The Effect of the Socio-Emotional Learning for Professional Development (SEL-PD) Program on Turkish Preservice Teachers' Knowledge and Practices

Ayça Ülker[1]   Tülay İlhan İyi[2]   Aysel Esen Çoban[3]

Abstract

The use of socio-emotional learning skills in the classroom is one of the most important teacher competencies. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the change in early childhood pre-service teachers' professional perceptions, knowledge, and skills throughout the Socio-Emotional Learning for Professional Development Program which was developed to provide support for pre-service teachers. The sample of this qualitative study consisted of 25 early childhood pre-service teachers who were selected through criterion-based purposeful sampling. They met the criterion of completing the School Experience Course and having ongoing teaching practice at a kindergarten with 3-6-year-old children. Data was collected through the Demographic Information Form and Structured Interview Form. The structured interview form includes questions regarding participants' perceptions of teachers' professional development, emotional socialization responses, their interaction with children, and the program outputs on their professional development. The findings showed that pre-service teachers' perceptions and practices towards professional development and socio-emotional learning have changed positively after the program implementation. Besides, their emotional awareness and emotional socialization skills have been improved. It has been revealed that these changes also improved their classroom practices that they displayed more social-emotional learning skills and less negative emotion socialization behaviors during their classroom practices. Findings were asserted concerning the importance of pre-service teacher training in terms of acquiring socio-emotional learning.

Keywords: Early childhood education, pre-service teachers, professional development, socio-emotional learning.

---

[1] (ID) Author, Hacettepe University

[2] (ID) Corresponding Author, tulay.ilhann@gmail.com, Hacettepe University

[3] (ID) Author, Hacettepe University

Introduction

It is known that in the 21st century, the affective dimension of learning has gained importance as well as the cognitive aspect, and in parallel, teachers' socio-emotional interventions in learning environments have attracted attention (Ahn, 2005; Hargreaves, 2000). If the curriculum and learning environment support social-emotional learning, teachers can focus on teaching social-emotional skills directly or indirectly (Göl-Güven, 2021). The use of socio-emotional learning skills in the classroom has become an important teacher competency in the last decade.

Furthermore, the success of educational systems depends on teachers' qualifications. Therefore, teachers have been placed at the center of reforms and policies implemented in education systems. The most important policies basically cover a series of regulations involving teachers such as teacher training, employment, career development, and professional development opportunities because the most important aspect of learning to be a teacher is that professional development is an ongoing process. There are various concepts used to describe teachers' professional development. Continuous education, professional learning, in-service training, mentoring/coaching, continuous professional development, continuous career development, and lifelong learning are some of them (George & Lubben, 2002; Hoban, 1996; NAEYC, 2011). All of these aim to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process by increasing teacher qualifications. Similarly, Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) highlighted that professional development covers knowledge and skills to improve students' learning opportunities, support teachers as professionals, and make an ecological change that emphasizes the teachers' work environment. The studies emphasize that teachers should actively participate in their own learning and think about their own understanding and practices to ensure professional development (Gujarati, 2018). It has been determined that teachers' learning and levels of strategy use are higher when coaching, study groups, and peer support are used in teachers' professional development programs (Joyce & Showers, 1988).

Buettner et al. (2016) emphasize that teachers have professional responsibilities, and they should be sensitive towards students, so their social and emotional performance in the classroom and the positive social and emotional learning environments they create for children are important and necessary in terms of teacher competencies. Similarly, Denham et al. (2012) state that teachers play an important role in the education and socialization of children by creating social and emotional learning environments in early childhood education institutions. Socio-emotional learning (SEL) skills are necessary for maintaining healthy relationships in any environment (classroom, school, home, work, etc.) where social relations exist. Therefore, it is of great importance for teacher candidates to acquire these skills and teach them to children within the scope of professional development activities.

SEL refers to the acquisition of important skills and qualities related to the social, emotional, and academic development of the individual throughout life, both in school and out of school (Pasi, 2001). The concept of SEL emerged from a new understanding of the nature of biology, emotions, and the relationship of intelligence with success and happiness (Stern, 1999). In general terms, SEL is the development of skills, attitudes, and values for children, young people, and adults to gain social-emotional competence (Elias et al., 1997). In a sense, SEL is the acquisition of basic social-emotional competencies by children and young people to be successful in business and school life (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2005). Notions such as child development, prevention, and emotional intelligence impact the studies related to this concept. SEL seems to be closely related to six basic approaches: emotional intelligence (McCombs, 2004), character education (Novick et al., 2002), multiple intelligence theory (Zins & Wagner, 1997), life skills approach (Greenberg, 2004), and social learning (Frey et al., 2005). Weissberg and Cascarino (2013) define the concept of SEL as "the processes acquiring and implementing effectually the necessary knowledge, attitude, and skills to manage the emotions of children and adults, to set and achieve positive goals, to feel and show empathy toward others, to establish positive relationships and to make responsible decisions" (p.9). CASEL (2017) defined SEL as five basic skill areas: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship-building skills, and responsible decision-making. Cüntay, Şad Polat, and Bakanay (2020) emphasize that schools are the most important representatives of social ties and routines in children's lives and therefore suggest that children's learning will be easier and more enjoyable in learning environments where SEL skills are established. Meta-analysis studies reveal that including socio-emotional learning skills in the school environment increases academic achievement (Durlak et al., 2011). Studies in the field of early intervention also draw attention to the

importance of supporting children's learning from early ages with SEL skills (Early et al, 2017; Gregory et al., 2017). SEL programs aiming to gain these skills, on the other hand, improve positive behaviors such as emotional understanding, cooperation, self-control, tolerance of frustration, use of effective conflict resolution strategies, and qualities such as planning, mental flexibility, general health, sexual development, and school success (Joseph & Strain, 2003; Sandy & Boardman, 2000).

Children's SEL skills are supported by the curriculum and SEL practices in the schools which are prepared or directed by the teachers (Jones et al, 2013). Therefore, teachers' socio-emotional competence and teaching skills regarding SEL play an important role in integrating SEL in early childhood classrooms. Studies conducted with primary school teachers have shown that teachers' own emotional competencies affect their professional competency perceptions. It has been found that if teachers regulate their own feelings about teaching, they have positive effects on the classroom's emotional climate, their interactions with students and parents, their personal and professional identities, and their ethical practices regarding care and teaching (Sutton, 2004; Yin & Lee, 2012). Research also shows that one of the most important SEL factors affecting the classroom practices of early childhood teachers is the emotions experienced by children (Ahn, 2005). Early childhood teachers experience rich interactions with children in terms of emotional socialization opportunities (Denham et al., 2012). Accordingly, teachers need to learn and use strategies that will support children's social-emotional skills in class.

Studies regarding SEL show the importance of developing teachers' socio-emotional competence and teacher training on SEL (Davis et al., 2021; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Tran & Nguyen, 2021). These studies consider teachers' needs for a socio-emotional learning curriculum and elaborate on the idea that SEL should be involved in preservice teacher training. The limited number of studies on SEL and teaching skills and strategies involved in early childhood teacher candidates' professional development practices points to an important gap in this field. Therefore, it is considered important to carry out studies to support teachers' SEL skills, to teach current effective strategies, and to understand their needs. On this basis, the Social Emotional Learning for Professional Development (SEL-PD) Program, developed within the scope of this study, aims to improve early childhood teacher candidates' teaching beliefs, knowledge, and practices of socio-emotional learning—as well as indirectly develop children's social-emotional learning skills—throughout the active learning strategies such as coaching, group work, and peer support. Çoban et al. (2019) stated that teacher candidates' meta-emotional awareness improved through the pilot implementations of the SEL-PD Program. Besides, teacher candidates started to use supportive emotional socialization reactions in their practices and their communication with children, and these skills acquired by teacher candidates improved their classroom management abilities.

Research Context and SEL-PD Program

The preschool period is a crucial part of education since critical learning experiences occur in this period. The learning and teaching process in an early childhood environment has strong social, emotional, and academic components and those components are important parts of preservice teacher candidates' professional development. Therefore, it is believed that the socio-emotional learning strategies should be taught as a part of teacher training programs. In Turkey, although the national early childhood education curriculum has embodied social-emotional learning skills, it is not a compulsory course in the teacher training program (Esen Aygün & Şahin Taşkın, 2019). TÜSİAD report (2019) identifies the whole society as the target audience of social-emotional learning skills and states that SEL skills would play a major role in increasing living standards. One of TÜSİAD's noteworthy recommendations is to include the participation of all stakeholders in SEL-based programs, which will be prepared by considering the rights of the child, and to make them a lifelong learning policy that will reflect on school, family, and business life from early childhood. In the report, it was emphasized that practices related to social-emotional learning skills should be included not only in schools but also in all social and educational policies; attention has been drawn to the role of teacher training programs and media tools, especially family and teacher education, in fostering social-emotional learning. Although the 2023 Education Vision Document (MEB, 2019) does not directly emphasize social-emotional learning skills, it is important in that it contains reflections on social-emotional learning principles with its structural and methodological suggestions. In addition, SEL skills were also included in the scope of Teaching Career Steps (MEB, 2022). On this basis, the

current SEL-PD Program has been developed and piloted in various teacher-candidate groups. As a part of a departmental curriculum, SEL-PD, which aims to develop social-emotional learning/ teaching practices of early childhood teacher candidates, was formed.

This training program includes activities to discuss teachers' professional development, teacher identity, emotional awareness for teachers, and emotion coaching skills for responding to children's challenging emotions through psychoeducation and experiential techniques such as play, drama, and art. This program, which has 11 sessions, is considered to improve professional development and socio-emotional learning/teaching practices. Sessions cover certain themes, which are important for gaining supportive teaching and interaction practices. The contents of the first five sessions are as follows respectively; an intro session with an emphasis on the participants' desire to be an early childhood teacher; a metaphoric discussion about the participants' perceptions regarding teaching, and two hands-on activities to raise emotional awareness. In the third session, The Bear Card Activity (Havighurst and Harley, 2010) is used to focus on different aspects of emotions and meta-emotion philosophy. In the fourth session, the Emotion Mask activity adopted from Southam-Gerow (2013) is used to explore emotion regulation techniques and develop empathy. The fifth session continues with a psychoeducation session about the theoretical base of emotion socialization/emotion coaching while the sixth session covers a role-play session about the basic emotion socialization strategies and mechanisms. After that, sessions continue with a reflective supervision session in which participants bring their own examples from the teaching practices and they are trained on emotion coaching responses to anger and anxiety. In the eighth session, participants exercise emotion coaching responses with sample scenarios via a structured worksheet. In the ninth session participants are informed on how to cope with children's negative emotions by using picture story books, breath exercises, The Turtle technique, and The Hand Model of Brain (Siegel, 2010). The tenth session is about children with individual needs, involving watching a movie together and the session covering a discussion on inclusive education. In the last session, a focus group discussion is conducted to explore participants' metacognitions about their beliefs, skills, and knowledge of teaching. This is planned as an evaluation session. Most of the sessions are supported with informative handouts and supportive reading lists.

The Aim of Research

In this context, the study aimed to determine the effect of the professional development program based on the SEL model, which aims to enhance the professional development and teaching competencies of early childhood teacher candidates. In accordance with this purpose, the question "What is the effect of the SEL-PD Program on the competencies of teacher candidates?" will be addressed.

Method

Research Design

As related to the basic purpose of this intervention study, a qualitative case study methodology was employed in order to examine the effectiveness of the SEL-PD program. The qualitative data was collected to test the implementation from the perspective of the participants. According to Creswell (2007), case studies emphasize a systematic process, including the selection of cases, the collection of rich and relevant data, and a rigorous analysis to derive meaningful insights. A case study is a research method and a detailed longitudinal examination of a single individual, group, event, or phenomenon, enabling researchers to gain insights into real-world contexts and the intricacies of the study subject.

Participants

The study group comprises a total of 25 teacher candidates who are enrolled in the 4th year of the preschool teaching department of a public university in Ankara. Criterion-based purposeful sampling which involves selecting cases that meet predetermined criteria of importance was used for sample selection (Patton, 2014). On this basis, all teacher candidates were considered to have completed the School Experience Course and to have ongoing teaching practice at a kindergarten with 3-6-year-old children in the spring term of 2019-2020. Oral consent and the informed assent of all participants were obtained.

Data Collection Tools

The demographic information form covered their age, gender, class level, and the length of their teaching experiences. The structured interview form compiled open-ended questions and was used to conduct interviews with the participants to assess their perceptions of teachers' professional development, emotional socialization responses, and their interaction with children during their practicum and the program outputs on their professional development. Pre and post-interviews were used to assess the effectiveness of the program. The type of questions asked of the participants during the research were, but not limited, as follows: (1) their perceptions about their own professional development level, (2) their own responses to children's emotions, (3) their interaction with children during classroom practice, (4) their point of view throughout the program outputs. Additionally, participants were asked to write individual reflective journals about the sessions and received feedback about those writings.

Procedure

The research process for this study began with the sample selection. As a part of a departmental curriculum, The SEL-PD Program, which aims to develop social-emotional learning/ teaching practices of early childhood teacher candidates was announced and a purposeful sample was identified. Oral consent and the informed assent of all participants were obtained. Additionally, a group protocol was signed to protect participant rights in the group process with an emphasis on confidentiality. Then semi-structured interview forms were presented to the participants to assess their baseline perceptions, practices, and early teacher identities. As the next step, participants attended an 11-session training (SEL-PD Program) which was formed and piloted before the current research (Çoban et al., 2019). The first author directed the group sessions with the supervision of the last author, as explained in the previous chapter. In the last session of the program, a focus group discussion was conducted to explore participants' metacognition about their beliefs, skills, and knowledge. This was an evaluation session and after group interactions were completed, structured interviews were implemented as post-tests to investigate the change in their perceptions and experiences during the program. Additionally, participants were asked to write individual reflective journals about the sessions and received feedback about those writings.

Data Analysis

The findings of this study were derived from the interviews and reflective journals were used to ensure the triangulation. Content analysis was used for analyzing the data. Participants' reflections in the reflective journals were used as supportive evidence to show the change in their beliefs, knowledge, and practices. Representative quotations were presented in the findings. The qualitative data analysis process involved the researchers working on the themes and the data constantly until an inclusive set of major themes was established (Creswell, 2007). The fundamental process in content analysis is to bring together similar data in the context of certain themes and categories to interpret them in a way that the reader can understand them (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In the second stage; reduced data was used and it was tried to reveal patterns between the data. In this regard, the whole interview data was read by three researchers and analyzed under the codes and the themes generated from the theoretical background of the study scope. In order to ensure reliability, an independent researcher was asked to analyze 15% of the data. Reliability was measured by the technique suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) as .88 which is an agreeable level for social research.

Findings

The findings obtained as a result of the study were collected in three categories: professional development, social-emotional learning, and program outcomes.
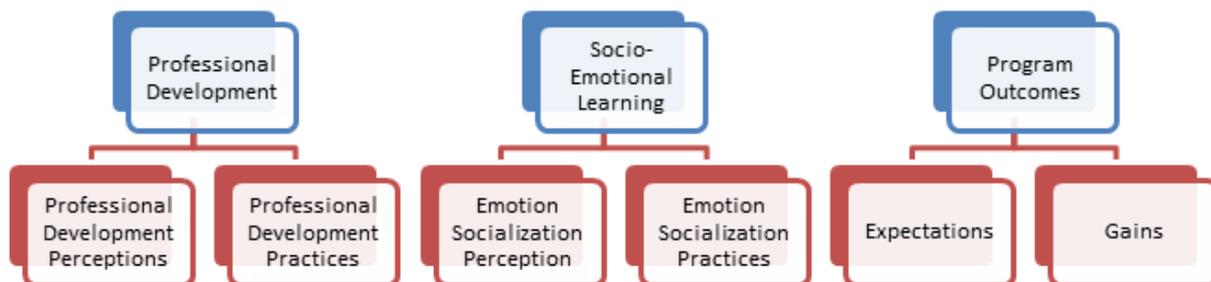

Figure 1. The Themes and Categories Obtained

As can be seen in Figure 1, the findings illustrate the changes in early childhood teacher candidates' perceptions and practices regarding professional development and emotional socialization throughout the program. In addition, the participants expressed their opinions concerning the program's efficacy.

Findings Regarding Professional Development

In the Professional Development category, two sub-themes were reached: 1) professional development perceptions and 2) professional development practices. As can be seen in Figure 2, these categories were preserved before and after the implementation of the SEL-PD Program, but it is seen that the related codes changed after the implementation.
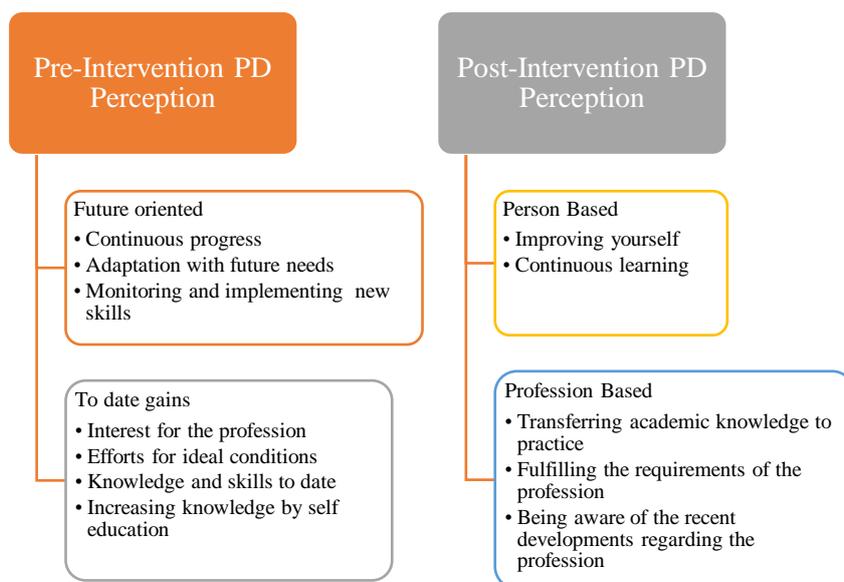

Figure 2. Findings on the Perception of Professional Development

According to Figure 2, the findings show that after the intervention; it was concluded that teacher candidates define professional development as profession-based and person-based. In the pre-tests,

there was a perception that professional development is gained through continuous progress after starting the profession, following the developments in the field, and the theoretical and practical skills acquired during the teacher training process. After the SEL-PD Program, it is seen that the professional development perceptions of teacher candidates are classified into two categories: To improve themselves through continuous learning (person-based), to follow professional developments and to put theoretical knowledge into practice, to acquire competencies required by the profession (profession-based). The statements of the teacher candidates proving this situation are as follows: *"Professional development is the state of understanding how the progress in the profession will continue. TC1" "Professional development means being aware of there are constant things to learn and continuing the learning process. TC6".*
Figure 3, shows the categories and codes of professional development practices of the participants.

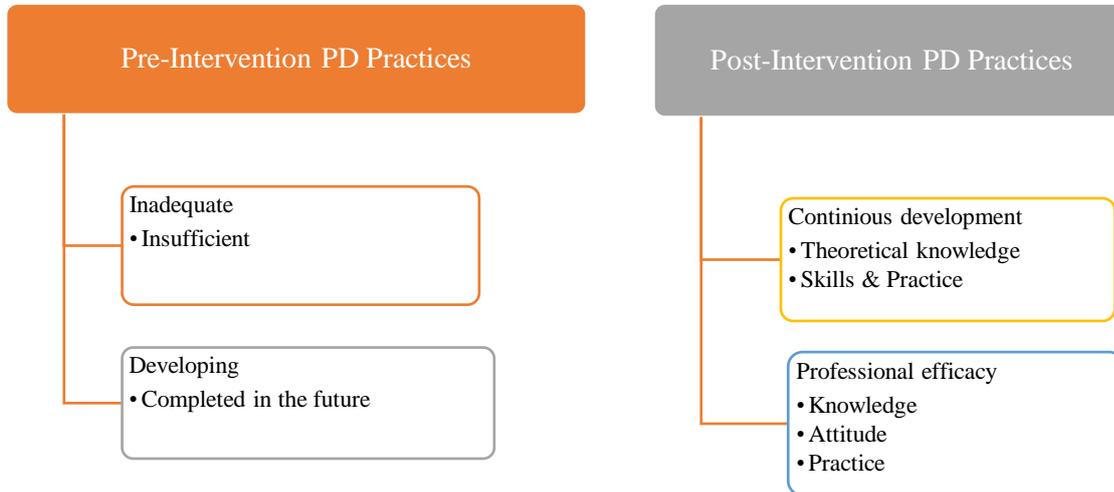| Pre-Intervention PD Practices	Post-Intervention PD Practices
Inadequate • Insufficient	**Continious development** • Theoretical knowledge • Skills & Practice
Developing • Completed in the future	**Professional efficacy** • Knowledge • Attitude • Practice

Figure 3. Findings on Professional Development Practices

When the professional development practices of the participant teacher candidates were examined; before the intervention, it was seen that they evaluated their professional development practices according to whether they were sufficient or not, but after the intervention, it was seen that they evaluated them in two categories as continuous development and professional competence. The professional development category includes knowledge-skills-attitude as three sub-dimensions. It was concluded that before the SEL-PD program, most of the participants did not do anything to provide professional development and they foresee providing their professional development in the future. Examples of participant expressions for this situation are as follows: "*After I start my profession, my professional development will progress in the future. T15*", "*My professional development is only theoretical at the moment, I think it will turn into an experience after I started my profession. T3*"
On the other hand, it was seen that after the SEL-PD program, the participants defined professional development practices in two categories: continuous development and professional competence. The teacher candidates stated that their theoretical knowledge improved, they acquired new knowledge and skills and showed positive professional development with their participation in the program. They also stated that they transferred this information into practice. The theme of professional competence includes three sub-dimensions in itself. The teacher candidates emphasize that the emotion socialization and emotion coaching approach they have acquired at the level of knowledge with their participation in the program is effective. In the skill sub-dimension, teacher candidates stated that they were able to reflect the knowledge they obtained into practice, that they were able to manage children's anger, and that they could manage emotion and behavior in their classroom practices. In addition, at the level of attitude; They stated that their motivation for teaching increased, they felt more competent, and they developed a positive attitude towards the profession. Examples of participant statements reflecting this situation are as follows: "*There were models that I learned and applied in this program. Therefore, I consider my own professional development to be 'progressive'. TC1" "In this Program, my professional skills improved as I understood the emotions of children.*

TC8" "I realized my own strength and competencies with this program (...) my self-confidence increased; I feel more competent TC3".

Findings Regarding Socio-Emotional Learning

Another finding obtained from the interviews held before and after the program is the perceptions and experiences of the participants in the social-emotional learning dimension. Under the theme of social-emotional learning, there are two categories: emotion socialization perception and emotion socialization practices which can be seen in Figure 1.

In the Socio-Emotional Learning category, two sub-themes were reached: 1) emotion socialization perceptions and 2) emotion socialization practices. As can be seen in Figure 4, these categories were preserved before and after the implementation of the SEL-PD Program, but it is seen that the related codes changed after the implementation.
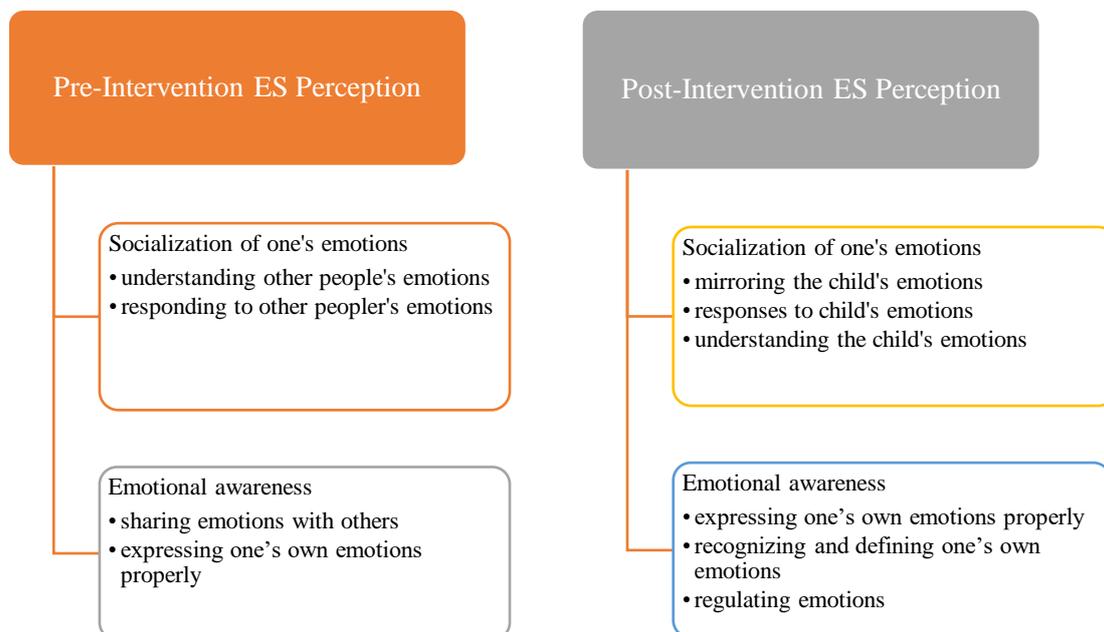

Figure 4. Findings on the Perception of Social-Emotional Learning

According to Figure 4, teacher candidates' perceptions of socializing the emotions of others and recognizing their own emotions changed after the program. Before the program, teacher candidates evaluated the emotion socialization process as understanding and reacting to the emotions of others, but at the end of the program, they detailed the emotion socialization process as being aware of children's negative emotions, reacting, and understanding children's emotions. While teacher candidates saw the process of sharing their own feelings and expressing their feelings as a part of their emotional awareness before the program, they explained the concept of emotional awareness as recognizing, defining, expressing, and regulating their own feelings appropriately at the end of the program.

```
┌─────────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Pre-Intervention ES     │         │ Post-Intervention ES    │
│ Practices               │         │ Practices               │
└─────────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────────┘
```

Negative practices
- annihilating the reason (ignoring)
- presenting entertaining activities (distraction)

Positive practices
- calming
- allowing to express the feeling
- questioning the reason

Supportive emotion socialization
- demonstrating that I understand his/her emotion
- emotion coaching
- labeling and reflecting the emotion
- allowing child to experience his/her emotion
- helping the child to solve the problem

Non supportive emotion socialization
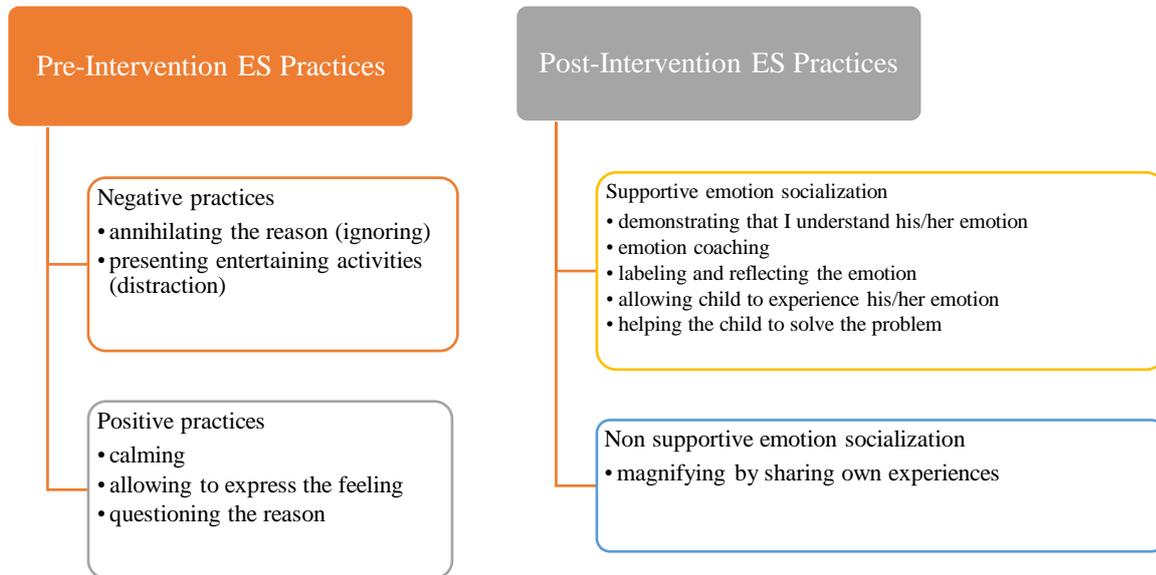- magnifying by sharing own experiences

Figure 5. Findings on the Practices of Social-Emotional Learning

When the emotion socialization practices of the teacher candidates were evaluated before and after the SEL-PD Program, it was found that their positive emotion socialization experiences remained the same and they used emotion-focused strategies in the socialization of positive emotions. However, it is seen that they have more supportive emotional socialization experiences and use the strategy of ignoring emotions less in the socialization of negative emotions after the SEL-PD Program. It was concluded that after the SEL-PD Program, apart from relieving the children of their negative feelings, the teacher candidates exhibited more emotion-focused attitudes such as showing understanding of the children's emotions, emotion coaching, labeling and reflecting emotion expression and giving the children the opportunity to experience their own emotions. Teacher candidates express this situation as follows: *"First I express the child's emotion verbally and then I accompany that emotion TC3", "I set up a sincere environment for him to express his feelings, I guide him to calm down, I express that I understand him and reflect his feelings."* It was observed that non-supportive emotion socialization strategies decreased after the program, but teacher candidates were able to use the growth strategy by presenting examples to children from their own experiences. Teacher candidates state that they have adopted a more relationship-based approach with children in their classroom interactions and that they are now able to focus on the needs of children, thanks to the socio-emotional learning skills they acquired within the scope of the SEL-PD Program.

Findings Regarding Program Outcome
Within the program outputs category, the pre-tests highlighted the prominence of personal development and professional development sub-themes under the expectations category. Furthermore, in the final tests, in addition to the personal and professional development categories, the group interaction category emerged under the achievements sub-theme. Figure 6 shows the findings of the program outcomes category.

Pre-Intervention Expectations	Personal skills	Self awareness
		Developing social emotional skills
	Professional needs	Guiding children
		Coping with professional anxiety
		Professional development
Post-Intervention Outcomes	Personal skills	Self awareness
		Emotional awareness
		Communication skills
	Professional needs	Instructional/teaching skills
		Self efficacy
		Emotion coaching skills
		Tuning in to children
	Group interactions	Being understood
		Being accepted
		Co-learning

Figure 6. Findings Under the Theme of Program Outcomes

As seen in Figure 6, it is concluded that the themes of personal development and professional development needs are preserved in the final tests in the theme of outputs of the program. In addition, it is seen that the expectation of learning to guide children under the category of professional development needs changed as the acquisition of instructional skills after the SEL-PD Program and group interaction emerged as a new category. In the theme of personal development, during the pre-tests, it was revealed that the expectations of the teacher candidates from the program were met at the end of the program, whose expectations were to get to know themselves, develop professionally, and improve their social and emotional skills. At the end of the program, the participants stated that their communication skills, self-expression levels, and awareness of themselves and their emotions increased and that the program also contributed to their personal lives. In the category of professional development needs, pre-tests drew attention to the professional development needs of teacher candidates; It is seen that they have expectations such as gaining professional knowledge and skills by participating in the program, coping with professional fears and anxieties, recognizing and eliminating their inadequacies, and finding answers to their professional inquiries. When the post-tests were evaluated, teacher candidates stated that they had learned emotional socialization strategies and acquired professional skills by understanding and managing children's emotions and that their sense of self-efficacy increased in classroom processes. Also, in the category of professional development needs, the teacher candidates who drew attention to the needs of guiding children, recognizing children's needs, and coping with children's challenging emotions before the program, drew attention to the progress they noticed in classroom management skills by learning the skills of coping with children's compelling emotions and emotion coaching at the end of the program. The group interaction category that emerged in the final tests indicated that the participants felt understood and accepted in this program which is conducted as an interaction group; It shows that they have the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences. It is seen that the expectations of the participants for a learner-centered professional development program are also met through the SEL-PD Program. As expected, the SEL-PD Program offered learners the opportunity to get to know themselves; It has provided

personal and professional development and has provided personal awareness because of being emotion-oriented.

In summary, it has been determined that the SEL-PD Program has been effective in the professional development needs, social-emotional learning, and teaching skills of teacher candidates and has met their expectations. These findings will be discussed in the following section within the relevant literature.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

The findings obtained in this study show the effectiveness of a professional development program developed to support teacher candidates' social-emotional skills. An effective professional development program is expected to have clear objectives, blend theory and practice, support collaborative group learning, and harmonize content and duration (Zaslow et al., 2010). With this aspect, participant views on the SEL Program emphasize the positive qualities of the program. Similarly, in studies on the professional development of teacher candidates in the literature, among the most emphasized principles of professional development include increasing teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge, providing sufficient time and resources, providing solidarity and cooperation, including evaluation processes, being based on teachers' needs, making decisions according to the learners' outcomes, focusing on individual and institutional development, including monitoring and support, being research-based, targeting effective teaching and learning, presenting various stages of change, and providing continuous questioning and reflection (Guskey, 2003). Similar to the features of professional development programs defined in the literature, a structure has been created in the SEL-PD Program that will increase the content knowledge of teacher candidates, allow them to interact with each other, include reflections of the teacher candidates, consider their needs, and allow them to evaluate their skills. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identified the elements of effective professional development as content focus, active learning, collaboration, use of examples and modeling, coaching and expert support, feedback and reflection, and sustainability. Studies investigating the effectiveness of the My Teaching Partner Program (University of Virginia, 2012), a professional development program developed for teachers to support children's social-emotional skills within the framework of a coaching model, show that children's social-emotional development progresses by supporting teachers in terms of professional development and that teacher–children interactions increased (Gregory et al., 2017). The positive outcomes of the SEL-PD Program, such as meeting the expectations of teacher candidates, including group interaction and emotion coaching skills, providing coaching and practitioner modeling, constantly reflecting on the teacher candidates, and receiving feedback on their practices, seem to be compatible with the professional development models in the literature.

Evaluation of the findings related to the SEL dimension of the program indicated that teacher candidates showed improvement in terms of emotional awareness and emotional socialization skills. Studies aimed at acquiring SEL skills, especially those related to gaining these skills at an early age, draw attention to the role of the teacher in the development of these skills (Poulou, 2007; Cüntay et al., 2020). The literature shows that early childhood teachers present various situational responses to children's emotions, and these responses can be supportive and non-supportive reactions such as empathy, relief, distraction, focusing on the problem, punishment, and contempt (Ahn, 2005; Ahn & Stifter, 2006). To support emotional awareness, which is one of the important dimensions of SEL, supportive emotional socialization skills offered by adults to children are of great importance. Children and adults can regulate their emotions to the extent that they can understand and recognize their own emotions. Accordingly, in the aforementioned study, teacher candidates could learn and reflect on supportive emotional socialization practices. In fact, Hargreaves (2000) stated that teaching has become a profession with more relational and emotional components. Due to the multidimensional nature of SEL skills, adults can both develop self-awareness and consider the emotions of children. It is thought that the balanced inclusion of these two dimensions in the SEL-PD Program will be effective in terms of teacher candidates' skills acquisition. The studies on teacher emotion socialization assert that early childhood teacher candidates experience rich interactions with children in terms of emotional socialization opportunities and that children's emotions are socialized through modeling, emotional teaching, and situational reactions during these interactions (Ciucci et al., 2018; Denham et al, 2012). Consistent with the literature, this study showed that teacher candidates used

similar situational reactions, and these reactions were shaped in a more supportive way at the end of the program.

Denham et al. (2017) stated that the job stress of teachers affects the emotional socialization responses they offer to children. It has been concluded that early childhood teachers with positive feelings toward the profession are more open to positive emotional experiences and have a higher tendency to support children's socio-emotional development. In parallel with the findings of this study, it has been found that teachers' own emotional competencies affect their professional competency perceptions and that if teachers regulate their feelings about teaching, they have positive effects on the classroom emotional climate, their interactions with students and parents, their personal and professional identities, and their ethical practices regarding care and teaching (Sutton, 2004; Yin & Lee, 2012). Therefore, it is believed that professional development activities that will nurture teachers' positive perceptions and experiences about the profession may affect teachers' workload, self-efficacy perception, and level of consideration for children. The findings of this study also confirm that the teacher candidates gained positive skills through the SEL-PD Program and that they felt more competent in their practices.

Current studies suggest that emotion coaching should be involved in the teacher education process by revealing that teachers' beliefs about their own emotions, their level of acceptance of their emotions, their emotional intelligence, and their level of mindfulness affect the level of considering and ignoring the emotions of children from different levels such as preschool, primary school, and high school (Ülker, 2021; Denham et al., 2012; Ersay, 2015). Gus et al. (2015) claim that discussion and consensus are needed on how to enable personal and professional skills to support frameworks for social and emotional learning in schools and support the idea that emotion coaching could be easily transferred to professional educational environments. In addition, Çoban et al. (2019), in the results of pilot studies of the SEL-PD Program, stated that teacher candidates' meta-emotional awareness improved, they started to use supportive emotional socialization reactions in their teaching practices and communications with children, and the skills they acquired improved their classroom management skills.

This study is important in terms of showing the effect of a professional development program that will enable early childhood teacher candidates to acquire SEL and teaching strategies. Schools have an important role not only in providing cognitive development but also in promoting individuals' social-emotional development (Durlak et al., 2011; Göl Güven, 2021). Roffey (2010) highlights that for successful implementation and integration of intervention programs, a symbiotic relationship is needed between the two educational systems; -school culture and climate, and the social and emotional curriculum for children. Therefore, as the most important shareholders of schools, teachers must improve themselves in terms of SEL, using professional development opportunities. It is also important that teachers should have the opportunity to acquire all these skills from the pre-service years so that they can internalize these skills and have sustainable goals. Considering the critical role of teacher competencies and qualifications in improving child outcomes in early childhood, the significance of professional development becomes highly evident. These kinds of professional development opportunities would affect all children who will be in the teacher's classes in the coming years, thus this ensures the intervention is long-term and large-scale. From this perspective, it becomes important for teacher candidates to have access to SEL-based curriculums or professional development opportunities before starting their careers.

On the other hand, this study has limitations. Qualitative research design was employed in this study and the sample consists of a single study group without a control group. In order to eliminate these limitations, it is recommended to have quasi-experimental research designs with control groups for future studies. Future research could be conducted with teachers, focus on certain child outcomes, and examine the change in learning environments.

Acknowledgment

conflict of interest between the authors, that all authors contribute to the study, and that all the responsibility belongs to the article authors in case of any ethical violations.

References

Ahn, H.J. (2005). Teachers' discussions of emotion in child care centers. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 32*(4), 237–242. doi:10.1007/s10643-004-1424-6

Ahn, H.J., & Stifter, C. (2006). Child care teachers' response to children's emotional expression. *Early Education and Development, 17*(2), 253–270. doi:10.1207/s15566935eed1702_3

Buettner, C. K., Jeon, L., Hur, E., &. Garcia, R. E. (2016). Teachers' social–emotional capacity: Factors associated with teachers' responsiveness and professional commitment. *Early Education and Development, 27*(7), 1018-1039. http://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2016.1168227

CASEL (2005). *Safe and sound an educational leader's guide to evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs*. Retrieved from https://casel.org/safe-and-sound-guide-to-sel-programs/

CASEL (2017). *Key implementation insights from the collaborating districts initiative.* Retrieved from https://casel.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/CDI-Insights-Report-May.pdf

Ciucci, E,. Baroncelli, A., Toselli, M., & Denham, S.A (2018). Personal and professional emotional characteristics of early childhood teachers and their proneness to communicate with parents and colleagues about children's emotions. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *47*(2), 303-316. doi:10.1007/s10566-017-9431-0

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cüntay, S., Şad Polat, C., & Bakanay, E. (2020). *Pandemi süreci ve sonrasında sosyal duygusal öğrenme* [Socio emotional learning during and afterwards of the pandemics]. Sosyal Duygusal Öğrenme Akademisi.

Çoban, A. E., Erdem, A. U., & Iyi, T. I. (2019). Supporting emotion socialization skills of preschool teacher candidates. In *Proceedings of 8th Psychological Applications and Trends Conference*, 145-149. doi: 10.36315/2019inpact036 2019

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M.E., & Gardner, M (2017). *Effective teacher professional development.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/productfiles/Effective_Teacher_Professional_Development_REPORT.pdf

Davis, K., Hammett, R., Seagraves-Robinson, T., Christian, D.D., & Low, G. (2021). Social-emotional learning: a framework for practice and pedagogy. *AI Practitioner, 23*(4), 92-101.

Denham, S.A., Bassett, H.H., & Miller, S.L (2017). Early childhood teachers' socialization of emotion: Contextual and individual contributors. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 46*(6), 805-824. doi:10.1007/s10566-017-9409-y

Denham, S.A., Bassett, H.H., & Zinsser, K (2012). Early childhood teachers as socializers of young children's emotional competence. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 40*(3), 137–143. doi:10.1007/s10643-012-0504-2

Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K.B (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, *82*(1), 405-432. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

Early, D.M., Maxwell, K.L., Ponder, B.D., & Pan, Y. (2017). Improving teacher-child interactions: A randomized controlled trial of Making the Most of Classroom Interactions and My Teaching Partner professional development models. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *38*(1), 57-70. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.08.005

Elias, M.J., Zins, J.E., Weissberg, T.P., Frey, K.S., Greenberg, M.T., Haynes, N.M., & Shriver, T.P (1997). *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/197157E4/chapters/The-Need-for-Social-and-Emotional-Learning.aspx

Ersay, E. (2015). Preschool teachers' emotional awareness levels and their responses to children's negative emotions. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *191*(2015), 1833-1837. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.220

Esen Aygün, H., & Şahin Taşkın, Ç. (2019). Öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik uygulaması kapsamında bilişsel esnekliğe ilişkin görüşleri. *Eğitimde Nitel Araştırmalar Dergisi*, *7*(4), 1475-1499. doi:10.14689/issn.2148-2624.1.7c.4s.8m

Frey, K.S., Nolen, S.B., Van Schoiack Edstro, L., & Hirschstein, M.K (2005). Effects of a school-based social-emotional competence program: Linking children's goals, attributions, and behavior. *Applied Developmental Psychology, 26*(2), 171-200. doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2004.12.002

Fullen, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1992). Teacher development and educational change. In M. Fullan & A. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Teacher development and educational change* (pp. 1-9). London: Routledge.

George, J.M., & Lubben, F. (2002) Facilitating teachers' professional growth through their involvement in creating context-based materials in science. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *22* (6), 659-672. doi:10.1016/S0738-0593(01)00033-5

Greenberg, M.T. (2004). Current and future challenges in school-based prevention: The researcher perspective. *Prevention Science*, *5*(1), 5-13. doi:10.1023/b:prev.0000013976.84939.55

Gregory, A., Ruzek, E., Hafen, C.A., Mikami, A.Y., Allen, J.P., & Pianta, R.C. (2017). My teaching partner-secondary: A video-based coaching model. *Theory Into Practice*, *56*(1), 38-45. doi:10.1080/00405841.2016.1260402

Göl-Güven, M. (2021). *Çocuklukta sosyal duygusal öğrenme*. İstanbul: Yeni İnsan Yayınevi.

Gujarati, J. (2018). Taking action: (Re)imagining professional development through the teacher research project. *Inquiry in Education*, *10*(2), 1-19.

Gus, L., Rose, J., & Gilbert, L. (2015). Emotion coaching: A universal strategy for supporting and promoting sustainable emotional and behavioural well-being. *Educational & Child Psychology*, *32*(1), 31-41.

Guskey, T.R. (2003). What makes professional development effective?. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *84*(10), 748-750. doi:10.1177/003172170308401007

Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *16*(8), 811-826. doi:10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00028-7

Havighurst, S., & Harley, A. (2007). *Tuning in to kids: Emotionally intelligent parenting: Program manual*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne.

Hoban, G. (1996). *A professional development model based on interrelated principles of teacher learning* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

Jones, S. M., Bouffard, S. M., & Weissbourd, R. (2013). Educators' social and emotional skills are vital to learning. *Phi Delta Kappan, 94*(8), 62-65.

Joseph, G. E., & Strain, P. S. (2003). Comprehensive evidence-based social emotional curricula for young children: An analysis of efficacious adoption potential. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *23*(2), 62-73. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F02711214030230020201

Joyce, R.B., & Showers, B. (1988). *Student achievement through staff development.* USA: Longman.

McCombs, B.L. (2004). The learner-centered psychological principles: A framework for balancing academic achievement and social-emotional learning outcomes. In J. E. Zins R. P. Weissberg, M. C. Wang & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Building academic success on social and emotional learning what does the research say?* (pp. 23-29). USA: Teacher College Press.

Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB] (2022). *Başöğretmenlik yetiştirme programı*. Ankara: Meb Basımevi.

Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB] (2019). *MEB 2023 eğitim vizyon belgesi*. Ankara: Meb Basımevi.

Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. USA: Sage Publications.

National Association For The Education Of Young Children (NAEYC). (2011). *Early childhood education professional development: Training and technical assistance glossary*. Washington, DC.

Novick, B., Kress, J.S., & Elias, M.J. (2002). *Building learning communities with character: How to integrate academic, social, and emotional learning*. USA: ASCD Publications.

Pasi, R.J. (2001). *Higher expectations: Promoting social-emotional learning and academic achievement in your school*. USA: Teachers College Press.

Poulou, M. (2007). Social resilience within a social and emotional learning framework: The perceptions of teachers in Greece. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, *12*(2), 91-104. doi:10.1080/13632750701315482

Patton, M.Q. (2014). *Nitel araştırma ve değerlendirme yöntemleri.* (Mesut Bütün & Selçuk Beşir Demir, Trans.). Ankara: Pegem Akademi. (Original work published 2001).

Roffey, S. (2010). Content and context for learning relationships: A cohesive framework for individual and whole school development. *Educational & Child Psychology, 27*(1), 156–167.

Sandy, S. V., & Boardman, S. K. (2000). The peaceful kids conflict resolution program. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, *11*(4), 337-357. https://doi.org/10.1108/eb022845

Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2017). Social and emotional learning and teachers. *The Future of Children, 27*(1), 137-155.

Siegel, D. (2010). *Mindsight: Transform your brain with the new science of kindness*. NY: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks.

Southam-Gerow, M.A. (2013). *Emotion regulation in children and adolescents: A practitioner's guide*. NY: Guilford Press.

Stern, R. (1999). Hormone-driven kids: A call for social and emotional learning in the middle school years. *Voices from the Middle*, *7*(1), 3-8.

Sutton, R.E. (2004). Teaching under high-stakes testing: Dilemmas and decisions of a teacher educator. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *55*(5), 463-475. doi:10.1177/0022487104270186

Tran, T. N., & Nguyen, T. D. H. (2021). Literature review of social-emotional competence: approach to professional standards of preschool teachers. *In Proceedings of 1st Hanoi Forum on Pedagogical and Educational Sciences*, 550-562.

Türk Sanayicileri ve İş İnsanları Derneği [TÜSİAD] (2019). *Sosyal ve duygusal öğrenme becerileri: Yeni sanayi devriminin eşiğinde iş ve yaşam yetkinliklerinin anahtarı.* Retrieved from https://tusiad.org/tr/yayinlar/raporlar/item/10450-sosyal-ve-duygusal-ogrenme-becerileri

University of Virginia (2012). *My teaching partner*. Retrieved from https://education.virginia.edu/myteachingpartner

Uygun, S., Ergen, G., & Öztürk, I.H. (2011). A comparison between practical training programs in teacher education in Turkey, Germany, and France. *Elementary Education Online, 10*(2), 389-405.

Ülker, A. (2021). Sosyal duygusal gelişimin kesişim noktası 6: Duygu sosyalleştirme ve duygu koçluğu uygulamaları. In H. Gülay Ogelman (Ed.) *Sosyal ve duygusal gelişim* (pp. 587-623). Ankara: Eğiten Kitap

Weissberg, R.P., & Cascarino, J. (2013). Academic learning + social-emotional learning = national priority. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *95*(2), 8-13.

Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2011). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*. Akara: Seçkin Publishing.

Yin, H.B., & Lee, J.C.K. (2012). Be passionate, but be rational as well: Emotional rules for Chinese teachers' work. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *28*(1), 56-65. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2011.08.005

Zaslow, M., Tout, K., Halle, T., Whittaker, J.V., & Lavelle, B. (2010). *Toward the identification of features of effective professional development for early childhood educators. Literature review*. US Department of Education. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED527140.pdf

Zins, J.E., & Wagner, D.I. (1997). Educating children and youth for psychological competence. In R.J. Illback & C.T. Cobb (Eds.), *Integrated services for children and families: opportunities for psychological practice* (pp.137-156). USA: American Psychological Association.