

Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Newcomer Education in the Netherlands

Consciously supporting newcomer children in their social-emotional development

Master Thesis

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Abstract

For newcomer children, the process of identity formation can be a difficult balancing act between different cultural values and notions. Social and emotional learning (SEL) in school can help newcomer children develop a coherent identity. This mixed-method research aims to explore to what extent the five SEL-competencies of CASEL (2017) are incorporated in the national and actual policy of primary newcomer education in the Netherlands. Educational experts ($N=8$) and professionals from newcomer schools were interviewed ($N=6$) and a survey was filled in by newcomer schools ($N=44$). Results indicate an absence of a national policy for SEL. In general, all newcomer schools address SEL and pay most attention to the social awareness competency and the least to responsible decision-making. Nevertheless, a more explicit and goal-directed approach for SEL is needed in newcomer education, for which guidelines and tools are missing. These findings provide an insight into which policy developments are required to promote a goal-directed approach for SEL in newcomer education, thus supporting identity development of newcomer children.

Key words: social and emotional learning, social and emotional development, newcomer children, newcomer education, identity development

Samenvatting

Het ontwikkelen van een samenhangende identiteit kan voor nieuwkomerskinderen een lastig balanceer proces zijn tussen verschillende culturele waarden en noties. Sociaal-emotioneel leren (SEL) op school kan nieuwkomerskinderen ondersteunen in het ontwikkelen van een samenhangende identiteit. Dit mixed-method onderzoek verkent in hoeverre de vijf SEL-competenties van CASEL (2017) zijn geïntegreerd in het landelijk beleid en het daadwerkelijke beleid van nieuwkomerscholen in Nederland. Onderwijsexperts ($N=8$) en beroepskrachten van nieuwkomerscholen ($N=6$) zijn geïnterviewd en een survey is afgenomen bij nieuwkomerscholen ($N=44$). Resultaten laten zien dat er geen landelijk beleid is voor SEL. Over het algemeen besteden alle nieuwkomerscholen aandacht aan SEL waarvan het meest aan de competentie ‘besef van een ander’ en het minst aan ‘keuzes maken’. Desondanks is er een explicietere en doelgerichtere aanpak voor SEL nodig in het nieuwkomersonderwijs, waarvoor richtlijnen en middelen missen. Deze resultaten geven inzicht in de (beleids)ontwikkelingen die nodig zijn om een doelgerichtere aanpak voor SEL te bevorderen in het nieuwkomersonderwijs en de identiteitsontwikkeling te ondersteunen.

Key words: sociaal-emotioneel leren, sociaal-emotionele ontwikkeling, nieuwkomerskinderen, nieuwkomersonderwijs, identiteitsontwikkeling

List of abbreviations

AZC	Asylum Centre
CASEL	Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning
CED-group	Centrum Educatieve Dienstverlening
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics Netherlands
LOWAN	Landelijke Ondersteuning Onderwijs aan Nieuwkomers
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SLO	Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Social and Emotional Learning in Newcomer Education in the Netherlands

4.3% of the primary school students in the Netherlands are newcomer children (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2019). Newcomers is a collective term for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, n.d.). They do not (yet) master the Dutch language sufficiently to enter regular primary education. In the Netherlands, newcomer children are divided over four types of schools: 1) newcomer school at the asylum centre (AZC-school), 2) independent newcomer school only for newcomers, 3) 1 or 2 classes for newcomer children within a regular primary school, and 4) a regular primary school with a few newcomer children (LOWAN, n.d-b). There is no specific obligatory curriculum designed for these schools or classes, but the LOWAN (national educational advisory platform for newcomer education) did develop midterm and end term goals, which may be adjusted by the school to tailor the specific students 'needs in their classes. These goals focus on five subjects: reading, reading comprehension, spelling, vocabulary and mathematics (LOWAN, n.d-a.). The main focus lies on mastering Dutch in order to progress to regular education as soon as possible.

Besides a language barrier, newcomer children also face other challenges with regard to their adaptation to a new country and a new school. Migration to another country requires an adaptation to a different culture, to different customs and norms and values. The concept of acculturation describes the cultural change that occurs due to continuous, immediate contact between two different cultural groups (Berry, 1997). In this acculturation process, the question of 'Who am I?' takes a central position (Berry, 1997). The confrontation with different (cultural) identities and with different norms and values can lead to uncertainty and confusion, mainly for children who are still in the process of developing a coherent identity (Erikson, 1963; Karkouti, 2014).

The process of identity development does not happen in a social vacuum at home; it is linked to social constructs of the broader community, including culture, traditions, ethical behaviour and history (Karkouti, 2014). For newcomer children this process is even more complicated since they are now part of two different communities: the community and culture of their heritage country and that of the host country. This often leads to newcomer children experiencing "push-and-pull" forces from home and school, in which the culture of the host-country can clash with their heritage culture at home (Fantino & Colak, 2001). This makes the process of identity formation a difficult balancing act between different sets of cultural values and notions (Fantino & Colak, 2005). When trying to balance these two forces in order to create a coherent identity these children can be stuck in the middle, experiencing a double

sense of non-belonging (Fantino & Colak, 2001; Kalmijn, 2018; Verkuyten, 2018). Failing to create a coherent identity can lead to identity confusion, which entails a lack of clarity about who a person is and what their role is in life (Erikson, 1963). This can have other negative consequences for newcomer children such as feelings of alienation, academic underachievement, psychological problems and radicalization (Brown & Chu, 2012; Cummins et al, 2015; Erikson, 1963; Verkuyten, 2018). It is thus critical for newcomer children to securely develop a coherent identity, but they cannot do this by themselves.

In order to assure that newcomer children are supported in their identity development and to prevent these negative consequences, it is important to make sure that primary schools for newcomer children actively support this identity development (Goedhart, 2017; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006). In fact, Marcia (1983) argues that a coherent sense of identity will be difficult to achieve without the security, support and encouragement for meaningful experimentation and exploration from their environment. Considering the fact that newcomer children spend much of their time in school and primarily experience these push-and-pull factors here (Fantino & Colak, 2001), the school environment plays a major role in the development of a coherent identity (Goedhart, 2017; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006).

Research has shown that social and emotional learning (SEL) in school can help children to develop a coherent identity (Bussemaker & Dekker, 2015; Catalano et al, 2004; Goedhart, 2017; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006; Rich & Schachter, 2011; SLO, 2019; Van Overveld, n.d.). Social and emotional learning is the process through which social and emotional skills are explicitly taught (Humphrey, 2013). These social and emotional skills are part of the social and emotional development of children. Given this connection, it is relevant to determine if and how SEL is incorporated in the policy of primary schools for newcomer children in the Netherlands.

Identity development

The development of a coherent identity is seen as the main goal of an individual's healthy development (Hoegh & Boergeois, 2002). Erik Erikson's (1963) psychosocial model of identity development has for decades been the central theory surrounding the development of a coherent sense of self. Erikson's theory builds upon the research of Freud (1932) concerning the ego. In order to develop a sense of harmony, the ego determines priorities and changes unwanted impulses into acceptable ones. Erikson (1968) argues that individuals with healthy egos, and a healthy ego identity, are therefore less affected by psychological conflict.

As mentioned before, school plays a major role in promoting a positive identity development (Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006; Kaplan & Flum, 2012; Rich & Schacter, 2011). School experiences are assumed to be fundamental building blocks in youth's identity, promoting among others the development of personal values, self-concepts and interests (Kaplan & Flum, 2009; Roeser, Peck & Nasir, 2006; Wigfield & Wagner, 2005). Attention to SEL in schools can support children in developing a coherent identity (Bussemaker & Dekker, 2015; Catalano et al, 2004; Goedhart, 2018; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006; Rich & Schachter, 2011; Van Overveld, n.d.). For this, the five competencies of SEL from the Collaborative of Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2017) can be used as a guideline in primary schools (Goedhart, 2018).

Social and emotional learning (SEL)

CASEL (2017) has developed an integrated model for SEL (Figure 1). They define SEL as the process of developing and applying the attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary to manage and recognize emotions, develop concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions and to handle challenging situations capably (CASEL, 2017). The model describes five competencies of SEL: 1) *Self-awareness*: the ability to recognize one's thoughts, values and emotions and the way in which they influence behaviour, 2) *Self-management*: the ability to regulate one's thoughts, emotions and behaviour, 3) *Social awareness*: the ability to empathize and take the perspective of diverse others and to understand ethical and social norms, 4) *Relationship skills*: the ability to establish and maintain relationships with diverse individuals, and 5) *Responsible decision-making*: the ability to constructively decide on personal behaviour based on social norms and ethical standards and reflect on them.



Figure 1: Social and Emotional Learning Model – CASEL (2017)

Through acquiring these competencies, the well-being, mental health and academic performance of children increases (Durlak et al, 2011; Humphrey, 2013; Van der Hoeven, 2017) and a coherent identity can be formed (Catalano et al, 2004; Goedhart, 2018; Rich & Schachter, 2011, SLO, 2019). Wellbeing is in this regard an important precondition for learning, children need to feel good in order to learn (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Explicitly teaching these SEL competencies provide the ability to increase this positive impact (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Durlak et al, 2011; Payton et al, 2008). This positive connection accounts for children with diverse national, cultural and lingual backgrounds (CASEL, 2017; Durlak et al, 2011).

Attention for the development of a coherent identity takes a central position in SEL and includes engaging in all five SEL-competencies (Goedhart, 2018). As often assumed, it is not solely the self-awareness and self-management competencies which contribute to the development of a coherent identity (Goedhart, 2018). Biesta (2015) even warns that if individuals are stuck in the question of ‘Who am I?’, that they will reduce the space for others to exist. Since identity always develops itself in relation to others, that would be counterproductive (Abram, 2008; Erikson, 1963; Goedhart, 2018). Biesta (2015) argues that individuals should also look at what they will eventually do with their identity in society and make choices regarding this involvement, thereby incorporating others and the society in their identity development process.

Culture and ethnicity

For newcomer children, another challenge is added to the identity formation process: determining their ethnic identity in relation to the national identity of the host country. According to Phinney (1993), ethnicity can be seen as a domain of identity in which the individual has to make certain choices and commitments. Newcomer children might experience more difficulty in making these commitments, as they must address this developmental task while operating in both the mainstream culture of the host country and in their ethnic culture of origin (Arnett & Taber, 1994).

In order to allow newcomer children to incorporate their ethnicity in their identity, newcomer schools should pay attention to intercultural communication (Cummins et al, 2015; Goedhart, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Broadly taken, intercultural communication urges an individual to learn to look at the world through different perspectives (Goedhart, 2018). Intercultural communication is part of the social awareness competency, focussing on taking perspectives of others, including those from different cultures and backgrounds (CASEL,

2017). If schools pay attention to this competency, they are thus providing opportunities for newcomer children to safely explore their culture and ethnicity and to connect this to the culture of the host country in order to create a coherent identity.

Education in the Netherlands

The last couple of years voices have been raised vouching for a broader view on education in general (Goedhart, 2018). Good education should be more than simply cognitive knowledge transfer. Schools should pay attention to all three target domains of education: qualification, socialisation and personal development (Biesta, 2014; Onderwijsraad, 2016). Qualification refers to the development of knowledge, a domain which is predominantly present in education in form of, among others, CITO tests and core objectives from Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling (SLO) (Biesta, 2014). Socialisation is described as a process in which youth and students learn about and are part of traditions and practices in society. Lastly, personal development is the process of individualisation of the student. The student has to be able to make his or her own decisions irrespective of the school or the standard norms and traditions and must be able to relate to society in a responsible way (Onderwijsraad, 2016).

When linking these domains to the SEL-competencies of CASEL (2017), the social awareness competency of CASEL (2017) can be recognized in the target domain of socialisation: by creating an understanding of social and ethical norms and learning to take the perspective of others, students learn about the society in which they live. Furthermore, the target domain of personal development can be linked to all five SEL-competencies of CASEL (2017). In order to attend to the process of individualisation, the student should learn who they are (self-awareness), how they can regulate their thoughts, behaviour and emotions (self-management), discover how they fit in social groups and society (relationship skills and social awareness) and lastly how to make their own decisions (responsible decision-making). Education should thus not only have the aim of ‘filling students with knowledge’ but should look at the broader development of children. This also includes attending to the identity development of children. In a letter to Parliament, the State Secretary Dekker (2016, p.1) wrote: “Teachers contribute to the identity development of students. They help them to discover and develop their ambitions and guide them in reflecting on their norms and values and the way in which they can act on them”. Thus, in order to support the broader identity development of children and attend to the target domains of socialisation and personal development, schools should pay explicit attention to SEL. The question is whether this is actually happening in schools.

Primary newcomer education in the Netherlands

As mentioned before, primary education for newcomer children in the Netherlands mainly focusses on mastering Dutch. This originated in the 1980s, when many labour migrants came to the Netherlands and learning Dutch was their first priority. Migration numbers nowadays show that the background of many newcomer children differs, and a large part is refugee. This change brings along a new urge for knowledge on what the education for newcomer children should include, both relating to learning a second language and to SEL (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2017). Nevertheless, little can be found about the policy for SEL in newcomer education. As mentioned before, there is no obligatory curriculum for newcomer schools (LOWAN, n.d.-a). It is thus unclear to what extent SEL is incorporated in the policy of each primary school for newcomer children. However, since research has shown that SEL can help children to develop a coherent identity, it is of utmost importance to determine to what extent SEL is incorporated in the policy of newcomer schools in the Netherlands.

A distinction needs to be made between the national policy and the actual policy. The national policy is comprised of goals set by the government which should be reached by all schools. The actual policy includes the specific approach of the school. There can be a discrepancy between these two since schools can determine the content of their education themselves. This freedom is guaranteed under article 23 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands 2008, in the freedom of education act. It is therefore relevant to look into both the national policy and the actual policy for SEL in newcomer education.

In general, article 8.2 of the Law for Primary Education (2020) dictates that “schools should focus on the emotional and cognitive development of the students and on the development of knowledge regarding their social, cultural and physical skills.” In 2015, article 4c - safety at school was added, stating that schools should have a social safety policy regarding the “social, psychological and physical safety of the pupils”. Furthermore, since 2016 this law also includes civil education in article 8.3, focussing on “the promotion of active citizenship, social integration and knowledge concerning different backgrounds and cultures of peers.” These articles obligate schools to address parts of SEL, but in what way, how often and which goals they should strive for are not clear.

When looking at the implementation of these laws, key-objectives for SEL cannot be found. For every subject in education, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has created key-objectives which need to be reached by all schools (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Guidelines for the implementation of these key-objectives have been developed by the

Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling (SLO) (TULE, n.d.). Since SEL is not classified as a subject, the Ministry of Education and the SLO do not provide key-objectives for SEL.

Specifically for newcomer education, the LOWAN has created a web-page with suggestions regarding materials and approaches for SEL with newcomer children. These include suggestions for energizers, some lessons, an explanation of the programme TeamUp@School and a test to measure the social-emotional development of newcomer children (LOWAN, n.d.-c). Besides these sources, nothing can be found about a national policy for SEL in newcomer education.

The current research thus aims to answer the following question: *To what extent are the SEL competencies of CASEL incorporated in (1) the national policy of primary schools for newcomer children in the Netherlands according to educational experts and (2) the actual policy of primary schools for newcomer children in the Netherlands according to the newcomer schools, and how can potential differences between schools be explained?*

Method

Design

This research follows an exploratory mixed methods design allowing for methodological triangulation (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the research was shortly put on hold when the schools were closed, resulting in administering the qualitative and quantitative phase at the same time when the school re-opened.

Survey

Sample

A total of 13 educational experts were approached. This yielded a sample of 8 educational expert interviews; three from the CED-group (educational advisory and development bureau), one from the LOWAN (national support platform for newcomer education), one from the Inspectorate of Education, one from the University College of Utrecht with expertise in SEL and newcomer education and lastly one from De Vreedzame School (programme for newcomer on SEL and civic education). These educational experts are of added value because they have knowledge of the national educational policy and often visit various newcomer schools across the country, allowing them to elaborate on both the national SEL-policy and to paint a general picture of the actual SEL-policy in newcomer schools.

Furthermore, 8 newcomer schools were approached for interviews which yielded a sample of 6 newcomer school interviews. The newcomer schools were asked to elaborate on

the actual SEL-policy in their school. In total, 14 interviews were conducted.

Instrument

Guided by the research question, a semi-structured interview guide was prepared for the educational experts, allowing for elaboration on decisions and motivations (Ritchie & Lewis, 2006; Boeije, 2009). Small modifications were made to the interview guides based on the specific expertise of the educational expert, but the core questions remained the same. The main topics were: 1) the importance of SEL, 2) programmes for SEL, 3) educational policy about SEL, 4) educational policy for newcomer education, and 5) developments (e.g. “What do newcomer schools need in order to effectively address SEL?”). A distinction was made between educational programmes and educational policy. Policy may also entail daily routine guidelines and practices which are not part of a certain programme. Furthermore, attention for SEL may be intertwined with other subjects - which are not related to existing SEL programmes.

Second, a semi-structured interview guide was prepared for the newcomer schools. The main topics were similar to the interviews for the educational experts but did not address the national policy: 1) importance of SEL, 2) SEL at your school, 3) SEL in general newcomer education, and 4) developments.

Procedure

The educational experts were contacted by email. The newcomer schools were approached through the survey, in which they could give permission for approaching them for an interview. In order to encourage a high response rate, an infographic with the most important findings of this research was promised in return for the schools and educational experts' willingness to join in the interview and survey.

Informed consent was obtained before the start of the interviews. The form contained information about the interview procedure, the data management and the use of the data. To increase reliability during the interviews, questions were probed to get a clear in-depth answer, summaries were made of the answers during the interview and participants were asked for more explanation (Baarda, De Goede, & Teunissen, 2013). The average duration of the interviews was 35 minutes. Microsoft Teams or Skype were used for administering the interviews face to face during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Data-analysis

A qualitative analysis of the interviews was conducted using NVivo. First, open coding was used within single interviews to develop specific categories and to label them with codes which correspond to the content of that category (Boeije, 2002). The labels were based

on theoretical concepts of social-emotional learning and the pre-determined interview questions. Secondly, interviews within the same group (educational experts and newcomer schools) were compared to develop the conceptualization of the codes and the subject and to create a better understanding of the concept (Boeije, 2002). Lastly, the expert interviews were compared with the newcomer schools' interviews to discover if the views of both groups correspond.

Interviews

Sample

The survey participants consisted of headmasters, teachers and care-coordinators of primary schools for newcomer children in the Netherlands. In total, 228 newcomer schools of all four types were approached (see introduction). Of the initial sample for the survey, 44 respondents completed and returned the questionnaire; a rate of approximately 19%. Table 1 shows the function of the respondents and Table 2 the type of schools.

Table 1

Overview of survey respondents (N=44)

Function	Respondents	Percentage
Headmaster of school	11	25%
Headmaster of location (attached to school)	4	9%
Care-coordinator	12	27%
Teacher	17	39%
Total	44	100%

Table 2

Overview of schools responding to survey

Type of school	Number	Percentage
AZC-school	8	18%
Independent newcomer school	12	27%
1-3 newcomer classes in regular school	19	43%
Few students in different regular classes	3	7%
Other*	2	5%
Total	44	100%

**Note.* Type could not be determined from survey data

Instrument

A survey for the newcomer schools was set up using SurveyMonkey. Besides closed questions, respondents could also elaborate on their answers in open questions. This combination was chosen because closed questions generally yield higher response and are easily comparable. Open-ended questions on the other hand produce more diverse answers and allow respondents to elaborate on their choices (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec & Vehovar, 2003).

The survey consisted of 36 items. Example questions included: “Does your school have a programme for SEL?”, and “Are there enough tools for SEL in newcomer education?”.

Procedure

For the approach of the schools, a database was set up with the help of the website of the LOWAN, containing the email addresses of every school with newcomer children in the Netherlands. 228 newcomer schools were approached by email. 82 of these schools immediately received the survey, since they used an impersonal email address which allowed an immediate approach according to the GDPR (European Parliament, 2016). The remaining 146 were each sent a personal email with the request for permission to send the survey. Of these schools, 40 indeed gave permission.

Data-analysis

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. To determine differences between SEL-competencies in schools, a one-sample T-test was conducted. Furthermore, an independent T-test was executed to determine differences between schools on time spent on SEL. Lastly, to examine differences in SEL-approach and SEL-competencies between schools, a Fisher's Exact Test was conducted.

Results

SEL as a precondition

In order to understand the choices made in the policy for SEL, it is important to determine what the perceived importance of SEL. All interviewees argue that the process of explicitly addressing SEL is a precondition for further (cognitive) development and learning. The interviews revealed five ways in which addressing SEL functions as a precondition for further (cognitive) development.

First, three educational experts and four teachers argued that paying attention to SEL has the potential of creating a feeling of safety which would make it possible for children to learn: “Children first need to feel safe before they can learn” (educational expert). In this way,

paying attention to the social and emotional development of children is thus seen as a precondition for further (cognitive) development. A second way was mentioned by three educational experts and four professionals from newcomer schools. They argued that children will not be able to learn if their heads are filled with worries, emotions, trauma or uncertainties. An example related to trauma was given by a teacher of a newcomer school:

In our class we had a boy who had been with us for 1,5 years but did not seem to progress intellectually. He was tested and these tests showed that he was full of trauma and emotions. As an illustration: when his father came to the Netherlands, he said that he did not come here for them [his children] and that if he would get the chance, he would kill them all. If a child experiences such horrific things, it makes it hard to learn. (Teacher newcomer education)

This can be connected to the provision of safety mentioned before; a child needs to feel safe before he or she can learn. While this quote centres around a child with trauma, the seven interviewees argued that the same can be said for other children whose heads are filled with uncertainties, worries or emotions. The general rule applies: “When a child’s head is full, he will not learn” (teacher newcomer education). To make the connection with SEL as a precondition; these schools and educational experts argued that SEL allows children to manage their emotions and to develop meaningful relationships. This provides safety, allowing them to make room in their heads for learning.

A third way relates to cultural differences and was mentioned by five educational experts and three teachers. They point out the possible difference in norms and values which newcomer children might encounter, arguing that these norms and values ask for different social competencies which these children might not (yet) possess. Through SEL these social competencies can be developed and feelings of insecurity or incompetence could be diminished. One of these experts also makes the connection to integration, emphasizing the need to develop certain social competencies which help them to successfully integrate into the Dutch society. One of these experts also argued that it is important for children to know where they come from in order to fully develop themselves, as illustrated in this quote:

It is important that children know where they come from and what their cultural background is. And that they are given the opportunity to share this with others. It [education] is often focussed on the ‘new society’, while these children need to be able

to fall back on their own culture, on where they come from and what they have experienced. (Educational expert)

A fourth way pertains to SEL as a precondition for the development of a coherent identity, mentioned by four educational experts and four teachers. They agreed that not only the self-awareness competency played a part in this process but all five of the SEL-competencies as can be understood from this quote:

SEL plays an important role in the identity development process and isn't something children do alone. You are also the person as reflected by others. The identity development is always happening in relation to others. That's why the five competencies of SEL all play a part in the development of a coherent identity. (Educational expert)

Finally, two educational experts and one teacher mentioned a specific importance of SEL for newcomer classes. Newcomer children continuously come and go, either because they move to a different place or they transfer to regular education, making a newcomer class relatively dynamic. The experts and teacher argued that this asks for a continuous focus on the group dynamics and on the development of new relationships.

National SEL-policy

According to all educational experts, there is no specific SEL-policy for newcomer education. For goals and guidelines of different subjects, newcomer schools are expected to the ones for regular primary education and to the midterm and end-term goals of the LOWAN (LOWAN, n.d.-a), as mentioned in the introduction. Among these, there are no core-objectives for SEL. However, all educational experts mention that there are sub-goals for SEL in primary education, but they are intertwined with other subjects such as civic education and geography. When the SLO was approached for comments on any goals and guidelines for SEL, the SLO could not honour the request because "the SLO does not have any projects or employees which focus on SEL or newcomer education at the moment because of current priorities lying elsewhere".

On the one hand, three educational experts explain that this provides space for the schools to organise their teaching themselves and determine on which principles their teaching is based. This freedom is guaranteed under art. 23 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands 2008, in the freedom of education act. On the other hand, in the

survey 67% of the newcomer schools expressed the need for a guideline (in Dutch: 'leerlijn') for SEL in order to facilitate a goal-oriented approach. 14% saw no need for a guideline and 19% chose 'other' as their answer and mentioned among other that they "had created their own guideline" or that "teachers should simply look more closely to the individual."

Furthermore, the Inspectorate of Education, whose task it is to guarantee the quality of education, does not look specifically at SEL in newcomer schools. They look at how the schools set goals for the newcomer children and if they are able to reach these goals. Next to that, they look at the pedagogical climate and safety at the school. Goals for SEL are often absent, as this educational expert mentions "newcomer schools make a plan with goals for every child. These often focus only on the cognitive development and do not include goals for the social-emotional development".

Actual SEL-policy in newcomer education – Interviews

Importance of SEL

In general, all eight educational experts agree that newcomer schools understand the importance of SEL. Three experts argue that language is nevertheless still seen as most important by newcomer schools and receives more attention.

Attention to SEL

Overall, agreement was found on the grounds that every newcomer school pays attention to SEL in some sort of way. Differences exist between schools and not all schools provide a structured SEL-approach. Some schools simply use emotion-cards at the start of the day while others make use of a structured SEL-method or approach with integrated 'lessons' throughout the day. Seven out of eight experts explicitly argued that a more structured and goal-directed approach is needed in most schools. Schools need to differentiate between explicit- and implicit SEL, as this educational expert illustrates "I often get the question; doesn't it [SEL] happen automatically? No, it does not. SEL can be approached implicitly and explicitly: explicitly means consciously addressing SEL and teaching it. Schools sometimes lack the explicit approach".

Another educational expert elaborates on this statement by arguing that newcomer schools should be 'consciously competent' with regard to SEL and take on a goal-directed approach.

If you're talking about SEL, it is about more than offering children a safe environment and making them feel 'seen'. It is also about being aware of the social-emotional goals you want children to achieve. Many teachers are

“unconsciously competent” and forget to make a concrete plan how to consciously work towards goals. If you’re “conscious and aware” you will be better able to support children in their social-emotional development and work towards goals. According to me, that’s SEL: being consciously aware of supporting children in their social-emotional development. (Educational expert)

Attention to SEL is thus present in all newcomer schools according to these educational experts, but a difference exists between implicitly- or explicitly addressing SEL. Newcomer schools should pay more attention to the latter according to the experts.

Struggles of newcomer schools

The main reason for not adopting this conscious and explicit SEL approach is a lack of specific tools for SEL in newcomer education. This reason was mentioned by seven out of eight experts and illustrates the struggle of newcomer schools. Often these schools simply do not know how to address SEL with newcomer children. Many existing methods and tools for SEL are designed for regular education and are very linguistic. Often newcomer children have not reached this language level yet. Furthermore, some teachers lack the knowledge of how to address SEL. This in combination with a lack of tools and guidelines leads to inadequate (explicit) attention to SEL and to differences between schools. These findings were also found in the survey, in which the schools expressed a need for additional tools and guidelines.

Besides providing newcomer schools with guidelines and tools on how to address SEL, two educational experts argue that schools should be provided with more information on why they should address SEL. When schools have no experience with the effects of explicit SEL approaches, they will be less inclined to adopt one.

Structural difference between schools

When looking at structural differences between newcomer schools, one main difference was mentioned by six out of eight educational experts: the type of school. Independent newcomer schools would pay more (explicit) attention to SEL than regular schools with a few newcomer classes or children. Two reasons were given for this. Firstly, newcomer classes that are attached to a regular school often copy the SEL method or approach of the regular classes while independent newcomer schools often have a method or approach specifically adapted to newcomer children. In regular schools it then depends on the creativity of the teacher if this approach is effectively adapted to the newcomer children or if it is only simplified and thus not used to its full extent. Secondly, independent newcomer schools’ teaching programmes have often been further developed. They often have more

expertise on how to teach and support newcomer children. This difference between schools thus expresses itself in more developed knowledge and better adapted SEL-approaches in independent newcomer schools, according to the experts.

Actual SEL-policy in newcomer education - Survey

Time, Importance, SEL-approach & SEL-competencies

First of all, the survey revealed that newcomer schools spend on average 45% of the time on SEL and 55% of the time on cognitive tasks. The importance of SEL versus cognitive learning was rated 6.2 SEL versus 3.8 cognitive on a 10-point slide-scale. Furthermore, approximately 48% of the schools claimed that they addressed SEL in their curriculum through use of a method (Figure 1). 23% addressed SEL through the vision or guidelines of the school and 25% claimed to use both a method and to make use of SEL through the vision and guidelines of the school. Only 7% (2 school) claimed not to address SEL at all. With regard to the SEL-competencies addressed at schools, social awareness was addressed in most of the approaches (90%) and responsible decision-making the least (48%) (Table 1 & Figure 2).

To determine if these differences between SEL-competencies addressed in newcomer schools is significant, a one-sample T-test was conducted. Responsible decision-making was addressed in significantly less approaches as compared to self-awareness ($M = .88$, $SD = .33$) and relationship skills ($M = .88$, $SD = .33$), $t(41) = 7.9$, $p = .00$, self-management ($M = .67$, $SD = .48$), $t(41) = 2.5$, $p = .015$, and social-awareness ($M = .90$, $SD = .30$), $t(41) = 9.3$, $p = .00$. Self-management was also addressed in significantly less approaches as compared to self-awareness and relationship skills, $t(41) = 4.2$, $p = .00$ and social awareness, $t(41) = 5.1$, $p = .00$. Lastly, social awareness did not significantly differ from relationship skills and self-awareness, $t(41) = -.38$, $p = .71$.

SEL-tools and stricter demands

In order to understand why some newcomer schools might not explicitly incorporate SEL in their policy, the survey also looked at the available tools for SEL in newcomer education. 40% (17 schools) was satisfied with the tools available but 60% (25 schools) vouched for more tools for SEL in newcomer education. The schools which expressed the need for a guideline also revealed which organisation they believe should provide these guidelines. Predominantly mentioned were the LOWAN (16/25), SEL-programmes (11/25), the SLO (9/25) and the PO-raad (6/25).

Lastly, the survey revealed that 76% of the schools do not want stricter demands for schools regarding the incorporation of SEL in their policy. Newcomer schools thus seem to

need more guidelines and tools on how to address SEL but also want the freedom to determine themselves how much time they spend on SEL and the content of it.

Figure 1
SEL-Approaches in Newcomer Schools (N=44)

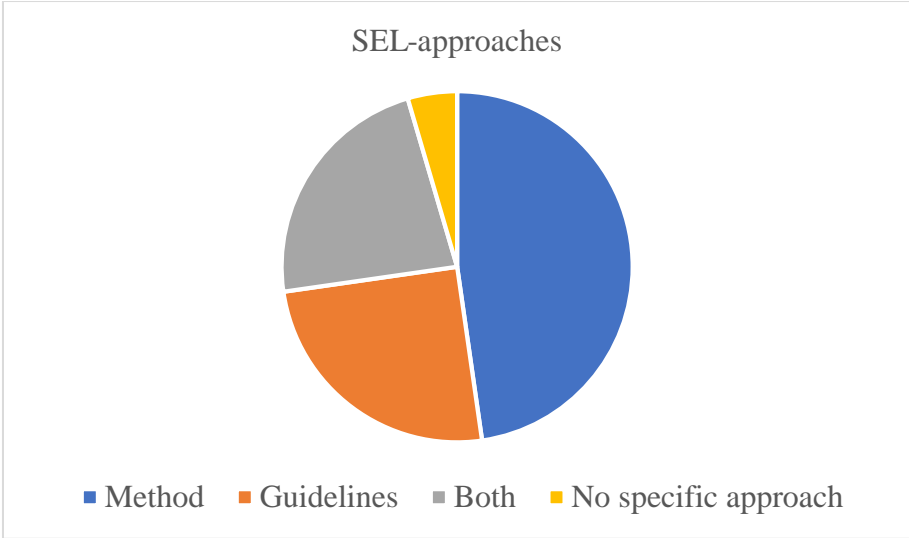
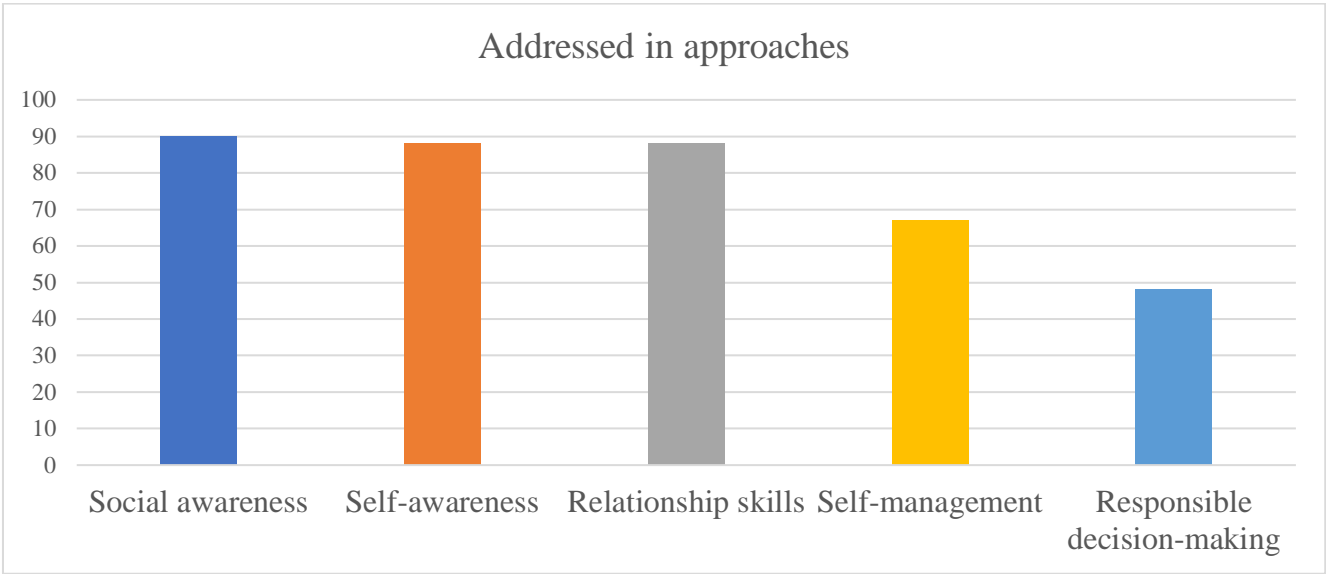


Figure 2
SEL -Competencies Addressed in Newcomer Schools (N=42)



Differences between schools: Time, SEL-approach and SEL-competencies

In order to analyse differences between schools, two groups were created: independent newcomer schools and regular schools with newcomer children/classes. This division was based on the assumption that a difference in SEL approach can be found between independent

newcomer schools and regular schools with newcomer classes or a few newcomer children. Table 1 shows the SEL-approaches and addressed SEL-competencies per type school.

Firstly, to determine whether a difference exists between schools with regard to the amount of time spend on SEL, an independent t-test was executed. Independent newcomer schools spent on average 45% of the time on SEL and regular schools with newcomer children on average 44%. This difference was not significant, $t = .194$, $p = .847$.

Secondly, to determine differences between the SEL-approach (method, guideline, both or none) and the type of school, a Fishers Exact test was executed. No significant difference was found between the SEL-approach and type of school, $p = .051$. The SEL-approach used does not depend on the type of school.

Thirdly, to examine differences between the use of certain SEL-competencies and the type of school, a Fishers Exact test was executed. No significant differences were found on self-awareness ($p = .656$), self-management ($p = .338$), social awareness ($p = 1.00$), relationship skills ($p = 1.00$) and responsible decision-making ($p = .767$). This shows that the use of SEL-competencies does not depend on the type of school.

It thus seems from the survey data that there are no significant differences between independent newcomer schools and regular schools with newcomer classes/children with regard to time spend on SEL, type of SEL-approach and to what extent the SEL-competencies are incorporated in these approaches.

Table 1

SEL-Approaches and Competencies in Approaches per Type School

School	Approach	N	Percentage	Self-awareness		Self-management		Social awareness		Relationship skills		Responsible decision making	
				N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Independent newcomer school*	Method	7	16%	6	86%	5	71%	7	100%	5	71%	3	43%
	Guidelines	8	18%	7	88%	6	75%	6	75%	8	100%	2	25%
	Both	5	11%	4	80%	4	80%	5	100%	5	100%	4	80%
	None	0	0%										
Total		20	45%	17	85%	15	75%	18	90%	18	90%	9	45%
Regular school with newcomers**	Method	14	31%	12	86%	8	57%	13	93%	12	86%	5	36%
	Guidelines	2	5%	2	100%	2	100%	1	50%	1	50%	1	50%
	Both	6	14%	6	100%	3	50%	5	100%	6	100%	5	83%
	None	2	5%										
Total		24	55%	20	91%	13	59%	20	81%	19	86%	11	50%
Total		44	100%	37	88%	28	67%	38	90%	37	88%	20	48%

* Note. Type 1 & 2 schools

** Note. Type 3 & 4 schools

Comparison interview and survey data

The comparison revealed several similarities. Both the survey and the interview data showed that newcomer schools understand the importance of SEL and pay attention to SEL, though in different ways and degrees. In addition, they both revealed the need of newcomer schools for more guidelines and tools in order to incorporate a more explicit approach.

Differences were also found. The interviews suggested that independent newcomer schools generally pay more attention to SEL than regular schools with newcomer classes/children due to more expertise and better adapted SEL-approaches in independent newcomer schools. This result was not found in the survey. The interviews also showed that newcomer schools should address SEL more explicitly and that some teachers lack the knowledge of how to address SEL. These constructs were not incorporated in the survey and could thus not be found. Lastly, the survey showed that both responsible decision-making and self-management are addressed in fewer approaches than self-awareness, relationship skills and social awareness. The interviews did not provide sufficient information to make the same or other distinctions.

Discussion

This research aimed to explore to what extent the SEL-competencies of CASEL are incorporated in the national- and actual policy of primary newcomer education in the Netherlands. With an explicit incorporation of SEL-competencies in the policy of primary newcomer schools, newcomer children can be supported in their identity development and negative consequences such as academic underachievement and mental health problems can be prevented (Catalano et al, 2004; Goedhart, 2017; Humphrey, 2013; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006; Rich & Schachter, 2011; SLO, 2019; Van Overveld, n.d.).

SEL as a precondition

The analysis of the interviews revealed five ways in which addressing SEL functions as a precondition for further (cognitive) development: 1) through the provision of safety, 2) through clearing the mind of worries, emotions, trauma or other uncertainties, 3) through bridging cultural differences and promoting integration of different cultures, 4) through promoting the development of a coherent identity, and lastly 5) by tending to the dynamic nature of a newcomer class. When comparing these ways to the SEL-model of CASEL (2017), each of them is considered in one or more SEL-competencies. The provision of safety is attended to especially in the relationship skills competency. The clearance of the mind is primarily attended to in the relationship skills and self-management competency. The bridging of cultural differences and promotion of integration can be found in the social

awareness and self-awareness competency. The development of a coherent identity concerns all five SEL-competencies, most prominently the self-awareness competency. Lastly, tending to the dynamic nature of newcomer classes is especially considered in the relationship skills and social awareness competency.

This analysis has expanded our understanding of the importance of SEL in newcomer education. All five competencies of SEL contribute to further (cognitive) development of newcomer children and pave the path for learning. The before-mentioned ways accord with earlier research. The meta-analyses from Catalano et al (2004), Durlak et al (2011) and Greenberg et al (2003) yield similar results and all show that addressing the five competencies of SEL is necessary for further positive (cognitive) development.

National Policy – absenteeism of SEL-goals

After several interviews it became clear that a national policy with goals for SEL is absent. Even though laws exist stating that all primary schools should address SEL, concrete goals remain absent. Given the importance stated by previous research of explicitly addressing SEL in order to support the identity development (Bussemaker & Dekker, 2015; Catalano et al, 2004; Goedhart, 2017; Lannegrand-Willems & Bosma, 2006; Rich & Schachter, 2011; SLO, 2019; Van Overveld, n.d.) and the positive effects of SEL mentioned by the educational experts, this finding is surprising. Even though newcomer schools and educational experts acknowledge the importance of SEL, it has not been translated into national goals or policy guidelines (yet).

On the one hand, several educational experts argue that a lack of national goals provides newcomer schools with the much-appreciated freedom to organize their own teaching. On the other hand, the survey showed that the majority of newcomer schools would appreciate more guidelines and direction for SEL in newcomer education. Freedom of education is precious but a lack of guidelines can also result in struggles for newcomer schools. On the contrary, the majority of the schools does not want stricter demands for SEL. It thus seems like newcomer schools do not want to be obligated to reach certain demands regarding SEL at school, but that they do see the importance of addressing SEL and want more guidelines and tools to do so.

Actual policy – present but in need of direction

Based on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the actual SEL-policy of newcomer schools, it can be concluded that generally all newcomer schools address SEL and proclaim its' importance. The educational experts suggest that independent newcomer schools pay more attention to SEL as compared to regular schools with newcomer classes/children,

though this was not found in the survey. Nevertheless, these data of the survey need to be interpreted with caution. There is a possibility that mostly schools who already recognize the importance of SEL and/or address it in their policy agreed to fill out the survey, leading to a possibly biased sample. The educational experts on the other hand have visited multiple newcomer schools and have thus seen a mixture of schools. They might have been able to paint a more complete picture of SEL in newcomer schools in the Netherlands, which is why there is a bigger focus on these results.

The data regarding the incorporation of different SEL-competencies is not influenced by this bias; this question was only intended for schools which have a SEL-approach. Differences were found between the incorporation of different SEL-competencies: self-awareness, social awareness and relationship-skills were addressed significantly more than self-management and responsible decision-making. This is in line with the perceived importance of SEL in the interviews: self-awareness, social awareness and relationship-skills regularly came back in the importance of SEL, while self-management and responsible decision-making occurred less. Moreover, the fact that social awareness is addressed most frequently aligns with the importance which Phinney (1993) puts on discovering ethnicity as part of your identity. Newcomer schools thus seem to pay attention to the most important competencies for newcomer children. It should nevertheless not be forgotten to pay equal attention to the other competencies.

The interviews furthermore revealed that most newcomer schools need to address SEL more explicitly through a structured and goal-directed approach. This is in line with earlier research, stating that an explicit SEL-approach increases the positive impact of SEL (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Durlak et al, 2011; Greenberg et al, 2003; Payton et al, 2008). Adopting an explicit approach can nevertheless be difficult for newcomer schools due to the previously mentioned lack of tools and guidelines.

Practical implications

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for current and future practice. A main implication, while still preliminary, relates specifically to the lack of guidelines and tools for SEL in newcomer education. This lack can lead to an inadequate incorporation of SEL in the policy of newcomer schools. In order to comply to the importance of SEL as expressed by both the educational experts and the teachers, a change is needed. For this, a few suggestions are made below.

First of all, newcomer schools should be provided with information on why they should address SEL. Although they recognize the importance of SEL, experts see a lack of

understanding of the specific positive effects of SEL. A recognition of these positive effects might make schools more willingly to adopt an explicit SEL-approach, for instance because it increases the wellbeing and academic performance of the students (Catalano et al, 2003; Durlak et al, 2011; Humphrey, 2013; Van der Hoeven, 2017).

Furthermore, newcomer schools express the need to be provided with guidelines for SEL in newcomer education. Bearing in mind the freedom and flexibility newcomer schools ask for, these should not be imposed on the schools but simply be available in order to present a structure on which schools can base their goal-directed approach. The same can be said for (national) goals for SEL. In order to facilitate a goal-directed approach, newcomer schools should have access to main goals for SEL. A key policy priority should therefore be to develop goals and guidelines for SEL together with newcomer schools which can be used to develop their own goal-directed approach.

Equally important, in order to give body to this goal-directed approach newcomer schools explicitly expressed the need for more tools for SEL. This specifically includes tools which will allow the teachers to address SEL in a non-verbal way, eliminating the barrier of language.

Strengths and limitations

A key strength of this research lies with the mixed method approach. This allowed for methodological triangulation, resulting in a comparison of data from different methods. Data could therefore be presented in a more meaningful manner and included different perspectives. Another strength of this research can be seen in the high societal relevance. Several practical implications were directly drawn from the data which, if successfully carried out, could lead to explicitly supporting the social-emotional- and identity development of newcomer children.

A limitation of this study lies with the possibly biased group of survey-participants. Due to this the results may have generated a more positive conclusion with regard to the implementation of SEL in newcomer education. Nevertheless, due to the method- and source triangulation with both educational experts and professionals from newcomer schools, a more general picture of SEL in newcomer education could be provided. By using two different methods and multiple sources, the results from the survey were put in perspective.

Another limitation is the relatively small amount of newcomer schools who filled out the survey. These numbers may have not been sufficient to obtain reasonable statistics which could be generalised.

Lastly, a critical note needs to be placed with regard to the effects of carrying out the research during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to this, the qualitative and quantitative data were administered at the same time. This eliminated the possibility to integrate and check potential causes of differences between schools with regard to their SEL-policy in the survey. Nevertheless, the main difference between schools mentioned in the interviews was possible to be checked in the survey. The result section would have therefore not differed significantly, though it could have resulted in a more elaborate review of other small differences. Furthermore, the interviews had to be virtually administered. Normally, non-verbal body language can also be a source of information in interviews. This is a different kind of contact and could improve the quality of the interviews and support mutual understanding (Iacono, Symonds & Brown, 2016). This source of information is limited in virtual interviews. Nevertheless, through carefully paying attention to the bodily cues which were visible on the screen, this limitation could partly be tackled. On the other hand, online interviews could also provide a positive effect. Because the interviewees are already at home and in a comfortable environment, they often tend to talk longer. This allows the researcher to gather more information (Iacono, Symonds & Brown, 2016).

Recommendations for further research

Several questions still remain to be answered. In this research the possible negative consequences of the failure to create a coherent identity for newcomer children, and the fact that SEL could support this identity development in school, gave cause to determine the degree to which SEL is incorporated in the policy of primary newcomer schools. This research did not aim to further research the specific relationship between SEL and the identity development of newcomer children. Nevertheless, a greater focus on the mechanisms which drive the connection between SEL and identity development could produce an even better understanding of the importance and implications of SEL. This research already shows that SEL plays a part in the identity development process by allowing and encouraging children to discover themselves, others and the world around them. Further research is required in order to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter.

Furthermore, if the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of what specific support and tools newcomer schools need in order to explicitly address SEL is essential. This will allow for a tailored and complete SEL-approach in newcomer education. In addition, research is needed to determine what knowledge newcomer schools have of the positive effects of SEL and to what extent they feel that they succeed in incorporating SEL

and identity development in their education. This will help to establish the gaps in knowledge and practice which need to be filled in order for schools to explicitly address SEL.

Final Note

This research illustrated the importance of SEL for newcomer children according to educational experts and professionals from newcomer schools and showed the willingness of newcomer schools to address SEL. At the same time, it discovered that there is no existing national policy for SEL and showed that newcomer schools experience a lack of guidelines and tools in order to explicitly address SEL with newcomer children. This discrepancy between the great importance of SEL for newcomer children on the one hand, and the lack of guidelines and tools to address SEL with newcomer children on the other, illustrates the gap between theory and practice. Changes need to be made if newcomer children are to be explicitly supported in their social and emotional development and in the creation of a coherent identity. If some of the practical implications stated above are put into practice, this explicit and goal-directed support might have a chance to develop in newcomer education. Because, “Doesn’t SEL happen automatically? No, it does not” (educational expert).

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