

## Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of the Feasibility and Effectiveness of Social-Emotional (Sel) Development Measures in Ho Chi Minh City

**Phan Tu Anh**

Faculty of Pedagogy, Thu Dau Mot University, Viet Nam

**ABSTRACT:** In the context of educational reform and improving the quality of early childhood education in Vietnam, teachers' social-emotional learning (SEL) skills are increasingly considered a crucial factor influencing the quality of childcare and education, as well as the creation of a positive learning environment. Although SEL development programs for teachers have been widely implemented in many countries worldwide, research and application of SEL development methods for early childhood teachers in Vietnam remain relatively limited. This article aims to clarify the theoretical basis of developing social-emotional skills for early childhood teachers, propose some SEL development methods suitable to the practical context, and survey teachers' perceptions of the feasibility and effectiveness of these methods. This study used a mixed-method approach, combining document analysis and questionnaire surveys with 50 preschool teachers working in preschools in Binh Duong Ward, Ho Chi Minh City. The results showed that the majority of teachers surveyed positively evaluated the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed measures, particularly in supporting the enhancement of emotional self-awareness, emotional regulation, and improved interaction with children. The research findings provide a basis for developing socio-emotional competency training programs for preschool teachers in the context of current educational reforms.

**KEYWORDS:** Social-emotional competence, SEL, preschool teachers, measures to develop SEL competence, early childhood education, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

---

### I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) has been recognized as one of the key approaches to educational innovation worldwide. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020), SEL is a process that helps individuals develop core competencies including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship-building skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies not only contribute to improved academic performance but also support the holistic development of individuals in their studies, work, and life. Much of previous research on SEL has focused on examining its impact on students and educational outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011). However, in recent years, researchers have increasingly emphasized the role of teachers' socio-emotional competencies in building a positive learning environment and improving the quality of education. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) argue that teachers' socio-emotional competence is closely related to the quality of teacher-student relationships, classroom management skills, and learner development outcomes. In early childhood education, teachers are not only organizers of care and educational activities but also role models for children to observe, learn from, and develop appropriate socio-emotional behaviors. The ability of teachers to identify and regulate emotions and establish positive relationships directly influences the classroom's psychological environment and children's development. In the context of current educational reforms, early childhood teachers in Ho Chi Minh City are facing numerous pressures from professional requirements, heavy workloads, increasingly high expectations from parents, and demands for educational quality. Research by Dau and Hoang (2025) shows that occupational stress is one of the significant concerns for preschool teachers, potentially affecting their mental health and work performance. This indicates that developing socio-emotional competence for teachers not only contributes to improving the quality of professional activities but also supports maintaining mental health and commitment to the profession. Although SEL has been widely implemented in many teacher training and professional development programs worldwide, research and programs specifically for preschool teachers in Vietnam are still relatively limited. Based on this reality, this article focuses on proposing some measures to develop socio-emotional competence for preschool teachers and surveys teachers' perceptions of the feasibility and effectiveness of these measures in the context of preschool education in Ho Chi Minh City.

# **Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of the Feasibility and Effectiveness of Social-Emotional (Sel) Development Measures in Ho Chi Minh City**

## **II. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research to propose and survey preschool teachers' perceptions of measures to develop socio-emotional competencies.

The qualitative research method was carried out through the collection, analysis, and synthesis of domestic and international literature related to socio-emotional learning, teachers' socio-emotional competencies, foundational theories of SEL, and models for developing SEL competencies in preschool education. The results of the literature analysis served as the basis for building a theoretical framework and proposing measures to develop SEL competencies suitable for the context of preschool education in Vietnam.

The quantitative research method was conducted through a questionnaire survey of 50 preschool teachers working at preschools in Binh Duong Ward, Ho Chi Minh City. The research sample was selected using convenience sampling, and participants were entirely voluntary. The survey tool used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low; 2 = Low; 3 = Medium; 4 = High; 5 = Very High). The survey focused on two main groups of criteria: (1) teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of the proposed SEL competency development measures and (2) teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of these measures in supporting socio-emotional competency development in professional activities. The collected data were processed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean, to analyze teachers' evaluation trends regarding the proposed measures.

## **III. RESULT**

### **3.1. Theoretical Basis for Developing Social-Emotional Competence for Preschool Teachers**

#### **3.1.1. Concept and Structure of Social-Emotional Competence (SEL)**

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020), Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which individuals develop the necessary competencies to identify and manage emotions, build positive relationships, demonstrate empathy, and make responsible decisions. CASEL identifies five core SEL competency groups: (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness, (4) relationship skills, and (5) responsible decision-making.

For preschool teachers, SEL competencies not only contribute to improving professional performance but also directly affect the quality of interaction with children, colleagues, and parents. In the preschool education environment, teachers frequently have to handle situations related to emotions, behavior, and social relationships. Therefore, developing socio-emotional competencies is considered an important component in the professional development of teachers.

#### **3.1.2. Psychological and Educational Basis for Developing SEL Competencies for Preschool Teachers**

##### **(1) Emotion Regulation Theory**

According to Gross (1998), emotional regulation is the process by which individuals control and regulate their own emotional experiences and expressions to adapt to life situations. In the preschool education environment, teachers frequently face stressful situations such as managing children's behavior, resolving conflicts between children, parental pressure, or a large workload. Emotional regulation skills help teachers maintain a positive psychological state and enhance professional performance.

Research by Jennings and Greenberg (2009) shows that teachers with good emotional regulation skills tend to create a more positive classroom environment, establish supportive relationships with children, and reduce the risk of occupational burnout. Similarly, Phan and Nguyen (2020) affirm that negative emotional regulation skills play a crucial role in communication and professional conduct for preschool teachers.

##### **(2) Social Learning Theory**

Bandura (1977) argues that humans learn behavior through observation and imitation of patterns in their living environment. In preschool education, teachers are one of the most important role models for children. The way teachers express emotions, resolve conflicts, and interact with those around them will influence the development of children's socio-emotional skills.

Therefore, developing SEL (Social and Emotional Intelligence) competence for teachers is not only significant for the teachers themselves but also contributes to supporting children's socio-emotional development through observational learning.

##### **(3) Ecological Systems Theory**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), children's development is influenced by many interacting environmental systems. Among these, the classroom and school belong to the microsystem, which is the environment that most directly and frequently impacts children.

Teachers play a central role in creating a safe, positive, and supportive educational environment for children's development. When teachers possess good socio-emotional competence, relationships in the classroom become more positive, thereby contributing to the holistic development of children.

## **Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of the Feasibility and Effectiveness of Social-Emotional (Sel) Development Measures in Ho Chi Minh City**

### **3.2. Measures for Developing Socio-Emotional Competence (SEL) for Preschool Teachers in Ho Chi Minh City**

The measures for developing socio-emotional competence (SEL) for preschool teachers proposed in this study are built on the basis of synthesizing fundamental theories of socio-emotional learning and the practical characteristics of current preschool education. Specifically, the CASEL SEL competency framework (2020) provides a basis for identifying core competencies that need to be developed in teachers; Gross's (1998) theory of emotional regulation emphasizes the role of identifying and controlling emotions in professional activities; Bandura's (1977) social learning theory shows that teachers are both learners through professional interaction and socio-emotional role models for children; while Bronfenbrenner's (1979) educational ecosystem model affirms the role of the school environment in supporting the development of both teachers and children.

Besides the theoretical basis, the proposed measures also stem from the practical experience of preschool teachers in Ho Chi Minh City. In the context of current educational reforms, teachers face many pressures from workload, professional requirements, managing children's behavior, and parental expectations. Research by Dau and Hoang (2025) shows that occupational stress is one of the significant issues for preschool teachers, affecting their mental health and the quality of their work. Meanwhile, content related to socio-emotional competence has not received adequate attention in teacher training and professional development activities.

Based on the above, the study proposes three key groups of measures to support teachers in developing self-awareness, self-management of emotions, social interaction skills, and the ability to cope with occupational stress, including: (1) organizing specialized training on SEL; (2) integrating SEL into regular professional activities; and (3) strengthening mindfulness practice and stress management techniques.

#### **3.2.1. Measure 1: Organizing specialized training on SEL based on the five core competencies model**

This measure is built upon the CASEL (2020) SEL competency framework, which emphasizes five core competency groups: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building skills, and responsible decision-making. Organizing specialized training sessions helps teachers understand the nature of SEL, identify their own emotional expressions, and enhance their ability to apply socio-emotional skills in their professional activities.

Training content can focus on topics such as identifying and regulating emotions, managing occupational stress, positive communication with children and parents, conflict resolution in the educational environment, and making appropriate decisions in pedagogical situations. Besides providing theoretical knowledge, the training program should focus on experiential activities, case studies, professional reflection, and skill practice to help teachers transform knowledge into practical competence.

#### **3.2.2. Measure 2: Integrating SEL into Regular Professional Development Activities**

This measure is proposed based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, according to which people learn and develop through observation, interaction, and sharing experiences with those around them. In the school environment, professional development activities are regular and provide a favorable opportunity for teachers to exchange ideas and support each other in the process of developing their professional competence.

Integrating SEL content into professional activities can be done through activities such as analyzing pedagogical situations related to socio-emotions, sharing experiences in handling professional stress, discussing typical cases in the classroom, practicing role-playing, or inviting experts for consultation and thematic training. Through mutual learning, teachers have the opportunity to broaden their understanding, improve communication skills, and build a professional support network within the school.

#### **3.2.3. Measure 3: Enhancing mindfulness practice and stress management techniques**

This measure is based on Gross's (1998) theory of emotional regulation, which emphasizes the role of identifying, monitoring, and regulating emotions to effectively adapt to life situations. For preschool teachers, maintaining a positive emotional state is crucial for the quality of interaction with children as well as their own mental health.

Mindfulness practices can include deep breathing, short relaxation sessions, focusing attention on the present moment, observing emotions without judgment, journaling, or engaging in post-lesson reflection. These techniques help teachers improve self-awareness, manage emotional responses, and mitigate the negative effects of occupational stress. Furthermore, these are highly feasible and easily implemented in the practical context of early childhood education institutions.

### **3.3. Survey of Teachers' Perceptions Regarding the Feasibility and Effectiveness of Measures to Develop Emotional and Social Competencies for Preschool Teachers in Ho Chi Minh City**

To understand teachers' perceptions of the proposed measures to develop emotional and social competencies, the study surveyed 50 preschool teachers working in preschools in Binh Duong Ward, Ho Chi Minh City.

## Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of the Feasibility and Effectiveness of Social-Emotional (Sel) Development Measures in Ho Chi Minh City

### 3.3.1. Teachers' Perceptions Regarding the Feasibility of the Measures

| Measure                                    | Very High (%) | High (%) | Average (%) | Low (%) | Very Low (%) | Mean |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|---------|--------------|------|
| 1.Thematic SEL Training                    | 40            | 46       | 10          | 4       | 0            | 4.22 |
| 2.SEL Integration in Professional Meetings | 36            | 44       | 16          | 4       | 0            | 4.12 |
| 3.Enhancing Mindfulness Practice           | 30            | 48       | 18          | 4       | 0            | 4.04 |

The survey results show that all three measures were rated highly feasible by teachers. The measure of organizing specialized SEL training received the highest rating, with an average value of 4.22. 86% of teachers chose "high" and "very high," indicating a significant need for participation in intensive training programs on socio-emotional competence. The measure of integrating SEL into regular professional development activities had an average value of 4.12. Approximately 80% of teachers believed this measure could be implemented regularly in the school's practical context. For the measure of practicing mindfulness and stress management techniques, the average value was 4.04. Although positively evaluated, some teachers felt that maintaining regular practice depended on available time and daily workload.

### 3.3.2. Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Measures

| Evaluation Content                              | Very Low (%) | Low (%) | Average (%) | High (%) | Very High (%) | Mean |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------|-------------|----------|---------------|------|
| 1. Improved emotional self-awareness            | 0            | 2       | 12          | 44       | 42            | 4.26 |
| 2. Controlling reactions during child conflicts | 0            | 4       | 14          | 48       | 34            | 4.12 |
| 3. Reducing occupational stress                 | 0            | 6       | 20          | 46       | 26            | 3.88 |
| 4. Improving teacher-child relationships        | 0            | 2       | 14          | 46       | 38            | 4.20 |
| 5. Increased confidence in classroom management | 0            | 4       | 14          | 50       | 32            | 4.10 |
| 6. Creating a positive classroom environment    | 0            | 2       | 16          | 48       | 34            | 4.14 |

The survey data in this table shows that the majority of teachers positively evaluated the effectiveness of SEL competency development measures. The percentage of those choosing "high" and "very high" ranged from 72% to 86% for the surveyed content. Among the evaluated content, emotional self-awareness achieved the highest average value (Mean = 4.26). This was followed by improving teacher-child relationships (Mean = 4.20), creating a positive classroom environment (Mean = 4.14), and enhancing the ability to control responses in pedagogical situations (Mean = 4.12). The content on reducing occupational stress had a lower average value (Mean = 3.88) but was still positively rated by the majority of teachers. This result suggests that teachers perceive SEL development measures as capable of supporting various aspects of their professional activities.

# Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of the Feasibility and Effectiveness of Social-Emotional (Sel) Development Measures in Ho Chi Minh City

## IV. DISCUSSION

The study shows that the majority of teachers participating in the survey positively evaluated the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed measures for developing socio-emotional competencies. This indicates that the measures are relatively suitable to the practical conditions of preschools in Ho Chi Minh City. Among the measures surveyed, the SEL thematic training based on the five core competencies model received the highest rating for feasibility. This result reflects the actual needs of teachers for intensive socio-emotional training programs. This assessment is consistent with CASEL's (2020) view that developing socio-emotional competencies for adults is an important condition for building a positive educational environment and promoting the holistic development of children.

The survey results also showed that teachers highly valued the role of measures in supporting the enhancement of emotional self-awareness, improving teacher-child relationships, and increasing confidence in handling pedagogical situations. These results are consistent with the research of Jennings and Greenberg (2009), in which teachers' socio-emotional competence is considered a factor that directly influences the quality of classroom interaction and educational effectiveness.

From the perspective of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, the research results show that developing SEL competence for teachers has significance beyond the scope of individual professional development. When teachers are able to identify and regulate emotions and build positive relationships, they simultaneously become positive socio-emotional role models for children to learn from through observation and imitation. In addition, the content on reducing occupational stress received lower ratings than the other content. This result can be explained by the fact that the occupational stress of preschool teachers is influenced by various factors such as workload, working conditions, parental pressure, and professional requirements. This observation is consistent with the research results of Dau and Hoang (2025) on the occupational stress status of preschool teachers in Ho Chi Minh City. Although the survey results reflect the positive perception of teachers towards the proposed measures, the study still has some limitations. The survey sample is relatively small (N = 50) and the data is mainly based on self-reports from participants. Therefore, further studies need to expand the sample size and combine multi-source evaluation methods such as classroom observation, in-depth interviews, or management evaluations to verify the practical effectiveness of SEL competency development measures for preschool teachers.

## V. CONCLUSION

This article has contributed to clarifying the theoretical basis of developing socio-emotional learning (SEL) skills for preschool teachers, and has proposed three measures to develop SEL skills suitable for the preschool education context in Ho Chi Minh City, including: (1) organizing specialized training on SEL based on the five core competencies model; (2) integrating SEL content into regular professional activities; and (3) strengthening mindfulness practice and stress management techniques. The survey results on 50 preschool teachers in Binh Duong ward, Ho Chi Minh City, show that the majority of teachers positively evaluated the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed measures. Among the proposed measures, the SEL (Social Emotional Intelligence) training received the highest rating for feasibility, while content related to enhancing emotional self-awareness, improving teacher-child relationships, and increasing confidence in handling pedagogical situations was highly rated for effectiveness. These results indicate that the proposed measures have the potential to support teachers in developing socio-emotional competence and improving the quality of their professional activities. The article also affirms the importance of paying attention to teachers' socio-emotional competence as a crucial component of professional development in early childhood education. Investing in SEL development for teachers not only contributes to improving mental health and reducing professional stress but also creates conditions for building a positive educational environment that supports the holistic development of children. However, the study still has some limitations, such as the relatively small sample size and the data being primarily based on teachers' self-assessments. Therefore, further research needs to expand the scope of the survey, incorporating diverse research methods such as classroom observation, in-depth interviews, or evaluations from administrators to more thoroughly verify the actual impact of SEL competency development measures on preschool teachers.

## REFERENCES

- 1) Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory. Prentice Hall.
- 2) Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development. Harvard University Press.
- 3) Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2020). What is SEL? <https://casel.org>
- 4) Dau, M. L., & Hoang, T. V. (2025). Stress của giáo viên mầm non các trường tư thục tại TP. Hồ Chí Minh: Thực trạng và khuyến nghị [Stress among preschool teachers in private schools in Ho Chi Minh City: Current status and recommendations]. Journal of Education. <https://tcgd.tapchigiaoduc.edu.vn/index.php/tapchi/article/view/3099/1080>

## **Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of the Feasibility and Effectiveness of Social-Emotional (Sel) Development Measures in Ho Chi Minh City**

- 5) 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. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>
- 6) Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271–299. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.271>
- 7) Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>
- 8) Phan, T. O., & Nguyen, T. H. Y. (2020). Kỹ năng điều chỉnh cảm xúc âm tính trong giao tiếp với trẻ của giáo viên mầm non [Negative emotion regulation skills in communicating with children among preschool teachers]. *IUH Journal of Science and Technology*. <https://jst.iuh.edu.vn/index.php/jst-iuh/article/download/1373/469>