

Introduction

In modern society, the nature of education is undergoing an unprecedented era. Globalisation, digitalisation, and AI, etc., such technical progression not only communicates information in education but also diverts it towards a multidisciplinary perspective. Education works as a tool which enhance the thinking power of a human mind. Now the main goal of education is not only academic achievements of students, but also to prepare such citizens who think critically, are problem-solvers, cooperative, empathetic, and full of moral values.

For the fulfilment of these objectives, SEL is a suitable tool. SEL with combination of AI can create new ideas, values and skills through which we can mould our future towards success (Schleicher, 2018). SEL provides the capability for student to understand their emotion, empathy towards others' emotions, and plays a crucial role in society (Elias, 2003). CASEL (2020), identifies the main 5 competencies of SEL- Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and right decision making. These five aspects are the basis for making students ready for 21st-century's challenges.

National Policy of Education 2020 is a radical change in the education sector in India. This policy comes after a long period of time with lots of recommendations and changes for the education system. The policy is aimed at making the education inclusive, holistic, flexible and practical. Under the Indian context, NEP 2020 defines education as multidimensional and holistic development. According to the policy, the purpose of the education is explicitly clear as it should create citizens not only who are intellectually prepared but also that one who is socially and emotionally competent (NEP 2020).

This paper mainly emphasises the role of SEL competencies in the context of NEP 2020, explaining how it can help to prepare future citizens of India. It explains the importance and relation of SEL with the 21st-century skills, and also the challenges and opportunities at the time of implementation of SEL in the school. This paper analyses the existing literature to find out the connection between SEL competencies and 21st-century skills and their preparation to equip the students for the future.

Objectives

- To identify the role of SEL competencies in developing 21st-century skills
- To analyze the extent to which SEL integration supports Future readiness within NEP 2020
- To identify the challenges and opportunities in implementing SEL in school premises.

Research Question

- How do SEL competencies encourage 21st-century skills among students?
- In what ways does NEP 2020 foster SEL competencies to build future-ready learners?
- What are the barriers and enablers to implement effective SEL in the school context?

Methodology

This research paper is based on the qualitative approach, which reviews various existing literature from peer-reviewed journals, books, articles, and reports to collect the content through literature review, and a content analysis method is used.

Theoretical Framework

Modern education is not just about sharing of information, but it also empowers the students to face various aspects in life. In a century that is marked by increasing competition, accelerated

technology development, and increasing social diversity, cognitive competence is not enough as a future preparation. Students need to be emotionally empowered, socially sensitive, and morally responsible. Socio-emotional learning (SEL) is an important concept in this regard.

The Collaborative Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) offers a theoretical basis of the SEL. CASEL (2020) further divides SEL into five competencies, namely self-management, self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. All these competencies make students face different personal and interpersonal problems. Self-management helps students to maintain equilibrium among emotions, stress, and goals whereas self-awareness aids students to recognise their values, capabilities, strengths, feelings and weaknesses. Relationship skills aids to build and maintain positive interactions, also creates healthy relationship by collaboration, communication, and resolving conflicts with others while social awareness aids to understand other's perspectives, knowing their point of view and develops empathy. Responsible decision making, the last competence has empowered students to opt for a moral and realistic option. This framework clearly shows that SEL is not only confined to emotional stability, but rather the cornerstone to prepare students for future-readiness (CASEL, 2020). SEL contributes to the various achievements of life. It not only positively affects academic achievements but also earnings after completion of education. With the help of SEL, students learn to incorporate cognitive processes, feelings, and behavioural skills, which provide positive outcomes in their education as well as life (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Research studies stated that the inclusion of SEL into curriculum could increase the academic performance of student by 11 % (Durlak et al., 2011).

Relationship of SEL and 21st Century Skills

21st century skills together with SEL Education, does not depend only on the knowledge of a subject instead it needs all those capabilities that aids to enhance and encourage global citizenship, life skills and creativity. As per the framework of partnership for 21st century learning (P21) students must have four capabilities for problem solving and effective interaction with others that is creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication which are commonly named as 4C'S (Trilling and Fadel, 2009). The elements of SEL and 4 C's are interconnected; e.g., the increased critical thinking requires the balance between self-awareness and emotional control, thus providing the students with the ability to analyze their strengths and weaknesses and the ability to improve themselves through self-reflection (OECD, 2021). Communication and collaboration are enhancing through empathy, relationship management, and social-awareness, and goal-focused learning is enhanced through self-management (Elias, 2019). Combined with mental flexibility and emotional stability, the creativity will thrive, and SEL will be an effective tool in addressing the modern challenges.

Blooms (1956) classify the objectives of education into three domains- cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The affective domain of learning is the least discussed of the three domains of learning, although it applies perspective, values and responding to emotions. Bloom, Krathwohl and Masai (1964) have pointed out that, education includes more than mere acquisition of knowledge; it includes implicit behavioural shifts and perspective changes. The affective domain is actively used by SEL, and the students can internalise social and emotional perspectives. So, the connection between the taxonomy of Bloom and SEL has a significant connection. A theory of eight psychosocial development stages by Erikson (1963) provided childhood and adolescence as crucial stages of education intervention. Adolescents are likely to face the identity vs. role-confusion crisis during this stage of life when they need to determine the meaning of life. Proper emotional support and social identification at this stage can also lead to responsible and confident citizenship;

otherwise, it may cause identity confusion. SEL provides capabilities to students with self-management, self-awareness and social collaboration in order to help students during their developmental stages. National education policy (2020) has stated that the aim of Education as “multidimensional and holistic development.” Holistic education gives five main principles which are equity, access, quality, affordability and accountability. By equity it means education should be imparted to all students according to their individual needs. From accessible means, education should be imparted to each and every student irrespective of their social status, economical and geographical background. By quality it means quality education should be provided to students as per global standards to enhance their skills, knowledge and morals affordability means it should be under reach of every class i.e. economically cheap and affordable and the last accountability means there should be transparency regarding evaluation, responsibility and administration in the education system. This policy focuses on cognitive, physical, social, emotional or moral aspect of student. Policy clearly specifies that education is not only for cognitive development of students but also for character development and to be fully equipped with the main skills of 21st- century. According to NEP (2020), the education system should prepare such citizens who are equipped with critical thinking, life skills, problem-solving, creativity, leadership skills, and moral values. It provides the 5+3+3+4 framework in which curriculum, teaching- learning and evaluation include experiential, multidisciplinary, and flexible perspectives through which students can choose subjects and activities according to their ability and interest. NEP (2020) has clearly stated in their policy, in connection with the holistic development of students that teacher’s centre of attraction should be student’s social and emotional development.

NEP (2020) come up with a holistic perspective and emphasises to include life skills and socio-emotional learning in the curriculum. As per the policy, the ultimate aim of education is to lead out the inner confidence, curiosity, and creativity of students instead of getting numbers and literacy only. ‘Holistic education’ can be achieved by changing the teacher training, teaching resources and evaluation system. It also emphasises experiential learning, digital literacy and internship. so that education could be inclusive, distance and essential for life.

Challenges and opportunities for Implementing SEL in School Environment

SEL aids students in improving in both academics and in their lives, but implementing SEL in schools comes with a number of challenges as well as with an abundance of opportunities. Some of the challenges are unavailability of resources, Time constraint, complexity of evaluation, insufficient teacher training, lack of school infrastructure, and diversity in culture. Due to which implementing SEL sometime becomes difficult and hence create a hindrance to develop SEL competencies in students. As opposed to these, there are a number of opportunities i.e. vocational development of teachers, integrating technology, collaborative participation and a tendency towards holistic education. The intersection of both policy support and engagement with the society offers necessary protection that will make the successful implementation of SEL in schools.

Challenges.

- **Time Constraint**

The enormous academic and non-academic workload on the teachers makes situation challenging to integrate SEL in the curriculum and hence unable to maintain regularity and depth, resulting as hindrance to the holistic development of students.

- **Inadequate teacher training**

Most teachers are not well acquainted with the practice of SEL theory, techniques and practices. And as teachers are not trained properly, they can be ignorant of their own socio-emotional challenges and this reduces their confidence and their effectiveness in helping students.

- **Problems regarding Finance and Resources**

The lack of sufficient finance and suitable materials to support the implementation of SEL programmes (e.g. instructional books, digital tools, resource centres, and expert consultations) hinder the delivery of the programmes especially in rural and under-resource schools.

- **Difficulty in evaluation**

Instead of traditional methods, an alternative evaluation tools, Observation feedback or a plane-based evaluation is needed to evaluate SEL program but making of such evaluation programme is time consuming and complex due to which it is hard to conclude it incorrect way.

- **Challenges related to Cultural Diversity**

India is a country of diversity in language, culture and social background so it is necessary to mould or shape the SEL program according to their needs, local language, rituals etc. Due to different perspectives and behaviour, approval and optimal use of SEL program is extremely tough.

Opportunities

- **Policy and Government Support**

It becomes so easy to get success when the policy and government come together.

Congruence between the policy guidelines and the government efforts is capable of significantly boosting the success of the programmes. The quality of SEL delivery can be improved through institutional growth and systematic planning. NEP (2020) states 'Holistic Development' is only possible when SEL becomes mandatory and practical.

- **Technology and innovation**

Online training, digital platforms, and mobile applications can reach out to teachers in remote regions. With the help of technological innovations, such as the use of AI-driven modules, it can be possible to provide SEL content effectively and easily to help students train SEL skills in virtual settings (Schleicher, 2018).

- **Parents and the community involvement**

Parental and community involvement outside the schools provides ample support and creates a favourable environment to the students. As soon as students are treated with respect and empathy, social-emotional learning (SEL) becomes successful (Jukes et al., 2018).

- **Continuous Vocational development**

After introducing the SEL into the programmes in the vocational training, the teachers will be able to identify their areas of strengths and weaknesses and then strive to correct the weaknesses. As a result, teachers have a chance to improve their personal skills, and, accordingly, be able to improve them in their pupils and prepare them to the upcoming challenges (Durlak et al., 2011).

Conclusion

This study clearly shows that SEL competencies play a crucial role to inculcate 21st century skills in students and preparing them for their future. After analysis of various papers, it is clear that the Five components of the CASEL framework and the P21 framework of 21st century skills are directly related to each other. That relation mainly shows in the development of critical analysis, communication, collaboration, and creativity skills. NEP 2020 takes a great initiative to develop SEL competencies in students. It states that value-based education, holistic education, life skills integration and teacher capability enhancement are the key factors for the successful implementation of SEL. Many studies show that the SEL program not only enhances the academic performance of

student but also helps them in their work space. With the help of SEL competencies, it is not only to prepare students for the future, but also the need of the present education system. In the context of NEP 2020, it is the necessity because this policy provides a wider perspective to the Indian education system to tackle the challenges of 21-century.

Suggestions

Important suggestions for student's future-

- For the implementation of SEL programs, state and central government should provide financial support to schools.
- Under NCERT, a special SEL centre should be created to prepare teaching materials, training resources and assessment instruments.
- Inclusion of SEL programme in the curriculum of all teacher-training organisations must be enforced.
- For in-service teachers, frequent schedules of SEL training programmes or workshops have to be established.
- An SEL team that consists of a principal, teacher-counsellor, and representatives of parents should be created at the school level.
- SEL implementation should be progressive where the process of implementation should start with the primary level, continue with the secondary and then the higher secondary.
- Specifically, digital platforms and mobile apps, as well as AI-based solutions, should be developed to support the training and assessment of SEL, especially when it comes to remote regions.

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