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## **Examining the Contents of Social Emotional Learning in the Vocational English Curriculum**

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### **Abstract**

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an essential component of education and personal development. SEL Programs, the positive effects of which have been proven in many ways by scientific research. This article examines the contents of the Food and Beverages Department Vocational English book used in vocational schools for 10th-grade students. The focus is on the presence of social-emotional learning (SEL) content and the book's strengths and limitations in addressing SEL competencies within the context of the food and beverage industry. A content analysis reveals that while the book includes some SEL content, there are notable gaps in the coverage of SEL competencies. It adequately addresses self-awareness and self-management, but provides limited attention to social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The book offers opportunities for active listening through listening activities and incorporates visual aids with pictures of real people. However, it lacks speaking activities, project work, and research opportunities. The findings highlight the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to SEL in the book, which can better prepare students for success in the food and beverage industry by strengthening their social and emotional skills.

**Key Words:** Education, Social Emotional Learning, Curriculum

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### **Introduction**

Social, mental and cognitive skills which continue to develop throughout our lives are critical for the performance in the classroom, what is more, they affect our life beyond the school and they contribute positively to the society we live as well as to the workplace. The analysis of personal development shows that social, mental and cognitive development is inextricably linked and consequently vital to student learning and achievement (Jones et al., 2002). So, we can assert that it is very important to educate students socially and emotionally, in other words, social-emotional development should continuously be nurtured as a fundamental basis in learning.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an essential component of education and personal development. According to one of the most widely accepted definition of Collaborative for Academic,

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Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL is the mechanism by which young people and adults learn and apply insights, abilities, and attitudes that enable them to create positive personalities, control emotions, and achieve individual and collective goals. Through this process, people can feel and express empathy for others, build and maintain good relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2021).

CASEL promotes five skill areas. Self-awareness, Self-management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision Making. To understand SEL frameworks and what an effective an SEL program should include, we should first understand these five competencies.

**Self-awareness** is the ability to correctly understand one's own feelings and thoughts and their effect on actions. It is about the recognition of one's own emotions, desires and motivations.

**Self-management** refers to the capacity to skillfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors across diverse circumstances. It encompasses the aptitude to handle stress, exercise restraint over impulsive impulses, cultivate self-driven motivation, and establish and attain both personal and academic objectives

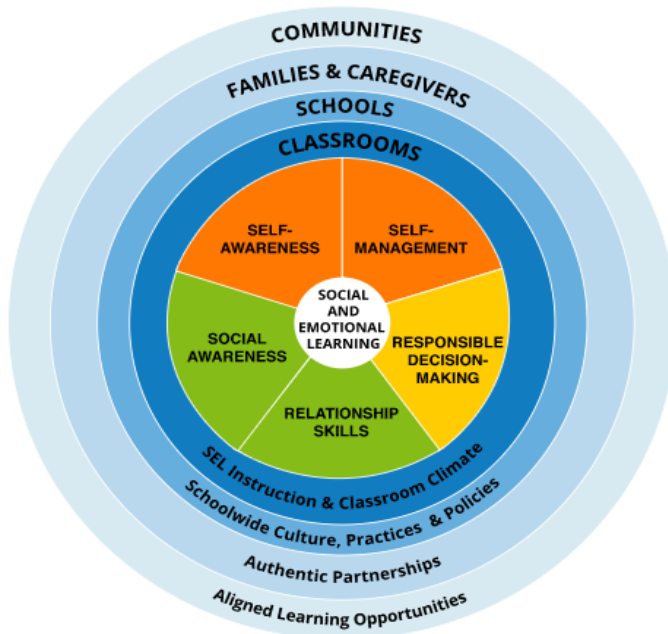
**Social Awareness** entails the capability to comprehend and appreciate individuals from various backgrounds and cultures. It involves comprehending social and ethical norms as guidelines for behavior, while also considering the resources and support systems provided by family, education, and the community.

**Relationship Skills** is the ability to form and maintain positive and fulfilling relationships people. This includes speaking openly, listening effectively, cooperating, avoiding undue peer influence, negotiating tensions constructively and finding and offering help.

**Responsible Decision Making** is the ability to make respectful decisions about personal behavior and social relationships based on ethical values, safety considerations, social expectations, a fair assessment of the impact of various behaviors and the well-being of self and others.

**Figure 1**

*“CASEL Wheel”, Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies*



Kaynak: CASEL. (2021). CASEL SEL Framework. <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>

The high-quality delivery of well-designed, evidence-based instructional programs and activities is an essential component of achievement SEL, for this reason CASEL emphasizes the importance of using high-quality, evidence-based approaches to promote students' social and emotional well-being. CASEL believes that it is most effective to incorporate SEL into the academic curriculum and the broader environment of school-wide programs and policies, as well as into ongoing collaboration with families and community groups by creating a good program. SEL includes a variety of approaches and strategies to promote psychological well-being and resilience, teaching social, cognitive, and life skills and avoid unpleasant life experiences as an integral part of the school curriculum (Zins et al., 2004). Empirical research suggests school-based SEL approaches appear to be effective in overcoming psychological and behavioral problems, improving children's cognitive and emotional development and increasing academic achievement (Osher et al., 2002). According to a study conducted by Durlak et al., (2011), adding a SEL curriculum is likely a wise academic decision, because by the time the program was completed, 27 percent more students would have improved their academic performance; 57 percent more would have increased their ability ratings; 24 percent more would have better social habits and lower levels of stress; 23 percent more would have better attitudes; and 22 percent more would have fewer behavior problems.

SEL Programs, the positive effects of which have been proven in many ways by scientific research, are undoubtedly implemented by teachers in schools. Their attitudes toward SEL are likely to affect all implementation processes. First of all, the teacher's confidence in presenting the program is related to adherence to the protocol of a program. (Brackett et al., 2012). In addition, teachers are more determined to work with a curriculum if they are confident with it and appreciate teaching it. Moreover, teachers are more determined to work with a curriculum if they are familiar with it and enjoy teaching it. Teachers' willingness to learn about SEL is likely to have an impact on their ability to incorporate it (Brackett et al., 2012). In summary, teachers' perspectives and views regarding SEL programs are crucial to program implementation.

In Turkey, we can see a growing focus on the use of student-centered methods and the psychological and emotional well-being of students is becoming increasingly important to explore. Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin (2017) conducted a qualitative study to determine teachers' views on social-emotional competencies and their perspectives on the SEL program in Turkey. It is found that the teachers from Turkey who participated in the study did not have information about SEL, but that many teachers emphasized the importance of being aware of one's emotions, building healthy relationships and making healthy choices. Teachers indicated that they wanted to know more about the program. It was also found that teachers carried out various activities and practices to improve students' social and emotional learning even though they had never heard of SEL before. According to Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin (2017), although teachers try to improve their students' social-emotional learning when faced with challenges in the classroom, their activities can be more successful if they have sufficient knowledge. Moreover, the findings of this study show that teachers are interested in social-emotional learning skills and would like to learn them.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is an essential aspect of education that supports students in cultivating the necessary abilities and proficiencies to comprehend and regulate their emotions, establish and pursue constructive objectives, empathize with others, foster and sustain healthy relationships, and make responsible choices. In recent times, there has been an increasing acknowledgment of the significance of SEL within the vocational English curriculum.

The vocational English curriculum refers to the set of courses and programs designed to teach English language skills to students who are preparing to enter the workforce. These courses often focus on practical language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking that are necessary for success in the workplace. However, the vocational English curriculum also has the potential to incorporate SEL as a way to prepare students for the social and emotional challenges they may encounter in their future careers.

So, what exactly does the inclusion of SEL in the vocational English curriculum look like? One common approach is to incorporate SEL into the content of the course itself. For example, a lesson on business communication might include a discussion of how to effectively manage emotions in a professional setting or how to show empathy towards coworkers. Another approach is to use SEL-based teaching methods, such as group work or role-playing activities, to help students practice and apply the skills they are learning. Within the vocational English curriculum, particular SEL competencies can be highlighted. These competencies encompass self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. For instance, a lesson centered around workplace conflict resolution could prioritize the enhancement of students' social awareness and relationship skills.

Overall, the incorporation of SEL into the vocational English curriculum has the potential to provide students with valuable skills and competencies that will serve them well both in their professional lives and in their personal relationships. By helping students understand and manage their emotions, communicate effectively with others, and make responsible decisions, the vocational English curriculum can play a vital role in preparing students for success in their future careers.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) holds significant value in education as it enables students to acquire essential skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These proficiencies play a crucial role in achieving success both personally and professionally, and are particularly valuable for students engaged in vocational education and training.

One way to incorporate SEL into vocational education is through the English curriculum. English is a subject that is often seen as a means to an end - a way to improve language skills for the purpose of gaining employment. However, English can also be a powerful tool for promoting SEL, as it allows students to express their thoughts and feelings, communicate with others, and read and analyze texts that deal with social and emotional issues.

There are several ways that SEL can be integrated into the vocational English curriculum. One approach is to use literature and media that addresses social and emotional themes. For example, students could read and discuss novels that explore themes of friendship, conflict resolution, or diversity. They could also watch films or documentaries that deal with similar themes, and engage in discussions or written responses to these materials.

Another way to incorporate SEL into the vocational English curriculum is through the use of role-playing and simulation activities. These activities can help students practice and apply their SEL skills in realistic situations. For example, students might role-play a scenario in which they have to resolve a conflict with a coworker or customer, or simulate a situation in which they have to make a difficult decision.

Finally, SEL can also be incorporated into the vocational English curriculum through the use of reflective writing and discussion activities. These activities can help students process their emotions and thoughts, and provide an opportunity for them to share their experiences and insights with others.

In conclusion, there are many ways to incorporate SEL into the vocational English curriculum. By using literature and media, role-playing and simulation activities, and reflective writing and discussion, educators can help students develop important social and emotional skills that will serve them well in both their personal and professional lives.

In this article it is aimed to examine the contents of the Food and Beverages Department Vocational English book used by 10th-grade students in vocational schools, specifically focusing on the presence of social-emotional learning (SEL) content and exploring the strengths and limitations of the book in addressing SEL competencies within the context of the food and beverage industry.

## **Methodology**

This study aims to examine the contents of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in the Food and Beverages Department Vocational English book. To achieve this aim, a content analysis method was used to analyze the book's contents in terms of SEL.

The sample of the study consisted of the Food and Beverages Department Vocational English book used in a vocational high school in. The book was chosen because it is widely used in especially public vocational high schools and has a focus on English language learning related to the food and beverage industry.

The content analysis was conducted using a coding scheme developed based on the CASEL framework for SEL. The coding scheme included five SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The coding was done independently by two researchers to ensure intercoder.

The analysis focused on identifying the frequency and depth of coverage of SEL competencies in the book. The frequency of SEL-related keywords and examples were recorded for each competency. The depth of coverage was assessed by examining the extent to which the book provided opportunities for students to practice and apply SEL skills in real-life situations related to the food and beverage industry.

The data collected from the content analysis were analyzed descriptively to provide an overview of the SEL content in the book. The findings were interpreted in light of the CASEL framework and discussed in relation to the potential implications for teaching and learning in vocational education.

In summary, this study employed a content analysis method to examine the contents of SEL in the Food and Beverages Department Vocational English book. The findings provide insights into the extent to which SEL is integrated into vocational English language learning and the potential implications for promoting students' social-emotional competence in the food and beverage industry.

## **Findings**

The vocational English book for the food and beverages department is designed for 10th graders in vocational schools and includes seven units that cover various topics related to the food and beverage industry, such as kitchen safety, food and cooking, and beverage service. The book includes pictures of real people with speech bubbles and many pictures, as well as listening activities, matching activities, and mind map activities. While there are some opportunities for interaction in the classroom, such as the dice game on page 79, there is a lack of speaking activities and project or research work.

In terms of SEL, the book has both strengths and limitations. The practical skills related to the food and beverage industry are covered in-depth and could be highly relevant and useful for the students studying in this field. However, the book lacks activities that specifically focus on SEL competencies, which are important for students' success not only in their careers but also in their personal lives.

The use of pictures of real people with speech bubbles may help to contextualize the content and make it more relatable for students. Additionally, the listening activities may provide opportunities for students to practice their active listening skills, which are an important aspect of communication. However, the lack of speaking activities could limit opportunities for students to practice and develop their interpersonal communication skills, which are crucial for success in any field.

The content analysis revealed that the Food and Beverages Department Vocational English book contained some SEL content, but there were notable gaps in the coverage of SEL competencies. Specifically:

*Self-awareness:* The book addressed this competency relatively well, with examples such as "recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses" and "identifying emotions in oneself and others" being present in multiple chapters.

*Self-management:* This competency was also addressed frequently, with examples such as "managing stress and emotions in the workplace" and "setting and achieving goals" being present in multiple chapters.

*Social awareness:* The book provided limited coverage of this competency, with only a few examples such as "understanding cultural differences in the workplace" and "demonstrating empathy towards customers" being present in a few chapters.

*Relationship skills:* This competency was also addressed relatively little, with only a few examples such as "working collaboratively with colleagues" and "providing effective customer service" being present in a few chapters.

*Responsible decision-making:* This competency was the least addressed, with only a few examples such as "making ethical decisions in the workplace" and "following safety protocols" being present in a few chapters.

## Discussion

The findings from the content analysis reveal that the Food and Beverages Department Vocational English book incorporates certain elements of social-emotional learning (SEL). However, there is scope for enhancing the depth and scope of coverage. Notably, the analysis highlights that the book offers limited chances for students to actively engage in practicing and applying SEL skills within real-life scenarios that are relevant to the food and beverage industry. Improvements in this aspect can further enhance the effectiveness of SEL integration in the vocational English curriculum for the department.

Moreover, the SEL competencies that were addressed in the book were not equally represented. For example, self-awareness and self-management were the most frequently addressed competencies, while responsible decision-making was the least addressed competency. This suggests that the book may not fully support students' development of all five SEL competencies, which could potentially limit their social-emotional competence in the workplace.

In light of the overall findings, it becomes evident that there is a clear requirement for a deliberate and structured integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) into vocational English language learning within the food and beverage industry. This objective can be accomplished through curriculum revisions that incorporate additional SEL-related content and by creating ample opportunities for students to actively practice and apply SEL skills in real-life scenarios. By adopting these measures, the vocational English curriculum can effectively equip students with the necessary SEL competencies for their personal and professional growth in the food and beverage industry.

Overall, the SEL content in the book appeared to be focused more on personal development (self-awareness and self-management) than on social skills and interpersonal relationships (social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making).

To enhance the SEL aspect of the book, future iterations could incorporate more speaking activities and project/research work that are specifically focused on SEL competencies. This would allow students to develop their social and emotional skills in a more meaningful and independent way. Additionally, incorporating more activities that allow for student interaction in the classroom could further enhance the book's effectiveness.

Furthermore, the book provided limited opportunities for students to practice and apply SEL skills in real-life situations related to the food and beverage industry. For example, while the book included scenarios related to customer service and teamwork, it did not provide explicit guidance on how to apply SEL skills in these scenarios.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the Food and Beverages Department Vocational English book contains some SEL content, there is room for improvement in the coverage and depth of SEL competencies, as well as in the integration of SEL skills into real-life workplace situations.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study align with the perspectives of Greenberg et al. (2017) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 2021) regarding the importance of integrating social-emotional learning into vocational education. Greenberg et al. state that "enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning is essential for students' overall success" while the ASCD emphasizes the significance of social and emotional learning in career and technical education.

In conclusion, this study examined the contents of SEL in the Food and Beverages Department Vocational English book using a content analysis method. The findings revealed that while the book contained some SEL content, there is room for improvement in terms of the depth and breadth of coverage. Moreover, the book did not fully support students' development of all five SEL competencies, which could potentially limit their social-emotional competence in the workplace.

The implications of these findings are significant for vocational education in the food and beverage industry, as social-emotional competence is increasingly recognized as a key factor in workplace success. Thus, there is a need for more intentional and systematic integration of SEL into vocational English language learning in this industry, to better prepare students for the social and emotional demands of the workplace.

Future research could build on this study by examining the effectiveness of SEL integration in vocational education, and by developing and testing instructional materials and strategies that support students' social-emotional competence in the food and beverage industry.

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