

## Therapization and emotions in the SEL's policy enactment in the school

### Terapización y emociones en la puesta en práctica de políticas de ASE en la escuela

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#### Background

Since the 1990s, a phenomenon internationally known as the emotional turn in education has proliferated, characterized by the increase of studies on the importance, application, design and evaluation of programs oriented to the development of the socio-emotional dimension within educational establishments. In Chile this proliferation has been reflected in various considerations within educational policies, such as: the definition of a comprehensive education, the emergence and updates of the National School Coexistence Policy, the incorporation of Personal and Social Development Indicators in the SIMCE; more recently the socioemotional learning questionnaire of the Comprehensive Learning Diagnosis, among others. These efforts have been operationalized under the name of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) policies. The implementation of SEL policies is a phenomenon that has been studied predominantly from the logic of the evaluation of specific programs. Although studies have been carried out on the implementation of SEL policies alone, it is necessary to develop a research approach that addresses the different SEL policies and discourses on the emotional, from the point of view of those who are in charge of putting these institutional mandates into practice.

#### Aims

The article analyzes how professionals make sense of the emotional dimension in SEL policies and how they implement these policies in Chilean schools. To do this, it examines how emotions are articulated under therapeutic logic to form a specific emotional style and how SEL professionals justify the therapization of education and the development of an introspective and affective emotional style in students. Additionally, the implications of the therapization of education and development towards an introspective and affective emotional style are discussed.

#### Method & procedures

This article describes a research project that aims to analyze the narratives of professionals responsible for implementing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) policies, in order to understand the implementation of emotional learning and its effects. The study was conducted using a narrative perspective, which understands narrative as a performative and transformative action that constructs experience and its meanings. The project was also influenced by the theoretical and methodological contributions of Ball et al. (2012), which view educational policies as being translated and interpreted by those who implement them. The fieldwork was carried out during 2021, using narrative interviews as the primary data production strategy. The participants included professionals responsible for implementing SEL policies in primary education establishments, such as school principals, coexistence managers, educational psychologists, and form teachers. The sample was selected based on their professional position, availability, and generality within Chilean educational establishments, as well as their connection to the promotion, management, and implementation of SEL policies. The data analysis was carried out using the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) technique, which focuses on identifying themes and patterns of meaning in the data, and places the subjectivity of the researcher at the forefront. The article emphasizes the importance of understanding how emotional learning policies are implemented and interpreted by professionals, and the potential impact on the

development of socio-emotional skills in students.

### Results & discussion

The research results indicate that the promotion of a certain type of language and emotional, therapeutic, introspective/affectionate approach is the way in which the senses of the emotional and the implementation of SEL policies are articulated. Affective speech is an institutionalized socio-cultural technique whose ultimate goal is the configuration of an emotionally regulated subject, and the educational space is a suitable place for this. Developing an introspective/affectionate style would allow for the capitalization of one's own emotions and participation in a sophisticated form of social stratification. The promotion of an introspective/affectionate style does not imply the development of a deracinated, narcissistic, or socially deracinated individual, but rather, it would be a phenomenon of institutionalization of the self strongly rooted in our culture. The "therapization of education" is a trend where social and educational policies promote emotional language and introspective approaches in order to create emotionally regulated individuals. Affective speech is seen as a key factor in developing socio-emotional skills, which are now considered essential competencies in neoliberal societies. However, it is important not to confuse this with the work of educational psychologists. Instead, the therapization of education can be seen as an updated version of an ancient pedagogy focused on character building. The author notes that emotions are present in all learning and development, but they should not be treated as absolute or prioritized above other functions.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge that the presented analysis is not a definitive understanding of the intentions of educational policies regarding emotions. Due to the current stage of SEL policies and the pandemic period that has reconfigured educational practices in this area, this research demonstrates how cultural processes, political urgencies, and daily work of professionals intertwine. The scope of this study is limited by its historical period and methodology, and an ethnographic approach could complement the narratives regarding the implementation of these policies. Further research is needed to understand the impact of certain forms of reasoning on school life and to include students as active and critical agents in these processes.

**Keywords:** education, emotions, social and emotional learning, therapeutic school, therapeutic ethos

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