that suggest that participating in a training course on bullying may bolster preservice teachers' understanding of problematic peer relationships among children (Benitez, Garcia-Berben, & Fernandez-Cabezas, 2009). Students were told to limit the materials to be presented in five 15-30- minute sessions, increasing in 15 minute increments for the elementary school unit. The five learning objectives (created by the students) for each of the units are described in Table 1. For each of the three units, students were instructed to prepare detailed lessons that were associated with the specific learning objectives. These lesson plans were expected to be developmentally appropriate and students had the option to use of one or more of the following: power-point or other visual aids (e.g., pictures, drawings, dolls, puppets, etc.), video exercises that the students could create or locate using the internet or purchase from reputable sources, role-play exercises, handouts, or other activities that were specific to the age group. These materials were created or modified from other sources for the purposes of this course only.

For each of the learning objectives, participants developed a detailed lesson plan. Each lesson plan was to consist of four sections: objectives, methods, expected results, and evaluation. Table 2 displays a brief outline of a lesson plan format (created by the students) using the first learning objective from the emotion understanding unit. Finally teams presented a draft of their plans to the class. To evaluate whether teams were able to connect the concepts and skills taught earlier in the module to create quality unit plans, the instructor used a rubric that was specifically developed for this course to assess: students' knowledge in the particular topic area, the quality and relevance of the lesson plans in relation to the learning objectives created in Module II, and the degree to which participants included planned learning activities that were based in the conceptual frameworks described earlier in this paper. This data recorded on this rubric were not analyzed for this report.

Table I. Lesson Plan Objectives

Unit Level	Topic
Preschool	<p>Emotion Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize, identify the emotions happy, and sad • Recognize and identify the emotions angry, afraid • Recognize and identify the emotion surprise • Express emotions and explore using emotion language • Explore matching emotional language with facial expressions
Preschool	<p>Emotion Regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize and identify emotions • Express emotions of self and peers • Match emotions with situations • Explore strategies for coping with emotions sad, angry, afraid • How would your friend feel?
Elementary	<p>Bullying and Victimization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the concept of 'bullying' • Examine indicators of bullying • Explore consequences of bullying for victim and perpetrator • Explore coping with being bullied • Building self-esteem to prevent bullying and to build peer relations

Table II. Lesson Plan Format

A. Objective	After discussion what makes them feel <i>happy</i> , each student will create a <i>Happy Book</i> .
B. Methods	<p>Students will review the previous day's discussion when students shared what makes them feel <i>happy</i>. Students will then be told that they will make a <i>Happy Book</i>.</p> <p>1. Materials Each table of six (6) students will be given color markers, glue sticks, large sheets of colored construction paper, yarn, magazines, plain white paper for drawing and a 3-hole punch.</p> <p>2. Procedures. Students will be instructed to draw or cut pictures from the magazines of things or situations that make them feel <i>happy</i>. They will then glue the drawings or magazine pictures to both sides of the construction paper. Using the three-hole punch and yarn, students will create their own <i>Happy Book</i> to be shared with the class.</p>
C. Results	What did the students do and what did they learn?
D. Evaluation	<p>What went well? What did not go well? Did the students enjoy the lesson? Did I enjoy implementing the lesson? How would I change the lesson next time?</p>

Module IV: Enhanced Teacher-Learning Strategies and Techniques

There are individual differences among children in their learning styles and preferences. Effective teachers have knowledge of and incorporate a variety of teaching methods to differentiate instruction and create communities of learning (Murray, Shea, & Shea, 2004). As highlighted by the CASEL, SEL instruction is enhanced by teachers' use of a variety of student-centered teaching and learning strategies (Payton et al., 2000). Thus, Module IV was aimed at instructing students about various learning styles and teaching methods, strategies, and techniques that were sensitive to children's wide-ranging abilities and social and cultural backgrounds to create rich classroom environments, a major challenge to beginning teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Murray et al., 2004).

In the preparation phase, participants were assigned readings and instructed in Howard Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligence theory. Gardner's theory suggests that there are seven human intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal. It is important for teachers to understand that there are differences in the extent to which individuals possess the multiple intelligences. Effective curriculum development and instruction is exhibited when teachers are guided by these potential differences in their lesson planning, development of assignments, and assessment methods. Although the instructor of the course understood that it is not always possible or even necessary to incorporate all of the intelligences in these tasks, the point of this module was to make sure that the prospective teachers understood that students learn and excel in a variety of ways. The point of this requirement was to help the students understand that effective classroom instructors offer an array of learning opportunities, which increases the likelihood of success for all students.

The second conceptual model taught in this module was the hemisphericity model, which addresses the importance of brained-based learning (Given, 2002; Jensen, 2005; Visser, Ashton, & Vernon, 2006). Hemisphericity is the term used to describe an individual's tendency process information through the left or right hemisphere or both. The left hemisphere is thought to be responsible for analytical, verbal, linear and logical tasks. The right hemisphere is associated with tasks that involve global, visual, and relational skills as well as intuition. Individuals use both sides of the brain to process information, but most people have a dominant side that is especially useful in challenging learning situations. This information was included as part of the course content because it is aligned with learning styles and preferences (McCarthy, 1987).

Finally, Bronfenbrenner's model, described above, was used as part of Module IV to teach the prospective students that learning is influenced by social and cultural factors as well as the material resources available to children at home, in their neighborhoods, and at school. In the application phase, teams were assigned the task of revising their unit plans to reflect the feedback presented in Module III and in relation to their 'new' knowledge of learning styles and preferences. Students were not completely rewriting unit plans. Therefore, they were less preoccupied with the mechanics of how to write a unit plan and were instead encouraged to focus on creating a dynamic approach to enhance the extent to which the material would be received by the children that they would teach. For the assessment phase, a specific rubric, developed for the purposes of grading and not included as data for this report, was designed that evaluated the various components of the curriculum (i.e., lesson introduction, learning objectives, teaching materials, SEL content, presence of assessment tools, self-reflection, and the inclusion of multiple learning styles and preferences).

As noted above, this project was conducted within the confines of a college course for which students received university credit. To that end, students' responsiveness to instructor feedback and consultation, group/team members' assessments of participation in the completion of assigned tasks, midterm and final course assessments, and instructors' ratings of curriculum quality were used in determining the course grade. In addition, at the end of the semester, each student was tasked with writing a brief paper that required them to reflect on the following questions: How has the course impacted your views on teaching?, What do you know now that you did not before?, What is the influence of social emotional skills on children's learning? What is the role of classroom teachers in facilitating social and emotional competence? (Triliva & Poulou, 2006). The data yielded from these reflections were analyzed for this report.

Specifically, students' reflective papers were analyzed using thematizing (Creswell, 1998) in order to produce a detailed description of undergraduate student participants' experiences of learning how to facilitate children's social emotional competence. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme captures important information about the data with regard to the specific research questions and represents patterned and meaningful responses within the data. We followed their recommendations and conducted our thematic analysis in six steps: familiarizing ourselves with the data, generating initial codes for organizing the data, searching for themes and reorganizing the data in relation to the themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report. Data were available for all fifteen participants.

Coding Reliability of the Themes and Credibility of the Data

Before discussing these results, we first report reliability analyses. In qualitative research, reliability can be determined by considering how well the themes represent the data, determining the similarities within and differences across the themes by showing representative quotations from the reflections transcribed, and seeking agreement among the two coders, the third co-author, and, the participant responses themselves. For this article, self-reflections for each participant were independently coded by the first (original coder) and second (secondary coder) authors, with the aim of determining the percentage of agreement across coders. This analysis resulted in 92% agreement and a Cohen's kappa of .84. This is an acceptable level of reliability, especially given the fact that qualitative case studies inherently allow for multiple interpretations of the data (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

Results

Overall, a thematic analysis of the written reflections of the students revealed that a curriculum and instruction course infused with SEL can impact prospective teachers' views on the overall role of emotions in the classroom for children's classroom learning and behavior. Three major themes were expressed by the participants: (a) Theme 1: The connection between SEL and academic learning; (b) Theme 2: Shifting from teacher- to student-centered pedagogy, and (c) Theme 3: The desire for continued learning related to SEL. Below, we describe the three themes and speculate on their meanings.

Emergent Themes

In a reflective assignment that was due at the end of the course, each participant was tasked with writing a brief paper that required them to reflect on the following questions: How has the course impacted their views on teaching?, What do you know now that you did not before?, What is the influence of social emotional skills on children's learning? and What is the role of classroom teachers in facilitating social and emotional competence? In addition, participants were asked to reflect on the course in terms of its impact on their knowledge of curriculum development overall. These papers were required, but not graded. Students were assigned a random identification number and papers were collected using a box that was placed outside the door of the class for the instructor to pick up later. Coding involved first having the coders read through the entire reflection. Second, the researchers collectively extracted quotes from the reflections that specifically addressed the three research questions and agreed upon three themes as best representing the data. Next, the two coders independently coded quotes into piles representing the previously identified themes. The three themes are described and discussed below.

Theme One: Connection between Social Emotional Competence and Academic Learning

All participants referenced their greater understanding of curriculum design and preparation as well as a greater appreciation of SEL. One comment that is illustrative of this point is:

I learned so much from this course. I really expected to learn lots about curriculum and planning but was surprised to learn so much about social-emotional development. My experience in this class will be memorable as I start my student teaching.

Fifteen of the participants also commented that completing this course provided an opportunity to learn about the importance of appropriate social emotional behavior as a necessary component of success in the classroom for both students and teachers. One participant wrote that:

This course encouraged me to reflect on my experience as an elementary school student; witnessing bullying of other children. I was one of those who laughed although I knew deep inside that it wasn't funny. I just did not know how else to respond because I wanted to remain a part of the popular group. My experience and participation in this course has helped me realize that being part of the audience contributes to the problem. Phenomenal! Who would have thought that emotions had so much to do with academics?

Another student commented that: "Teaching is about understanding content as well as attending to the fact that children's learning styles and preferences are affectively-based". Similarly, another participant wrote: "I had never really considered SEL as a form of intelligence that could support children's school work". Interestingly, all 15 participants commented positively about Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which embraces the importance of social and emotional competence as important for children's learning and experiences in the classroom.

Theme Two: Shifting from Teacher-Centered to Student-Centered Pedagogy

Additionally, 14 of the 15 students reflected on personal shifts toward adopting more learner-centered pedagogy. For example, one participant stated:

I thought I would focus a lot of time on controlling the classroom. Now I am learning that my focus will be on helping children to control themselves. I wish I had learned this earlier in my teacher preparation program.

For many participants, this shift from thinking about classroom regulation to student self-authorship and self-regulated learning was profound. For instance, one participant wrote:

During my preparation to become a teacher I have never really thought much about children's emotions. My focus has been on ensuring that I knew all I should about subject matter and teaching techniques. This was an eye-opener!

A different participant commented that:

The SEL curriculum assignment helped reinforce for me that the best learning happens when there are opportunities for hands-on activities and experiences. I will remember this when I become a teacher myself.

These data demonstrate a paradigm shift where participants discuss moving from a control-centered approach to a student-centered approach for learning and embraced the idea that students rather than teachers should be at the center of the classroom.

Theme Three: Desire for Continued Learning Related to Social Emotional Constructs

Eight of the participants expressed a desire for continued exploration of social emotional constructs.

One participant wrote:

I am in my senior year and, before taking this class, I thought I was ready for the classroom. My research on emotion regulation and the experience of developing a SEL-based curriculum, however, has taught me that I have much to learn about the importance of emotions when it comes to children's success in school.

One participant commented that "I wish that I had the opportunity to take more courses on this topic". Together, these comments suggests that, contrary to some reports (Weston, Anderson-Butcher, & Burke, 2008), some undergraduate preservice teachers expressed a strong desire for continued professional development and training in this area.

Discussion

This research capitalized on the opportunity provided by a teacher education curriculum and instruction course to facilitate preservice teachers' understanding of SEL. Overall, the study described in this article demonstrates that SEL concepts can be successfully infused in an undergraduate course on curriculum and instruction. Three research questions were addressed by this research. The first question had to do with whether a curriculum and instruction course infused with SEL content can impact prospective teachers' views on the overall role of emotions in the classroom. The second question considered the influence of the course on teachers' conceptions of SEL and its association with children's learning and behavior. The final aim centered on how teacher preparation programs can encourage prospective teachers to consider children's social emotional skills once they enter the classroom as teachers.

The findings seemed to suggest that a paradigm shift in participants' views of teaching from teacher-centered to learner-centered. Specifically, participants commented about the importance of using content and curriculum materials to facilitate and support children's active learning rather than forcing them to take on a passive role in a highly directive classroom environment. Regarding the second question, although participants expressed a desire to learn more about SEL, we were encouraged by the finding that all of them commented about having a newfound awareness that emotions and academic learning are correlated. With respect to the third question, the vast majority of participants indicated that they valued the importance of courses on SEL as a strategy for helping them to prepare for children's emotion-related behavior. At the same time, all of the participants made at least one comment with regard to the importance of SEL for children's academic learning. Nevertheless, training teachers to understand how emotions and emotion-related behavior impact teaching and learning requires a systematic approach that goes beyond the stand-alone course described in this report. Another way to address this issue is to require courses on SEL in undergraduate teacher-training programs that incorporate practicum experiences that allow for real-world experience for preservice teachers before they get to the classroom.

As noted above, the framework that most resonated with the participants was Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. However, as mentioned earlier, teams were required to incorporate the conceptual

frameworks presented and the literature collected as part of the overall course. One area for future research would be to have students practice delivering the content they developed and to have them participate in activities that allow for deeper reflection, practice, coaching and appropriate feedback, and revision, elements that should be part of any curriculum development process (Joyce & Showers, 1981). This would have allowed for the development of higher-quality materials. However, the course was centered on the process of creating curriculum rather than on specific outcomes that would have been achieved through formal implementation (see Romasz, Kantor, & Elias, 2004). At the same time, it would also be interesting to examine whether a course like the one described in this article actually improves prospective teachers' understanding of children's SEL and contributes to teacher empathy to children's emotional displays and to the development of strategies for dealing with classroom emotions.

This project was developed as part of a collaboration and shared vision between and among individuals trained in different disciplines. Teacher education programs typically do not include training in SEL and the courses like the one we report on in this article provides some guidance on how to accomplish this goal. One limitation of the work is that we did not have specific information about what participants knew before taking the course. However, we did have first-hand reports from the majority of the students that they had given very little thought to SEL. Another limitation was the number of students enrolled in the course was relatively small. Although the reflections did not contain identifying information, some participants may have felt that their responses were not anonymous, which could have impacted the data that were collected. Nevertheless, the results of this study illustrate the potential benefits of integrating SEL content into a curriculum and instruction course and demonstrated that (at least through the student's eyes) that doing so may support preservice teachers' recognition of the importance of social emotional competence for student learning and the endorsement of a student-focused approach to teaching. In addition, the findings of this qualitative case study suggests a number of avenues for future research that could include an empirical study with an experimental design with an addition of a control group and the inclusion of pre-and post-test measures to assess quantitative change in prospective teachers' understanding of SEL content and could ensure that this approach to teaching SEL content to preservice teachers is actually helpful. Following both groups into teaching practice would also be a great way to further examine the questions posed in this research and might aid in the advancement of professional development programs for in-service teachers. We see this version of the course as a valuable first step toward the development of programs, courses, and content aimed at training teachers in social emotional learning. Future research should build on this project to explore, in greater depth, how to best achieve this goal.

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