

Emotional competence in the school curriculum of Spanish as an additional language in Australia and the United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT: The development of students' emotional intelligence has become a priority in integral education since the beginning of this century. Existing mental health issues in young learners brought about by the pressures and challenges of a globalized capitalist society have been put in the spotlight and exacerbated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which explains the need to promote this type of intelligence in education. We will focus on Australia and the UK, two contexts where social and emotional learning (SEL) has been promoted via government directives and policy documents across the curriculum. However, since both educational contexts have monolingual policies, our objective is to analyse whether emotional competence is integrated and developed throughout the Languages curriculum, specifically, in the case of Spanish as an additional language in Primary education. Drawing from SEL's theoretical framework, and using qualitative content analysis, we will examine the above-mentioned curriculum implemented both in New South Wales and England.

Key words: Emotional competence, Social and emotional learning (SEL), Spanish as an additional language, Primary education, English-speaking contexts.

La competencia emocional en el currículo escolar de español como lengua adicional en Australia y Reino Unido

RESUMEN: Desde su expansión a principios de los años 2000, el desarrollo de la inteligencia emocional de los estudiantes se ha convertido en un objetivo prioritario de la educación integral. Las exigencias y retos que plantea una sociedad capitalista y globalizada unidos a los impactos negativos de la COVID-19 no solo ha puesto en el punto de mira los ya existentes problemas de salud mental entre los jóvenes, sino que los ha agravado, de ahí la necesidad de promover este tipo de inteligencia a nivel educativo. Este trabajo se enfoca en Australia y Reino Unido, dos contextos donde existen directivas gubernamentales y políticas educativas que promocionan el Aprendizaje Social y Emocional (en inglés, SEL) a lo largo de la educación reglada. Sin embargo, dado que trata de dos contextos educativos con políticas lingüísticas monolingües, nuestro objetivo es analizar si la competencia emocional se desarrolla en el currículo de Lenguas, y, específicamente, en el de español como lengua adicional para Primaria. Para ello y, partiendo del marco teórico de SEL, realizamos un aná-

lisis cualitativo de contenido tanto del currículo de español implementado en Nueva Gales del Sur como en Inglaterra.

Palabras clave: Competencia emocional, Aprendizaje social y emocional (SEL), español como lengua adicional, Primaria, contextos anglófonos.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental and behavioural disorders have become one of the largest and fastest-growing categories of diseases worldwide (OECD, 2021). Suicide is the leading cause of death among young Australians (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022), making mental health issues a national concern (Slemp et al., 2017). Similarly, in the UK, a survey about children and young people's mental health in 2020 (Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2020) found that one in every six children aged 5 to 16 years probably has a mental health disorder. Against this concerning backdrop, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated young people's already-existing feelings of loss, anxiety, and frustration, with school closures affecting not only their learning but also their social interactions with peers and teachers (Gedikoglu, 2021).

Although the UK and Australian governments have responded positively to the COVID-19 pandemic by investing millions of pounds and dollars in supporting mental health services for children and young people, as well as mental health support teams in schools, what such a global health crisis has really highlighted is the pressing need to implement a comprehensive education that combines both emotional and academic dimensions, and, most importantly, the urgency to change the focus to early and preventive intervention to tackle mental health issues.

A very well-known comprehensive approach to education is *Social and Emotional Learning* (SEL), a term coined for the first time in 1994 by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) group, a global leader of this approach whose main aim is to achieve the social, emotional, and academic development of all children (CASEL, 2022a). In both contexts under study, SEL has been recommended via government directives and policy documents that encourage teachers to develop it as part of their role (Parliamentary, 2009; ACARA, 2010; 2014; 2022). In Australia, SEL has even been embedded in the National Curriculum (ACARA, 2012), where *Languages* have been identified as one of the learning areas where such a comprehensive approach falls more naturally. Nevertheless, both the UK and Australia are characterized by having monolingual language policies based exclusively on English, which might hinder the implementation of such an approach.

Considering the impacts of the pandemic on students' emotional well-being, this paper aims to unveil whether SEL is promoted in education, as the above-mentioned governmental recommendations indicate. To this end, we particularly focus on analysing whether emotional competence is integrated and developed throughout the Languages curriculum. We will concentrate on England and New South Wales, specifically on Spanish as an additional language in Primary education, given the importance of emotional learning at this stage of life. We will start by explaining where languages, particularly Spanish, sit in the national curriculum of both contexts and their similarities and differences (stages, timetabling, years when languages are mandatory, etc.). Next, we will describe in detail the SEL theoretical

framework and how it has been implemented in England and NSW. We continue by concentrating on the methodology used for our analysis, followed by the results and discussions. Finally, we will present the conclusions.

2. LANGUAGES IN THE UK AND AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Given Australia's long history as a destination for immigrants, it is considered one of the countries with the greatest linguistic and cultural diversity. However, the multicultural and multilingual nature of this context, officially acknowledged in state policies on multiculturalism (Wallace, Tolley & Vonk, 2021) poses numerous challenges to plurilingualism (Author, forthcoming), a paradox reflected in Australia's lack of commitment to language provision. In the UK, although multiculturalism is widely accepted as a demographic fact, it has not been formally recognised in a legislative sense (Wallace, Tolley & Vonk, 2021). Nevertheless, schools, particularly in England, also face challenges in both language provision quality and student language uptake (Ofsted, 2021). The precarious position of languages in both countries has been attributed to the overmentioned "monolingual mindset" (Clyne, 2008), as well as the UK school system being described as "predominantly monolingual and unicultural" (Wei 2006, 82).

Languages were introduced into the Australian formal education system in the 1990s (Ministerio de Educación y Formación, 2020). Despite numerous legislative efforts to increase enrolments, the situation has not improved significantly (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017). In 2021, the total number of candidates for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) in NSW was 75,493, with only 6,314 taking a language (NESA, 2021) representing 8.3%. In England, even though most students (82% of girls and 73% of boys) learned a language for GCSE in 1997 (Rodeiro, 2009), enrolments dropped rapidly to 47% since 2004, when studying modern languages at GCSE became optional (Ofsted, 2021). Even though the teaching of a foreign language was made compulsory for primary schools (Key Stage 2) in 2014 (McLelland, 2018; British Council, 2020), A-level entries in languages in 2021 were only 24,030 out of 756,230 (Ofqual, 2021) accounting for 3.1% of all entries.

Currently, neither country has a national language policy. In Australia, the Australian National Curriculum for Languages (ACL) endorsed in 2015 by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2015) as part of the National Curriculum (ACARA, 2012) serves as *de facto*. However, despite such a national framework, each Australian state and territory have significant autonomy in developing its own educational and language policies. Thus, not all of them use the ACL but a variant adapted to their local contexts and needs (Morgan et al., 2021). In New South Wales, the NSW Education Standards Authority has developed its own local curriculum considering both state and local legislation (NESA, 2022). This curriculum is taught over three stages: Primary (K-6), Secondary (Years 7-10) and Senior (Years 11-12), which are also divided into several stages (Figure 1).

The United Kingdom (UK) is formed of four nations (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland) whose *de facto* language is also English. However, Welsh has a very strong presence in Wales and Irish and Gaelic are also spoken in Northern Ireland and Scotland. England implemented the National Curriculum in 1988 (Education Reform Act, 1988), but it only applied to England and Wales at the time. Over the years, the curriculum has undergone

four reforms (Parliamentary, 2009) whereby each nation has a certain degree of independence in how the national curriculum is applied. The most recent reform took place in 2014 (Roberts, 2021) and organised the National Curriculum into several *Key Stages*. Primary, the stage under study here, is divided into two stages, as Figure 1 illustrates.

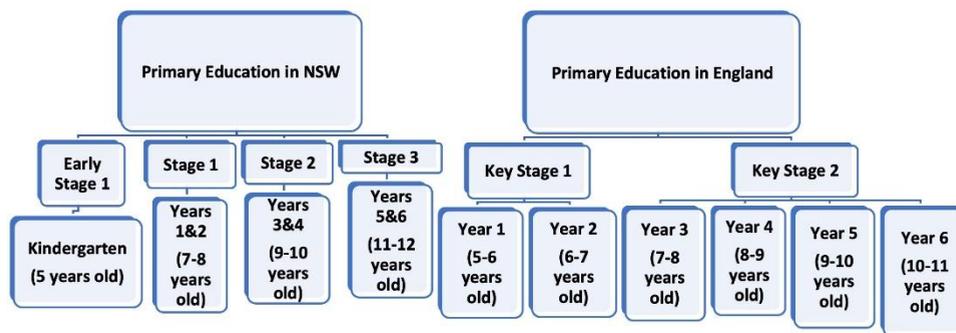


Figure 1: Stages composing Primary Education in NSW and England.

Languages are an integral part of the national curriculum in both NSW and England. In NSW, it is one of the nine learning areas of the curriculum for which NESA (2018a) developed a specific framework, the so-called *Languages K-10 Framework*. This curriculum provides a differentiated syllabus for the twenty-two languages composing it, including Spanish. It incorporates content from the ACL (NESA, 2018a) and some pedagogical views about education, including the Statement of Equity Principles (BOSTES, 2010) and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008).

The National Curriculum in England, which schools are legally required to follow (Education, 2013), is subject-based and consists of “core subjects” and “foundation subjects”. While all subjects are studied from the ages of 5 to 16, modern foreign languages begin at the age of 7 (Holmes et al., 2019). Unlike in NSW, there is not a differentiated curriculum for the different languages taught at schools but a common curriculum for all of them. At Key Stage 2 (KS2), the curriculum is organised around several learning outcomes related to the four skills of a language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), whereas at Key Stage 3 (KS3), it is organised around grammar-vocabulary and linguistic competence (Ofsted, 2021).

In contrast to the UK, the Spanish curriculum in NSW (NESA, 2018b) provides broad learning outcomes and clearly defines the standards students are expected to achieve in the K-10 sequence. Another difference is its intercultural approach, whereby language and culture are closely linked. Such an approach is reflected in its organisation around two interrelated strands: *Communicating* and *Understanding*. The first strand has three objectives: a) interacting, b) accessing and responding, and c) composing; the second has two: a) systems of language and b) the role of language and culture. Moreover, given the diversity of the Australian ecology, the Spanish curriculum considers the diverse needs of all students by providing a differentiated syllabus for four groups of students: 1) learners of Spanish as a second or additional language, 2) students with prior learning and or experience, 3) students with a Spanish background (heritage) and 4) students undertaking a Life Skills

course (special education needs). This level of differentiation does not exist in the English National Curriculum.

Regarding the obligation to study languages during the school year, differences are also found in both contexts. In England, as mentioned above, languages were compulsory after the age of 14 (KS3) until 2004 (Ofsted, 2021). However, now the National Curriculum requires all local state-funded schools to teach languages from KS2 to KS3 (Department of Education, 2013). At KS2, where Languages have been a statutory part of the curriculum only since 2014, students are required to study a “foreign language”, which might include an ancient language such as Ancient Greek or Latin. At KS3, the requirement is specifically for a modern foreign language (British Council, 2020). Although languages became compulsory in KS2, only four out of five primary schools teach them (British Council, 2022). However, the amount of time spent on it varies greatly.

Moreover, the curriculum’s flexibility, combined with a lack of progression when moving to KS3, has resulted in a loss of focus on which languages and at what level they are taught at KS2 (British Council, 2022). The National Centre for Excellence in Language Pedagogy does not provide any schemes of work or resources for this level of teaching. Consequently, most schools teaching KS3 assume students may have no prior knowledge of a language and start teaching on that basis (British Council, 2022). This practice contributes to the idea that progression in languages is irrelevant and reinforces the above-mentioned monolingual mindset.

In NSW, the study of a language is not mandatory in Primary education (Stages 1-3). However, at Stage 4 and Stage 5 it is obligatory to study 100 hours across twelve months (preferably Year 7 or Year 8) (Morgan et al., 2021). Nevertheless, students may begin learning a language at any point along the K-10 continuum. At Years 9 and 10, where students can choose a language as an elective, the language study in NSW schools decreases dramatically. According to NESAS (2021), since 1991, there has been a decline of more than 34% in the enrolments of students taking a language for HSC. In the case of Spanish, 480 students sat the test in 2021, a 12% decrease from 2020 (NESAS, 2021). However, compared to other languages, and despite some ups and downs, Spanish has remained relatively stable since 1991.

Similarly, in England, there has been a dramatic fall in the number of students taking modern foreign languages (Education Policy Institute, 2022), with GCSE entries being reduced by half since 2005, despite a slight increase in the years 2018-2019, followed by a further reduction in 2021 (British Council, 2022). In this context, the challenge remains to ensure appropriate resourcing during the transition from KS2 to KS3 in terms of progression and language studied. In December 2018, the National Centre for Excellence in Language Pedagogy (NCELP, 2018) was established to support language practitioners with teaching resources, professional development tools and workshops. However, their work so far has mainly focused on KS3. More recently, in November 2022, the Department for Education opened a programme backed by £14.8 million intending to support language teaching (DfE, 2022). This new programme will adhere to the principles outlined in Ian Bauckham’s 2016 review, in which the curriculum is delivered through three pillars: phonics, vocabulary and grammar (Bauckham, 2016).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing challenges and mental health issues caused by the demands and pressures of a globalised capitalist society, proving that a more holistic approach to students' development, including both social and emotional learning (SEL), has never been more critical to future learners' success. Although SEL is not a new concept, it has gained traction in recent years (Aspen Institute, 2019). The United States, where such an approach started and has advanced the most, is where the majority of research demonstrating its value can be found (Weissberg et al., 2015; Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2018; Gueldner et al., 2020). However, there are also numerous studies documenting the benefits of SEL programmes for people's well-being and improved academic performance in many other countries (Weare, 2015; Frydenberg et al., 2017).

SEL was introduced and defined in 1994 by a group of researchers, educators and practitioners who also founded the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (CASEL, 2022a). Such a multidisciplinary group aimed to develop a framework to support the positive social, emotional, and academic development of children and adolescents in school settings, eventually becoming the leading organisation to advocate for this holistic approach to education on a global scale (Weissberg et al., 2015; Gueldner et al., 2020). Given that there is no official definition of SEL, there are several ones with minor differences, one of which is as follows:

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2022b).

SEL programmes and strategies have been implemented over nearly thirty years in different geographical contexts, thus, different conceptual frameworks are used (Gueldner et al., 2020). The framework developed by CASEL is by far the most deployed and widespread (Allen et al. 2017). CASEL's SEL framework is a whole-school approach facilitated by coordinated efforts involving individuals across key settings: classrooms, schools, families and communities. At the centre of such a framework are five broad and interrelated core competence areas: *Self-awareness*, *Self-management*, *Social awareness*, *Relationship skills*, and *Responsible decision-making* (Weissberg et al., 2015; Gueldner et al., 2020; CASEL, 2020). Figure 2 shows the descriptions of CASEL's core competencies, according to CASEL (2020).

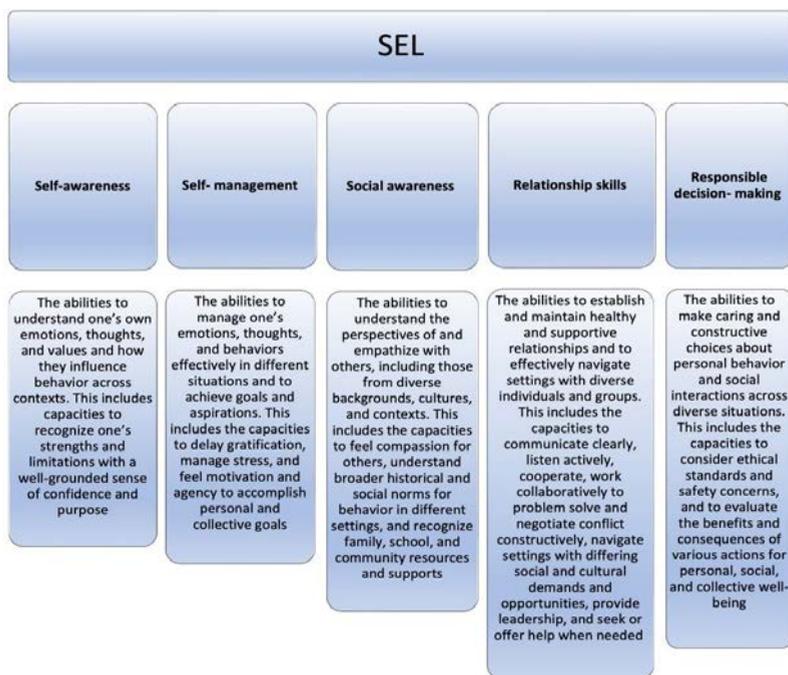


Figure 2. Descriptions of CASEL 5 interrelated core competence areas (CASEL, 2020).

The three-dimensional Australian National Curriculum (ACARA, 2015) consists of eight learning areas, along with three cross-curricular priorities and seven general capabilities embedded in the content of each learning area. One of these seven general capabilities is *Personal and Social Capability*, which ACARA (2022) identifies with SEL. Nevertheless, rather than five, such capability consists of four competencies perfectly aligned with CASEL's framework as well as with the model of Bisquerra and Pérez Escoda (2007): *Self-awareness*, *Self-management*, *Social awareness* and *Social management* (Figure 3).

Regarding the implementation of SEL programs, although some whole-school approaches have been implemented in Australia (Frydenberg et al., 2017), ACARA has opted for a classroom-based approach in public schools. In this context, SEL has been integrated into all learning areas and stages of the curriculum, assuming that teachers are ready to contribute to students' social and emotional learning. Consequently, educators are expected to not only integrate concepts from this holistic framework into all curricular areas but also to serve as role models for students by demonstrating good emotional competence in their pedagogies and teaching practises (Freeman & Strong, 2017). The work of Frydenberg et al. (2017) is an example of the variety of profiles and educational contexts where SEL research is being carried out in Australia. However, none focuses on analysing SEL in the Languages curriculum.

In the UK, the Primary National Strategy (PNS), which is the main source of centrally provided support for the delivery of the Primary curriculum (Parliament, 2009), also includes advice on SEL, *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (SEAL), and how to assist stu-

dents in developing related skills (DeF, 2011). Although the CASEL competencies underpin SEL in the UK, it slightly differs from the former by including the following competencies: *Self-perception, Self-awareness, Motivation, Self-regulation, Self-control, Social skills, Resilience and coping* (Early Intervention Foundation, 2015) (Figure 3).

SEAL is a comprehensive programme contained in the National Strategies summary (National Strategies, 2011) with a whole-school approach providing support in all state schools for students to develop their social and emotional skills. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned, created and made it available to schools (Clouder, 2015). Such programme is not intended to be a centrally imposed policy, but rather to provide a framework and guidance to support schools in developing social and emotional skills for their students while considering the unique circumstances of each school (Humphrey et al., 2010). In 2010, the SEAL programme was implemented in 90% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools in the UK (Humphrey et al., 2010).

Different policies address SEL across the four nations in the UK (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015; DfE, 2017; 2018; 2019). The National Endowment for Science, Technology, and the Arts (NESTA) published a report in 2020 (Donnelly et al., 2020) that provided analysis from the perspective of schools on their awareness of these policies, which policies they implement, and their usefulness. The report concluded that although there is a high level of awareness in the UK, England reported the lowest level with only 50% of schools implementing any of these Social Emotional Skills (SES) policies. Similarly, English schools also reported being less likely to find SES policies beneficial with 60% of the respondent considering them helpful and 40% unhelpful.

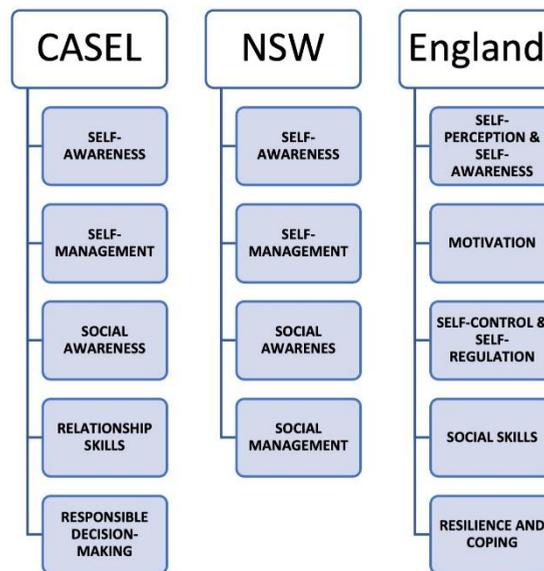


Figure 3: SEL Competencies according to CASEL and its adaptation to NWS and England.

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology chosen for this research is document analysis (Morgan, 2022), an underused but valuable approach to qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) consisting of a systematic analysis for reviewing or evaluating printed and electronic documents (Bowen, 2009). The basis of our analysis is two documents: the current official Spanish curriculum for NSW (NESA, 2018b) for Stages 1, 2 and 3, publicly available on the NESA official website, and the Spanish progression Map for Key stage 2 designed by Twinkl (2022), an international online educational publisher which specialises in the production of teaching and resources for first and secondary education providers. Twinkl and other educational publishers' companies base their materials on the National Curriculum in England: language programmes of study (DfE, 2013). In the UK, the said educational publishers require a fee that needs to be paid by the school.

We chose this methodology not only for the multiple advantages it brings (affordability, easy access, and stability of the data, among others) (Morgan, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) but also because our focus is to examine whether the two texts guiding Spanish language teaching in both contexts integrate SEL. Other reasons to choose this method include the recommendation to employ it for cross-cultural research and collaborative projects such as this one (Bowen, 2009) and, particularly, the benefits it provides for studying curriculum content and how it affects student learning (Morgan & Forest, 2016). However, there are also limitations associated with conducting a document analysis (biased selectivity, authenticity and insufficient data among others) (Bowen, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) that we tried to minimise by following Flick's (2018) recommendations when selecting the documents. In terms of the analysis, we opted for a qualitative content analysis approach (O'Leary, 2004; Bowen, 2009) since we were interested in the latent and explicit meaning in data rather than in statistics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The procedure started by finding and selecting the texts and checking their authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (Flick, 2018). Next, we analysed both documents using an iterative process that combined elements of content analysis and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009) by drawing on Braun et al. (2016)'s six-phase model. We initiated the document analysis by organising information into categories related to the SEL framework and skimming both documents for explicit and more implicit ideas contained in their passages. The first phase involved familiarising ourselves with the content by reading and rereading all data and critically engaging with it as data rather than as information. The next phase implied a systematic and thorough coding process for theme development. We employed a deductive approach for this process using the two adaptations of CASEL's core competencies in the NSW and England school curriculums (Figure 3) as predefined codes for our analysis.

Following Braun et al. (2016)'s model, the following phases involved organising codes and coding data into potential themes, as well as reviewing and revising those themes to develop a richer data analysis that enabled us to identify patterns. Each of the authors conducted their own content and thematic analysis. Later, we compared our codes, themes, and analyses to ensure they were all applied and classified in the same way. To maximise the consistency, reliability and validity of our findings, we conducted several rounds of coding/re-coding and theme definition/re-definition, classification/re-classification together until we reached a consensus. In the final phase, we compiled the analyses of the two documents under study and compared them.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis and comparison of the two documents mentioned above reveal similarities and differences. The more striking difference is that the National Curriculum for languages in England is very limited. The subject content breakdown describing the aim, the purpose of the study and attainment targets is barely three pages long when compared to eighty-six pages in the case of English (Dfe, 2013). Given that the learning outcomes are quite limited, its implementation into schemes of work by the different education publishers allows for a strong feeling of repetition. Such repetition does not allow for a clear progression path, which reinforces the idea that languages are difficult to master and the notion of monolingualism.

Even though Languages are not mandatory in Primary education in NSW, their curriculum is far more developed than in England, where they are compulsory at this stage. The NSW curriculum is also underpinned by an intercultural approach which closely links language and culture, recognising that those elements are co-constitutive and inextricably intertwined (Byram, 2014). In England, in turn, the curriculum follows a more traditional communicative approach based on the promotion of functional skills.

Another difference that clearly stands out is that in England, despite SES policy documents, the SEAL program being implemented in schools, and studies proving the benefits of SEL in education (Humphry et al., 2010; Clarke et al., 2015), student emotional competence is an underdeveloped objective of the National Curriculum for Spanish. In NSW, however, the local adaptation of the national curriculum (ACARA, 2015) by NESA explicitly includes emotional competence as one of the general capabilities to be developed through the content of all the learning areas, including the Spanish K–10 syllabus.

Nevertheless, the analysis reveals that, in both contexts, the attention paid to emotional competence is insufficient since not all its dimensions according to the SEL framework are addressed. Moreover, there are few explicit references to emotional competence in the syllabus content thus it must be inferred from the analysis and interpretation of the content descriptions and outcomes.

In NSW, considering the two components that articulate the Spanish curriculum, most references to emotional competence are found in *Communication*, particularly in relation to its objectives of interaction, and accessing and responding. Although its composing objective primarily focuses on the development of literacy and critical and creative thinking, there are some references to this competency too. In the second component, *Understanding*, there are no references to emotional competence in its objective related to systems of language since it focuses on grammar rules. Its second objective, however, the role of language and culture, is closely related to interculturality, hence some overlaps are found between the objectives of this other general competence and those of the more social dimension of emotional competence.

Similarly, in England, most references to emotional competence are found in the content related to listening and speaking skills, particularly, in the outcomes related to interaction or cultural awareness as these activities require students to understand and engage with a range of audiences. References to emotional competence are less frequent in writing and reading and none is found in the content dealing with grammar rules, like in NSW.

Regarding the four competencies that shape emotional competence according to the adaptation of CASELS's framework to the context of NSW and the five to England (Figure

3), the ones referring to the social dimension are undoubtedly the most encouraged. In NSW, *Social Management* is the most fostered followed by *Social awareness*. In the first case, such competence can be perceived in the content and learning outcomes descriptions, which systematically include collaborative work and effective communication. The development of leadership skills, negotiation, decision-making and conflict resolution is usually detected in the differentiated content for students with previous experience in Spanish. In the second case, the appreciation of different points of view and understanding of relationships with other people is encouraged at all stages, particularly through the content and learning objectives relating to the role of language and culture. The ability to contribute to society is typically promoted in students with prior experience in Spanish.

The development of *Social Skills* is also the most nurtured competence in the Spanish progression Map in England, which is strongly linked to listening and speaking skills. Unlike NSW, where social skills are divided into Social management and Social awareness, in England, there is no differentiation. Such competence is fostered in a wide range of tasks promoting engagement in conversation, expressing own opinions, developing effective communication and undertaking collaborative work whilst fostering children's curiosity and helping them deepen their understanding of the world around them. There is a very clear progression and scaffolding in place to support this.

Clearly, the personal dimension of emotional competence is the least encouraged in both contexts. In NSW, there are considerably fewer references to it and mostly related to *Self-management*. In the first two years of primary education, students are encouraged to participate in classroom routines and instructions to develop self-discipline. This competence is more frequently embedded in the content and learning objectives oriented towards text creation, where there appears to be a tendency to promote individual work more. Moreover, it is most common in students with prior experience with Spanish. In England, the equivalent competence is *Self-control* and *Self-regulation*. Such competence is observed in the four language skills through class instructions, by developing students' ability to follow instructions. Writing and reading skills are characterised by the student's individual work developing student self-control and self-regulation at fulfilling activities by themselves.

Finally, in NSW, little emphasis is placed on *Self-awareness*. Such competence appears to be linked to a more utilitarian approach rather than a true self-reflection on emotions, especially when functional content includes "likes and dislikes". Most references to this competence are found in the final years of Primary education. In Years 5 and 6, explicit content referring to emotional competence such as "expressing feelings using emotional language" is introduced for the first time, which could be interpreted as a way of recognising emotions. Similarly, the development of reflective practice as a student is also explicitly mentioned for the first time.

In England, *Self-awareness* and *Self-direction*, which corresponds to Self-awareness in NSW, are also scantily promoted and linked to a functional aspect of the language. Another barely mentioned competence in the Spanish progression Map is *Resilience and coping*, which is also connected to the more personal dimension of emotional competence. Such competence can be identified in the latter stage of KS2 (Year 5 and Year 6) when students, focusing on reading and writing skills, are encouraged to use a variety of strategies to determine the meaning of new words as well as identify familiar and unfamiliar words, to build resilience in this context.

Overall, results show that the National Curriculum for Languages in NSW is clearly far more developed than in England. Regarding emotional competence, the fact that SEL is one of the seven general capabilities integrated into the curriculum demonstrates a genuine interest in promoting it. In England, however, we did not identify such interest since the promotion of emotional competence is not a specific goal pursued in the National Curriculum, thus, is not explicitly integrated into it. However, despite differences in education policy, we discovered similar deficiencies when we analysed the Spanish curriculum.

In both contexts, the social dimension of emotional competence is undoubtedly the most encouraged, while its personal one is developed significantly less. We also discovered a dearth of specific vocabulary related to emotional competence, and the few terms found are usually linked to functional language content. These findings concur with those who claim that, while legislative efforts are required to successfully implement emotional competence, they are insufficient and must be supplemented with more practical recommendations, more vocational training and support for teachers, and more evaluation and monitoring to ensure positive results (see Slemp et al. 2017).

One limitation of this study that could lead to future research is the lack of classroom observations to determine how teachers implement curriculum content in their teaching practice. However, despite limitations, we believe that our analysis represents a first step towards understanding the role of emotional competence in the Spanish curriculum in NSW and England, a subject that, to the best of our knowledge, has not yet been investigated.

6. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront of current pedagogical debates the pressing need to develop students' emotional competence to prepare them to cope with the demands and pressures of the twenty-first century, burdens that have been impacted by this health crisis, exacerbating people's existing challenges and mental health issues. To tackle this situation, SEL has been proposed as a holistic approach to students' development, since worldwide research has proved this approach to have a positive impact not only on students' academic performance but also on their mental wellness (Durlak et al., 2011; Frydenberg et al.; Taylor et al., 2017).

In the two contexts under investigation, SEL is no stranger to education legislation. In NSW, it has been promoted via government directives and policy documents, being one of the seven general capabilities integrated into the curriculum, which is commendable and certainly a step forward for Australia. In England, however, despite SEL policy documents and the implementation of the SEAL program in schools, SEL is considered but not explicitly integrated into the National Curriculum.

However, despite these contextual differences, when analysing the curriculum of Spanish as an additional language in Primary education, similar shortfalls are discovered in both settings. The different dimensions of emotional competence identified by CASEL's framework are not equally promoted in either of the two settings. The most fostered dimension of emotional competence is unquestionably the social one, whereas the personal dimension is supported the least. Additionally, vocabulary related to emotional competence is not often

explicitly mentioned in the syllabus content; rather, it must be inferred through analysis and interpretation of the descriptions and outcomes of the content.

Therefore, to implement a truly comprehensive education, the Spanish curriculum must evenly develop all the dimensions shaping emotional competence throughout a coherent and well-sequenced program. Also, more explicit vocabulary related to social competence and greater content differentiation are required to give visibility to such competence and to make it easier for teachers to implement.

Finally, the comparison of the Spanish curricula in NSW and England has shown that, despite being necessary for the successful implementation of SEL, legislative efforts alone are insufficient. Such legislative initiatives must be accompanied by more practical recommendations and greater teachers' professional development and support to achieve positive outcomes.

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