How could teachers and teacher educators develop as inquiring professionals?

Modelling social and emotional skills

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Warm up

Part 1

Instruction: On your own, think of as many **Social and Emotional Skills** as you can.

Write **one skill per sticky note.**

Think about the things trainee teachers need to succeed socially and emotionally.

Time: 2 minutes

Part 2

Instruction: Get up and post your sticky notes in the column where you think the skill belongs.

If a column is already labelled with the skill, you can add your note beneath it or place the note in another category if you think it fits there better.

SELF-AWARENESS	SELF-MANAGEMENT	SOCIAL AWARENESS	RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

CASEL core competencies for SEL

Category	Example Teacher-Generated Skills
Self-Awareness	Identifying emotions, recognizing strengths, self-confidence.
Self-Management	Impulse control, stress management, self-motivation, organization.
Social Awareness	Perspective-taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, respect for others.
Relationship Skills	Communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, active listening.
Responsible Decision-Making	Analyzing situations, problem-solving, ethical responsibility, reflection.

Part 3

Look at the variety of skills listed.

Why is it important that we, as teacher educators, *model* and explicitly *teach* these skills every day?

Objectives

To identify opportunities to develop trainee teachers' own social and emotional skills through inquiry-based activities

To make links between a trainee teachers' own set of social and emotional skills and their ability to teach and model these same skills in the classroom.

Policy and research

Managing Behaviour (Standard 7 – Manage behaviour effectively)

Learn that…	Learn how to…

8. Teaching and modelling a range of social and emotional skills (e.g. how to recognise and understand feelings, manage emotions, and sustain positive relationships) can support pupils' social and emotional development.

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Department for Education

Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework

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CASEL (2020, p.1) defines SEL as

"the process through which [we] acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities; manage emotions; achieve goals; show empathy; establish and maintain supportive relationships and make responsible, caring decisions".

Social and emotional skills (SES) are essential for students and influence socio-economic outcomes throughout an individual's life (OECD, 2020)

SEL and SES programmes are less prevalent in UK compared with US, so yet little is known about how teachers interpret them (Wood, 2022)

To develop pupils' social and emotional skills (SES), it is argued that teachers need the same set of skills for their own wellbeing and resilience (Sandilos et al., 2023).

Teacher's 'drive' SEL programmes but if we do not understand teachers' own SES and how they influence pupils' SEL, we will never know how to develop SEL in classrooms (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Modelling social and emotional skills directly supports inquiry-based learning by fostering the collaboration, communication, and critical thinking required for it.

CASEL, 2024

Inquiry-based learning

Scenario 1:
Handling a lesson failure.

Scenario 2:
Handling critical feedback from mentor.

Scenario 3:
Mentor expressing excessive personal stress.

Scenario 4:
Mentor overload and missed feedback opportunity.

Scenario 5:
Trainee feeling micro-managed by mentor.

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1. What SES are required by the trainee?
2. How might they resolve the situation?
3. How might a Teacher Educator teach or model these skills?

Scenario 1: Handling lesson failure

The trainee attempts a complex, innovative lesson that the mentor had expressed mild scepticism about.

The lesson completely fails; students are confused, the technology breaks, and the trainee ends the period feeling embarrassed and defeated.

Scenario 2: Handling critical feedback from mentor

After delivering a lesson, the mentor gives the trainee very direct, constructive criticism about their classroom management strategy, pointing out several areas for immediate improvement, which makes the trainee feel inadequate and defensive.

Scenario 3: Mentor expressing excessive personal stress

The mentor frequently uses their check-in time with the trainee to vent about unrelated frustrations (e.g., school politics, personal problems) to the extent that the trainee feels like an emotional dumping ground, taking time away from crucial professional mentoring.

Scenario 4: Mentor overload and missed feedback opportunity

The mentor is under significant pressure due to external school duties and has repeatedly postponed scheduled observation feedback sessions with the trainee, who is desperate for guidance and worried about meeting university deadlines.

The trainee feels ignored and anxious.

Scenario 5: Trainee feels micro-managed by mentor

The mentor, though well-intentioned, provides overly detailed lesson plans and insists on editing the trainee's materials extensively before every class, leading the trainee to feel a lack of autonomy and confidence in their own professional judgment.

Scenario	SEL skills	Resolution
1. Handling lesson failure	**Responsible Decision-Making** (Owning the failure, self-reflection, seeking specific advice).	The trainee approaches the mentor, summarizes the three key reasons the lesson failed, and asks for specific feedback on which element to tackle first. The mentor, seeing the trainee's professionalism and self-reflection, provides supportive and actionable advice for revising the plan.
2. Handling critical feedback from mentor	**Self-Management** (Regulating emotional response, pausing before replying).	The trainee thanks the mentor for the feedback, asks clarifying questions to ensure they understand the points, and sets a goal with the mentor to implement one specific change in the next lesson.

3. Mentor expressing excessing personal stress	**Social Awareness & Self-Management** (Boundary setting, empathetic redirection)	The trainee gently but firmly steers the conversation back to pedagogy, ensuring that the allocated time is used for the trainee's development, thereby establishing a healthier professional boundary.
4. Mentor overload and missed feedback opportunity	**Self-Management** (Proactive initiative, preparing efficient documentation)	The trainee sends a concise email detailing the most critical points they need feedback on. The mentor, appreciative of the organization, commits to reviewing the points and providing written feedback within 24 hours, followed by a brief check-in during lunch.
5. Trainee feels micro-managed by mentor	**Relationship Skills** (Respectful assertiveness, negotiating independence)	The trainee proposes a structure where the mentor reviews the full plan on Mondays, but then gives the trainee full control to execute and reflect on the lessons, with the agreement that the trainee will implement the mentor's suggestion if an issue arises.

How can we incorporate "modelling" of SES into teacher educator sessions?

Self-awareness: Modelling self-reflection and emotional recognition.

Teacher trainees must first be aware of their own emotions, biases, and stressors before they can manage a complex classroom.

Modelling strategy	Activity
Emotional check-in	Start every course session or supervision meeting with a quick "How are you showing up today?" prompt. **Model first:** "I am feeling a little stressed from grading, but I am choosing to focus on our productive conversation."
Reflective journaling	Assign structured reflection journals after classroom observations or teaching a lesson. The prompts should focus on their **emotional response** (e.g., "What moment was most energizing/frustrating? How did that feeling affect your instruction?")
Classroom feedback	Use **video recording** of their teaching or **peer observation** with a specific focus. The feedback should address their non-verbal cues (e.g., "I noticed your voice volume increased when that student challenged you. What emotion was driving that?").

Self-Management: Modelling Stress-Coping and Goal-Setting

Teacher burnout is a major issue; trainees need to learn how to manage stress and stay motivated.

Modelling strategy	Activity
Mindfulness breaks	**Model a three-minute mindful breathing exercise** at the start of a difficult lecture or after a challenging discussion. Explain the *purpose* ("I feel the stress building, so we are taking three breaths to re-centre ourselves before we proceed.").
"WOOP" protocol	Teach and use a goal-setting protocol like **WOOP** (**W**ish, **O**utcome, **O**bstacle, **P**lan) for their long-term teaching goals and short-term class management goals. This models a structured approach to self-motivation and overcoming impulses.
Calm and consistent response	Instead of saying "You shouldn't have done that," model **Responsible Decision-Making** by asking, "Let's pause. What were you feeling in that moment? What is a better action plan for next time?"

Social Awareness: Modelling Empathy and Perspective-Taking

Trainees must understand the diverse perspectives of their future students, families, and colleagues.

Modelling strategy	Activity
Deconstructing scenarios	Use **case studies or role-playing** of challenging student-teacher or parent-teacher interactions. Have trainees take on the *student's* or *parent's* perspective to discuss their potential emotions and motivations.
Acknowledge privilege/bias	**Model the language of acknowledging one's own identity and biases** and how they might impact classroom equity (e.g., "Based on my background, I may have a blind spot regarding this issue. What are your perspectives?").
Curiosity over judgement	When discussing a student's challenging behaviour, **model asking clarifying, non-judgmental questions** (e.g., "What might be happening in that student's life that would cause this reaction?" rather than simply labelling the student as 'disruptive')

Relationship Skills: Modelling Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

Adults need to be able to build trust and resolve conflict respectfully.

Modelling strategy	Activity
Structured discussion circles	Use **Community Building Circles** as the format for weekly meetings. This models active listening, equal voice, and setting collaborative norms, which they will use with their own students
Giving and receiving feedback	**Model growth-oriented, specific feedback** on their lesson plans or teaching. Teach them to use "I appreciate... I wonder..." statements, and then model **receiving** their feedback about the course with openness and a commitment to adjust.
Repairing mistakes	If a mentor makes an error or miscommunication with a trainee, **model a direct apology and repair strategy** (e.g., "I apologize that my feedback was unclear yesterday. I was tired, and I let my frustration show. Let's talk about it again now to ensure we're aligned.").

Responsible Decision-making and Relationship Skills: Modelling emotional regulation and collaboration through conflict scenarios

These scenarios are designed to practice conflict resolution using "I-Messages," perspective-taking, and de-escalation techniques.

Role	Details/objectives
Trainee teacher	You are the student-teacher. Your goal is to **actively listen**, apologize for the miscommunication, and schedule a follow-up meeting with the cooperating teacher present. **Focus on using a calm tone and "I-Messages."**
Upset parent	Your child came home upset because they feel they were unfairly disciplined for talking to a friend. You are angry that the teacher didn't call you first. You are approaching the teacher immediately after school, feeling protective and dismissed
Observer/coach	Note how effectively the teacher maintains a calm posture, validates the parent's emotion ("I hear how upset you are..."), and avoids getting defensive

Plenary

Reflect on this session and how you currently support trainees to teach and model SES.

Anything you may do in addition/differently moving forward?

Be prepared to share in a Round Robin.

Our Research

Measuring social and emotional competencies of pre-service and ECT teachers at Primary and Secondary.

- TRUST questionnaire (quantitative)
- Classroom observations (qualitative)

In collaboration with Liebniz Institute, Germany and Yale University, USA.

If you'd like to learn more or be willing to allow us access to participants in your training establishments, please email leila.walker@uwe.ac.uk