The Implementation of Social Emotional Learning Approach in Elementary School

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the execution of the social-emotional learning approach in the elementary school of the Fun School Movement (FSM) model. This study was a qualitative approach. The informants in this study were first-grade teachers, school principals, and first-grade students of the elementary school of the FSM model. The data collection techniques were in the form of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. The data analysis involved the process of data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The validity of the data was tested through source triangulation and technique triangulation. The results show that the implementation of the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) approach in the classroom is designed by the class teacher, such as discussions, morning sharing, giving affection stars, appreciation, class agreements, group work, circle time, and reflection, while learning activities outside the classroom are integrated into the agenda or school habituation program.
Keywords: implementation, social-emotional learning, elementary school

Introduction

Elementary school is one component of the basic education level. The Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states, "Basic education is the level of education that underlies secondary education level". According to Osiesi (2020), elementary education is the foundation of formal education. It develops in young minds the skills, experiences, and knowledge necessary for pursuing academics at a more difficult and advanced level. Olowonefa (2022) explains that the skills, attitudes, and fundamental knowledge required to live in society and the world are acquired through elementary education. Therefore, education in elementary school should not only focus on developing cognitive aspects but also pay attention to the development of social and personal aspects of students.

An ideal elementary school is not only a place for teachers and students to meet but also a safe place for students to study in a conducive atmosphere so that students feel comfortable. School is an environment that makes learning comfortable and enthusiastic and can train students to have optimism and resilience within themselves when facing challenges (Candra & Rizal, 2021). In line with this statement, the concept of education initiated by Ki Hajar Dewantara states that school is a place to play and learn fun.

The condition of schools in Indonesia is currently experiencing a learning crisis. Results of the Program Results Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) found low scores in literacy, science, and mathematics as it ranked 74th out of 79 countries (Schleicher, 2018). Therefore, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology launched the *Merdeka Belajar* breakthrough. The Merdeka Learning Policy is a step to strive for an independent and humane student learning process in line with the interests and character of students. It provides space for creative teachers to create a happy learning atmosphere. However, in practice, in the field, there are still schools that use a learning concept that is rigid, monotonous, tense, and unpleasant, even authoritarian to students.

The results of a case study conducted by Ballerina (2018) regarding the handling of school refusal in family-based elementary school students found students refused to go to or be at school. It is because students are afraid of subjects that have not been mastered and are less able to adapt socially. Furthermore, the results of Anjelika's study (2018) showed that the behavior of refusing to go to school by two students was based on negative experiences at school due to being ridiculed by their peers, feeling embarrassed and afraid of failure, getting bad grades on subjects they didn't like, dyslexia, passive, and the problem of parents being loud and grumpy. Another thing that triggers refusal to go to school is the personality of students who are less confident and shy, making students unable to adjust and socialize well in the school environment and at home.

The conditions above show that some schools are not a pleasant place to learn and tend to make students feel pressured. It is because these schools place too much importance on academics in learning. The values that should be achieved in learning tend to be forgotten because teachers focus on the subject matter content to pursue school grades and rankings (Jones & Moreland, 2015). In line with the previous statement, Wuryandari & Herwin (2021) and Saptono (2022) stated that the content of value education is starting to fade in the educational process, so what happens is that education in several elementary school places less emphasis on personality formation and less instilling values for the sustainability of students in the future.

Unlike the three schools in Ngaglik District, Sleman Regency, namely Rejodani Public Elementary School, Karangmloko 2 Public ES, and Ngebelgede 2 Public ES, they all implement the concept of a fun school with the Fun School Movement (FSM). FSM is trying to improve education by returning to the educational concept of Ki Hajar Dewantara. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, education is a guide in the life of a student's evolution, which means that education guides all-natural strengths that exist in oneself so that students, as human beings and as members of society, can attain the greatest safety and pleasure. Education that seeks to establish a fun learning environment, humanize, and promote character is required to improve school quality. It is what underlies the emergence of FSM to implement the concept of a fun school and is practiced in three elementary school in Ngaglik District, Sleman Regency.

FSM is a grassroots movement with teachers to create a critical, creative, independent, and fun learning culture in schools (https://sekolahmenyenangkan.org). This movement promotes and builds awareness of teachers, principals, and education policymakers to build schools as fun places to learn science and provide life skills so that students become successful learners (https://sekolahmenyenangkan.org). FSM aims to create a pleasant learning climate so students can continue learning happily and comfortably without pressure (Setiawan, 2021).

Recent studies see that FSM is a factor in improving the quality of education because FSM can provide many advantages and conveniences in providing education (Calp, 2020). According to Candra (2018) and Wiranti (2021), FSM will build a school ecosystem that can make school members happy, appreciative, and have high empathy for one another. Candra & Rizal (2019) explain that FSM is a grassroots movement that aims to change the educational paradigm that prioritizes student welfare. FSM's implementation applies four principles namely the learning environment, academic practices, school connectedness, and character development.

One of the four interesting principles FSM offers is character development through SEL. It needs to be implemented in ES because, at this level, students are in a transitional period of change in mental and social development (Sabani, 2019). Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is also needed to equip students to avoid various problems. Kautz et al. (2014) reported that SEL could lead students to positive results, including reducing dropout rates, student behavior problems in deviant schools, drug use, mental health problems, and criminal behavior. In line with this statement, Esen-raygun & Sahin-task (2017) explained that SEL impacts students' self-esteem and self-acceptance, improves students' abilities such as communication skills and empathy and avoids violence or bullying.

SEL, one of the principles of FSM, can overcome existing problems regarding the student learning process. The study by Elias (2009) and Adiba (2020) shows that SEL can shape the character of student responsibility. Next, a study by Hromek & Roffey (2009) and Fadhila (2021) shows that learning becomes fun and effective through SEL.

Social-emotional skills are not acquired by themselves, but a process is needed to make them happen, which begins with SEL in their environment (Clarke, 2015). SEL is an approach that needs to be applied in the implementation of education in Indonesia to develop students' personality, social and

emotional at school. However, unfortunately, SEL until now has not been implemented in all education units at the elementary level due to the lack of socialization regarding FSM in schools and practice SEL has not been fully implemented into learning activities in schools.

From the description above, education in ES requires a fun school ecosystem and education focusing on SEL. These things can become a strong foundation for forming strong ES students' personalities. FSM embraces schools on the area's outskirts to implement SEL. One of the areas targeted by the ES of the FSM model is Ngaglik District, Sleman Regency. This study aimed to describe the execution of the social-emotional learning approach in the elementary school of the FSM model. This study provides an overview of various students' social-emotional development practices through the SEL approach in elementary school.

Methods

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach. The participants in this study were first-grade teachers, school principals, and first-grade students of the elementary school of the Fun School Movement (FSM) model. The study was conducted between September 2022 and April 2023. The study was conducted in three elementary schools of the FSM model, namely Rejodani Public ES, Karangmloko 2 Public Elementary School, and Ngebelgede 2 Public Elementary School. These locations were selected because they had implemented the SEL approach as one of the principles of FSM embodiment. The data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Miles et al. (2014) state that the data analysis consisted of acquisition, condensing, presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The validity of the data was examined through source and technique triangulation.

Results and Discussion

Results
The Implementation of the SEL Approach in the Classroom
Implementing the SEL approach in the classroom begins with the teacher giving trigger questions and inviting students to carry out activities that lead to the five competencies of SEL: self-awareness, self-management or self-regulation, social awareness, establishing relationships and cooperation, and making responsible decisions. In implementing the SEL approach, the first grades are divided into three parts, namely, opening activities, core activities, and closing activities. All activities and activities during the learning process are integrated with the subject matter and conditions that occur during the teaching and learning process. An example of an activity or activity is that the teacher invites students to discuss and share, as well as carry out various learning activities that support the competence of SEL, such as self-actualization, working in groups, telling stories, appreciation, and reflection. It is based on the results of the interview.

For the flow in the class, it begins with (habituation) reciting asmaul husna, then continues with checking moods such as, 'How are you feeling this morning?', now 2-3 children will talk about their feelings, and then their friends will give feedback. Next, there are questions related to the subject matter to build children's reasoning so that questions and answers occurred. In the middle of learning, I also give ice breaking to refocus the children, and at the end, I always ask the children to reflect on today's learning and what they got.

The implementation of SEL in teaching and learning activities in the classroom must begin with a 'lighter'. The 'lighter' can be an image, video, or even a question. After that, the children will be given space or circle time to digest and think and allowed to share their thoughts and feelings. In addition, invite children to have the courage to express their opinions and knowledge without fear. Do not forget that the teachers have to share their feelings and give time for children to express their stories every morning. At the end of the lesson, they reflect on habituation. Children can write on the sheets provided or share them directly by telling stories again.

Based on this, implementing SEL in class begins with an opening activity. In this opening activity, the teacher asks about how students feel, "How do you feel this morning?" then the teacher allows students to tell stories related to the background of their mood. Furthermore, the teacher gives trigger questions that build reasoning and discussion to direct students to learning material by presenting images

or other supporting media. In the middle of learning, the teacher also does 'circle time' or sharing with students the ability to be invited to sit on the floor on a mat to form a circle. At the end of the lesson, the teacher invites students to reflect on today's learning activities by writing on the sheets provided or sharing them directly by telling stories and expressing their feelings and thoughts.

Apart from noting the five competency aspects of SEL, the teacher develops and creates activities for implementing SEL in classroom learning. As a facilitator, the teacher is given the freedom and discretion to create various activities that support and facilitate learning that provides emotional and social space for students to convey their thoughts and feelings.

In SEL activities in class, the teacher set the seats for the children in groups of four. Of course, that's not without reason, but rather it provides an opportunity for children to learn and practice how to interact and be social because, later in it, they will intersect and work together. In the morning, the teacher does the habituation for children to fill the emotional zone, and at the beginning of learning, she asks to give space for children to share because children's feelings will affect the learning process. Some of these 'emotional zones' are filled daily, and some are filled weekly on weekends. She also routinely holds 'Sharing Wednesdays' and 'Writing Thursdays' to allow children to express and reflect on their feelings and experiences. So, starting from there, children unconsciously learn how to listen, appreciate, and have the courage to try.

The results of these interviews lead to the conclusion that the implementation of SEL in first-grade learning is carried out with various activities that integrate aspects of SEL competence, such as at the beginning of learning or during the opening activities, the teacher asks about feelings and provides space and opportunities for students to talk about what that underlies his mood. Furthermore, in the learning process or core activities, the teacher invites and trains students to discuss and work together in completing a challenge to train communication skills and relationships between students. Finally, at the end of the lesson, the teacher always gives appreciation in the form of affirmative sentences and gives kindness stars to students and invites students to reflect on the learning activities that have been carried out. In addition, to support the SEL implementation process, the teacher uses various zones in every corner of the class, such as the emotional zone, the class agreement zone, the goodness zone, the presence zone, the work and creation zone, and various other zones.

Implementing the SEL approach in first-grade learning with the mentioned activities aligns with the researchers' observations. Implementing first-grade SEL in three FSM model schools inserts five aspects of SEL in learning activities: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, establishing relationships, and making responsible decisions. The teacher shows these aspects helping students recognize and manage themselves (emotional, social, skill and academic potential, and self-actualization). Students can express their feelings and reflect on themselves. Students respect each other, help each other, and have high empathy with friends, students can work in groups actively and happily, and students can make and carry out these decisions with full responsibility. In addition, the results of the analysis of documentation in the form of photographs during teaching and learning activities and student work indicate that the implementation of the SEL approach in the three FSM model ES has a similar form of activity or activities, namely providing opportunities and space for students to practice their social-emotional abilities by being involved in active learning with a pleasant classroom climate.

Problems and Solutions during Classroom Learning

During the implementation of learning in class, especially in lower grades, namely first grade, where students are in a transitional period or transition from kindergarten to ES, teachers often encounter various problems with students. Because at that age, students adapt to a new environment and culture that is different from before, they cannot be separated from problems. The problems encountered in implementing the SEL approach in the classroom are the diverse developmental abilities of students, both socially, emotionally, cognitively, and motorically.

There must be problems because not all children can follow our expected path. Some children are still lacking and are late in reading and writing, which became an obstacle for me at the beginning of the semester. For that, the teacher work around this by making extra special hours for reading and writing because the abilities of each child are different, so I group the children according to their level of ability to make it easier to provide treatment according to the needs of each child.

In the case of low grades, the problem sometimes comes from the answers given by the children to the questions asked by the teacher, which are often not what is expected. So, this is a challenge for

making questions using the simplest sentences and being understood by children. Keeping the class conducive is also challenging for the teacher. The solution to keeping the first grade conducive is inviting children to recall the class agreements made and agreed upon together.

The diversity of each student's abilities and potential influences their acceptance in the learning process and the growth of their social and emotional aspects. It is challenging for classroom teachers to approach, know, and handle each student with different needs and problems. Suppose there are obstacles or difficulties following the learning process because these students are children with special needs. In that case, the school will take action by involving parents and bringing in experts such as counselors or psychologists.

The results of these interviews lead to the conclusion that the problems encountered in implementing the SEL approach in class are the diverse developmental abilities of students, both social-emotionally, cognitively, and motorically. At the basic level, the class teacher can overcome the problem by taking a personal approach to students experiencing problems, such as inviting them to communicate and describe the problems they face together. However, if the problem has not been resolved, it will be followed up by the school principal and parents or even at a higher level by bringing in a counselor or psychologist.

The problems and solutions when learning in the classroom that have been mentioned are in line with the observations the researchers made. Problems during class learning were observed when the researcher took part in first-grade teaching and learning. These problems occur among students but can be resolved by the class teacher by reminding them of the class rules that have been made and mutually agreed upon and inviting students to reflect on their actions.

The Implementation of the SEL Approach in the School Environment

Implementing SEL in the elementary school of the FSM model environment is integrated with the school's programmed routine agenda. All forms of this program are, of course, based on aspects of SEL competence. The program's purpose is to meet students' social and emotional requirements, foster good character, encourage student participation, and create a positive and enjoyable school environment. It is founded on the outcomes of the subsequent interviews.

In implementing SEL, the school makes various programs, agendas and activities that provide a social-emotional platform for students. There are sharing classes so that children can tell their stories. The teachers become aware of children's problems at home because the background of the child's psychological condition greatly influences the children's attitude at school in participating in the learning process. Then, they also have a 'Cheerful Saturday', filled with various activities such as morning exercise, healthy walks, market day, and cooking day. Then they also have a 'Blessed Friday', filled with dhuha and midday prayers, shaking hands, and remembrance of *asmaul husna* daily. All this information is stored in the SEL. Because by establishing closeness with children socially and emotionally, academic achievement will follow and increase.

Apart from the school program and agenda, the implementation of SEL in the school environment is also indicated by changes in the appearance of the school environment, which provide space for students to play and learn and facilitate students' social-emotional development.

It can be concluded that the implementation of SEL in schools is to make various kinds of school activity agendas that provide social and emotional space for students, such as Sharing Wednesdays, Writing Thursdays, Blessing Fridays, Clean Fridays, Healthy Fridays, Cheerful Saturdays, Brainstorming, Circle Time, Cooking Day, Market Day, Buddy Program. In addition, it is supported by changing the appearance of the school's face by creating a positive school environment climate that is colorful and has aesthetic value and by making the school a park for students to play as well as learn so that students feel happy, comfortable and feel at home at school.

The implementation of SEL in schools integrated into the various school programs and agendas mentioned aligns with the results of document analysis and documentation studies that researchers conducted. The document analysis results show that programs integrated with the curriculum are shown in the curriculum structure of the habituation and life skills education section and in the organization of learning in the cultural actualization section. The form of the SEL implementation program at the ES of FSM model is to carry out class outing activities with the main focus on honing life skills, manners, holding periodic market day and cooking day activities, routinely carrying out Action Friday Berinfaq,

reading *asmaul husna*, physical fitness gymnastics, clean Friday action, morning sharing, holding exhibitions of work, parent association meetings, social services, and Class Competitions.

The implementation of SEL in the schools mentioned aligns with the researchers' observations. The observations show that the implementation of SEL in schools can be seen when the teacher allows students to tell stories about anything at the beginning of learning in the 'Wednesday Sharing' activity. Students actively raised their hands to share their stories and feelings. Then, one of the students told me that he had just bought ornamental fish and birds. On a different 'Sharing Wednesday' opportunity, on January 18, 2023, it was seen that students were actively filling the emotional zone, which in grade 1 was called the "today's feeling zone" Then two students got the opportunity to share their feelings according to what was filled in the emotional zone. The two students are T, and N. T said she was happy that morning because her mother had returned to work, while N said she was happy to come to school because she met friends.

Implementation of SEL in schools with physical fitness gymnastic activities was found at the time the observation was carried out. The observation results show that in the activity of healthy exercise together, the teacher invites students to appear in front of guiding the gymnastics. Then most of the female students immediately dashed forward. The observations also showed dhikr *asmaul husna* activities at the beginning of learning. The teacher invited students to do ice-breaking and sharing sessions to allow them to share their experiences after attending the outing class with the agenda of visiting the Sonobudoyo Museum and practicing making pizza.

The implementation of SEL at school with the 'Cooking Day' activity was found during the observation. The observations show that even though the 'cooking class' activity is carried out independently, in practice, students work together and help friends who encounter problems and experience difficulties. For example, when one of the students did not bring a mat, the friend who brought more was given a loan. Then, all the students looked enthusiastic about learning to make this omelet filled with bananas. Some students even dared to try to stir the dough using a mixer. In addition, the observation results also show an implementation of SEL in schools with outing class activities in first grade. The student activity agenda is playing and learning in the open and parenting sessions for parents. In this outbound opportunity, students are introduced to the surrounding environment and natural resources humans use to meet their daily needs, learn how to grow crops, and play group games to increase sportsmanship and cooperation and provide emotional and social space. In addition, the parenting activities of the teacher and parents have the theme 'From Us to Us'. In the parenting of class teachers and Islamic religious education teachers, provide space for dialogue and communication to guardians/parents regarding the growth and development of children in classes and schools, as well as discussing programs that will be implemented in the future, such as additional special study time for reading, writing, and counting recitation activities.

Discussion

According to the study's findings, which were conducted through interviews, observations, and documentation studies, applying SEL in the FSM model ES is the next stage after the planning stage. The implementation of SEL is a learning approach planned and prepared beforehand. Implementing SEL in the FSM model ES is integrated into classroom learning and school programs based on students' social-emotional needs, including students' potential, interests and talents, development and conditions to master aspects of students' social-emotional competence. It is in line with the theoretical study obtained by Schonert-Reichl (2017) and Jones & Doolittle (2017), which the SEL approach aims to improve students' social and emotional skills by presenting a positive environment and directing students toward positive goals so that learning emphasizes not only cognitive but also affective and student character development. In addition, teaching and learning activities in FSM model schools are observed in close, warm, comfortable, and fun relationships and make classrooms and schools a playground for students to learn. This is consistent with the opinions of Ghasya (2018) and Wicaksono (2020), who state that a school is considered fun if it has an atmosphere that is relaxed, free of pressure, safe, attractive, awakens interest in learning, full involvement of students, devoted attention to participants, an interesting learning environment, excited students, joyful students, and students with high concentration.

The study's findings indicate that implementing the SEL strategy in FSM model ES, especially in first grade, runs in an atmosphere of harmonious, democratic, mutual acceptance and appreciation,

mutual concern, appreciation and motivation for student and teacher relations. The findings of this study concur with Martin et al. (2017), who contend that students' motivation and engagement, as two primary examples of positive academic behaviors, facilitate their learning success. Consequently, increasing academic motivation and student engagement has been a top priority for all effective instructors (Peng, 2021). It is also in line with the principles of Ki Hajar Dewantara: *ing ngarsa sung tuladha, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani* (behind giving power and strength, in the middle fostering initiative and enthusiasm, in front of setting an example).

According to the study findings, while using the SEL method, teachers are not only fixated on learning activities planned in the Learning Implementation Plan or learning scenarios. However, in the process, teachers can develop their own SEL approaches adapted to the situations and conditions of the class during the learning process by carrying out various learning activities that can meet aspects of SEL competencies, as for examples of activities during class learning such as morning sharing, brainstorming, discussions, circle time, reflection, and appreciation. This statement supports Emaliana's opinion (2017), which reveals that to consider and support and facilitate students' needs, teachers can invite students to encourage cooperation, such as role-playing, exchanging ideas and thoughts, conveying opinions, and sharing experiences.

The study's results also show that the activities of the SEL approach emphasize independent learning, which provides space for students' freedom of expression so that the learning process becomes active and not one-way. According to Ali (2019) and Justino and Rafael (2021), a student-centered approach may promote critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and lifetime learning. Through changes in seating arrangements that are not monotonous, communication links from various directions are created that are more interactive between students and teachers. This remark is consistent with Rogers' (2020) belief that the classroom layout may best assist in fostering involvement and learning attainment. The position or seating arrangement and the class layout are also interesting, marked by several zones in every corner of the classroom so that students will develop optimally according to their needs. It is in line with the statement of Hrbackova & Hrncirikova (2022) that psychological comfort is important for students to get a positive assessment of the school environment. SEL refers to the processes by which people acquire and effectively apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills that allow them to understand and manage their emotions, feel and show empathy for others, set and achieve positive goals, develop and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2013).

From the results of observations that have been made, the implementation of SEL in the school environment is also indicated by changes in the appearance of the school environment, which provides space for students to play as well as learn by utilizing the school environment as a playground. The appearance of the school environment, which gives a positive impression, is a difference and advantage of other schools with the ES of the FSM model. In addition, the SEL approach is implemented in the ES of the FSM model environment, which is integrated with the school's programmed routine agenda. Of course, these activities are based on SEL competency aspects, such as Sharing Wednesday, Writing Thursday, Blessing Friday, Clean Friday, Healthy Friday, Cheerful Saturday, Brainstorming, Circle Time, Cooking Day, Market Day, and Buddy Program. According to Smith, Faith, and Charlene (2014), a positive school climate is fostered by a vision of mutual respect. It provides a sense of security and collective concern for the school's physical environment that involves all members of the education system. According to Osher et al. (2020), the most important component of school climate is related to students' interactions with teachers, school administrative staff, and peers regarding emotional, physical, social, and intellectual security, connectedness, respect, support, involvement, relational trust, and cultural responsiveness.

This study's findings support Bai et al. (2021) and Davis et al. (2021) that incorporating SEL into the classroom helps students control their emotions and sustain connections with others. This study also supports a study conducted by McCormick et al. (2013), who found positive academic results in mathematics and reading following the implementation of SEL in the classroom and school environment. Next, a study conducted by Duginske (2017) and Alzahrani et al. (2019) noted in his study that good emotional-social skills will affect students' academic achievement.

Conclusion

The study's findings indicate that integrating the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) approach within the elementary school of the FSM model is executed within both the classroom and the broader school setting. The classroom's implementation of the SEL approach is designed by the class teacher, such as discussions, morning sharing, giving sympathy stars, appreciation, class agreements, group work, circle time, and reflection. In contrast, the SEL method implementation in the school environment is included in the agenda or school habituation program. The next study is expected to review SEL planning and evaluation so that the management of SEL comprehensively improves students' socio-emotional competence. Overall, this study highlights the importance of integrating SEL into ES, showing its positive influence on students' socio-emotional development and providing valuable insights for educational stakeholders seeking to enhance student outcomes holistically.

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