



SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LITERACY PRACTICES OF SCHOOL HEADS IN MERCEDES DISTRICT

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SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LITERACY PRACTICES OF SCHOOL HEADS IN MERCEDES SCHOOL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the level of socio-emotional literacy of 26 School Heads in Mercedes District. Survey-questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion were the main tool in data gathering. The data gathered were analyzed and presented using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that Mercedes District School Heads are **Lightly Literate** (2.38 GWM) in Socio-Emotional Literacy (SEL). Moreover, **Identity and Agency** ranked 1 among 5 SEL parameters followed by **Emotional Regulation**, and **Cognitive Regulation**. The study also showed that various programs, projects, and activities are being implemented to promote socio-emotional literacy among learners, personnel, parents, and other stakeholders. Further, the study revealed that school heads experienced different issues and challenges in their station.

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: 1) There was a need to propose project that may help in increasing the socio-emotional literacy among school heads of Mercedes District; 2) There are still programs, projects, and activities that may be implemented to improve socio-emotional literacy practices; and 3) Issues and challenges being experienced by the school heads can be lessen. Finally, it is recommended that school heads be coached and mentored through a project titled ***“Developing Socio-Emotional Practices of Mercedes District’s School Heads”*** which may develop school heads skills along the identified socio- emotional competencies as well as establish a non-threatening and positive school climate.

Keywords: *socio-emotional literacy, practices, school heads,*

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The Researcher

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CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

One of the most crucial and valuable resources in every organization is its human resources. It is therefore necessary that this resource be well-taken care of and nurtured to harness the full potential of all its members and contribute to the total performance of the entire organization. The art of managing people in the organization is human resource development and management. There are a lot of definitions given to this discipline, but they focus more on its descriptions and functions.

Human Resource Development and Management focuses on managing the most significant asset of the organization – the people who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. It identifies, nurtures, and uses the abilities of the employees working for the company. They are there to create a suitable climate for their people to help them and the companies develop (Shethna,n.d).In the Department of Education (DepEd), it has also been defined in various ways. Essential to any definition is the understanding that effective organizations must be able to **find, keep, motivate**, and **develop** human beings in order to achieve results, thus it is the process of helping organizations do just that (Pantoja,n.d). In the school set-up most especially in public elementary and secondary schools, the School Heads (SH) or the Principals are the one managing the human resource of the school. They ensure that the professional development plan (PDP) captures the needs of all its employees. However, who is responsible in the professional growth of these SHs? How are they assisted and coached to address their leadership competency, functional

competency, core competency needs, and their socio-emotional needs? How is the socio-emotional literacy development of school leaders assessed or gauged?

Socio-emotional learning has been defined in a number of ways. SEL referred to as socio-emotional literacy is the process of developing self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success. People who possessed this skill are said to be better equipped in managing life's challenges, tends to build positive relationship with others and inclined to make informed decisions. It focuses on the set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills that support success in school, the workplace, relationships and the community (ILT-ISPD,2021).

Frey, Fisher, and Smith define the core aspects of social and emotional learning (SEL) which are: identity and agency; emotional regulation; cognitive regulation; social skills; and public spirit; and provide practical suggestions for how schools might adopt them and how teachers can focus on them in their classrooms. SEL according to them is a part of the curriculum that should be transparent so that the community can monitor and critique these efforts. In general, SEL focuses on “a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills that support success in school, the workplace, relationships, and the community.” This strengthened the importance of integrating different SEL programs in schools and in ensuring that concepts, plans, process of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are well-understood and embraced by all internal and external stakeholders.

Several researches and publications talk about SEL and its application to education most specially its positive impact to students' learning. Teachers are the driving force behind social and emotional learning (SEL) initiatives in schools and classrooms, and they have a significant impact on students' social-emotional welfare and competence. Classrooms with positive teacher-student interactions encourage pupils' deep study and fruitful social and emotional growth (Schonert-Reichl,2017). Another study shows that the foundation of classrooms and schools that are not intimidating to children and challenge them to learn more while doing so in ways that do not deter them is sound social-emotional learning, good character, and academic success. Additionally, these institutions are places where students feel loved, cherished, and recognized as resources rather than merely learners. The best chance of achieving this goal is through the integration of academic and social-emotional development. By doing this, teachers are also preparing their children for life's challenges, for their civic duties, and for leading literate, responsible, nonviolent, drug-free, and compassionate lifestyles (Elias,n.d).

Vicki Zakrzewski (2014) in his article titled “How Social-Emotional Learning Transforms Classrooms” stated that SEL doesn't just change the teaching—it changes the teachers and the students. Specifically, he stated that when educators begin using SEL in the classroom, sometimes the most surprising outcome is how they personally change. Unless a teacher is an automaton, teaching students emotional and relationship skills compels a teacher to reflect on his or her own social-emotional competencies—sometimes both in and out of the classroom.

A local literature (Ronda, 2000) talks about the decision of DepEd to infuse social emotional learning (SEL) in the curriculum of public schools to address not only the emotional quotient (EQ) development of students but also from their intelligence quotient (IQ). These abilities are expected to support academic success and foster the growth of entire, well-rounded people. Fostering lifelong learners in a world that is rapidly changing necessitates refinement in education. A local study (Rungduin & Reyes, 2015) also reveals that in terms of the social and emotional elements, it has been discovered that Filipino learners share the characteristics of all learners. However, because they were raised however in a social context where Filipino culture predominated, there are other characteristics that are also quite distinctive as Filipinos. The intellectual abilities of the learner increase as they age, along with their emotional and social capabilities, which also mature. Additionally, their ideas, terms, and abstractions are found in the context of their particular social reality. Further, the findings provide information on how perspective-taking is an important social behavior among children and what it does to a person when he or she gets into the more advanced grade levels, giving teachers and others in the field of education a foundation on what emotions are important to cultivate and why it should be enhanced.

The above-cited literature and studies enumerated how SEL had contributed towards the attainment of quality learning of pupils and students but none of these discuss about the impact of SEL to the behavior and performance of teachers most specially with the school leaders. School Heads nowadays are performing a multi-faceted role in leading the school most specially during this time

pandemic. In Mercedes District, existence of conflict between School Heads and Teachers were evident for the past years. Some had been elevated to district level but there were some which had reached up to the Office of the Superintendent. There were also cases of conflict between teachers and parents which negatively the image of the school in particular and the district in general. The occurrence of these situations when left unresolved may result to a much better problem that will affect to cohesion within the school and ultimately lead to poor quality of learning among pupils and students. It is high time that development of socio-emotional literacy among school heads must be put first into consideration. The potential advantages of SEL to their performance may address the possible gaps not only in school leadership but also in their inter-personal competencies. This is the greatest motivation which drive the researcher to conduct this research study.

INNOVATION, INTERVENTION, AND STRATEGY

The researcher implemented a SEL initiative for 19 elementary and 7 secondary school heads entitled **“Mercedes District School Heads’ Development Program in Socio-Emotional Literacy”**. This was a series and combination of short talks, conferences/seminars, and coaching and mentoring which aims to introduce the principles and dynamics of the SEL and how it will impact the School Heads’ relationship to teachers and other school personnel and ultimately institutionalize the implementation of SEL in school. The development of socio-emotional skills had proven to have positive impact to the performance of the learners when practiced by the teachers. It is then necessary that SEL must be developed more importantly among school leaders knowing the enumerable

issues/challenges they experience along school leadership and governance in the entire school system.

The implementation of the program started from the dissemination of the research findings on the socio-emotional literacy as well the practices employed, issues/challenges experienced by the 26 elementary and secondary school heads in Mercedes District. The data showed their SEL competencies with high or low ratings, the researcher focused the initiatives generally on the common underdeveloped SEL skills. Topics had been included in the program matrix and those individual competencies, which need further development, had been tackled through coaching and mentoring during school visits. The researcher asked the school heads to submit individual plans along those areas.

This program helped the School Heads to do away with conflicts with teachers, students and stakeholders since the integrated SEL competencies had been gradually developed on them. They can better understand how a particular individual behaves, responds and performs inside and outside the school. They also revisited their own strengths and weaknesses for sound engagement with others.

ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The general objective of this research study was to determine the level of socio-emotional literacy of 19 Elementary and 7 Secondary School Heads in Mercedes District. This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the socio-emotional literacy of School Heads in Mercedes District in terms of:

- a. Identity and agency;
 - b. Public spirit;
 - c. Social skills;
 - d. Cognitive regulation;
 - e. Emotional regulation?
2. What are the School Heads' socio-emotional practices in Mercedes District along the identified parameters?
 3. What are the issues/challenges experienced by the Mercedes District School Heads along socio-emotional literacy practices?
 4. What program/project/action may be implemented as the result of the study?

ACTION RESEARCH METHODS

The research applied quantitative-qualitative mixed method. Quantitative method emphasizes objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon (Babbie, 2010).

The researcher determined the level of socio-emotional literacy of 26 School Heads in Mercedes District using the self-rating survey-checklist along five (5) parameters and 34 indicators, which will serve as the primary and quantitative data which will answer question number 1. On the other hand, qualitative method is used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and

interactions. The researcher conducted focus group discussion to uncover the socio-emotional practices, issues, and challenges as well as the individual experiences of the participants, which may have not been captured by the survey checklist. These formed part of the qualitative and at the same time will serve as the secondary data. This was collected through a focus group discussion (FGD). The data collected answered questions 2 and 3.

A. Participants and/or Other sources of data and information

The respondents and participants of the study were the 19 Elementary and 7 Secondary School Heads in Mercedes District. They answered the self-rating survey checklist and then participated during FGD. They were chosen because their roles in the institutionalization of socio-emotional learning (SEL) among learners and teachers are of vital importance. More than anyone, School Heads must have at least high level of socio-emotional literacy since they are the prime movers in the implementation of all educational services including programs, projects and activities (PPAs) to learners in their respective schools. They are also the agent of cohesion between and among members of their organization.

These respondents and participants were from the following elementary and secondary schools in the Mercedes District: Cayucyucan Elementary School, Claro Ibasco Elementary School, Colasi Integrated School, F.P. Ibasco Elementary School, Gaboc Elementary School, Hamoraon Elementary School, Hinipaan Elementary School, Lalawigan Elementary School, Lanot Elementary School, Lope Manlangit Elementary School, Mambungalon Elementary School, Manguisoc Elementary School, Masalong-salong Elementary School, Pambuhan Elementary

School, Quinapaguian Elementary School ,Tarum Elementary School , ,Mercedes Central School, Tagontong Elementary School, San Roque Elementary School. Caringo High School, Lalawigan National High School, Manguisoc National High School, Mercedes High School, Pablo Villafuerte High School, Pambuhan National High School, and San Roque National High School.

The researcher used purposive sampling technique through total enumeration. This means that all the 26 School Heads were the sample population for the survey checklist and focus group discussion to capture important qualitative data about how SEL is infused to their school leadership.

B. Data Gathering Methods

The researcher, after the approval of the research proposal asked permission from the School Division Superintendent (SDS) to conduct orientation for data gathering from the target respondents and participants. The 26 School Heads were guided on how the researcher-made survey checklist will be utilized and will capture the necessary data. They were assured that their responses were taken with full confidentiality and were used solely for research purposes. The researcher also emphasized that neither the names of the respondents nor the names of their schools will be mentioned in the results, findings, and discussion as compliance to the data privacy requirement, instead the researcher used coding. This was the first step of data gathering. The next step was the conduct of the FGD in which the same 26 School Heads served as the participants. The researcher chose purposive sampling through total enumeration to capture all the qualitative data for proper representation given the unique landscape of the elementary and

secondary schools in Mercedes District. The researcher appointed a facilitator during the FGD as well as designated recorder to avoid bias during the process.

The table 1 below shows the parameters and their corresponding indicators to be rated by the respondents using a survey checklist.

Table 1
Socio-Emotional Literacy (SEL) Parameters and their Corresponding Indicators

Parameters	Indicators
A. Identity and Agency	<i>strength recognition</i>
	<i>self-confidence</i>
	<i>self-efficacy</i>
	<i>growth mindset</i>
	<i>perseverance and grit</i>
	<i>Resiliency</i>
B. Public Spirit	<i>respect for others</i>
	<i>Courage</i>
	<i>ethical responsibility</i>
	<i>civic responsibility</i>
	<i>social justice</i>
	<i>service learning</i>
C. Social Skills	<i>Leadership</i>
	<i>prosocial skills</i>
	<i>Sharing</i>
	<i>Teamwork</i>
	<i>relationship building</i>
	<i>Communication</i>
D. Cognitive Regulation	<i>Empathy</i>
	<i>relationship repair</i>
	<i>metacognition</i>
	<i>Attention</i>
	<i>goal setting</i>
	<i>recognizing and resolving problems</i>
E. Emotional Regulation	<i>help seeking</i>
	<i>decision making</i>
	<i>organizational skills</i>
	<i>identifying emotions</i>
	<i>emotional self-perception</i>
	<i>impulse control</i>
	<i>impulse control</i>
	<i>delaying gratification</i>
	<i>stress management</i>
	<i>Coping</i>

In general, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) focuses a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills that support success in school, the workplace, relationships, and the community. It is an integral part of education and human development. It is also defined as the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals.

Recognizing Socio Emotional Literacy as an official component of curriculum allows teachers to operationalize it in their classroom. Teachers have to teach students how to make decisions about the choices and problems they face. A student who has excellent content knowledge but poor social or problem-solving skills is a student at risk of being manipulated. Similarly, students who are able to predict possible consequences of their actions may be better equipped to make good decisions.

The first sub-component of SEL is **Identity and Agency** which revolves around the idea that children's and adolescent's sense of identity is shaped by a myriad of factors, including experiences inside and outside school. Their agency, which is their belief in their ability to influence the world around them, is materially governed by their identity. Factors that contribute to a young person's identity and agency include: A recognition of one's strength; The self-confidence to try something new; Self-efficacy, or belief in oneself; A growth mindset that is fueled by perseverance and grit; and The resiliency to bounce back from setbacks.

Emotional Regulation is the second sub-component of SEL. Students are judged by adults and peers based on how well they regulate their emotions. Those who struggle to regulate their emotions may have difficulty developing and maintaining healthy relationships with others. Skills that positively contribute to emotional regulation include: Being able to identify and describe emotions; Accurately perceiving one's own emotional state as a first step in identifying the emotions of others; Learning to manage impulses and delay gratification; Recognizing and managing feelings of stress; and Using adaptive coping skills.

Further, **Cognitive Regulation**, the third sub-components of SEL asserts that learning is not passive. Acquiring knowledge and skills requires students to engage in certain habits and dispositions. The category of SEL, the one that most closely intersects with the academic instruction we do each day, includes building students' skills in the areas of: Metacognition; Sustaining Attention; Goal setting and monitoring; Recognizing and resolving problems; Help seeking; Decision making; and Getting and staying organized.

Moreover, **Social Skills**, the fourth sub-component of SEL states that quality relationships are the basis for effective interactions inside and outside school because they allow for productive and positive collaboration. Students need to be equipped with tools to foster, maintain, and repair relationships, and this requires a substantial amount of adult guidance. In particular, students need to be taught and have opportunities to practice: Prosocial skills, such as sharing and teamwork; Building relationships; Communicating effectively; Developing and expressing empathy; and Repairing relationships.

Finally, **Public Spirit**, the final aspect of our integrated SEL model is the basis for democratic way of life and essential to creating and sustaining a social structure in which people are valued and treated fairly. We see public spirit evidenced in the ways that people contribute to and steward their communities. Major concepts that help build student's public spirit include: Having respect for others; Being courageous; Understanding one's ethical responsibility; Recognizing one's civic responsibilities; Pursuing material improvements in the lives of others through social justice work; Service learning; and Leadership.

C. Data Analysis

Frequency counts was used to show the data, which was then refined into tables with the proper column headings, descriptors, and interpretations. Average and ranking was used to identify the parameters which the School Heads rated high or low. This is important to in determining the socio-emotional competencies which need to sustain and those needing further development. The respondents' ratings used 4 Point Likert's Scale, 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest socio-emotional literacy level. The respondents' self-rating were interpreted using the scale: **1.00-1.74 Not Literate, 1.75-2.49 Lightly Literate, 2.50 -3.24 Moderately Literate, 3.25-4.00 Highly Literate.** The result answered *Problem 1*.

Furthermore, the results of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were presented in terms of themes showing the similarities and differences of the responses from the participants. The data answered *Problems 2 and 3*, while the plan of actions were determined based on the over-all results, findings and discussions, which answered *Problem 4*, the output of the study to be implemented in 26 elementary and secondary schools in Mercedes District.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND REFLECTION

Socio-emotional literacy of School Heads in Mercedes District in terms of Identity and agency, Public Spirit, Social Skills, Cognitive Regulation, and Emotional Regulation

The data for this statement of the problem was gathered using 4-point Likert scale questionnaire. There were five SEL parameters with a total of 33 indicators wherein respondents rated from 1 to 4, 1 for Not Literate, 2 for Lightly Literate, 3 for Moderately Literate, and 4 for Highly Literate.

Table 2 shows the indicators, the frequency distribution of responses, overall mean, interpretation, and rank. First, the data shows that Mercedes District School Heads' SEL based on the answers in the survey questionnaires is **Lightly Literate** with a General Weighted Mean of **2.38**. Moreover, **Identity and Agency** ranked 1 among 5 SEL parameters with a weighted mean of **2.50** interpreted as **Moderately Literate**, followed by **Emotional Regulation** with a weighted mean of **2.38** interpreted as **Lightly Literate**, and third is the **Cognitive Regulation** with a weighted mean of **2.34** interpreted also as **Lightly Literate**. Further, it shows that among 33 indicators, there is one (1) indicator wherein School Heads of Mercedes District is Not Literate; 22 indicators that they are Lightly Literate; ten (10) indicators that they are Moderately Literate, and none among the indicators in which School Heads of Mercedes District are Highly Literate.

It can be analyzed that school heads of Mercedes District are moderately literate in the first SEL parameter, Identity and Agency, with growth mindset, perseverance and grit, self-efficacy, and resiliency as their strength. They are also moderately literate in Leadership under Public Spirit; Relationship Building under Social Skills; Metacognition, Help seeking, and Organizational skills under

Cognitive Regulation; and Impulse Control under Emotional Regulation.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution, Mean and Rank of Socio-Emotional Literacy of
School Heads in Mercedes District Camarines Norte
(n=26)

Indicators	Frequency				Weighted Mean	Int.	Rank
	1	2	3	4			
Identity and Agency					2.50	ML	1
1 Strength recognition	6	14	6	0	2.00	LL	6
2 Self-confidence	5	10	10	1	2.26	LL	5
3 Self-efficacy	1	10	14	1	2.57	ML	3
4 Growth mindset	0	5	17	4	2.96	ML	1
5 Perseverance and grit	0	6	20	0	2.76	ML	2
6 Resiliency	2	10	13	1	2.50	ML	4
Public Spirit					2.23	LL	4
1 Respect for others	10	14	1	1	1.73	NL	7
2 Courage	5	15	6	0	2.03	LL	6
3 Ethical responsibility	1	14	11	0	2.38	LL	3
4 Civic responsibility	1	13	12	0	2.42	LL	2
5 Social justice	3	12	11	0	2.30	LL	4.5
6 Service learning	3	12	11	0	2.30	LL	4.5
7 Leadership	2	9	15	0	2.50	ML	1
Social Skills					2.18	LL	5
1 Prosocial skills	10	12	4	0	1.76	LL	7
2 Sharing	7	12	7	0	2.00	LL	6
3 Teamwork	7	10	9	0	2.07	LL	5
4 Relationship building	3	7	15	1	2.53	ML	1
5 Communication	2	15	9	0	2.26	LL	3
6 Empathy	1	18	7	0	2.23	LL	4
7 Relationship repair	2	12	11	1	2.42	LL	2
Cognitive Regulation					2.34	LL	3
1 Metacognition	2	8	16	0	2.53	ML	1
2 Attention	2	19	5	0	2.11	LL	7
3 Goal setting	3	9	14	0	2.42	LL	4
4 Recognizing and resolving problems	4	12	10	0	2.23	LL	5
5 Help seeking	1	12	12	1	2.50	ML	2.5
6 Decision making	2	18	6	0	2.15	LL	6
7 Organizational skills	3	7	16	0	2.50	ML	2.5
Emotional Regulation					2.38	LL	2
1 Identifying emotions	3	14	9	0	2.23	LL	6
2 Emotional self-perception	1	15	10	0	2.34	LL	5
3 Impulse control	0	13	13	0	2.50	ML	1
4 Delaying gratification	1	13	12	0	2.42	LL	2.5
5 Stress management	2	11	13	0	2.42	LL	2.5
6 Coping	2	12	12	0	2.38	LL	4
General Weighted Mean					2.32	LL	

Legend:

3.25-4.00–Highly Literate (HL) 1.75-2.49 – Lightly Literate (LL)
2.50-3.24 – Moderately Literate (ML) 1.00-1.74 -Not Literate (NL)

According to the study of **Schonert- Reichl**, classrooms with positive teacher-student interactions encourage pupils' deep study and fruitful social and emotional growth. It is the same with the schools with positive Public School District Supervisor (PSDS) and School Head (SH) interaction that promote higher socio- emotional literacy within the district. Due to pandemic, said interaction between PSDS and SH and among other school heads were limited for the past two years. Utilization of gadgets and online platforms became vital in continuing the work-related activities of educators. This may be one of the reasons why socio-emotional literacy among school heads in Mercedes District is light in general.

School Heads' socio-emotional literacy practices in Mercedes District along the identified parameters: Identity and agency, Public Spirit, Social Skills, Cognitive Regulation, and Emotional Regulation

This research question was answered through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among School Heads of Mercedes District, which was conducted on February 28, 2023, at District Office Conference Room in Mercedes Elementary School. This was attended by seven secondary school heads and 19 elementary school heads with a total of 26 participants. One school head served as facilitator and another one served as secretary who writing and utilized audio recording to capture all the responses. The respondents were coded, and the responses were classified according to theme, then processed, and analyzed by the researcher.

The table 3 showed the FGD result wherein different SEL practices in schools were enumerated by the school heads. Various programs, projects, and activities are being implemented that promote socio-emotional literacy among learners, personnel, parents, and other stakeholders.

Table 3
Focus Group Discussion Result by Theme and Parameters on
Socio-Emotional Literacy Practices of School Heads in Mercedes District

	Socio-Emotional Literacy (SEL) Parameters				
THEME	Identity and agency (Strength recognition, self-confidence, self-efficacy, growth mindset, perseverance & grit, resiliency)	Public Spirit (Respect for others, courage, ethical responsibility, civic responsibility, social justice, service learning, leadership)	Social Skills (Prosocial skills, sharing, teamwork, relationship building, communication, empathy, relationship repair)	Cognitive Regulation (Metacognition, attention, goal setting, recognizing, and resolving problems, help seeking, decision making, organizational skills)	Emotional Regulation (Identifying emotions, emotional self-perception, impulse control, delaying gratification, stress management, coping)
Learners	*Rewards and Recognition *Peer teaching *Remedial / enhancement activities	*Monthly reflection of values for the month during flag ceremony *EsP Integration in all learning areas *Active organizations	*Group activities during teaching & learning process *Attendance to different contests, trainings, and activities outside the school *Provision of different school activities	*Empowerment of classroom and school organizations *Provision of different parks (WATCH park, English park, etc) *Provision of Literacy Wall	*Positive Discipline *Provision of Freedom Wall
Personnel	*Monthly Staff Meeting *Implementation of Rewards and Recognition *Celebration of each other's success *Mentoring	*Establishment of positive school culture *Open professional communication	*Provision of different school searches/ competitions *Attendance to different contests, trainings, and activities outside the school	*School-based LAC Sessions implementation * Team Building	*Promotion of Fair treatment among staff * Constant Practice of Respecting others *Provision of Freedom Wall
Parents	*Monthly SPTA Meeting *Open communication through group chats	*Open professional communication *Involvement of parents in decision makings specially if it involve their children	*Assignment of groups of parents in some activities or projects such as <i>Gulayan sa Paaralan</i> , 4Ps, SBFP beneficiaries, etc	*Monthly HRPTA meetings *Provision of functional and updated Transparency Board *Updating Facebook Page	*Open communication through messenger, group chats or texts
Other Stakeholders	*Bi-annually general assembly *Attending/ participating in community meetings, programs, and projects	*Involving the LGU in the upkeeping of learners' safety and security in and outside school premises	*Conducting alumni homecoming *Advocating adopt-a-school program	*Providing functional and updated Transparency Board *Updating Facebook Page	*Open communication through messenger, group chats or texts

It can be analyzed that all schools have various practices that promote socio-emotional literacy however they are lightly aware that those are what is being asked in the survey questionnaire on SEL parameters. The practices that promotes SEL among learners are Rewards and Recognition; Remedial/ Enhancement Classes; Peer Teaching; Positive Discipline; Provision of Freedom Wall; Empowerment of classroom and school organizations; Provision of different parks (WATCH park, English park, etc); Provision of Literacy Wall; Group activities during teaching & learning process; Attendance to different contests, trainings, and activities outside the school; Provision of different school activities; Monthly reflection of values for the month during flag ceremony; Values integration in all learning areas; and Encouraging active school organizations.

Similarly, school heads practices that promote SEL among personnel are Monthly Staff Meeting; Implementation of Rewards and Recognition; Celebration of each other's success; Mentoring Establishment of positive school culture; Open professional communication; Provision of different school searches/ competitions; Attendance to different contests, trainings, and activities outside the school; School-based LAC Sessions implementation; Team Building*Promotion of Fair treatment among staff; Constant Practice of Respecting others; and Provision of Freedom Wall. Moreover, the following practices promotes SEL among parents: Monthly SPTA Meeting; Open communication through group chats; Open professional communication; Involvement of parents in decision makings specially if it involve their children; Assignment of groups of parents in some activities or projects such as *Gulayan sa Paaralan*, 4Ps, SBFP beneficiaries, etc; Monthly

HRPTA meetings; Provision of functional and updated Transparency Board; and Updating Facebook Page Open communication through messenger, group chats or texts.

Finally, school heads shared their practices in school that promote SEL among other stakeholders and these are: Bi-annually general assembly; Attending/ participating in community meetings, programs, and projects; Involving the LGU in the upkeep of learners' safety and security in and outside school premises; Conducting alumni homecoming; Advocating adopt-a-school program; Providing functional and updated Transparency Board; Updating Facebook Page; and Open communication through messenger, group chats or texts.

The above-mentioned practices supported the literature of **Ronda, 2000** which talks about the decision of DepEd to infuse social emotional learning (SEL) in the curriculum of public schools to address not only the emotional quotient (EQ) development of students but also from their intelligence quotient (IQ). These abilities are expected to support academic success and foster the growth of entire, well-rounded people. Fostering lifelong learners in a world that is rapidly changing necessitates refinement in education. With all those practices of school heads in Mercedes District, it is expected that socio-emotional literacy will be higher now that there is constant interaction among learners, personnel, parents, and other stakeholders during in-person classes.

Issues/challenges experienced by the Mercedes District School Heads along socio-emotional literacy practices.

To answer research question number 3, the 26 respondents were coded with alphabets A to Z to maintain the confidentiality. Their responses were noted

into writing during the actual FGD and at the same time recorded using audio recorder. They were informed beforehand that the whole process will be recorded for easy facilitation and processing of the gathered data. Based on the responses of the school heads of Mercedes District during Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the following issues/ challenges were experienced along socio-emotional literacy practices.

Respondent A shared that socio-emotional literacy are important in promoting healthy work environment. However, according to him, there are many stressors that hinders SEL practices in schools. **Respondents D, N, R, and Y** agreed with his statements and added that overlapping reports and activities are their biggest stressors. **Respondent E** said that no matter how calm and empathetic a leader is, if there are teachers who are negligent of their work that affect other personnel or the school, school head's SEL practice was at stake.

Respondent L that the issue/ challenge he experienced along SEL practice was some disputes and misunderstandings among teachers inside the school. **Respondents B and Z** agreed and said that those are inevitable yet can be resolved through good conversations or open professional communications.

Respondent F shared that the challenge she had encountered were the misbehavior of the students, lack of interest, and emotional problems which manifests in day-to-day activities in school. **Respondent C, S, and W** agreed and shared that more matured learners are harder to understand as they are facing more problems in their adolescence: personal, family, peers, and school-related issues. **Respondent H** affirm that SEL integration is very important so that

students become more understanding of one another and teachers become more empathetic and caring for the utmost benefit of the students. **Respondent K** however shared that too much empathy spoils the students and made some of them irresponsible of their actions. **Respondent M** said that Child Protection Policy is often misunderstood by students and parents at stake of their personal and performance development.

Moreover, **Respondent Q** answered that her challenge was the lack of participation and cooperation of some school stakeholders in school activities. **Respondents J, I, O, and T** agreed and added that sometimes parents' participation do not even close to 50% of the total population. **Respondent U** shared that he included raffle draws of simple items such as groceries and school supplies to encourage parents' participation in meetings and other school activities and that was very effective according to him. **Respondents P and G** agreed and shared that they do the same in their stations and that strategy is indeed effective.

Finally, **Respondent X** shared the issues and challenges he experienced along SEL practices and those were: unsupportive community towards school programs, projects, and activities; neglected issuances, letters, and other communications; and poor responses on grievances that need immediate action or attention. **Respondent V** also shared that some teachers really do neglect or ignore the communications especially those informal ones that are being sent through group chats as some intends to not attend to it with an excuse that they were not informed. Some teachers and parents are just not cooperative at all according to her. On the other hand, **Respondents L and B** believed that open

professional communication especially during staff meeting can resolve this issue.

Respondent M also shared that teachers who are neglecting their work must be reprimanded especially if it will affect the whole organization. **Respondent A** agreed and reiterated the importance of socio-emotional literacy practices to avoid bigger conflict between and among colleagues. Everybody agreed that that if socio-emotional literacy will be religiously practiced by all school personnel, it will lead to a healthy, harmonious, and happy working environment.

Relative to this research question, **ILT-ISPD, 2021** defined socio-emotional learning as the process of developing self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success. People who possessed this skill are said to be better equipped in managing life's challenges, tends to build positive relationship with others and inclined to make informed decisions. It focuses on the set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills that support success in school, the workplace, relationships, and the community. Focus Group Discussion is essential in the brainstorming of different issues and challenges experienced by the school heads in their station and the possible solutions that other school heads may suggest. Different perspectives on how to handle issues and challenges arose.

Program/project/action may be implemented as the result of the study.

Based on the result of survey questionnaires and focus group discussion, the researcher, being the Public Schools District supervisor of Mercedes District proposed a project proposal titled “*Developing Socio-Emotional Practices of Mercedes District’s School Heads*”. This project aimed to develop school heads

skills along the identified socio- emotional competencies; to prepare an action plan enhancing the socio-emotional skills; and to establish a non-threatening and positive school climate. This project was conducted on March to April, 2023.

The program was implemented in the form of coaching and mentoring sessions and sharing between and among school heads' milestones in developing their own socio-emotional literacy skills. The 23 SEL indicators under lightly and not literate were divided into three groups which were the focus of each session. The proponent presented a particular situation which served as a starter discussion. The participants drew their ideas based on the presented situation that led to in-depth discussion and integration. School heads arrived at the realization of their own needs that led to the development of their socio-emotional skills and practices. The details of this project was discussed in the advocacy, utilization, and dissemination part of this paper.

REFLECTION

The conduct of research about socio-emotional literacy (SEL) among School Heads in Mercedes District had given me an opportunity to understand better the types of school leaders handling and managing the education frontliners--the teachers in the district. My research endeavor uncovered many things. SEL is indeed new to school heads and considered a strange idea to them, thus, they are more focus on improving the academic performance of the learners managing school operations, budgeting, conducting instructional supervision and neglecting to consider the teachers' socio-emotional well-being. Some school leaders seem to be more attuned to their positional power rather than developing and taking

care of their own socio-emotional needs which greatly affect their sense of making personal choices and actions toward their subordinates.

School Heads should consider their own emotions and align them with their teachers to avoid possible gaps or misunderstandings that can potentially affect the school's performance when left unresolved. Developing SEL between and among School Heads and teachers may contribute further to the development of their competence that will not simply permeates but transcends into students' academic performance.

On the other hand, School Heads must undergo a comprehensive SEL training together with the teachers, pupils, and parents to better understand its principles and benefits to their organization. Infusing the SEL principles into practice within the school culture must be made possible. Further, advocacy programs must be implemented for sustainability. Through the full implementation of SEL, relational issues, problems, gaps, and misunderstanding may gradually vanish since everyone became tolerant to individual differences and diversity.

ADVOCACY, UTILIZATION AND DISSEMINATION

The project titled “**Developing Socio-Emotional Practices of Mercedes District’s School Heads**” is a series and combination of short talks, conferences/seminars, and coaching and mentoring which aimed to introduce the principles and dynamics of the SEL; how it impacts on the School Heads’ relationship to teachers and other school personnel; and ultimately institutionalize the implementation of SEL in school. The development of socio-emotional skills had

proven to have positive impact to the performance of the learners when practiced by the teachers. It is then necessary that SEL must be developed more importantly among school leaders knowing the enumerable issues/challenges they experience along school leadership and governance in the entire school system.

The implementation of the program started from the dissemination of the research findings on the socio-emotional literacy as well the practices employed, issues/challenges experienced by the 26 elementary and secondary school heads in Mercedes District based on the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted. The conducted FGD successfully brought out different actual scenarios, problems, strengths and opportunities in all schools in Mercedes District and all school heads shared ideas, suggested possible solutions, as well as reinforced others' ideas on how SEL is being integrated and experienced, and how can SEL implementation be improved. At the end of the brainstorming during FGD, SEL implementation in the different programs, projects, and activities in schools and inside classrooms was Since the data clearly showed their SEL competencies with high or low ratings, the researcher focused the initiatives generally on the common underdeveloped SEL skills. Topics were included in the program matrix but those individual competencies, which need further development, were tackled through coaching and mentoring during school visits. The researcher also asked the school heads to submit individual plans along those areas for the School Year 2023-2024.

Further, the researcher visited schools and talked to learners, teachers, stakeholders, and school heads about socio-emotional literacy, its birth in DepEd, why does it needs to be integrated, how can it be integrated, and what will be the

impact of its implementation on the overall performance of the school. During those visits, the researcher, as Public Schools District Supervisor of Mercedes District, had the chances to monitor and evaluate the school's programs, activities, and projects (PPAs) and mentored and gave technical assistance to teachers and school head as to the different strategies of SEL integration. Most schools are actually integrating SEL in their PPAs however, they were not aware that those are exactly what socio-emotional literacy is. The term SEL was just introduced to them and they showed enthusiasm on strengthening SEL implementation in their respective schools. Therefore, the action plans were agreed to be prepared and submitted for the school year 2023—2024 to have ample time for planning of strategies and activities.

This program is indeed helping the School Heads to do away with conflicts with teachers, students and stakeholders since the integrated SEL competencies is gradually developing on them. They can better understand how a particular individual behaves, responds and performs inside and outside the school. They can also frequently revisit their own strengths and weaknesses for sound engagement with others.

ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN AS TO THE UTILIZATION/ IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

“Developing Socio-Emotional Practices of Mercedes District’s School Heads”

SY 2023–2024

Objective/ Target	Activities/ Strategies	Time Frame	Persons Involved	Resource Requirement		Success Indicators/ Expected Output
				Source	Estimated Cost	
To develop the Socio-Emotional Literacy Practices (Identity and Agency, Public Spirit, Social Skills, Cognitive Regulation, & Emotional Regulation) of Mercedes District School Heads by the end of School Year 2023-2024	Acceptance of School Action Plan on Developing SEL practices	August, 2023	-PSDS -School Heads	MOOE	1,400.00	- Compiled School Action Plans of all elementary and secondary schools in Mercedes District
	Coaching & Mentoring teachers and school heads	August, 2023 to July, 2024	-PSDS -School Heads -Teachers	TEV	6,000.00	-Printed accomplishment reports with supporting documents
	Serving as speaker in INSETs and LAC sessions to advocate SEL practices	As scheduled based on School Calendar for SY 23-24	-PSDS -School Heads -Teachers	TEV	5,000.00	-Printed training proposals & accomplishment reports with supporting documents
	Monitoring and Evaluation of SEL practices in schools	August, 2023 to July, 2024	-PSDS -School Heads -Teachers	TEV	6,000.00	-Printed SEL M&E

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FINANCIAL REPORT

The table below shows the financial report of the study. This presents the expenses for each activity in pre-implementation, during, and post- implementation phases.

ACTIVITY		CASH OUT	BALANCE
BASIC EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FUND (BERF) FACILITY GRANT			Php. 15,000.00
1	Attended the MOA signing at ROV	3,500.00	11,500.00
2	Purchased bond papers	1,200.00	10,300.00
3	Purchased short ordinary folders	200.00	10,100.00
4	Food for the conduct of FGD	2,500.00	7,600.00
5	Conducted innovation project titled “Developing Socio-Emotional Practices of Mercedes District’s School Heads”	6,350.00	1,070.00
6	Printed and hard bound copies of Action Research	2,250.00	-1,180.00

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