

**HOW AN EXPERIENCED TEACHER PLANNED AND INTEGRATED  
PRACTICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL  
COMPETENCE IN HER KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY**

by

Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro

BA, University of Santa Catarina, Brazil, 2016

M.Sc., University of São Paulo, Brazil, 2019

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the thesis entitled:

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in Interdisciplinary Studies

**Examining Committee:**

Laurie Ford, Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education

Co-supervisor

Catherine Ann Cameron, Psychology

Co-supervisor

Jim Anderson, Language and Literacy Education

Supervisory Committee Member

## **Abstract**

Social-emotional competence is a significant aspect of early learning, and school teachers are expected to address the social and emotional needs of children. There are several concepts related to social and emotional competence that have influenced the way in which teachers implement practices for addressing the social and emotional needs of children. A common way that teachers exploit opportunities to address social and emotional competence is by using already developed primary intervention programmes. A series of phenomena are seen to compromise the efficacy of these programs, such as lack of fidelity and buy-in, and little is known about how kindergarten teachers integrate practices for the development of social and emotional competence into their daily practice. This Case Study used Thematic Content analysis of class plans, observations and interviews with one teacher to explore how an experienced kindergarten teacher plans opportunities and integrates practices for the development of social and emotional competence in her classroom. How this teacher articulates the process of planning and implementing opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence was also explored. This study took place in a public school in the lower mainland of British Columbia, Canada, where the school curriculum had focused on the issue of social and emotional competence for many years. The teacher used different planned and spontaneous strategies to support children's development of social and emotional competence. The most used strategies involved books and humour. Her experience helped her develop the expertise to integrate teaching practices that are effective in creating a positive environment for learning. However, teachers may benefit from getting more support to ease their job. As it was a case study, other contexts may reveal different findings. Future

research may focus on studying how a teacher might use humour and internet search to support children's development of social and emotional competence.

## **Lay Summary**

For many years, teachers in British Columbia, Canada have been expected to help children, especially in their early years of schooling, with their social and emotional development. While we know that addressing the social/emotional development of children is one aspect of the education of young children, little is known about the processes by which they do this. The purpose of this case study was to explore how one experienced kindergarten teacher plans and implements practices for the development of social and emotional competence of her students during daily practices in the classroom.

## **Preface**

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, A. Ribeiro, under the supervision of Drs. Laurie Ford and Ann Cameron. This study submitted with the file H19-00741 at the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and was approved under the title: *How experienced teachers plan and integrate practices for the development of social and emotional competence in kindergarten: A case study.*

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*To my dear parents*

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Social and emotional competence is recognized as a significant aspect of early learning and development (Goodman et al., 2015). Future success and positive life outcomes can be dependent on the development of children's early social and emotional competencies (Jones et al., 2015). Goodman and colleagues reported that when young children are socially and emotionally competent, they are more likely to develop positive life outcomes and higher levels of wellbeing when compared to less socially and emotionally competent peers.

Studies have recently evidenced how academic learning and emotional development are closely intertwined in the early years (Heller et al., 2012; Raver & Knitzer, 2002; Wenz-Gross et al., 2018). Durlak and colleagues (2011) claim that early years education is critical in equipping children not only with academic knowledge and skills but also with social and emotional competence, shaping foundations for lifelong learning and socio-emotional functioning. A significant portion of time each day is spent in group settings in school, and social and emotional competencies are best inducted and acquired when children are situated in a group setting (Collie, 2020). Therefore, kindergarten teachers play a vital role in the development of children's social and emotional competence by facilitating appropriate interactions and experiences (Kirk & Jay, 2018; Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011; McLaughlin et al., 2017; Ng & Bull, 2018).

The role of education in developing social and emotional competence is hardly a new idea (Cohen, 2006). Three thousand years ago, in Greece, Egypt, and India, at the beginning of formal education, schooling was considered first and foremost a socialization process (Nash, 1968; Padel, 1992). Also, five hundred years later, the words "know thyself" were carved on the wall of the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi and served as an organizing idea for Greek society, which valued self-knowledge, including emotions and behaviours (Snell, 1982). Finally, the importance

of the environment and its power to shape human behaviour, both essential dimensions for the development of social and emotional competence, have been recognized for centuries. For instance, around two thousand years ago, BC, Hippocrates asserted that climate and geography form human character (Jones, 1923).

Currently, the social and emotional needs of children in British Columbia, Canada are commonly addressed by the implementation of primary preventive or positive development programs at school (Le Mare, 2011). Such programs have a ready-to-be-delivered curriculum that teachers are trained to implement in the classroom to address children's social and emotional competency needs. The popularity of this approach is in part because it can easily be translated into a sequence of steps to be followed toward clearly documentable desired outcomes (Le Mare, 2011). This approach to addressing social and emotional competence has become increasingly popular in the current era of accountability within education, as an evaluation tool is a part of many programs (Kohn, 2000).

### **Rationale for the Present Study**

It has been documented that many challenges may be faced by educators within a school day in implementing a prevention program due to the lack of resources, time, or priority in achieving academic curricular demands (Ng & Bull, 2018). Moreover, schools may also perceive structured programs to be insensitive to their cultural context and therefore make modifications, adjusting it to their reality, which may be seen to compromise fidelity and threaten program efficacy (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

The integration of 'teachable' opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence in teaching practices, as it has been for centuries, is a possible solution in addressing the social and emotional needs of children. However, little is known about whether, when, or

how kindergarten teachers actively create their own opportunities to adopt strategies to facilitate the development of social and emotional competence. In this research observational data from one classroom, teacher interviews, and classroom lesson-plans were used to explore how an experienced kindergarten teacher plans opportunities and integrates practices for the development of social and emotional competence in her classroom. How this teacher articulates the process of planning and implementing such opportunities was also explored through the analysis of interviews.

## **Key Concepts**

### ***Kindergarten***

This study took place in the province of British Columbia, where children can start kindergarten in September of the year they turn five years old. A full-day, play-based kindergarten program is available for all five-year-olds in British Columbia.

### ***Kindergarten Teacher***

To teach in British Columbia's kindergarten-to-Grade-12 public-education sector, teachers must have completed a teacher-training program that qualifies them to teach from kindergarten to Grade 12 in the public education system and obtain a teaching certification.

### ***Social and Emotional Competence***

Social and emotional competence was understood as composed of a broad set of skills that children learn how to use appropriately and effectively, depending on their culture, context, identity, and circumstance (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) in the present study. These social and emotional skills include, but are not limited to, problem-solving skills; understanding, identifying, expressing, and regulating emotions; skills to form close and secure relationships;

engaging in positive interactions with others; resolving peer conflicts; and resilience (Denham et al., 2003; Goodman et al., 2015).

### ***Teaching Practices***

Teaching practices, as considered in this study, are intentionally planned or spontaneously implemented (Han & Kemple, 2006). These activities are structured and pre-designed by the teacher to maximize the likelihood that children will attain certain goals. Spontaneously implemented practices are strategies that the teacher implemented on-the-spot in response to the demand of a specific moment or child.

### ***Integrated Practice***

In the present study, integrated teaching practices are those implemented by a teacher to provide opportunities for the development of social and emotional competencies outside a standardized positive development program (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). Within this approach, the development of social and emotional competence is integrated into daily practices in the classroom, with the teacher placing a particular emphasis on the processes by which such skills are acquired (Le Mare, 2011; Reeves & Le Mare, 2017)

### **Summary**

Social and emotional competence is recognized as a significant area of early learning. Teachers are expected to address the social and emotional needs of children at the start of schooling. However, little is known about how reception/kindergarten teachers integrate such practices for the development of social and emotional competence in their daily practices.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### **Social and Emotional Competence and Related Concepts Through History**

The role of education in developing social and emotional competence is not a new concept (Cohen, 2006). In North America, it has been addressed in schools in various ways throughout history. Which competencies should be acquired have also changed over time, depending on community social and economic needs, religious and scientific discourses, and historically specific hierarchies of race, gender, and social class (Boler, 2004).

#### ***Moral Education***

Colonial schools in North America taught social and emotional competencies that were based on Christian principles; protestant and other religious values derived the “good student” through moral rules of obedience (Mulkey, 1997). The focus was on “devotional” activities, emphasizing politeness and relying on a teacher’s moral example. “Parents, as well as educational theorists, increasingly insisted on teachers of good character, and this, in turn, was to include mastery of temper” (Stearns, 1986, p. 102).

A few decades earlier, the family was responsible for the education of children in what were then British North American colonies. The pattern began to change at the beginning of the 19th century as the British government viewed education as a way of promoting cultural identification with Christianity, the English language, and British customs (Gaffield, 2019). The teacher was expected to set a good example for the child, as was the mother (Boler, 2004).

The concept of the ideal “moral student” was also transported into Native American cultures, for example, by forcing young children from Indigenous cultures to live with white, middle-class families as part of their educational and socialization experience (Boler, 2004). Many children were also forced to attend religious/state residential schools to assimilate into the

primarily Christian culture. Before contact with Europeans, Indigenous peoples had their own means to educate their youth: By demonstration, group socialization, cultural and spiritual rituals, skill induction and oral teachings (Mccue, 2020). The establishment of European classroom-style education as part of a larger goal of acculturation disrupted traditional methods and resulted in cultural trauma and displacement (Bennett et al., 2005).

### ***Character Education***

The notion of moral development changed after the First World War, increasingly industrialized societies emphasizing incorporating social values of efficiency and productivity (Golightly, 1926). The good student was now framed in terms of their utility, social efficiency, and skills (Setran, 2003). The new brand of character education focused upon contributions to the larger social order in terms of efficient service.

[S]chools would be reduced to teaching mechanical skills and virtues associated with living in an industrial society. As morality became a list of behaviours supposedly identified by value-neutral ‘scientific’ methods, it was distanced from the idea of moral development through conscious and critical thought. (Beane, 1990, p. 28).

Morally educated workers were more likely to follow the rules, be methodical, respectful, and display good manners when compared with those who were not; therefore, morality was more valued than knowledge (Katz, 1971).

In the case of British Columbia, the arrival of substantial numbers of persons from Asia in the early 20th century, and the consistent finding that Asian-origin students had high scores on them, evoked the emergence of a trend for examinations (Gaffield, 2019). Educators in British Columbia seized upon scientific testing as an appropriate way to classify students in the pursuit of educational progress within the British-origin culture of the province.

The selection of virtues was fundamentally a matter of determining the qualities of the best adult citizens in the population. Groups of adults, typically consisting of teachers, school administrators, and businessmen would come together to analyze the various functions performed by model adults, detailing the traits of character necessary to perform those functions with efficiency (Setran, 2003). Women, teachers, and mothers were expected to teach children to self-regulate. Favoured over coercion, maternal love pedagogy was used to teach children to internalize self-control (Boler, 2004).

### ***Mental Hygiene Movement***

Concomitantly, the mental hygiene movement, like the eugenics movement of the previous century, represented what Cohen described as an “attempt by scientists, professionals, and experts to cope with social problems through a scientific control of behaviour” (1993, p. 128). Emotions were framed not as religious sins but as pathological symptoms. This movement also represented a veiled response to the vast increases in immigrant populations and social conflicts (Boler, 2004). As is it true in other movements, the success or failure of mental-hygiene was assumed to depend upon the teacher’s personality. It was understood that a harsh and authoritarian teacher would force children to hide their emotions, thus contributing to personality maladjustment. Therefore, the teacher was expected to create a school therapeutic milieu and embody an institution for children’s personality development (Cohen, 1993).

### ***Emotional Intelligence***

Following the hygiene movement, the studies of Salovey and Mayer (1993) inspired Goleman (1995) in defining emotional intelligence based on the development of three competencies: Identify emotion in oneself and others, self-control (delayed gratification), and manage other’s emotions effectively. According to Goleman, the moral person accepts their

neurobiologically-determined fate and develops the self-control to convey the right emotions at the right time, in the right way to achieve success.

The focus is on how children can either control and manage undesirable emotions (e.g., anxiety and anger) or expand and acquire desirable emotions (e.g., empathy and optimism). Emotional intelligence classroom curricula cast the social self in individualistic terms: These competencies are acquired by teaching the child to choose how to act and control his/her emotions autonomously, according to Boler (2004). Which emotions are relevant and how to deal with them does not address social hierarchies or cultural differences that are related to the particularity of emotional responses. Regardless of the apparent interest in social relations, emotionality is identified as an individual choice.

Representations of emotional intelligence do not interrogate how people are taught different rules of conduct according to race, gender, and social class status for emotional display. An interesting example discussed by Boler (2004) is how women have historically been characterized as naturally caring and empathetic. However, there is no discussion of how women might help understand how to develop this social skill. Moreover, being an empathic and caring woman was one of the reasons stated to keep the woman at home taking care of the house and children, while men would go to work to provide for their families. The Emotional Intelligence framework values these same traits as a means to corporate success.

### ***Social and Emotional Learning***

Following the Emotional Intelligence framework, the term Social and Emotional Learning was created by the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2017) in an attempt to suggest a universal framework for programs of health promotion, especially at school (Elbertson et al., 2010). The goal of CASEL is to provide

measurable, evidence-based social and emotional competence programs for educators to implement in their classrooms. The philosophy of social and emotional learning states that the degree to which an individual copes with the challenges inherent in social interactions using these competencies is an indicator of positive adaptation (Durlak et al., 2011). Generally, this framework is implemented in schools via structured curriculum programs, e.g., Second Step (Frey et al., 2000), PATHS (Greenberg et al., 1995), and Strong Kids (Merrell et al., 2007).

### **Strengths and Challenges of Ready-to-be-Delivered Programs**

A growing body of evidence suggests that social and emotional competencies are malleable and can be taught effectively by using a variety of approaches, including the systematic teaching of skills within the classroom through the implementation of programs (Durlak, 2011); complex, whole-school approaches that seek to engage in contextual restructuring (Goldberg et al., 2019); and integrated teaching practices in the school curriculum (Le Mare, 2011). Systematic reviews and meta-analyses have demonstrated the effectiveness of such intervention programs to develop social and emotional competence. Durlak et al.'s (2011) comprehensive study of 213 programmes found a grand study-level mean of 0.30 (95% CI=0.26–0.33) for outcomes including social and emotional learning skills, attitudes, positive social behaviour, conduct problems, emotional distress and academic performance.

Intervention outcomes may also be compromised by inconsistent implementation (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Greenberg, 2010; Spoth et al., 2013). These inconsistencies may be due to a lack of resources, time, or prioritization in achieving academic curricular demands (Ng & Bull, 2018). Although such programs may seem easy to implement as they are structured in a way ready to be administered, Payton et al. (2000) recommended that teachers receive regular support when teaching a social and emotional competence or prevention program to assure fidelity. Assuring

fidelity, which can be defined as the degree to which the major components of the programme have been faithfully delivered (Durlak, 2016), increases costs and teachers' overall time spent on implementation (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

A meta-analysis conducted by Goldberg and colleagues (2019) aimed to determine the effectiveness of programmes that adopted a whole-school approach to developing children's social and emotional competencies. Whole-school interventions were included in the analysis if they involved multiple contexts across the school environment and staff, teaching practices, and community and family partnerships. A total of 496,299 participants in 45 studies (30 interventions) were analyzed. Post-intervention outcomes resulted in small but significant improvements in participants' social and emotional adjustment ( $d = 0.220$ ), internalising symptoms ( $d = 0.109$ ) and behavioural adjustment ( $d = 0.134$ ). No significant impact on academic achievement was documented. Whole-school interventions, having the inclusion of a community component, and the country where the study was conducted show to be significant moderators of social and emotional development. More specifically, studies conducted in the United States of America were more effective than studies from other countries.

The authors suggest two explanations to this last finding: first, US programs are more detailed in their prescriptions for teachers on how to implement the programs (Weare & Nind, 2011); second, US schools have more national and local support to implement such programs (Barry et al. 2017; Mart et al. 2015;). A third hypothesis may be raised, as programs are created in and for a specific context, and most of them are not culturally adapted when adopted in another context (Garner et al., 2014) therefore schools may perceive these programs to be insensitive to their cultural context, especially in a multicultural community. In order to adjust the program to their reality, a teacher may make modifications in the program, which may, again,

compromise fidelity and threaten program standardization effectiveness (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Garner and colleagues (2014) reviewed 23 “gold standard” programs for preschool and elementary school children in the 2013 Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) report. According to them, diverse groups of children and adolescents bring to the school context differences in culture, home environments, learning styles, child-adult interactions, and educational resources more generally. Moreover, none of the programs they reviewed were culturally adapted for the settings in which they were administered, either through collaborative efforts with community members or based on theory or previous research. Also, some groups, such as Asian American and First Nations children, were not proportionally represented as the studies’ participants. Further, Hoffman (2009) made a similar point in her critical analysis of social and emotional competence programming in the USA. She noted that emotional and cognitive processes—including emotional expression and regulation—are culturally conditioned, and suggested, “social and emotional learning has yet to engage in a deep way with questions of cultural diversity” (p. 549).

Program effects can vary because many interventions attempt to change behaviours, whose meaning and expression may be different in diverse cultural and identity groups (Hoffman 2009). Some scholars argue in favour of adapting existing programs to be responsive to participants’ cultural values and perspectives (Bernal et al. 2009). Others view diversity, particularly concerning culture, as involving different and distinct underlying processes whose function as well, as the form may vary cross-culturally. Duran and Duran (1995), for example, suggested that the “imposed use” (Weiss et al. 2008) of select evidence-based programs among Native American/Alaska Native communities represents an instance of “forced acculturation,” or

the imposition of foreign sets of values, goals, and implementation processes (Whitbeck 2006, p. 185).

Rowel and Trickett (2017) analyzed published evaluations of school-based universal social and emotional learning intervention in terms of their empirical and theoretical attention to student diversity characteristics. They assessed how and when gender, race/ethnicity, SES, disability status, and sexual orientation/gender identity were reported, how differential effects based on diversity were incorporated into reported intervention generalizability discussions, and how these characteristics are analyzed as moderators of program outcomes. Diversity characteristics were inconsistently reported, and many articles did not report any diversity information. Further, moderation analyses testing for diverse program effects were conducted in approximately one-third of the articles. When conducted, the tests were often not explicitly justified by either the previous literature or a hypothesis. Explanations of moderation results, when present, were often limited to previous research findings, and less than one-third of the moderation subsample articles explicitly discussed program generalizability to diverse groups.

Additional concerns have been raised by critics of the social and emotional framework. According to Stearns (2018), social and emotional learning programs set up an artificial boundary between students and teachers, positioning teachers as the ones who know what it is to have appropriate emotional and social reactions and students as those who must be taught. It may also reproduce the content-based educational approach requiring teachers to deliver instruction aiming to develop students' sets of specific social and emotional competences while being insensitive to cultural variations (Hoffman, 2009). Boler (2004) criticized emotional learning practices in schools, pointing out the dangers of an emphasis on emotion in the classroom as a potential source of ideological manipulation. The author illustrates the need for critical

engagement with the ideological, political, and cultural context in which specific discourses about emotion in schooling become legitimized and popularized.

Stearns (2016) stated that learning how to repress bad feelings and aggressive behaviour may be understood as a way to maintain pre-existing power structures. This suppression of aggressive tendencies may force students to experience shame due to their negative affect or rebellious tendencies. In this sense, such programs do not support democratic education but undermine it with what can be called hegemonic positivity, despite an actual reality that may be, in fact, revolting and worthy of rebellion.

### **Integrating Social and Emotional Competence in Teaching Practices**

According to Le Mare (2011), social and emotional competence may be incorporated into daily practices at school when teachers emphasize the processes by which such competencies are acquired (Le Mare, 2011; Reeves & Le Mare, 2017). The positive development of children depends to a considerable degree on whether or not the contexts in which they develop, including schools, communities, and families, are reliable sources of supportive relationships (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Instead of focusing on a child's acquired competencies, the emphasis is on the ability of adults, such as teachers, to provide caring contexts and to develop genuine and supportive relationships with the students in their charge. This approach does not lend itself to standardized instructional scripts or scopes or in-sequence curricula. Since genuine caring is attuned to individuals and their needs, caring practices are necessarily emergent and variable, rather than predetermined and fixed, according to Reeves & Le Mare.

It is possible to use existing language arts, social studies, history, or arts curricula within which to promote social and emotional competence (Cohen, 2006). For example, a language arts teacher can use the analysis of a novel not only to sharpen critical thinking and linguistic

capacities, but also to open the door to an empathic consideration of various points of view, an understanding of how characters see a conflict, and the adaptive or maladaptive methods they employ in dealing with it. Social and emotional competence can also be integrated into the non-academic aspects of life at school (Cohen, 2006). For example, a teacher's talking with children about what kind of classroom they want and which rules they are going to live under can lead to a shared sense of what they, as a group, want. Therefore, early childhood teachers play a significant role in facilitating the development of young children's social and emotional competence, partly because teachers are positioned to provide support as the educator who knows and observes children within a group setting most intimately (Kemple, 2004).

Only a few studies have demonstrated how teachers integrate opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence into their practices, however. Mashford-Scott and Church (2011) studied how teachers promote social and emotional competence in teacher-child interactions in Australian kindergarten classrooms, and Ng and Bull (2018) examined strategies used by teachers to develop social and emotional competences in kindergarten children in Singapore. Mashford-Scott and Church used Conversation Analysis (CA), focusing on the sequential organization of turns in naturally-occurring interaction between teachers and children during the regular activities in a school day. The interactions were video-recorded in two early childhood settings over two weeks, for an average of 14 hours per setting (28 hours in total). The authors suggested that by encouraging children to propose solutions when peer conflicts occur, the teacher could facilitate relationship management, which involves conflict resolution and responsible decision-making, involving exploring options to solve a problem.

Ng and Bull's (2018) observational study of teachers' practices related to social and emotional competences and the environments in which they occurred more frequently in six

kindergarten classrooms in Singapore. Two research assistants conducted non-participatory and non-reactive observation in person as well as video recording, lasting up to 4 hours, in each K1 classroom. They found that opportunities for social and emotional education occurred more frequently during small group activities, during outdoor play and in intentional teaching than during individual activities, indoor and spontaneous teaching. They also found that acts or tasks most used by teachers to facilitate social and emotional learning were related to providing opportunity, assistance, and encouragement, which they called setting a positive tone. The authors also identified teachers' acts, such as allocating a leading task, as a means for children to exercise appropriate turn-taking in being a leader. Ng and Bull documented teachers' oral-related strategies such as extension, which refers to the act of building on children's responses with questions or comments and suggestions of solutions as social and emotional education-appropriate practices. These findings highlight the importance of intentional efforts planned by teachers to create opportunities to engage and facilitate children's learning in classrooms (Booren et al., 2012).

### **Classroom Planning and Social Support**

The social support of teachers plays an essential role in developing children's social and emotional competence, especially with their modelling and encouragement (Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009). Three domains of social support are proposed by Collie (2020): autonomy-, competence- and relatedness-support. Autonomy-support reflects a social environment where authority figures, such as teachers, promote empowerment and self-initiation in the social and emotional domains. It would involve classroom teachers' providing a rationale for social-emotional tasks and acknowledging students' perspectives on social-emotional issues (Collie, 2020) and obtaining students' input in determining the rules or norms for social interactions in a

classroom. Autonomy-support for social and emotional competence would also encompass strategies such as providing students with choices and options in approaching social and emotional interactions and using democratic approaches for managing conflict and disagreements (Reeve & Jang, 2006).

Competence-support involves teachers' outlining clear goals, rules, and expectations about an activity before it begins and providing guidance while the activity is underway, offering positive and constructive feedback after the activity is completed. Teachers might offer competence-support by providing clear goals, rules, and expectations about behaviour and interpersonal interactions at the beginning of the year and on regular occasions after that. Teachers might also offer ongoing support to help students work together effectively and provide constructive feedback to students about how they navigated a social interaction or emotional experience. Relatedness-support involves teachers' taking time to interact with students and expressing interest in and affection for those individuals (Connell & Belmont, 1991), being attuned to their needs and dedicating resources to the students (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Taken together, the three types of need-support help to create social environments that are conducive for social and emotional competence development.

In this sense, a teacher may use materials and activities, such as use cooperative games, role-playing activities, group problem-solving exercises, and storytelling in their efforts to develop children's social and emotional competence. When teachers carefully select the types and amounts of material according to levels of challenge, for example, they may contribute to children's feelings of competence and influence the children's positive sense of self-identity (Han & Kemple, 2006). Moreover, the integration of materials and activities that foster the development of social and emotional competence may be intentionally planned or spontaneous.

A teacher who intends to use specific strategies begins with a particular objective in mind, as is true of activity planning in general. The classroom activities are then designed to maximize the likelihood that children will attain the goals. For example, teachers might plan on reading a book using a specific classroom arrangement at a particular moment of the day. In contrast, spontaneous interventions can be used by teachers to address the needs of students when an opportunity arises without being planned. For example, when one child laughs at another's mistake, the teacher has a choice as to whether to focus on the offending student or use the opportunity as a teachable moment for the entire classroom.

### **Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice**

To address the social and emotional needs of children, teachers should also be aware of age and cultural appropriateness (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Rowel & Trickett, 2017). When teachers make developmentally appropriate decisions about supporting children's emerging social and emotional competence, they draw upon their knowledge about the needs, interests, and abilities of each child, and the socio-cultural context (Kostelnik et al., 2002).

Although there are strong criticisms of the concept of developmentally appropriate practice, based upon the notion that there is no universally accepted concept of 'appropriateness' (Grieshaber & Cannella 2001), chronological age may serve as an indicator of children's interests and abilities. That does not mean that every child the same age will have the same interests, but a teacher could take into account how each child is progressing and address his or her presenting social and emotional needs. For example, during the preschool years, children's development of communicative, language, symbolic, and perspective-taking abilities enable greater engagement in cooperative play, including cooperative social pretend play (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) states three core considerations for making instructional decisions on developmentally appropriate practice: (a) “what is known about child development and learning,” (b) “what is known about each child as an individual,” and (c) “what is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, pp. 9–10). The goal of using these considerations in making instructional decisions is to improve the growth and development of individual children across all of their developmental domains.

Regarding social competence instruction, the NAEYC guidelines (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, 126) state, “the most important contribution teachers can make to children's social and emotional competence is to establish a personal, nurturing, responsive relationship with every child.” Katz and McClellan (1997) described this as ‘community building,’ which creates a potential environment for children's development of social and emotional competence. The authors also recommended that children at the preschool stage should be provided with extended time to interact with peers exploring learning activities to practice social competences. Such activities require early childhood teachers to plan the curriculum, create a classroom environment, and provide instructional methods that facilitate child-focused learning. Additionally, teachers’ modelling and individual scaffolding are also essential for young children to develop such competencies.

Furthermore, social behaviours may carry different meanings in different social groups and cultures (Han & Kemple, 2006). In 1972, Ekman examined the spontaneous expressions of Japanese and Americans as they watched highly stressful movies, first alone, and then in the presence of an older, male researcher. When alone, all participants were similar in their expressions of anger, sadness, disgust and fear. However, when the researcher was present, the

Americans continued to express their negative emotions, but the Japanese were more likely to smile. Ekman's findings provided early empirical evidence for cultural differences in emotional expression, indicating that while the display of emotional expression in private may be universal, emotions displayed in the company of others may vary cross-culturally. Cultural emotional expression specificity in social situations has since been reproduced in numerous studies. Lack of awareness of such differences in social meaning and expression can lead to significant misunderstanding (Han & Kemple, 2006).

### **Summary**

There are several concepts related to social and emotional competence that have influenced how teachers integrate practices for addressing the social and emotional needs of children through time. Prepacked preventive programs are a common way that teachers implement opportunities for social and emotional competence. However, a series of issues may compromise the efficacy of such programs, such as lack of fidelity and buy-in. How teachers integrate practices for the development of social and emotional competence into their daily practice has received little attention.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **Overview**

In this chapter, the methods of the present research study are described. First, the purpose and research questions are presented, followed by a description of the ontology and epistemology adopted by the study. Next, the methods, criteria and procedures for selecting and recruiting a participant are described, along with the ethical considerations in conducting this study, followed by a detailed description of the strategies used to ensure rigour. The chapter concludes with a description of the data-analysis procedures employed in this qualitative case study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how an experienced kindergarten teacher plans opportunities, and integrates practices for the development of social and emotional competence in an early childhood educational setting. How this teacher articulates the process of planning and implementing opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence was also explored. It was hoped that an understanding of how this experienced teacher plans and implements opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence in kindergarten will contribute to the development of psycho-educational interventions aimed toward supporting teachers in their work in addressing social and emotional competence in kindergarten-age students.

### **Research Questions**

1. How are the processes of planning and implementing opportunities to support the development of social and emotional competence articulated by a teacher of kindergarten age children?

2. How does a teacher of kindergarten age children plan and integrates opportunities for developing social and emotional competence in her classroom?

### **Ontology and Epistemology**

The ontological perspective of this study is that of bounded relativism, which argues that one shared reality exists within a bounded group (e.g., cultural, moral), but across groups, different realities exist (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Social and emotional competence depends on culture, context, identity, and circumstance (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Therefore, the practices implemented by teachers may also look different depending on teachers' and children's cultures, contexts, identities, and circumstances. Thus, a deeper understanding of teacher practices must acknowledge the subjective nature of their experiences and beliefs, which vary as a function of their place, time and culture.

Constructivism, the epistemological perspective of this study, posits that meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world; no real-world pre-exists that is independent of human activity or symbolic language (Bruner, 1986). For constructivists, human beings construct knowledge as they engage with and interpret the world (Crotty 1998). From this viewpoint, teacher practices and views of social and emotional competence can best be understood by considering the subjective nature of their knowledge and beliefs in this particular domain, allowing for the co-construction of meaning by participants and the researcher through mutual dialogue and exploration.

### **Method**

The study was conducted using a Descriptive Case Study methodology (Merriam, 1998; 2009). Case Study is a research methodology typically seen in social and life sciences. According to Merriam (2009), there is no single definition of case study research. However, for

the purpose of this study, a case study methodology is defined as an intensive, systematic investigation of a bounded unit in which the researcher examines in-depth the data within its real-world context (Yin & Campbell, 2018). This study was bounded in a kindergarten classroom of a public school in an urban school district in the lower mainland of the province of British Columbia, where social and emotional competence has been the focus of the school curriculum for many years (see Research Context).

Being a descriptive case study means that the final product is a dense description of the phenomenon being studied. This methodology is particularly suitable when the researcher is interested in how the phenomenon takes place (Merriam, 2009). One aim in this study was to describe the practices of one kindergarten teacher for the development of social and emotional competence in her classroom, as well as this teacher's perspectives on planning and implementing such practices.

### ***Research Context***

The present study took place in a public school in an urban school district in the lower mainland of British Columbia. Canada has a decentralized model of education; therefore, to explore specific issues related to schools, one must understand how each province deals with the subject (Le Mare, 2011). In British Columbia, the focus on social and emotional competence in the school curriculum can be traced back 30 years. In 1989 an Order-in-Council under Section 169 of the *School Act* entitled "Mandate for the School System Province of British Columbia" established policy direction for the British Columbia school (Brummet, 2013). Specifically, the legislation established the definition of a "quality" education as one that "assists in the development of human potential and improves the well being of each individual person in British Columbian society" (p. 88).

A further step toward integrating social and emotional competence into the school curriculum in British Columbia occurred in 2001 with the Ministry of Education's first explicit inclusion of "social responsibility" among the provincial performance standards alongside reading, writing, and numeracy (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2001). The Social Responsibility Framework incorporates the teaching of responsibility, conflict resolution, defending human rights, perspective-taking, respectful communication, and working towards a better future as contributing members of the classroom, the school and the community (Storey, 2017).

In 2015, a new curriculum was released in British Columbia with three core competencies to be developed at school: Communication, Thinking, and Personal/Social Competence (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013). Teachers were expected to focus on the development of such competencies when planning their classes and support students in the development of concepts and skills, which they call "Know-Do-Understand" within the new curriculum. The development of social and emotional competence in the new curriculum comes into play, especially with the third core competency, Personal/Social Competence. Personal and social competences encompass the abilities students need to thrive as individuals, to find and achieve their purposes in the world and to understand and care about themselves and others. This core competence includes the following skills: Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, Personal Awareness and Responsibility, and Social Responsibility (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013).

### ***Participant***

The current case study was conducted with one public school kindergarten teacher in an urban school district in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The pseudonym Ms. H will be

used throughout this thesis to refer to the teacher. Ms. H has been an elementary school teacher since the beginning of her career. She has 21 years of teaching experience in total and 15 years as a kindergarten teacher. With a Master's degree in Education, she had been teaching the same group of 16 kindergarten students since the beginning of the school year, September 2018-2019, in which the study was conducted (June 2019). She had experience with implementing social-emotional learning programs, including *Roots of Empathy* (Gordon, 2005), *Mind Up*, (de Carvalho, 2017), and *Zones of Regulation* (McQuaid, 2018). However, she was not explicitly or exclusively implementing any specific packaged social-emotional learning program at the time of the present observations.

## **Data Collection**

### ***Background Information Survey***

Along with the consent form, the participant teacher received a Background Information survey (see Appendix A) where questions about her experience as a teacher, degree, gender, and classroom characteristics were requested. This information helped the researcher to know more about the teacher's background and context before the interviews were conducted.

### ***Class Lesson Plans***

Teacher-written class lesson plans were requested before the observations each week as she had written weekly class lesson plans, in which she briefly described the activities to be conducted in her class each period of each day. The researcher captured images of the class lesson plans and returned them to the teacher on the same day that they were provided. There was no identifying information or names of the children in the class lesson plans. It was hoped that the lesson plans would inform the researcher regarding how the kindergarten teacher anticipated opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence. The teacher's

class lesson plans were mostly the labels she gave to activities she was planning to implement each day, and the times each activity would start and end. Therefore, they were used to help understand how the teacher structured lessons and to give context to the interviews and observations.

### ***Interviews***

The first semi-structured interview (pre-observation interview) took place before the beginning of the classroom observations, and the second semi-structured interview was conducted after the classroom observations were completed (post-observation interview). The pre-observation interview (see Appendix B) explored what opportunities the teacher was planning to integrate into her practice for the development of social and emotional competence. The teacher was also asked about her appreciation of the importance of social and emotional competence. The second interview (post-observation interview) (see Appendix C) was conducted by the researcher at the end of the study and enabled a deeper understanding of how the process of planning and integrating opportunities to support kindergarten children's social and emotional competence was articulated by the teacher. The teacher was also asked about how she experienced the process of participating in the research, how her processes of integrating social and emotional competence into class lesson plans and practice emerged during the days she was observed, and what resources she found available to support her teaching social and emotional competence. Both interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed shortly after each interview.

### ***Classroom Observations***

The purpose of the classroom observations was to gain a better sense or insight into how the teacher integrated social and emotional competence into her teaching practices. The

observations took place during regular school activities three times per week for two-hour blocks over three weeks.

To ensure rigour, a second researcher took notes during one-third of the observation blocks and participated in debriefing sessions with the lead researcher. The observers were trained (see Appendix D) by a more experienced researcher from the research lab of the lead researcher to make a descriptive narrative of what was being observed. Researchers positioned themselves at various locations in the classroom as needed to view the different classroom activities, with a computer and took narrative notes during the observation period. The narrative was completed during the observation with a description of what was seen by the observers, who sought to be as objective as possible. The researchers wrote on their narratives what they were seeing, trying to detach their inferences and interpretations in order for them to be independently annotated on their reflective journals or annotations.

Classroom observations were conducted during both free play and teacher-directed activities and were named according to the class lesson plans' labels provided by the teacher beforehand. The starting and ending times for each observation were recorded on the observation protocol (see Appendix E). An additional space on the observation protocol allowed the observers to note inferences, ideas, and reflections emerging from the observation. The notes were completed during the observation, while additional reflections were recorded in reflective journals. Both notes and reflective journals were used to guide the debriefing sessions. Shortly after the observations were completed, the observers reviewed their own narratives to ensure report clarity and consensus.

## **UBC Ethical Board and School District Research Approval**

### ***UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) Approval***

Ethics approval was obtained from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) at the University of British Columbia. This study complied with the guidelines for ethical research outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2010)*.

### ***Vancouver School Board (VSB) District Research Approval***

Approval to conduct research in the targeted school district was obtained from the school district level research committee through the submission of the proposal. The application included a description of the study, researcher background and qualification, copies of the interview and observation protocols used in this study. An abstract of the completed report is to be sent to the Learning Services of the school district once the thesis is made publicly available through the cIRcle repository at UBC.

## **Recruitment and Consent**

### ***School and Teacher Recruitment***

The study met the requirements for participation in a Vancouver public school. Once approved by the district and the BREB, kindergarten teachers known by the research team were contacted to explore their interest, by sending a Recruitment Letter (see Appendix F) via email. One teacher expressed interest and she fit the research requirements, which were: Having taught their present class since September 2018, and having more than three years of experience. She was invited to participate in the study.

Once the teacher had determined her interest, the researcher sent an email recruitment letter (see Appendix G) to request an in-person meeting with her school principal to discuss their

possible participation in the study. When the principal agreed to the teacher's participation, the researcher arranged a meeting with the participant-teacher to complete the consent (see Appendix H) and background information forms. Another meeting was scheduled to retrieve the background information and consent form, and the first Semi-structured Interview was also conducted that day. The consent form was created following the guidelines outlined by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Office and specified in the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects (2013).

Based on a review of the curriculum as outlined by the BC Ministry of Education, the goals of this research study coincided with the goals of the curriculum (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013). Therefore, the selected teacher might be able to apply the process of the study and its findings for her own professional development. The teacher was also compensated for the time dedicated to the study with a 50-dollar bookstore gift card.

### ***Classroom Recruitment***

After teacher consent was obtained, the researcher sent a letter to the parents of the students in the classroom (see Appendix I) explaining the study and informing them that two researchers would be observing their children's teacher during a three-week period. Parents were informed that the children were not the focus of the observation; rather, the focus was on the teacher and her interactions in the classroom. So, while their children could be observed when in interaction with the teacher, the focus was on the teacher. Parents were not requested to take action, as the children were not the participants or the focus of the observations. The letter indicated that they might not consent to the interactions of the teacher with their child being observed, but no parents expressed concerns or requested their child be restricted from observation. Children were informed about the observations by the teacher and by the research

team. On the first day of observations, the lead researcher explained the study to the children (see Appendix J) in developmentally appropriate language.

### ***Confidentiality and Privacy***

The participant provided consent, and the form was kept in a locked filing cabinet at the thesis co-supervisor's research lab office (Room Scarfe 2404) along with the background information form. Children's names are not written in any document or included in any of the observation annotations. Only the ID numbers for names that appeared on interviews were written on paper documents. The teacher was given a pseudonym used in all written communication regarding the study. All computer files were password protected and encrypted.

### **Procedures to Ensure Methodological Rigor**

Tracy (2010) describes rich rigour, one of the eight “big-tent” criteria for ensuring excellent qualitative research. She described rigour as characterized by detailed descriptions and face validity that can be confirmed by examination of the “care and practice of data collection and data analysis procedures” (p. 841). In this study, the lead researcher's reflexive journal, triangulation, member checking and peer debriefing served as the primary tools to ensure methodological rigour.

### ***Reflective Journals***

The researchers involved in data collection kept reflective journals (see Appendix K) to document a detailed description of all events related to the study, such as specific happenings, contextual information with regard to school visits and reflections that arose during data collection. The reflections were referenced, indicating to which particular part of the observation or interview they referred. The reflective journals served as a record for reflection, but they were not formally analyzed; they only supported the researchers' debriefing sessions and data analysis

(Spall, 1998). Reflections occurring during the observations were recorded on the section “field notes” on the observation protocol.

### ***Triangulation***

Mathison (1988) described triangulation as the use of “multiple methods, data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings” (p. 1). Although data collected from different sources may converge, Mathison (1998) concluded that inconsistent and contradictory findings are equally possible, in which case, the goal of the researcher is to determine plausible explanations. Triangulation was conducted using the three sources of data (interviews, observation records and class lesson plans) to look for convergence, inconsistencies and contradictions. The pre-observation interview and class lesson plans were triangulated to look for instances where the teacher was planning opportunities for social and emotional competence. How the teacher articulated meaning related to social and emotional competence was triangulated using all sources of data.

### ***Member Checking***

Member reflections were a method of “taking findings back to the field and determining whether the participants recognize them as true or accurate” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 242). The researcher conducted a session with the teacher after the data had been analyzed to discuss the thematic structure that the researchers identified when analyzing planned practices and integrated opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence. The researcher reviewed the planned thematic structure of the results with the teacher during the session. The interpretations of how the teacher perceived social and emotional competence were explored with the participant. There were no inconsistencies or disagreements between the teacher and the researcher. However, there were interpretations made by the researcher that the participant did

not expect. These were discussed, and an agreement was reached between the researcher and participant on how to report these instances.

### ***Peer Debriefing***

Throughout this study, the researcher engaged in peer discussions about the progress and the process of investigation, methodology, analysis, and findings with other researchers from the labs in which the lead researcher participates (Spall, 1998). The reflexive journals and observation notes were used to establish credibility in the debriefing sessions, and the researchers explored possible areas of bias (Lincoln, 2010). The peer debriefing sessions for data analysis were conducted with the second observer, who is a senior undergraduate student in psychology, and a Ph.D. graduate student in social work with experience in Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researchers met biweekly during the three months after data collection to discuss the observation narratives made by both observers. After reviewing and discussing all sources of data, the lead researcher coded the observations and interviews, using the class plans as context, and the graduate student matched 25% of the data to the coding structured created.

### **Data Analysis**

This study employed a Thematic Content Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyze the interviews and observation narratives; the class lesson plans and reflective journals were used to provide context to the data but were not formally analyzed. The interviews were transcribed using the software InqScribe and the analyses were conducted on the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software NVivo-12®.

### ***Thematic Content Analysis***

Braun and Clarke (2006) described thematic content analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data as it minimally organizes and describes

the researcher's data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this and supports the researcher in interpreting various aspects of the research topic. This analytic approach supported the exploration of teaching practices related to social and emotional competences as well as allowing for a deeper understanding of how an experienced teacher articulated the process of planning and implementing such practices. Considering that human beings construct knowledge as they engage with and interpret the world and events, realities, meanings, experiences, these are the outcomes of a range of discourses operating within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Crotty, 1998).

Thematic Content Analysis is a reflective process, as is true in all qualitative analysis (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). There is no linear progression, which means that identifying themes and sub-themes are not one-time events. The continuous process of coding and categorizing and returning to the initial data to reflect on the analysis enriches the results and creates themes that incrementally capture and describe the participants' meanings

### ***Step-by-Step Analysis***

The Thematic Content Analysis steps, as conducted by this study, are reported as follows:

**Step 1: Transcription.** The interviews were transcribed the day after they were conducted. The observation narratives were also reviewed by the observer immediately after the observation was conducted to ensure clarity. The researcher transcribed the interviews, attempting to represent accurately the choice of words and pauses made by the participant to preserve the intended meaning. Once the transcriptions were completed, the researcher revised them and checked them against the original audio recording to assure accuracy (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Step 2: Becoming Familiar with the Data.** The researcher transcribed the data and started to become familiar with it before any organization occurred (Riessman, 1993). Familiarization began during data collection and continued throughout the transcription and its review. According to Bird (2005), the transcription step may be a key phase of interpretative data analysis. Following the transcription and transcript review, the researcher engaged in biweekly debriefing sessions with the second observer and the graduate student experienced in Thematic Content Analysis. The debriefing sessions had two phases: In the first phase, the observations were discussed, and in the second phase, the interviews were explored. Four debriefing sessions were held during the first phase; the researchers discussed the first week's narrative on the first session, the second week on the second, and the third week on the third session. The fourth session helped to integrate the reflections made in the previous sessions. The second phase had two sessions, where the researchers discussed the interviews. The class lesson plans were available to the researchers. The lesson plans gave the researchers information about the activities that happened before, after and during the observation. During this process, the discussions and reflections helped the lead researcher generate meaning out of the data collected.

**Step 3: Data Organization.** After obtaining an overall understanding of the data, and discussing it with the other researches, the lead researcher created an NVivo project and added all study documents into it. There were two interview transcripts and nine observation narratives.

**Step 4: Initial Codes and Themes.** The observation narratives were coded according to the teacher's practices implemented for the development of social and emotional competence as recognized by the observer. The interview instances were coded when the teacher talked about her planned opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence and the processes of planning and implementing opportunities to support the development of social and

emotional competencies that were articulated by her. Both interviews were triangulated with the classroom observations and class lesson plans.

**Step 5: Reviewing Themes.** After the coding framework was developed, the lead researcher checked for similar codes and combined them in themes and subthemes associated with the basic concepts related to the research questions. The researcher created a thematic structure of the planned and implemented opportunities for social and emotional competence in this kindergarten classroom and how the teacher perceived and articulated the process of supporting the social and emotional needs of kindergarten children.

**Step 6: Defining and Naming Themes.** The researcher described each theme and related themes to each other, aiming to construct “a concise, punchy, and informative name for each theme” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 125). Themes were named in a descriptive manner to represent the different underlying subthemes, trying to capture the teacher’s practices related to social and emotional competence and how she constructs meaning about the subject. Debriefing sessions were held at this stage to discuss the thematic structure (see *Peer Debriefing in Procedures to Ensure Methodological Rigor*). The more experienced graduate student coded 25% of the observation data matching to the thematic structure created by the lead researcher, more than 90% agreement was reached for every code, and the Kappa index for all coding was 0.63, which is considered moderate (McHugh, 2012). The teacher-participant also participated in a member-checking session where the thematic structure of the data was reviewed and discussed.

**Step 7. Producing the Report.** The results were reported via the themes and sub-themes identified with the goal of responding to the research questions. Extracts of what the teacher had planned, implemented or perceived of the process were used to support the analytic narrative illustrating the themes generated (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## **Summary**

In this Case Study, written class lesson plans, observations, and interviews were used to explore how an experienced kindergarten teacher integrates opportunities for social and emotional competence into her daily teaching practice. This study was conducted in an urban public school, in a jurisdiction where the school curriculum had focused on social and emotional competence for many years. The sources of data were analyzed with Thematic Content Analysis, and the results are presented in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Overview

The purpose of this study was to 1) explore how an experienced kindergarten teacher apprehends the process of planning and implementing opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence through the use of one-to-one semi-structured interviews, 2) observe how this teacher integrated opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence in an early childhood educational setting. In this chapter, the results are summarized according to each research question.

### Research Question 1: Articulating the Process

Regarding Research Question 1, how the experienced kindergarten teacher articulated the process of planning and implementing opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence in her early childhood educational setting was explored. Using Thematic Content Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2008), and the two semi-structured interviews, themes and subthemes were created to address Research Question 1, and are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*Themes and subthemes for Research Question One*

Theme	Subthemes
Beginning of the year vs, end of the year	
The main goal of early years education	
Doing the job is the training	
Support for teachers	
	Age-appropriate practice
	Anticipating future happenings
	Ensuring expected social conduct
	Integrating
Integrating practices	Individualized attention
	Modelling
	Positive perspective
	Developing conflict resolution skills
	Humour as a tool
	Programs as tools

### ***Beginning of the Year vs. End of the Year***

Ms. H discussed the differences between being a kindergarten teacher at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year. She compared how her practices change between these two different periods. According to her, at the *beginning of the year*, she conducts more collective activities to inform children of desired classroom behaviour and uses individual incidents to address situations with the entire class. Her plans for classes are structured, and she has content to disseminate. This time of the year serves to “set the stage” for the rest of the year. The teacher also mentioned using more strategies from programs that are ready-to-be-delivered, such as *Zones of Regulation*, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today*, and others. These programs support her in setting the expectations for the rest of the year, giving children a framework that they can depend upon.

By the *end of the year*, Ms. H stated that her practices are focused on making sure children are ready to progress to Grade 1 and have acquired all the skills they need to be successful in the next grade. According to her, at that time of the year, she addresses issues that arise with each child individually.

I talk a lot by the time it gets to this part of the school year; I talk a lot about getting ready for Grade 1 and what you can expect when you get to Grade 1... there is a lot of just one on one.

### ***The Main Goal for Early Years Education***

At the beginning of the year, Ms. H sends a letter for parents of her new students with the following, saying: “I have two goals for your child: One is that they feel good and are happy to come to school; and that they are working hard and treating others nicely.” On this extract, we see how social and emotional competence seems to be an essential aspect of her teaching. Along

with sharing goals with parents, Ms. H considered developing social and emotional competence the most crucial part of early years' education "more so than building [their] knowledge base." According to Ms. H, labelling social and emotional competence has changed over the course of her career, but it has always been something she addressed with the students in her classroom. The teacher affirmed that she strives to include practices in her teaching that support children's development of such skills, by clearly stating what is expected of them and providing them with opportunities to figure it out on their own in a protective environment.

### ***Integrating Practices for Early Years Education.***

To achieve these goals, the teacher articulated her strategies, the subthemes that emerged in this sense were: Age-appropriate practices, Anticipating future happenings, Ensuring expected social conduct, Integrating, Individualized attention, Modelling, Positive perspective, and Developing conflict resolution skills, Humour as a tool and Programs as tools. These subthemes were also found on the observation narratives at her integration of practices to develop social and emotional competence.

**Age-Appropriate Practices.** The teacher referred to the stage of development kindergarten children are in and how that influences her practices. Ms. H described her efforts to attend to their needs according to their developmental characteristics, while realizing that not all children are the same. She has observed children's behaviours throughout her years of experience as a teacher and has studied children's development to address their needs accordingly. The teacher recognized children may be more egocentric at this age, and they are developing their social skills, being in a social environment in school assists in this development, and the teacher strives to provide opportunities that will support such development.

**Anticipating Future Happenings.** Ms. H saw the importance of informing the children about future happenings, being either social events or content-related. The teacher explained how she does not expect children at such a young age to know how to act in a specific situation, especially novel situations. Therefore, anticipating what may happen to the children by explaining how they are expected to act and how others will likely act may support children's development of social skills. Ms. H gave an example of how she 'frontloads' the situation for the children:

So, today [three other classes] performed for the school, and my class knows a lot of the grade sevens who are in the group. So, I told them 'when the grade sevens come on, and you see them' I said 'don't yell from your seat and say 'Hi,' if you want to wave and just wave, don't go in front, because it will embarrass the grade 7 if you are yelling and blah blah blah'. So, I like to frontload them with little things like that. [...] So, [give them] the tools beforehand.

As it was seen in her class lesson plans, and as shared in her interview, Ms. H is an organized and structured person who enjoys being in control, and she suggested that children may have the same need. Therefore, "I try to front-load them and then there is not, you know, maybe so much anxiety around 'OK, now what is going to happen, now what is going to happen' kind of thing."

**Ensuring Expected Social Conduct.** As a kindergarten teacher, she accorded importance to ensuring the children were behaving according to what is expected in school by sometimes explaining to the children what is expected in specific situations and other times simply asking them to behave in a certain way. The expected social conduct she explained and

requested are essential skills children will take with them throughout their school years and in their life beyond those walls.

**Integrating.** The teacher understood the importance of giving children opportunities to work together valuing their choices and identities.

I have this random name generator that... it is on the computer. And so, when I pair them up to do something, I just use that. [...] So, everybody has a chance to be working and associating with someone new. Do they have their friends whom they like to sit and work with? For sure! But then they have also had the opportunity to work with this person over here and this person over here and that person over there.

Ms. H also made efforts to integrate different cultures into the classroom, so children felt included. In one of the classroom observations, the teacher showed a video with a girl singing *Blackbird*, from *The Beatles*, and she told the observers how she had a First Nation's child in the class, and she wanted to make him feel included. Although this child was the one laughing hardest at the girl singing, the teacher believed it might be a sign of discomfort, rather than disrespect. She perceived the video as a way to desensitize the children and help them recognize there are other cultures, languages and people out there creating beautiful things.

**Individualized Attention.** The teacher understood how children are different and may need different kinds of support. Ms. H suggested that getting to know every child's "little personality," making efforts to fit her practice into something meaningful to each of them, is essential. "It is not my job to change the child to fit into the situation." Therefore, instead of seeking to adjust children to a certain way, the teacher advocated for children to be treated as individuals. In this sense, although Ms. H could see moments where she should address issues

with the entire classroom, she felt that most issues should be addressed individually. That is because children have different needs and also because they react to situations differently.

Ms. H exemplified this by saying that when they come back from recess or lunch, they run out onto the sidewalk, and she tells them not to do that. Nevertheless, some children do that sometimes, and she knew that some of them should not be reprimanded in front of others or “they would dissolve into a puddle of tears.” Even though it is something that everybody should not do, to select that particular person out like that would be devastating for that particular student. Having that in mind, she talked to that child in private and made sure he understood he should not run out onto the sidewalk.

**Modelling.** Ms. H articulated the importance of modelling the behaviours she expected from the children, showing them how to act.

I think, like in the back of my mind, quite a bit about treating others respectfully and being kind and showing kindness as well. I always describe my management as kind but firm. Like you know how you are supposed to act or at least you can kind of guess how you're supposed to act.

**Positive Perspective.** The teacher highlighted the importance of having a positive perspective on the children she was teaching and praise them for their positive behaviour. She thinks that children should be acknowledged when they behave well, and not only when children who often misbehave display them, but well-behaved children should be rewarded for doing what is expected of them. Ms. H suggested that recognizing children for their good behaviour supports children to keep issuing that behaviour and develop the skills expected.

I try... Not just children who have trouble displaying more appropriate, empathetic behaviour. Also go after the ones who do it on a consistent basis to acknowledge that

'hey, what a nice person you are, and you are making other people feel good, and that should make you feel good too.' Because why not be rewarded for something you're already doing, rather than rewarding the child for displaying a behaviour once in a blue moon. Well, the person who is doing it every day they may be rewarded as well. Who wants to come to a place where you do not feel, like, valued and understood and appreciated?

**Developing Conflict Resolution Skills.** Ms. H considered it essential to support children in understanding the conflicts they go through in the classroom; choosing when it is appropriate for her to support them in resolving the conflict themselves or guide them into resolving the conflict more directly.

So, it depends on what the problem is. Sometimes just the act of telling is enough for them and no need to intervene. My philosophy is like: let them make a mistake, and then they can learn from that mistake. I do not try to stop conflicts from happening, because they kind of need it to in order to learn not to do that.

Moreover, sometimes Ms. H realizes they need a direction on how to react, “if someone says ‘so and so touched my hair.’ I reply, ‘Okay, well turn around. Did you tell them to stop? No. Okay, turn around. Tell them to stop’.”

**Humour as Tools.** The teacher used humour in her practice. She used sarcasm and irony to entertain the children and herself. She also identified humour as a tool to create community. Ms. H recognized the fact that every year her class spends ten months together, “so, we might as well find a way that we can get along and that we can all enjoy our time being together, and I think humour is an excellent way to do that.” She believes that when the teacher has a sense of humour, children develop more critical thinking since they have to evaluate whether or not the

teacher's joke was actually true. "They have to submit [what was said to their judgement] 'Okay, did she really mean it? That sounds a little absurd'". The classroom also becomes an environment of shared merriment and community as children and teacher use humour in their interactions, creating community. Finally, Ms. H believed humour was an excellent way to create joy for children coming to school because "children should enjoy going to school and a fun way to do it is through humour."

**Programs as a Tool.** She also used strategies from social and emotional learning programs she had previously been trained to implement. She did not implement the entire program but included specific strategies she found to fit her practice. Ms. H is particularly opposed to programs that, according to her, publicly shame the child into conforming in a certain way. The teacher states that "it is more important for people to know how to act than to know how to act in a certain situation," from her point of view, specific programs can control children's behaviour for the context of the classroom, but her goal is to teach the child in a way that they can take to other contexts, including their personal life. According to her:

I do not necessarily think, like 'OK, now I need to read this manual to figure out how to teach social-emotional learning.' Different programs that I have tried out or participated in are ones that I think are more of like an add-on to things I already do." That is because "you have to have some sort of buy-in, and it needs to make sense to me before I am going to use something. Different bits and pieces, because I always look at a particular program 'okay, that is one person's way of teaching X, Y, or Z, or implementing X, Y, or Z, and that is one way that works for them. But that portion of it and that portion of that will work for me'. So, I will pick and choose from there. I do not think it is too often I follow everything by a script.

### *Doing my Job is the Training*

According to Ms. H, most of what she learned to be a teacher was gained in performing as a teacher. Her experiences and practices taught her how to be a teacher. According to her, “you will learn maybe 10%, 10% of what you need to know, in order to be a teacher, you learn at UBC through your courses and through your practicum, the other 90% you learn by doing my job”. Her non-romanticized view of teaching helped her face teaching as a profession with challenges she needed to face, rather than a frustrating vocation.

It was her career experiences from teaching in Grade 3 down to K that gave her a better understanding of the skills children would need in going forward. She learned from Grades 3, 2 and 1 what were the skills that successful children have and how a teacher might support the development of such skills. This knowledge helped her adapt her practice to kindergarten to bolster children’s social and emotional development as well.

### *Support for Teachers*

Ms. H stated that when she started teaching, teachers had much more personal support from the school district than what they have now. The district “actually had consultants whom you could call up and say 'OK, I need some help with X, Y, or Z.' Then they would send someone out, they would do sample lessons with you, talk through things with you.” This support is not available for teachers anymore, “all those positions got cut when the education budget got cut and then it has never quite bounced back. [...] Now, you kind of have to find it on your own.” A resource that new teachers have to find support on their own, according to Ms. H, is the internet as it has nearly anything a teacher may be searching for. When she started teaching, this resource was not available, “that is half the battle.” However, she still considered that there was a need for more support.

According to Ms. H, the new curriculum poses an extra challenge as it is less clear than the previous one. She expressed her belief that the previous curriculum was clearer on its objectives and what teachers needed to do to cover them. The new curriculum is less direct and confuses new teachers. She suggested that new teachers should receive more support from the district, or even from more experienced teachers, to gain some perspective on whether or not they are on the right track.

Ms. H revealed that the District has a program of mentoring where experienced teachers support new ones in the difficulties they may encounter. However, “the truth is you cannot pop in [another school] at recess or at lunch or before or after school to ask a question or get some advice or whatever it might be.” She suggested that a mentoring program within schools could have better results, as teachers would not have to dislocate. She made that suggestion to the district Board and was hoping they would consider it for next year 2020. Ms. H also mentioned how she already provided mentoring; she offered support to a teacher in her school and online on a teachers’ Facebook group she initiated, which has the goal to promote teachers to share their experiences.

## **Research Question 2: Integrating Opportunities**

In Research Question 2, how an experienced kindergarten teacher integrated opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence in an early childhood educational setting explored nine naturalistic observations that were employed over three weeks in June 2019 to document how the teacher integrated such opportunities. The observations, analyzed using Content Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2008), generated themes and subthemes for Research Question 2, reported in Table 2.

**Table 2.***Themes and Subthemes for the Research Question 2*

Themes	Subthemes	Number of Observations <sup>a</sup>	Frequency <sup>b</sup>
Anticipating Future Happenings	Ensuring understanding	5	9
	Frontloading the children	6	11
	Preventing unnecessary conflict	4	7
Having Children in the Centre	Age-appropriate practice	6	15
	Allowing child guided interaction	5	14
	Individualizing attention	6	20
Integrating	Embracing differences	2	3
	Acknowledging cultural diversity	3	3
Explaining the Consequences		7	33
Focusing on the Positive	Having a positive perspective	8	19
	Validating	9	45
Modelling		8	19
Providing Opportunity for Children to Develop	Conflict resolution skills	7	16
	Empathy	3	6
	Expected social conduct	9	50
	Self-awareness	7	17
	Sense of time	7	16
	Social Skills	7	11
Using Strategies	Books	9	12
	Humour	8	25
	Music	2	2
	Programs	4	5
	Physical	6	9
	Visual	4	6
	Collective/In pairs/Individual		

Note. <sup>a</sup> There were nine observations in total. This number refers to how many observations each theme was observed. <sup>b</sup> How many times in total a theme was observed among all nine observations

***Using Strategies***

During the observations, certain strategies were used by the teacher to provide opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence. These strategies were: Books, Humour, Music, Visual Strategies, Programs and Physical strategies. These strategies were used in collective or individual settings or in pairs. These are explored in each theme, and

how she implemented these strategies in a way that might support children’s social and emotional development was discussed. In Table 3, the frequencies of strategies used according to each subject are presented. The subjects were coded according to her class lesson plans, and the strategies were coded from the nine observation narratives created in her classroom.

**Table 3.**

*Frequency of Strategies Used According to Teaching Subject*

Teaching Subjects	Strategies					
	Books	Humour	Music	Programs	Physical	Videos
Arts	0	2	2	0	2	4
Language	13	16	1	3	2	0
Math	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non regular activities	0	0	0	2	2	0
Play time	0	2	0	0	0	0
Snack and Lunch	0	2	0	0	0	0
Welcoming and saying goodbye	0	3	0	0	3	1

Most strategies were used during Language Arts-related activities, and the most frequent strategy across all subjects was humour. Table 4 shows which competencies the teacher addressed in the subjects she teaches, in accord with her class plans.

**Table 4.**

*Competences Addressed According to Teaching Subject*

Teaching Subjects	Competences Addressed						Total
	Conflict resolution skills	Empathy	Expected Social Conduct	Self-awareness	Sense of Time	Social Skills	
Arts	0	0	6	0	1	0	7
Language	7	1	22	6	8	7	51
Math	1	1	4	1	0	3	10
Non regular activities	4	2	7	1	0	3	17
Play time	3	0	4	1	1	0	9
Snack and Lunch	0	1	0	2	3	0	6
Welcome & Goodbye	1	0	2	5	4	0	12
Total	16	5	45	16	17	13	112

The subject most used by the teacher to address different competencies was Language, and she addressed mainly Expected Social Conduct, Sense of Time and Social Skills across subjects. Table 5 shows which group-setting the teacher used to address such competencies.

**Table 5.**

*Competences Addressed According to Group-Setting*

Competences Addressed	Group-Setting		
	Collective	In pairs	Individual
Conflict Resolution skills	16	3	0
Empathy	6	0	0
Expected social conduct	42	4	1
Self-awareness	16	1	0
Sense of time	15	2	2
Social Skills	9	6	0

The teacher used mostly collective group-settings. However, as seen in Table 2, the teacher provided individualized attention for children on twenty occasions across six of the observations, which may indicate that even though she primarily used collective settings for her activities, she still gave children individualized attention.

*Anticipating Future Happenings*

**Frontloading the Children.** The teacher was observed “frontloading” the children about future happenings in the classroom, including social events and content-related activities. In the very first observation, the teacher told her students: “these are the people I told you about before, as I said, they are here to observe me, let’s say hi to them,” and the children say hi. This example shows how she had anticipated the researchers' visit with the children, informing them that we were going to be in their classroom and what was the goal of the visits.

She also warned her students about different upcoming social events and how to behave in such events. The same sub-theme is also found on how Ms. H articulated the process of planning and implementing opportunities for the development of social and emotional

competence. She gave an example of how she informed the children about how to behave when they go to a social event that is not common in their daily activities, in that case, an assembly. In one of the observations, the teacher had planned a walk around the neighbourhood; they would also visit Ms. S's house. So, she informed them how to act during the activity, what was expected of them, and what they could expect.

**Ensuring Understanding.** When Ms. H finished explaining to the children the upcoming events and giving them information, she asked questions to ensure understanding. She also used more than one technique to convey a message, seeking to make sure that the children understood. For example, on the third observation, around 9 am, the teacher explained that the children who will be in kindergarten at that school next year would visit their classroom that day, and in the meantime, her students would go to another room. The teacher explained this by giving specific instructions to the children. She said, very slowly, "When the recess ends, you will not come back to this classroom." Some children told her they would not remember this and Ms. H asked who thought they would remember, and suggested that they help each other remembering. Following, she had a message written on the board with some blank spaces in between letters, the message is the same one she has given before about children not coming back to the classroom after recess, the children completed the activity by filling the blank spaces with the missing letters and revealing the message on the board.

**Preventing Conflict.** The teacher used her experiences to inform her as to what were the situations that might cause misunderstandings seeking to avoid unnecessary conflict from happening. As seen on the themes from the first research question, she drew names with a name generator to make pairs for activities. She was aware that children might have their preferred friends, so, during math centers the children were going to do a math activity. Ms. H drew the

children's names of those who would do the activity together and said, "if your pair is someone you really like, you are going to say 'yay, if it is someone you like, but not exactly whom you were expecting, you are also going to say 'yay.'"

### ***Putting Children in the Centre***

**Age-Appropriate Practice.** During the observations, children were responsible for organizing Ms. H's class, putting chairs into place for them to sit, and the materials organized, and every afternoon they would clean the room and stacked the chairs beside the tables. Ms. H gave children tasks according to their maturity level, taking into account their age and skill levels. She adjusted her expectations according to what she felt the children as a group could meet, and was also flexible when she realized a particular child was struggling to meet them by virtue of their differential level of maturity.

**Allowing Child-Guided Interactions.** Ms. H allowed children to guide interactions in the classroom. As was described earlier, during one of the observations, Ms. H played a song of a Mi'kmaq girl singing *Blackbird*, from The Beatles, in her native language. She told the children about the girl and how she speaks two languages, she also told them about The Beatles and how some of them are alive, and some are dead. The children started asking her about another Beatle's song that is used in the movie 'boss baby' and how it was stolen. The teacher explained it was not stolen; they were allowed to use it. Next, children started asking about the dead Beatles, who were they, and if there were pictures of them dead. The teacher allowed questions and patiently responded to the children. A child said he liked the song and the teacher answered she liked it too. Ms. H spent nearly an hour on the topic, discussing music rights and death with the children, something she had not planned to do beforehand; in her class plan, she

had ‘math’ and ‘graphing’ planned for that time. In this example, we see how she allowed children to guide the interaction.

She also allowed children to dictate the pace. The teacher assessed children regarding their strengths and difficulties and made efforts to respect those. In the afternoon of one of the observations, the teacher was assessing each child’s reading accomplishment. She first established rapport by asking what their favourite book was and got to know what were the opportunities the children had to have access to someone reading a book to them at home by asking who read with them. Following that, she asked each child to read. When Child 3 was being assessed, Ms. H gave her instructions on how to read by repeating what the sounds of each combination of letters were; the child seemed to have difficulty reading certain sounds. Ms. H asked what the sound of [d + a] is, and the child said she does not want to say, so the teacher replies, “That is fine is. Do you want to do [read] one more?” the child stated that she did not want to continue, so the teachers allowed her to go play again. Next, Child 4 experienced the assessment. After reading the first book, Ms. H said, “You will now read another book that may be difficult; you can tell me if it is too difficult.” The child was not able to finish the book, so the teacher blamed the book for being too hard and praised the child for doing a good job on the previous one.

**Individualizing Attention.** In the example above, the teacher assessed the child’s skill level in reading individually. Also, every morning she greeted students by their names and sometimes asked specific questions to them about details she knew of their lives. She demonstrated to the children that she saw them as individuals. On the day before one of the observations, a child was not feeling well and was sent home by the school. On the observation day, as soon as this child arrived in the classroom, Ms. H asked if he was feeling better.

Moreover, when children had questions about activities she would sit by their side or ask them to sit by her side and instructed them on what to do.

### ***Integrating***

**Embracing Differences.** The teacher made efforts to embrace differences in many ways. As described in her interview and other extracts presented in this section, Ms. H used a random name generator to choose which pairs of children would work together; she said did that consciously to make sure all children had an opportunity to work with each other, embracing the children's differences and supported them to embrace differences as well. Also, when doing activities where multiple answers were possible, she encouraged the children to have different opinions and validated them for that. She used different strategies to integrate children; one of them was during storybook reading. During one of the observations, she told children in the classroom the story of *Something Else* (Cave, 2011); the character in the story was not accepted by other children because he was different, he was "something else", unlike any other. He did everything to be like the others, but it did not work because he did not look like them. The book finished by "something else" finding a friend that did not care about their difference, and when someone different from them wanted to join their little group, instead of saying that they did not belong, they opened room for them and became friends with the new one as well.

**Acknowledging Cultural Diversity.** As indicated earlier, during one of the observations, the teacher played the The Beatles song, sung by a Mi'kmaq girl. Ms. H explained to her classroom how the singer is from the First Nations, and she knew how to speak the first nation's language Mi'kmaq, so she sings this Beatle's music in that language. The teacher exemplified how one of the children in the classroom speaks the Mi'kmaq language. This child asked if she also speaks English, Ms. H said yes.

In the morning of one of the observations, the children were doing an activity where they were to write, the teacher instructed them that they should start writing from left to right. One of the children said that in Chinese, this is different, Ms. H responded that maybe in Chinese they might do it differently, but that she did not know Chinese. In this example, she acknowledged that there might be differences in the ways people do things in different cultures.

**Explaining the Consequences.** Ms. H explained the consequences of children's actions; she did not just tell them she wanted them to do something just because she wanted it. After lunch one day, children were doing a reading buddies activity where they sat in pairs and read together, a child had a headphone around his waist, so the teacher asked that he not put headphones around his waist as they might break. In the same activity, a child was taking longer than the others to sit, so the teacher said: "there is a new rule in the classroom when a child takes too long to sit, she or he will lose two minutes of playtime." The other children questioned her as to why, and she said: "because some children are very good at coming back and sitting here, and others we are always waiting for them, and I do not think it is fair." In this example, we see how she explained consequences of their actions to objects: the headphones may break; to themselves: if you do not sit you will lose playtime; and to others: if you are not seated, and others are sitting it is not fair to make them wait.

### *Focusing on the Positive*

**Having a Positive Perspective.** Ms. H had a positive perspective in different situations; she tended to highlight children's behaviours that are positive rather than the negative ones. This subtheme was observed 19 times among eight of the nine observations. As mentioned on the subtheme Allowing child guided interaction, during one observation, when she was assessing the children's reading skills, when the child could not read the more challenging book, she did not

blame the child's skills, but blamed the book for being too hard. In the morning of one of the observations, she had just asked children to sit for collective book reading, many children had already sat down, but some had not, and she said, "There are some children that I never have to wait for," and listed the names of some children that were the first ones to sit. On one of the observations, around 10:30 am, right after their break, she called them to sit on the carpet to engage in the book reading activity and said something very similar "these are the children I am not waiting for" and listed the names of the children.

**Validating.** Ms. H praised children when they behaved positively reinforcing positive behaviour. This subtheme was observed 45 times among all nine observations. Mostly Ms. H praised good behaviour, or when they finished activities, by saying: good job, it is good, you got this, I love it, that is very sweet, very beautiful.

### ***Modelling***

Ms. H enacted what she expected from the children. She modelled with her behaviour what she wished the children to do. The teacher modelled selective attention by not giving attention to a child when she was engaged in another activity or giving attention to another child. When she finished what she was doing, she then gave attention to the child. Ms. H also modelled identifying and talking about emotions by discussing her own feelings with the children. Another example of her modelling is how she expected children to engage in appropriate behaviour and be polite with each other, which she also enacted.

### ***Providing Opportunities for Children to Develop***

**Conflict Resolution Skills.** During the afternoon of one observation, two girls told Ms. H "they are in the red zone." They were referring to a protocol from the *Zones of Regulation* program. Being in the red zone is described within the programme as feeling extremely

heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be experiencing anger, rage or explosive behaviour when in the red zone. So, the teacher decided to use this situation to provide an opportunity for all the children in the classroom to develop conflict resolution skills:

Teacher: "When Child 4 came in, she was in the red zone, and Child 5 told me she was very disappointed. Can you tell me why you are in the red zone, Child 4?"

Child 4: "Because people took my basket and threw it away."

Teacher: "And how is your basket now?"

Child 4: "It is in good shape now."

Teacher: "Child 5, why are you disappointed?"

Child 5: "Because child 4 took my ring and disappeared with it."

Teacher: "And did you get your ring back?"

Child 5: "No."

Teacher: "hmmm, so are you mad at each other?"

Following, the teacher suggested a breathing exercise to the children and asks if they are angry with each other, they say 'no, just a little.'

Teacher: "You guys are a little annoyed, but are not angry with each other then?"

Child 4: "Yes."

Child 5: "I lost my ring."

Teacher: "Where you had your ring the last time, and you dropped it?"

Child 5: "I do not know."

Teacher: "You know, when you have something in your hand, you have to make sure you are holding up well, Child 6 hold his 'poop toy' well in the playground and then he did

not lose it, sometimes when you let something laying down somewhere, people think you do not want it anymore. Child 5, you can try to search later. "

**Empathy.** In the past, Ms. H implemented the program *Roots of Empathy*; however, the teacher who supported her stopped working with the program. At the time of the observation, Ms. H was implementing practices on her daily routine related to developing empathy, such as discussing how other people might feel when we treat them well or badly, reading books about recognizing emotions in others and showing videos where empathy is shown or explained.

In the morning of one observation, the children were sitting on the carpet, and Ms. H sat on her chair in front of them. An announcement about a child who threw crayons at the construction workers outside had just played over the school public address system, and the teacher knew it was not her children who did that. However, she used this situation to provide them with an opportunity to develop empathy. She said, "What that kid did is not cool. Imagine if someone did it to you? Would you like that? Now imagine how the workers felt". In another observation, Ms. H had written on her class lesson plan to show a video about empathy at the end of the day; she played a video where a rude man walked down the street, not caring for other people, until somebody saw him and showed him kindness. After this, the rude man started to recognize when a person required support, much like someone did for him.

**Expected Social Conduct.** Ms. H explained and ensured that expected social conduct was the norm in her class. Depending on the situation, the teacher explained to the children what was the expected social conduct, and in other situations, she made sure they were acting appropriately. When children were talking, sometimes she would say they should be paying attention and explained why; other times she would intervene and simply ask them to pay attention. On several occasions, she would simply "shush" them. On other occasions, when they

are all talking at once, she would ask them to raise their hands when they have something to say as she could not hear if all talked at once.

**Self-Awareness.** During the morning of one observation, Ms. H started to explain an activity, and almost all were sitting on the carpet. A child was sitting on a book he took from the bookcase, she stopped the explanation and asked, "what am I waiting for?"; he put the book back and sat with the others. In this example, the teacher did not tell what she was waiting for but gave the child an opportunity to be aware of himself and the others to realize what he should have been doing differently. On several occasions, the teacher asked questions of the children and promoted situations in which they would have to inspect themselves and their actions in relation to the classroom and what was expected of them.

**Sense of Time.** The teacher would repeatedly let children know how much time they still had for an activity. Ms. H supported the children in developing a sense of how much time had passed, how much time they still had, and how much time in total they could spend on an activity, assisting children to manage time according to the activity that was proposed.

**Social Skills.** Ms. H provided opportunities for the children to develop social skills by working in pairs or groups. She also supported children about their positive interactions with each other. During one of the observations, she drew names for children to be in pairs for the next activity. In the activity, the children had to ask each other how many people live in their house. A child asked, "it finishes when somebody wins?" and she answered, "this activity is not about winning; it is about finding things about other people." In one observation, after the 10:30 am break, the teacher read a book about scary things, then she asked the children what they thought was scary. Following, Ms. H gave children partners with her name generator and asked them to sit with their knees touching to tell each other the things that scared them.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, the themes and subthemes related to how an experienced kindergarten teacher appreciates the process of planning and implementing opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence and how this teacher integrated opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence in an early childhood educational setting were presented. The teacher provided opportunities for children to develop social and emotional competence in several ways, and her reflections about the subject were reported.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Overview**

The primary purpose of the present study was to explore how an experienced kindergarten teacher plans opportunities and integrates practices for the development of social and emotional competence in an early childhood educational setting. How this teacher articulates the process of planning and implementing opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence was also explored. Two interviews, nine observations, and an analysis of class lesson-plans, revealed several themes and subthemes related to how this teacher plans, integrates and articulates opportunities to the development of social and emotional competence in an early childhood educational setting. In this chapter, the relevant research that pertains to these findings is integrated and discussed. Limitations and strengths of the present study and directions for future research are also presented.

### **Integrating Practices for the Development of Social and Emotional Competence**

According to Cohen, teachers may use various existing subjects to foster children's development of social and emotional competence (Cohen, 2006). By emphasizing how these competencies are acquired, the participating teacher implemented practices and created environments in which such development was viable (Le Mare, 2011). By contrast, ready-to-be-delivered programs would require the selection of a part of a school day to implement them. In observing this experienced teacher, it was possible to see how she included practices for the development of social and emotional competence in all subjects she teaches: language, math, arts, science, and others (across, or under the curriculum). For that, she used different resources and strategies such as book reading, humour, songs, programs, and physical and visual strategies.

Book reading was used, especially during planned Language Arts activities. The teacher would address specific skills by reading a book that children could relate to, amongst them:

"Have You Filled a Bucket Today?", "Interrupting Chicken", "Something Else" and others.

These books supported the teacher in addressing being friendly with one another, not interrupting when someone else is talking and including people in our friendship group, even when they are different. Such planned activities can maximize the likelihood that children will attain the objectives that the teacher had in mind (Han & Kemple, 2006). Using different strategies from programs was mostly planned. However, the teacher also made use of some strategies, such as showing the *Zones of Regulation* folder, to address situations on-the-spot. Spontaneous interventions can be used by teachers to address the needs of students when an opportunity arises without being planned, as a teachable moment for the entire classroom (Han & Kemple, 2006).

The teacher is required to observe the children she is working with and plan activities according to the needs they have, or spontaneously propose an activity to support children on-the-spot, according to her objectives. Observing the children's needs is essential to practicing intentional teaching, which involves educators being thoughtful and purposeful in their decisions and actions in the classroom (Houghton, 2013). Ms. H planned and spontaneously practiced intentional teaching by drawing on multiple sources of knowledge, her professional background and skills, and her understanding of children's families and communities, including cultural and personal values. Intentional teaching can offer a useful strategy to create teaching practices that are responsive and adaptive to the individual child's social and emotional needs (McLaughlin et al., 2016)

### **Building Positive Relationships**

Understanding each child's individual needs and supporting them with intentional teaching provides teachers with an opportunity to create positive relationships with the children. Many researchers have highlighted the role of teacher-child relationships as essential in the

quality of young children's early learning and experiences (Melhuish et al., 2015). Early learning that occurs within a context of supportive, stable, and responsive relationships between children and a caring adult, being in the family or at school, promotes the development of social and emotional competence and yields favourable outcomes in the short- and longer-terms (Jones et al., 2015).

To build such relationships, the teacher strove to put children in the center, giving them individualized attention, recognizing their developmental characteristics, and facilitating them to participate in the classroom choices actively. The teacher referred to stages of kindergarten child development to justify her choices of activities and practices in the classroom. However, she acknowledged there are many differences "in-between" children, and what is the appropriate practice to each child may vary according to their culture, gender, ethnicity, social status and other characteristics (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001). Ms. H had studied how children mature and understood the need for the development of communicative, language, symbolic, and perspective-taking abilities enabling greater engagement in cooperative activities, following the National Association for the Education of Young Children guidelines (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

The same guidelines in a more recent version (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) has suggested that teachers can make a significant contribution to children's social and emotional development by establishing a responsive, nurturing, and personal relationship with each child in the class. Ms. H also recognized the importance of creating such relationships and made efforts to give individualized attention to each child in her classroom. She also used humour to create community and assisted children in creating positive relationships amongst themselves by

providing opportunities for them to interact with diverse peers exploring learning activities, and practicing social competences (Katz & McClellan, 1997).

### **The Importance of Support to Teach Social and Emotional Competence**

Ms. H has 25 years of experience as a teacher and has tried many strategies over these years to support children in their social and emotional development. These strategies were created by her or suggested by other teachers during training sessions, and she has seen many ways in which assistance is provided for teachers to create a supportive environment for learning. She suggested that new teachers, and experienced ones as well, would benefit from receiving more personalized support. Sabol and Pianta (2012) reported that teachers who were provided with individualized support in their own classrooms had their interactions with students improved. Moreover, Reeves and Le Mare (2017) offered support for teachers to integrate social and emotional competence into their practice. The authors reported that individualized support for teachers could lead to changes in how they understand the aims of education and the role of relationships in supporting students to become happy, healthy and productive citizens.

It is recommended that teachers receive regular support when teaching social and emotional competence in the context of a program, especially to assure fidelity (Payton et al., 2000). However, teachers that are not delivering a program may also benefit from support to gain some perspective on social and emotional competence and discuss ideas and teaching practices. Ms. H suggested that teachers should get support from more experienced teachers at their own school, as teachers do not have the time to go to another school during recess. When teachers form a partnership to share their knowledge and support each other, Sheridan and colleagues (2009) called this coaching. However, this process needs frequent interaction for changes in teaching to occur.

According to Ms. H, the primary source of support for teachers is currently the internet. However, given the vast amount of content available, teachers have to develop the ability to harness this resource purposefully and productively (Kumari, 1998). Kabakçı and colleagues (2010) investigated the opinions of 21 Turkish elementary school teachers on using internet searching strategies to plan their classes. Almost all teachers thought that they needed the training to use internet search since they encounter difficulties in accessing relevant information and scientific resources online. The participants also reported problems with accessing websites with virus threats and difficulty of accessing websites that required membership. Similarly, Williams and Coles (2007) examined the use of internet search by 390 UK school teachers addressing their information literacy levels with an emphasis on their confidence in their abilities to find, evaluate and use research information. Findings suggested that teachers have a range of concerns regarding their lack of skills and knowledge of using internet searches, which they judge necessary to access and evaluate websites effectively. Therefore, even though internet searching may be an interesting resource for teachers, they still need support in using it.

### **Humour as a Means of Having a More Pleasant Environment for Learning**

Ms. H uses the internet as a strategy to find ideas for her classes, yet, the most common strategy used by her was her own sense of humour. It can be recognized by the fact that she saw humour as an essential tool for children to develop critical thinking and create a sense of community in the classroom. Although the definitions of humour vary, there is general agreement among researchers that humour involves the communication of incongruous meanings that are amusing in some way (Martin, 2007). Banas and colleagues (2011) conducted a review of the last 40 years of research on humour in educational settings and, according to them, instructional humour has mainly positive consequences. These positive consequences are related

to how humour may create a positive classroom environment; it also increases student motivation for learning and how engaging the instruction is for students, thus relieving tension and student anxiety.

Having a teacher with a sense of humour may also foster the development of children's sense of humour, which has been found to function as a successful means of social influence (Watson & Drew, 2017); as a communication tool providing a socially acceptable outlet for aggression (Reece, 2014); as a means of creating community (Korczynski, 2011); and as a strategy for coping with stress, fear and anxiety (Martin et al., 1993). It is reasonable to conclude that humour is a useful strategy for teachers to use in the classroom to provide children with opportunities to develop social and emotional competence.

However, what amuses or entertains may vary, depending on the audience, and it may serve negative social functions, such as ridiculing and social isolation. Moreover, according to Banas and colleagues (2011), some researchers have noted that certain types of instructional humour may have negative consequences as well. Therefore, teachers must be careful with how they use humour in their classroom, adapting it to their audience and supporting children in developing positive humour usage as well. Banas and colleagues suggested that instructors should be especially careful regarding the age of students, as humour may confuse younger children as they may not understand exaggerations, distortions or irony, and they may inadvertently learn inaccurate or incorrect information.

Ms. H, on the other hand, believes that once children are confronted with information that may be false, it helps them in developing critical thinking and recognize what is true or false in a situation. Wanzer et al. (2010) suggested that for humour to facilitate learning, children need to be able to perceive and resolve the inconsistencies in a humorous instructional message. If the

students cannot resolve the incongruity, that may cause confusion. Therefore, more than taking into consideration children's age, teachers need to take into account how children face incongruities of teacher's speech and support them in resolving this.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This qualitative case study provided rich detail about how an experienced teacher integrated practices related to social and emotional competence, as well as how she articulated her meanings about the subject. Research bias was avoided by including a researcher that did not participate in the data collection as a debriefer for data analysis. Also, although there were research questions, there was no previous hypothesis for this research; this way, confirmation bias was diminished. To avoid participant bias, the researcher strove to build an accepting environment and had open-ended questions on the interviews. However, as the analysis was conducted following a qualitative approach, they depended largely on the interpretation of the researchers involved, and there could possibly have been areas of bias.

As this study was conducted with a single case, the researcher was able to investigate the topic in more detail than might be possible if dealing with a large number of research participants with the aim of generalizing. Given the design of the study and the study of one teacher in one setting, the results should not be generalized. However, by providing a thick description, it is hoped that other researchers and teachers might find the results transferrable (Lincoln, 2010). According to Leininger (1994), transferability refers to whether or not particular findings can be useful to another similar context or situation, while still preserving the meanings and inferences from the completed study. In this sense, the responsibility of the researcher lay in providing detailed descriptions for the reader to make informed decisions about the transferability of the findings to their specific contexts is important. The researcher provided a 'thick' description of

the context, research methods and quotes of the data so that readers can consider their own interpretations.

### **Future Directions**

This exploratory research also provided insights for future studies, such as how these practices might impact children's social and emotional development, and that might be tested by other methods. Also, this research highlighted the importance of humour to build a positive environment for learning, social and emotional competencies included. In fact, several studies were found about humour and its effects on emotions. However, little is known about how teachers might use humour to support the development of social and emotional competence in the classroom. Future research could explore how teachers can use different styles of humour to support children's development of social and emotional competence.

Another interesting finding was how teachers might use internet searching as a resource for learning about teaching and class planning. However, studies have reported on how the ability to use this resource with purpose in order to be productive is essential for teachers to develop (Kabakçi et al., 2010; Williams & Coles, 2007). How teachers can receive support and training to use internet searching as a resource of liable information is an interesting subject of research.

### **Summary**

Ms. H used different planned and spontaneous strategies to support children's development of social and emotional competence. The most commonly used strategies were books and humour. Her many years of experience helped her develop knowledge and expertise to integrate teaching practices that are effective in creating a positive environment for learning. Nevertheless, teachers can benefit from receiving more support from their district supervisors or

other teachers to ease their job. Recognizing that the present study is a case study, other methodologies in different contexts could reveal different findings. Future research could focus on studying teachers' use of humour and internet searching for supporting children's development of social and emotional competence.

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**Appendix A - Background Information**

1. How many children are in your classroom?

\_\_\_\_\_ children

a) Do any of the children in your classroom have special education designations?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please specify how many \_\_\_\_\_

2. During the current school year, have you used, or are you using, any special programs that addresses Social and Emotional Competence? (for example: Roots of Empathy; Second Step...)

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please specify the name of the program(s) you are using \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you used any special programs that addresses Social and Emotional Competence previously in your teaching career?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please specify the name of the program(s) you have used.  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. In what is area(s) do you hold a teaching certificate: (specify all areas of current teaching certification) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you currently teach part-time or full-time?

\_\_\_\_\_ Part-time

\_\_\_\_\_ Full-time

\_\_\_\_\_ Other, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

6. How many years have you worked as a classroom teacher?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

7. How many years have you worked as a kindergarten teacher?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

8. How many years have you worked as an early childhood teacher (Pre to Grade 2)?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

9. Do you have experience teaching/working in another early childhood setting outside of Pre to Grade 2 teaching (e.g. Strong Start, Montessorri, Preschool)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. What is the highest degree you have completed?

*(Please choose one)*

\_\_\_\_\_ B.A./ B.Sc.

\_\_\_\_\_ B.Ed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Post Baccalaureate Diploma or Certificate

\_\_\_\_\_ Master's Degree (e.g. M.A., M.Sc., M.Ed.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Doctoral Degree (e.g. Ed.D., Ph.D., Psy.D.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Post-Doctoral

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

11. How do you identify?

*(Please choose one)*

\_\_\_\_\_ Male

\_\_\_\_\_ Female

\_\_\_\_\_ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Rather not say

## Appendix B - Pre-Observation Semi-Structured Interview Guide

*Say to the teacher:*

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my study! Your participation is very important to me.

The questions I will ask you have no right answer.

If you do not wish to respond to a question, let me know and we will skip it.

Finally, I would like to ask you if that is ok that I audio record our conversation. I am the only one who is going to hear it and transcribe it. If at any point we mention any names, from students, staff, or your own name, I will replace them with ID numbers or pseudonyms.

*Following are the main questions and possible follow up questions to be asked depending on what the teacher responds.*

- b) Why did you decide to become a teacher?
  - Tell me about your experience as a teacher
  - As a kindergarten teacher?
  - Why did you agree to be part of my study?
  
- c) From your perspective and experience, what are the goals of Early Years Education (K-2)?
  - Are there more goals?
  - What are the ways you try to achieve them?
  - Does your perspective coincide with the expectations of parents, schools' staff and other people involved in the education of children from your classroom?
    - How do you balance these expectations?
  
- d) In your experience, what are the roles of the teacher in Early Years Education?
  
- e) How do you evaluate your training to work with children?
  - Tell me about the difficulties you encounter in your classroom routine
    - How do you deal with them?
  - Tell me about the kinds of support you have when facing these difficulties
  - From your point of view, do kindergarten teachers need more support in any specific area?
    - What kind of support would that be?
    - From whom?
  
- f) From your perspective, what is the importance of social and emotional competence?
  - Tell me about its importance in the context of Early Years Education
  - Tell me how practices related to social and emotional competence are present in the pedagogical priorities of your school in general
  
- g) Thinking about your classroom routine, how do you include practices that promote social and emotional competence?
  - Could you give me examples?
  - How do you plan them?

- What are the kinds of moments do you put them in practice?
- h) Do you anticipate opportunities for practices related to social and emotional competence in the next few weeks?
- What opportunities are you thinking of?
- i) Tell me about your experiences with any prepared program \_\_\_\_\_ that you implemented in your classroom. *(complete the blank space if the teacher had experiences with any social and emotional program, consult survey)*
- What did you like about the program?
  - Was there something you did not like?
  - Do you still use something from the program in your practice?
- j) Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not discussed so far?

## Appendix C - Post-Observation Semi-Structured Interview Guide

*Say to the teacher:*

Thank you for participating in my study! Your participation is very important to me.

The questions I will ask you have no right answer.

If you do not wish to respond to a question, let me know and we will skip it.

Again, I would like to ask you if that is ok that I audio record our conversation. I am the only one who is going to hear it and transcribe it. If at any point we mention any names, from students, staff, or your own name, I will replace them with ID numbers.

*Following are the main questions and possible follow up questions to be asked depending on what the teacher responds.*

PART 1 – Talk about the experience of being part of the research

1. Tell me about how you feel and how was the experience with having researchers in your classroom observing your practice
  - Was it uncomfortable in any way?
  - Were there any positive aspects?
2. Tell me about how you feel and how was the experience with having someone look at your class plans?
  - Was it uncomfortable in any way?
  - Were there any positive aspects?

PART 2 – Discussing the opportunities for social and emotional competence.

1. On our first interview, we talked about how you plan opportunities for social and emotional competence. Tell me about these past three weeks and how was the process of implementing them.
  - Was there something you planned and you could not implement?
    - Ask for examples
  - Was there something you did not plan to do but you included in your practice?
    - Ask for examples
  - Tell me about the resources you found that helped you in this process
    - Ask for examples
  - What about the difficulties you encountered?
    - Ask for examples

To end the discussion:

Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not discussed here?

*Read this to the participant:*

Thank you very much for participating in this research. Your reflections and considerations are all very important and I have certainly learned a lot from you. I hope you might take something from this experience too.

We would like to review our initial results with you. As soon as the results are finalized, we will contact you to review the initial results.

## Appendix D - Observation Training

Following are the topics discussed in the Observation training to be held with one research assistant who will be present at the classroom 25% of the time.

### Part A

- Purpose of the study
- Rationale of the Study

### Part B

- Ethics
- Confidentiality and Privacy

### Part C

- Narrative observation
- Non-participant Observation
- Descriptive observation

### Part D

- Inspect the Observation Protocol
- How to annotate on the Observation Protocol

### Part E

- Practicing with a YouTube video (link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3Dw0rmiyXc>)

### Part F

- Thematic Content Analysis
- How to conduct: step-by-step

### Appendix E - Observation Protocol

Participant's ID		Number of students registered	
Classroom Number		Number of students present	
Date & Hour	___/___/2019 (__:__ AM/PM)		

Narrative			Notes
Activity	Starting Time	Ending Time	
	__:__ AM/PM	__:__ AM/PM	

## Appendix F - Recruitment Letter for Teachers

### Principal investigator:

Laurie Ford Ph.D.  
Department of Educational & Counselling  
Psychology &  
Special Education  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxxx@xxxxxx

Project Office: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

### Co-Investigators:

Catherine Ann Cameron, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxxx@xxxxxx

Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro, B.A.  
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxxx@xxxxxx

---

Dear Teacher;

We are writing to invite you to take part in a research study that we would like to conduct at your school. This study is the Master's thesis for the student investigator, Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how a kindergarten teacher plans and integrates practices related to social and emotional competence in their classroom.

### I. Who are we looking for?

This is a case study and we are looking for:

- One kindergarten teacher
- With at least 3 years of experience
- At least one year as kindergarten teacher
- Who has been working with the same classroom since September 2018

### II. What is going to be asked of you?

- **Class plans:** We are going to ask for your class plans in any format that you may have (daily, weekly, monthly) during a three-week period. We are going to make a copy of them and return them to you the same day. If you do not make a written class plans, that is not a problem, we will not ask you to make them for us. We will remove any names or identifying information on the plans.
- **Observations:** We would like to observe your classroom for 2 hours, three times a week, for 3 weeks (9 times). One or two researchers will be in your classroom observing your practice related to social and emotional competence and take notes on a tablet. You will not be asked to do anything different from what you normally intend to do during those visits.

- **Interviews:** Before and after the observations we would like to have an interview with you to talk about your ideas about social and emotional competence and your practices and plans for the class related to this subject. Each interview will take about 30 to 60 minutes. We are also going to ask you for some background information. When we have finished the study and have completed our initial analysis we would like to talk with about the findings for about 30 to 60 minutes. .

There will be no cost to taking part in this research project beyond the time it will take to engage with us. Taking part in the study is voluntary and will not affect any services you receive from your school or school district. You will be given a \$50 gift card to thank you for your help with this project.

### **III. What are the benefits for you?**

We hope that this study will help you reflect on your practices related to social and emotional competence in your classroom. The school curriculum as outlined by the BC Ministry of Education (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013) proposes that teachers include social and emotional competence into their practice, therefore, we hope that this study might be useful to you to help reflect on the ways you have been attending to this expectation in your classroom.

We will share a copy of the study once it is completed.

For more detailed information about the study (e.g., involvement, risks, benefits, and confidentiality), please see the attached consent form.

If you meet the criteria and are interested in taking part in our project, or if you would like to learn more about the study, please contact us by phoning the research project office at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by sending us an email at xxxx@xxxx.xxx.xx before \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_ (*insert date that is 7 days after the visit*).

If after speaking with us you wish to take part in the project, please complete the attached consent form and demographic information and let us know by email or phone. Following, we will contact you to pick up the documents and start with the study procedures.

Sincerely,

---

*Laurie Ford*

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*Catherine Ann Cameron*

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*Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro*

## Appendix G – Recruitment Letter for Principal

### Principal investigator:

Laurie Ford Ph.D.  
Department of Educational & Counselling  
Psychology &  
Special Education  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxxx@xxxxxx

Project Office: (XXX) XXX-XXXX  
**Co-Investigators:**

Catherine Ann Cameron, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxxx@xxxxxx

Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro, B.A.  
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxxx@xxxxxx

---

Dear (Principal's name),

We are writing in hopes that you will allow us to meet with your kindergarten teachers to invite them to take part in a research study that we are conducting. This study is the Master's degree thesis for a student investigator, Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro. You are receiving this letter because we believe your school is a good match for our study.

### **I. Who we are?**

Alessandra is a Master's student in the Interdisciplinary Studies program at UBC who is co-supervised by Dr. Laurie Ford in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology & Special Education and Dr. Ann Cameron in the Department of Psychology, at UBC.

### **II. What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to

- understand more of how a kindergarten teacher plan their practices related to social and emotional competence
- observe how they implements these into their practice in the classroom
- and hear how they evaluate these processes.

### **III. Who are we looking for?**

This is a case study and we are looking for:

- One kindergarten teacher
- With at least 3 years of experience
- Who has least one year as kindergarten teacher
- Who has been working with this classroom since September 2018

Please feel free to share this with all of your kindergarten teachers. If they are interested, they can contact us for more information.

#### **IV. What are the benefits?**

The school curriculum in British Columbia has a specific focus on social and emotional competence. This study may be used by the participant as a way to reflect on their own practice in the classroom related to their teaching social and emotional competence in their classrooms. The teacher will be compensated for their time involved in the study with a \$50 gift card.

#### **V. What is involved during the study?**

The teacher will be asked for:

- **Class plans:** The researchers will request the teacher's class plans in any format they may have (daily, weekly, monthly). If they do not have class plans, they will not be asked to make one for the research. The researcher will take a picture of the class plan and secure it in an encrypted folder. We will remove any names or identifying information on the plans.
- **Observations:** Two researchers will be in the classroom taking notes on a tablet about the teacher's interactions during 2 hours, 3 times per week, for 3 weeks. These observations will take place during different activities. The teacher will not be asked to do anything different from what they are already planning.
- **Interviews:** Before the observations start, the teacher will be invited to an interview to talk about her or his perspectives about social and emotional competence and what she or he usually does in the classroom related to that area of practice. Once the observations are finished, the teacher will be invited for a second interview to talk about her or his practices, the process of participating in the study and revisit some topics from the first interview. After the preliminary analysis we will ask to meet with the teacher to discuss the initial findings. Each interview will take 30 to 60 minutes.

#### **VI. What are some of the risks?**

The teacher or the children might feel uncomfortable with the presence of researchers in the classroom, but we will ask the students in the classroom and the teacher to let us know if that happens and we will leave the classroom and come back in a better time. They will be able to stop taking part at any time, and we will be available if they have any concerns. Our experience is that students and teachers get used to the presence of researchers in the classroom very quickly.

#### **VII. What happens with the results?**

The researcher will share a copy of the results when the study is completed. The findings will be part of Alessandra's Master's thesis. And an abstract of the completed report will be sent to Learning Services of the Vancouver School Board (VSB: Research Committee).

#### **VIII. What about your privacy?**

It is very important to us that the school and the student's rights to privacy are respected. All information collected as part of this research study will be kept confidential. No individual information will be reported and no parent, student, teacher, or school will be identified by name in any professional or public reports about the completed study.

If you are interested in allowing us to talk with the kindergarten teachers at your school or would like to learn more about the study and what is involved, please contact Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro or Dr. Laurie Ford by phoning the research project office at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by sending us an email at <xxxx@xxxx.xxx.xx> or < xxxx@xxxx.xxx.xx >.

Sincerely,

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*Laurie Ford*

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*Catherine Ann Cameron*

---

*Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro*

## Appendix H - Information and Consent for Teachers

### Principal Investigator:

Laurie Ford Ph.D.  
Department of Educational & Counselling  
Psychology &  
Special Education  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxx@xxxxxx

Project Office: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

### Co-Investigators:

Catherine Ann Cameron, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxx@xxxxxx

Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro, B.A.  
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxx@xxxxxx

Dear Teacher;

This is an invitation for you to take part in the study that we are conducting. If after reading this letter you decide you would like to take part, please sign the consent form on page 5 and fill out the Background Information Survey attached. Let us know by phone or e-mail and we will pick it up at the school on a time agreed with you. You may keep pages 1 to 4 for your records.

### I. What is the study about?

This study aims to understand more about how a kindergarten teacher plans, implements, and perceives teaching practices for the development of social and emotional competence in their classrooms.

### II. Who are we looking for?

This is a case study and we are looking for:

- One kindergarten teacher
- With at least 3 years of experience
- At least one year as kindergarten teacher
- A teacher who has been teaching the same group of students since September

### III. What is involved?

We are asking for you to share your class plans, allow us to observe in your classroom and take part in and three interviews. You will find more details below:

- **Class Plans:** We will ask you for your written class plan, any format that you may have (daily, weekly, monthly). We will take a digital photo image of them and return them to you in the same day. If you do not write down class plans, that will not be a problem; we will not ask you to make one for us. If your name or your students' are

on the class-plans, they will be masked before the picture is taken. We will not have any names on the documents we keep.

- **Observations:** We would like to observe your classroom for 2 hours sessions, three times per week, for 3 weeks (9 observations total). During these three weeks we will observe different activities such as free-play, breaks and teacher-directed activities. One or two researchers will be in your classroom observing your practice related to social and emotional competence and taking notes with a tablet. You will not be asked to do anything different from what you typically do when teaching in your classroom.
- **Interviews**
  - *1<sup>st</sup> Interview:* Before the first observation, we will interview you in person to talk about your perspectives on social and emotional competence and your practices and plans for the class related to this subject. This interview may take from 30 to 60 minutes. This interview will be audio recorded with your permission.
  - *2<sup>nd</sup> Interview:* After we complete our observations, we will invite you to take part in a second in person interview. In this interview we will ask you for your views about the process of planning and integrating opportunities to support kindergarten children's social and emotional competence. You will also be asked about how you felt during the process of the research, and what resources you find available to support you on teaching social and emotional competence. This interview will take from 30 to 60 minutes. This interview will be audio recorded with your permission.
  - *Follow Up Debrief Interview.* A few weeks after we have completed our observations and 2<sup>nd</sup> interview, we will arrange a 30 to 60 minutes interview by phone or in person to review and discuss our initial findings and get any feedback or insight you might have.

#### **IV. How will your privacy be respected?**

- All background information about you and your consent will only be seen by the researchers, and kept in locked cabinets in Scarfe Room 2404 at UBC
- As with any work taking place in schools, if we observe a situation where the risk of harm to a student in the classroom or school is apparent or we have reason to believe a child needs protection (e.g., evidence and/or disclosure of abuse) as defined by the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA s. 14), we have a legal duty to report the matter to a Child Welfare Worker and to provide any data collected once requested by a court of law.

#### **V. How are the data going to be used?**

The results will be a part of Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro Master's thesis, titled 'How experience teachers plan and integrate practices for the development of social emotional competence in kindergarten classrooms: A case study'. Once the preliminary analysis is completed, we would like to have a final session to discuss the initial findings of this study with you. A final summary

of the research will also be sent to you. And an abstract of the completed report will be sent to Learning Services of the Vancouver School Board (VSB: Research Committee).

#### **VI. What are the benefits and risks if you take part?**

We hope that the information we learn from the study may help you reflect on your own practice in the classroom. In the future, the results of this study may help other teachers with their practices too. You will receive a \$50-dollar gift certificate to thank you for your time if you take part in the study.

We believe that the risks in this study are minimal. You might feel uncomfortable with the presence of a researcher in the classroom, if that happens, you can let us know and we will leave the classroom and come back in a better time. Our experience is that teachers and students get used to the presence of researchers in the classroom very quickly. Although we do not anticipate this, some of the questions we ask may seem sensitive or personal. You do not have to answer any question if you do not want to. You may stop taking part at any time, and we will be available if you have any concerns. If a parent does not want us to observe you interacting with their child we will not do so.

Once the data is analyzed and publicly available in the format of Alessandra's Thesis, you will not be able to withdraw your data.

#### **VII. Who do you contact if you have any questions?**

If you have any concerns or questions about the study, please contact Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro, as listed at the top of this letter. If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance call toll free 1-877-822-8598, or e-mail [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca).

#### **VIII. How do I give my consent?**

We hope that you will to take part in our study, but it is your choice. If you do not consent there will be no negative impact on you. If you consent, please:

- Sign the consent form on next page (page 5). You can keep pages 1 to 4 of this letter for your records.
- Complete the Background Information questions
- Return the documents to the researcher.

THANK-YOU

---

*Laurie Ford*

---

*Catherine Ann Cameron*

---

*Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro*

## Consent for Teachers

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Taking part in this project is voluntary and you may refuse to take part or withdraw from the study at any time before the data are made publicly available. Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this research project. When you sign below it also means that you have received a copy of this consent form (pages 1, 2, 3 and 4) for your own records.

---

### **Willingness for your involvement in the study**

Please check:

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, **I am willing** to take part in this project including providing any of the class plans I write during the study, participating in two interviews and allowing the researchers to observe my practice.

Teacher's signature (please sign):

Teacher's name (please print your name):

Date:

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## Appendix I - Information for Parents

### Principal Investigator:

Laurie Ford Ph.D.  
Department of Educational & Counselling  
Psychology & Special Education  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxxx@xxxxxx

Project Office: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

### Co-Investigators:

Catherine Ann Cameron, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxxx@xxxxxx

Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro, B.A.  
Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program  
Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX;  
Email: xxxx@xxxxxx

Dear Parent(s);

We are writing to inform you about a research study your child's teacher is planning to take part in.

#### **I. What is the study about?**

The aim of this study is to understand more about how your child's kindergarten teacher implements opportunities for the development of social and emotional competence in their classroom. The results will be a part of Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro Master's thesis, titled 'How experienced teachers plan and integrate practices for the development of social emotional competence in kindergarten classrooms: A case study'.

#### **II. What is involved?**

One or two researchers will be in your child's classroom observing the teacher and their interactions three times per week for two hours for three weeks (*add the weeks agreed to with the teacher here*). Your child will not be asked to do anything different from their typical classroom routine. The researchers will not talk with the students. The research focus is on the teacher and their interactions with students within the classroom. It may be that during the time of the observation the teacher will interact with your child (or they may not). If they do, this interaction will be observed and become a part of the research. We are going to take notes with a tablet, and we are not using audio or video recording. No student names will be recorded.

#### **III. How will your privacy be respected?**

Your child will not be asked any personal information and nothing specific or identifying about your child will be recorded.

#### **IV. What are the benefits and risks if your child takes part?**

We hope that the information we learn from the study may help your child's teacher reflect on their own practices in the classroom. In the future the results of this study may help other teachers with their practices too. We believe that the risks in this study are minimal. Your child might initially feel uncomfortable with the presence of a researcher in the classroom. However, our experience is that students and teachers get used to the presence of researchers in the classroom very quickly given that there are frequently observers in the classroom. If someone is not comfortable with our presence we will leave and come back in a better time. We will also be available to talk if they have any concerns.

**V. Who do you contact if you have any questions?**

If you have any concerns or questions about the study, please contact Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro, as listed at the top of this letter. While your child is not officially a participant in the study if you have any concerns about your child's rights as a student in the classroom of the teacher participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or call toll free 1-877-822-8598 or if more convenient, e-mail [RSIL@ors.ubc.ca](mailto:RSIL@ors.ubc.ca).

We hope that you do not have concerns with our observing the teacher in your child's classroom. If you do not have concerns you do not have to take any action. If you do have concerns and prefer we do not record observations of the teacher's interactions with your child, please fill out the next page (page 3) in this form and return it to the school before *(insert date of first observation as agreed with the teacher)* and we will not record any observations of the teacher interacting with your child.

Sincerely,

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*Laurie Ford*

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*Catherine Ann Cameron*

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*Alessandra Mafra Ribeiro*

If you do not consent for your child to be observed when in interaction with the teacher by the researchers in this study, please mark the “I DO NOT CONSENT” box below and have your child return this page to the teacher by (*insert date*).

I do NOT consent ( )

Parent’s signature (please sign):

Parent’s name (please print your name):

Child’s Name (please print your child’s name):

Date:

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\*If you consent, you do not have to take any action.

## **Appendix J - Script to Explain the Study for Kindergarten Children**

Hi Students,

Our names are Ale and Harleen, we are both students at UBC.

We are here to ask your teacher to help us with a project we are doing.

We are here to learn what your teacher has you do in her/his class. We are going to visit your classroom a few times over the next few weeks. We will be writing on our tablets what is happening when we are in your classroom

We are not going to ask you to do anything special or even talk with us unless you have something you want to tell us.

We are going to give your teacher (Ms. NAME) a letter for you to take to your family so they will know about our visits to your class too.

If your parents and you are ok with us visiting your class, you do not need to bring the letter back but if your parents do not want us to take notes when your teacher is working with you, they will send the letter to your teacher we will not watch her/him working with you.

Do you have any questions?

## Appendix K - Reflective Journal

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### WEEK ONE

PRE- Observation interview	
1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	
Notes	

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WEEK TWO

1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	
Notes	

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WEEK THREE

1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Observation	
POST- Observation interview	
Notes	