Towards a Cross-Cultural Conceptual Framework for Researching Social and Emotional Education

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Abstract

The central aim of this study was to investigate how different countries practice social and emotional education (SEE) using a comparative research design to create a cross-cultural conceptual framework. The study used a sequential quantitative-qualitative analysis with a comparative design that included 750 teachers. Cross-cultural differences were found in the research sample regarding teachers' self-perceived role in socialising emotion: specifically, the teachers' openness to emotional expression in the classroom, and what social and emotional aptitudes were more likely to be included as part of SEE provision. More variation was found in these variables internationally compared to intranationally. A conceptual framework using two dimensions was created in order to aid future cross-cultural research regarding SEE provision and the study of emotional rules in the teaching profession: the Ideal Affect (likelihood of suppressing rather than expressing emotion) and the Ideal Self (likelihood of developing skills for independence versus interdependence).

Keywords: social and emotional education, comparative education, emotional wellbeing, social and emotional learning, emotional intelligence

Social and emotional education (SEE) is the educational process that aims to develop social and emotional competencies, both intrapersonal (e.g., developing feelings of self-worth, self-discipline and managing stress), and interpersonal (e.g., safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of others, negotiating and resolving conflict and appreciating diverse perspectives). Given past findings that culture influences the way adults socialise children's emotions (Friedlmeier, Corapci, & Cole, 2011), it is unfortunate how scant the research dedicated to cross-cultural differences in SEE provision currently is. The necessity for research in this area is made all the more obvious the more emotional wellbeing is researched: take, for instance, the longitudinal study by Layard, Clark, Cornaglia, Powdthavee, and Vernoit (2014) which found that a person's wellbeing as an adult is more dependent on their emotional health when they were a child compared to their academic attainment in school and their level of wealth as an adult. How schools develop social and emotional competencies and promote emotional wellbeing in children and young people is thus of great importance. This paper aims to fill the gap in the research literature by conducting the first multiple-country study regarding teachers' beliefs and practice of SEE in order to create a conceptual framework to compare SEE provision from culture to culture for future research. This will hopefully aid in the cross-cultural study of 'emotional rules' in the teaching profession, and how these impact other aspects of learning and school life (Zembylas & Schutz, 2009).

Literature review

The available literature regarding SEE includes the evaluation of social and emotional learning programmes in schools cross-culturally (Sklad, Diestra, De Ritter & Gravesteign, 2012; Wigelsworth et al., 2016); a comparison of educational policy relating to social and emotional skills (Domitrovich, Durlak, & Gullotta, 2015; OECD 2015; Emery, 2016); and a summary of relevant SEE policy and best practice in various countries (Fundacion Botin, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2015). This research, however, does not focus on teachers' opinions and beliefs regarding SEE, and tends to treat teachers as faceless variables in the testing of outcomes (i.e., whether students' social and emotional aptitudes improved after a SEE intervention using psychometric testing). Research that does exist involving teachers' opinions and practice of SEE have so far been done as single-country studies: in Greece (Triliva and Poulou, 2006; Poulou, 2017), in Australia (Djambazova-Popordanoska, 2016), and in Turkey (Esen-Aygun & Sahin-Taskin, 2017).

In order to research multiple countries for the present study, the variables of culture were explicitly defined as information (ideas, beliefs, values, skills, attitudes, and knowledge) acquired from other individuals via social transmission mechanisms (e.g. teaching, imitation) (Mesoudi, 2011). The most common method to compare different cultures in past research has been the use of cultural dimensions, and the first systematic review of studies of cultural difference was completed by Inkeles and Levinson (1969). They proposed three 'cultural issues' that commonly differentiated groups: relation to authority; self-concept and the definition of gender roles; and conflict resolution, which primarily relied on the expression versus inhibition of emotion. Inkeles and Levinson's work greatly influenced the Dutch comparative psychologist Geert Hofstede (1980) who used 100,000 standardised questionnaires given to IBM workers in over 53 countries to identify the variables that would predict the cultural differences in his dataset. Hofstede identified four cultural variables in total and scored each country's cumulative answers as a position from 0-100 on each dimension. Taras, Kirkman and Steel's (2010) '*A Three-Decade, Multilevel, Meta-Analytic Review of Hofstede's Cultural Value Dimensions*' found 598 studies that used Hofstede's framework

representing over 200,000 participants and concluded that the dimensions remain theoretically relevant to the study of cultural differences.

Hofstede's 1986 paper, '*Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning,*' was used in the present research to create a series of hypotheses using two specific dimensions - the Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) Index (the degree to which members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity), and the Masculinity Index (MI) (the degree of differentiation of gender and the division of emotional roles). Hofstede used these dimensions to predict cultural differences in the teacher-student relationship - 'the device par excellence by which that culture itself is transferred from one generation to the next' (Hofstede, 1986, p. 302) - and these predictions helped form the hypotheses for cultural difference in SEE provision that were used in the present research (summarised in Table 1).

Table 1. Cultural differences in teacher/student relationships and predictions for social and emotional education provision.

Low UA	**SEE hypotheses**	**High UA**	**SEE hypotheses**
Students feel comfortable in unstructured learning situations.	SEE has vague objectives, and is not timetabled. Low training in SEE. Preference for implicit SEE skills and reliance on modelling. Low expression of emotion.	Students feel comfortable in structured learning situations.	SEE has precise objectives, and is timetabled. High training in SEE. Preference for explicit SEE skills and reliance on didactic teaching. High expression of emotion.
Low MI	**SEE hypotheses**	**High MI**	**SEE hypotheses**
System rewards students' social adaptation.	SEE is believed to be as important as academic subjects. Teachers feel responsible for socialising students.	System rewards students' academic performance.	SEE is believed to be less important than academic subjects. Teachers do not feel responsible for socialising students.
Minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders.	Similar replies to the importance of SEE from both male and female teachers.	Maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders.	Different replies to the importance of SEE between male and female teachers.
Interdependence ideal.	Interpersonal skills are prioritised (safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of others; social skills, negotiating and resolving conflict; appreciating diverse perspectives).	Independence ideal.	Intrapersonal skills are prioritised (self-discipline; setting goals; developing feelings of self-worth; recognising triggers of anger; understanding, and labelling emotion; relaxation techniques).

Methodology

The study used a sequential quantitative-qualitative analysis with a comparative design, with 750 teachers in an initial quantitative phase participating in a questionnaire, and 22 teachers in the following qualitative phase participating in semi-structured interviews. The comparative design used a *contrast of contexts* method which works best when the cases that it juxtaposes are maximally different (Skocpol & Somers, 1980). Thus, the four case studies for this current research project were chosen from Hofstede's (1986) cultural groupings that were most likely to socialise emotion differently, as well as other variables to differentiate the cases (more specifically, whether the country had SEE policy, and whether the education system was centralised or decentralised). The case studies chosen were:

1. United Kingdom: a highly decentralised education system with varying levels of SEE provisions (High MI, Low UA)
2. Spain: a regionally-centralised education system with varying levels of SEE provisions due to region-specific initiatives (Low MI, High UA)
3. Sweden: a highly decentralised education system, with no SEE provision (Low MI, Low UA)
4. Greece: a highly centralised education system, with no government-funded SEE provision (High MI, High UA)

The questionnaire was also devised to compare both international variation, and intranational variation in ten Likert scale questions. Frequency distributions by item were examined for both significance value (p) and magnitude of Cohen's effect size (d). This was due to the methodological and theoretical significance of within-culture variation, discussed in more depth by Au (1999), who warned that average levels of conformity in each culture cannot reveal cross-cultural difference in variance, and what is needed is the standard deviations of measures between each of the case studies.

For the quantitative data collection, surveys were used to collect original data using the Opinio web-based survey software. In order to have as many teachers participate as possible, and to be able to have a random sample, virtually every school in each of the four countries was sent an invitation email to participate using the SwiftMailer software and University College London (UCL)'s simple mail transfer protocol (SMTP) email server. A copy of the questionnaire invitation was sent to every school or teacher email address collected from education department websites and publicly available 'freedom of information' documents. The self-selection bias is thus one of the biggest limitations of the study.

For the qualitative data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 teachers who were a sub-sample of the original quantitative sample (and included every teacher who self-selected to take part in a 50-minute interview as part of the prior questionnaire). The demographics for both the participants in the quantitative and qualitative section of the research were similar: 73% female and 26% male; 52% held an undergraduate degree, 46% a postgraduate degree, and 2% a high school degree; 13% were preschool teachers, 52% primary teachers, and 35% secondary teachers; 11.7% were 20-30 years old, 22.3% 31-40 years old, 32.7% 41-50 years old, 30% 51-60 years old, and 3.2% 60+ years old. Questionnaire responses to open-ended questions and interview responses were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model of thematic analysis, as well as quantified to ascertain their frequency. Full information on the purposes of the research were provided to all participants in the initial

email sent to teachers, plus an invitation to be included in the dissemination of the findings. All participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Findings

Ideal affect

From the hypotheses created from Hofstede's (1986) uncertainty avoidance index, it was predicted that the Swedish and UK teachers (who rated low on the uncertainty avoidance index) would model the suppression of emotion (the inhibition of affect) and favour the control and management of emotion in their classrooms. The curriculum would have vague objectives - if any at all - and SEE would be more likely to be infused into the curriculum as implicit skills learnt via modelling, rather than taught as a separate subject. Furthermore, most teachers would not receive specific SEE training. These predictions and the current study's findings for these two countries are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Results in cultural differences in teacher/student relationships and social and emotional education provision in Low Uncertainty Avoidance cultures.

Prediction	**Were the predictions confirmed by the findings?**	
	UK	**Sweden**
SEE has vague objectives, and is not timetabled.	No. Out of the four countries, the UK was the most likely to have SEE timetabled (61% of preschool and primary schools, and 56% of secondary schools). However, this was partly due to the Labour government's SEAL* framework which was discarded by the Coalition government in 2010.	Yes. SEE did have vague objectives and no SEE framework had been created nor implemented in Sweden. Only 26% of Swedish primary teachers and 34% of secondary teachers said they timetabled SEE.
Teachers model the suppression of emotion.	Yes. Only 63% of UK teachers in the sample agreed that teachers should be comfortable expressing their emotions in class - the lowest percentage in the sample.	Yes. Although 73% of Swedish teachers agreed that teachers should be comfortable expressing their emotions in class, only 51% of teachers agreed that negative-evaluating emotion should be displayed in the classroom.
Low training in SEE.	No. UK had the highest training in SEE out of the four case studies (40% of UK teachers said they had received training in SEE).	Partly. Although 38% of Swedish teachers said they had received training for SEE, Sweden had the highest drop in SEE training over the past two decades.
Preference for implicit SEE skills and reliance on modelling.	No. 38% of primary school teachers, and 34% of secondary school teachers said they taught SEE implicitly - the lowest percentage in the sample. Developing students' social and emotional aptitudes were more likely to be mentioned by UK teachers also.	Yes. Teachers were much more likely to teach SEE implicitly (67% in primary school, and 56% in secondary school). Swedish teachers discussed the quality of their interactions with their students and modelling more frequently, rather than developing and assessing students' social and emotional skills explicitly.

*The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL) programme (Department for Education and Skills, 2005) was the Labour government's universal, whole-school social and emotional education programme created as an 'objective list model': a series of skills as defined by a steering group (42 competencies in total in five skill groups: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills), that could be measured and assessed by teachers. By 2010 SEAL was operational in 90% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools (Humphrey, 2012).

On the other hand, Spanish and Greek teachers who rated high on the uncertainty avoidance scale would allow for more emotion to be displayed in the classroom (the expression of affect) and prioritise how emotions should be communicated. The SEE provision in Greece and Spain would have explicit objectives, would be more likely to be timetabled in the school day and taught didactically as well as by modelling, and most teachers would receive training. These predictions and the corresponding findings are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Results in cultural differences in teacher/student relationships and social and emotional education provision in High Uncertainty Avoidance cultures.

Prediction	**Were the predictions confirmed by the findings?**	
	Spain	**Greece**
SEE has precise objectives, and is timetabled.	No. Spanish primary school teachers were more likely to teach SEE using relational approaches and modelling (66%) rather than timetabling SEE with precise objectives (29%). In comparison, 44% of Spanish secondary school teachers timetabled SEE showing a significant difference between SEE provision in primary and secondary school.	No. Greece does not currently have a SEE framework, and was the least likely to have the subject timetabled out of all the four case study countries: 32% of Greek primary school teachers and 20% of secondary school teachers in the sample timetabled SEE provision.
Teachers encourage the expression of emotion.	Yes. 83% of Spanish teachers in the sample agreed that teachers should be comfortable expressing their emotions in class - the highest in the sample. 72% of teachers also agreed that negative-evaluating emotion should be displayed in the classroom - again, the highest in the sample.	Partly. 67% of Greek teachers said they should feel comfortable expressing their emotions in class - the second lowest in the sample. However, Greek male teachers were found to be significantly more comfortable expressing their emotions in class, including negative emotion, compared to female Greek teachers ($p < 0.05$, $d = .44$ suggested a small to moderate practical significance).
High training in SEE.	Partly. The Spanish teachers were the least likely to have received SEE training (23%), however, Spain had the largest increase in new teachers training for SEE relative to the other countries.	Yes. 34% of teachers trained in SEE, with a large emphasis on teacher training for SEE in the university - a percentage that was relatively high compared to other countries.
Preference for explicit SEE skills and reliance on didactic teaching.	Partly. A higher percentage of Spanish teachers were found to teach SEE explicitly in secondary rather than in primary.	Yes. When SEE programmes were implemented, these were more likely to be taught explicitly focusing on developing and assessing students' social and emotional skills.

Ideal self

The second Hofstede dimension that was used in the present research was the Masculinity Index. For this dimension it is the UK and Greece that are rated high on the index, predicting that the Greek and UK teachers would emphasise skills that help students be independent, for

example: self-discipline, setting goals and developing feelings of self-worth. Other hypotheses included that teachers of different genders would also hold different views in terms of their responsibility to socialise students, and that there would be a greater tendency for teachers to believe that the role of education is solely academic achievement and not the socialisation of pupils (which they would believe to be the responsibility of parents/guardians). The findings for these two countries are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Results in cultural differences in teacher/student relationships and social and emotional education provision in High Masculinity Index countries.

Prediction	**Were the predictions confirmed by the findings?**	
	UK	**Greece**
SEE emphasises intrapersonal skills more	Partly. 56% of UK teachers taught intrapersonal skills regularly (e.g., developing feelings of self-worth, self-discipline, managing stress) - the highest in the sample. However, UK teachers were just as likely to teach interpersonal skills (65%).	Partly. 45% of Greek teachers taught intrapersonal skills (which was relatively higher compared to Swedish responses), but 52% of Greek teachers in the sample said they were more likely to regularly teach interpersonal skills (e.g., safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of others, negotiating and resolving conflict, appreciating diverse perspectives).
SEE believed to be less important than academic subjects.	Partly. This was a subject that hugely divided the UK participants with one group believing SEE was beyond their remit, and the other believing SEE was the keystone to learning.	Yes. SEE was largely defined by Greek teachers as a means to an end to improve academic attainment.
Maximum differentiation in gender responses regarding SEE.	No. UK had the least differentiation between male and female teachers in the present study.	Yes. Greece had a significant difference between male and female teachers in multiple responses compared to the other countries: male teachers felt more comfortable expressing emotion, believed they had better teacher-student relationships, and that they had better relationships to students' parents compared to their female colleagues.
Female teachers more likely to feel responsible for socialisation	No. Both male and female teachers believed themselves responsible for socialisation- no significant difference was found.	No. Both male and female teachers believed themselves responsible for socialisation - no significant difference was found.

In turn, Spain and Sweden which are rated low on the masculinity index by Hofstede, were hypothesised to be more likely to help students learn skills that let them live in harmony with others, such as: safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of others, social skills, negotiating and resolving conflict and appreciating diverse perspectives (empathy). Both male and female teachers would feel responsible in socialising students, and think this responsibility to be as

important as the academic achievement of their students. The predictions are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Results in cultural differences in teacher/student relationships and social and emotional education provision in Low Masculinity Index countries.

Prediction	**Were the predictions confirmed by the findings?**	
	Spain	**Sweden**
SEE emphasised intrapersonal skills more.	Yes. More interpersonal skills were regularly taught by Spanish teachers (63%) compared to intrapersonal skills (49%).	Yes. More intrapersonal skills were regularly taught by Swedish teachers (53%) compared to intrapersonal skills (41%).
SEE believed to be as important as academic subjects.	Yes. There was a large commitment to SEE and the importance of emotion to learning. Those teachers who believed school was simply about academic attainment made up a small minority of the sample.	Yes. Although SEE is treated as outside of the teacher's remit, it was definitely within the school's remit, and school counsellors are available to all students in Sweden.
Minimum differentiation in gender responses regarding SEE.	No. A significant difference was found in multiple answers. Female Spanish teachers were found to be more likely to believe that emotion is fundamental to learning, that children can be taught SEE skills, that they should be responsible for socialising students, and that their students were offered enough opportunities to verbalise their emotions.	No. Female teachers believed themselves more responsible for socialisation than male teachers (see below).
Both genders feel as responsible for socialising students.	No. Female teachers believed themselves more responsible to socialise students than male teachers in the sample ($p < 0.05$, $d = .29$ suggested a small practical significance).	No. Female teachers believed themselves more responsible for socialisation than male teachers in the sample ($p < 0.05$, $d = .48$ suggested a small to moderate practical significance).

Intraregional versus international comparisons

A common objection in the literature regarding the comparative field is that international comparisons tend not to take into account the differences within each country, what is referred to in the literature as the intranational differences (Au, 1999). To address this issue, Likert scales in the current study were also assessed at the regional level to analyse what intranational differences did exist. Two items were chosen for this exercise, one with the most cross-cultural differentiation: 'Not enough attention is devoted to social and emotional education in my school' representing a divergence in two groups (Greece and Spain versus Sweden and the UK), and one with the least cross-cultural differentiation: 'My students have consistent behaviour goals between home and school' representing the least divergence (where Greece, Sweden and the UK had similar responses compared to Spain). Four regions with the highest number of respondents were chosen for each of the case study countries: Attica, Macedonia, Peloponnese and Thessaloniki for Greece (n=83); Balearic islands, Canary islands, Castile Leon and Navarra for Spain (n=166); North Middle, South Sweden, Stockholm and West

Sweden for Sweden (n=75); and East Anglia, Midlands, Scotland and South East England for the United Kingdom (n=152).

When looking at the Likert scale with the most cross-cultural divergence ('Not enough attention is devoted to social and emotional education in my school'), only one statistically significant difference at $p < 0.05$ was found intranationally: this was in Spain between Navarra and the Canary Islands ($d = 0.45$, which suggested a moderate practical significance), which, fittingly, are regions found almost 2,500 kilometres away from each other. Whereas internationally the variance in effect sizes varied in effect from $d = 0.18$ to $d = 0.92$, intranationally the variance in effect sizes varied from $d = 0.007$ to $d = 0.47$. International differences were thus more statistically significant and of a larger practical significance than interregional differences within the same country for this Likert scale (see Table 6). As can be seen with each of the four regions in each country, Spain and Greece were far more likely to have higher means than Sweden and the UK, suggesting that teachers from the former countries were more likely to be dissatisfied with their school's SEE provision compared to Sweden and the UK- this corroborates the international differences of the entire sample.

Table 6. Average mean answer from four individual regions in each case study country 'Not enough attention is devoted to social and emotional education in my school'.

UK	**South East**	**Scotland**	**East Anglia**	**Midlands**
Mean	2.63	2.53	2.43	2.39
SD	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.3
Number	62	19	40	31
Scotland	0.08	-	-	-
East Anglia	0.15	0.08	-	-
Midlands	0.19	0.11	0.03	-
Greece	**Macedonia**	**Attica**	**Peloponnese**	**Thessaloniki**
Mean	3.3	3.11	3.06	2.94
SD	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1
Number	23	27	16	17
Athens	0.17	-	-	-
Peloponnese	0.21	0.04	-	-
Thessaloniki	0.33	0.15	0.1	-
Spain	**Navarra**	**Balearic Isl.**	**Castile Leon**	**Canary Isl.**
Mean	3.43	3.27	2.96	2.95
SD	0.9	1	1.1	1.2
Number	37	60	25	44
Balearic islands	0.17	-	-	-
Castile Leon	0.47	0.29	-	-
Canary islands	0.45*	0.29	0.01	-
Sweden	**South**	**Stockholm**	**North middle**	**West**
Mean	2.88	2.79	2.5	2.46

SD	1.1	1.2	0.8	1
Number	17	29	16	13
Stockholm	0.08	-	-	-
North middle	0.4	0.28	-	-
West	0.4	0.3	0.04	-

Note: The means of responses are presented in descending order. Higher means represent agreement that not enough attention is devoted to social and emotional education in the teacher's school. The grid is organised to present all pairwise comparisons and indicates the magnitude of Cohen's effect size (d) where .2 is small, .5 is moderate and .8 is large. * Significant at the (p) < 0.05 level ** Significant at the (p) < 0.01 level *** Significant at the (p) < 0.001 level

The questionnaire item with the least divergence (at least between Spain compared to Greece, Sweden and the UK) was 'My students have consistent behaviour goals between home and school'. This item had no statistically significant differences intranationally, although the international variations were found to be very similar in terms of effect sizes, with the largest effect size internationally being $d = 0.59$, and intranationally being $d = 0.51$. The regional differences, nevertheless, mimicked the overall groupings of the international findings, with Spanish regions being differentiated from the regions in the three other countries; that is to say, Spanish teachers were more likely to agree in every region that their students had consistent behaviour goals between home and school, whereas teachers from UK, Greece and Sweden were more likely to disagree (see Table 7).

Table 7. Average mean answer from four individual regions in each case study country 'My students have consistent behaviour goals between home and school'.

UK	**East Anglia**	**South East**	**Midlands**	**Scotland**
Mean	3.2	3	2.9	2.8
SD	1.2	1.1	1.3	0.9
Number	39	50	33	19
South East	0.17	-	-	-
Midlands	0.24	0.08	-	-
Scotland	0.38	0.2	0.09	-
Greece	**Peloponnese**	**Thessaloniki**	**Attica**	**Macedonia**
Mean	3.1	3.1	3	2.7
SD	0.88	0.8	0.87	0.93
Number	15	16	26	19
Thessaloniki	0	-	-	-
Athens	0.11	0.11	-	-
Macedonia	0.44	0.45	0.33	-
Spain	**Balearic Isl.**	**Castile Leon**	**Canary Isl.**	**Navarra**
Mean	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.2
SD	0.89	0.85	0.97	0.91
Number	53	31	41	30

Castile Leon	0	-	-	-
Canary islands	0.11	0.11	-	-
Navarra	0.33	0.34	0.21	-
Sweden	**West**	**North middle**	**South**	**Stockholm**
Mean	3.1	3.1	2.9	2.6
SD	1.1	0.73	0.74	0.86
Number	12	14	15	29
North middle	0	-	-	-
South	0.21	0.27	-	-
Stockholm	0.51	0.62	0.37	-

Note: The means of responses are presented in descending order. Higher means represent agreement that teacher's students have consistent behaviour goals between home and school. The grid is organised to present all pairwise comparisons and indicates the magnitude of Cohen's effect size (d) where .2 is small, .5 is moderate and .8 is large. * Significant at the (p) < 0.05 level ** Significant at the (p) < 0.01 level *** Significant at the (p) < 0.001 level

Discussion

Uncertainty Avoidance Index

The only reliable prediction based on Hofstede's (1986) cultural dimensions across the four case studies regarding the Low Uncertainty index was the expression rather than inhibition of affect. This dimension originally described by Inkeles and Levinson (1969) was created to explain differences in conflict resolution by inhibiting or expressing emotion. Taras, Kirkman and Steel (2010) also found that the predictive power of culture was higher than that of other demographic variables regarding emotion (or the 'ideal affect' of any given culture), and the present research corroborates this finding. Whereas Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance dimension was able to correctly identify the differences in treatment of emotion in the classroom, it did not do so in the case of Greece on account of gender – Greek female teachers felt more inclined to inhibit emotion rather than express it. The UK education system was found to act more in line with high uncertainty avoidance countries like Spain and Greece (using specific objectives regarding SEE and emphasis on teacher training), contrary to Hofstede's predictions as well. One correct prediction was Sweden's SEE provision which was more in line with lower uncertainty avoidance countries with its vague objectives and reliance on implicit approaches.

As they relate to SEE provision, the findings highlight that the inhibition as well as expression of emotion are currently being socialised both implicitly via modelling and a focus on the teacher-student relationship (relational approach), as well as by explicitly developing and assessing students' social skills, especially self-regulation and the management of emotion (competence-based approach). Hofstede's dimensions were found to not predict cultural differences due to two reasons: (1) the socio-political context (for example, in the UK the Low Uncertainty cultural dimension seemed more likely to predict the SEE policy of more Conservative governments, rather than more Liberal policy, such as the SEAL framework); and (2) the age of the students the participants were teaching (dimensions were more likely to predict teacher-student relationships in secondary school rather that primary school which

could imply that Hofstede's dimensions are more applicable to teacher-student relationships of older rather than younger students).

Masculinity Index

The Masculinity Index was partly found to be a reliable predictor for what skills were more likely to be taught in each culture: intrapersonal skills (e.g., developing feelings of self-worth, self-discipline, managing stress) versus interpersonal skills (e.g., safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of others, negotiating and resolving conflict, appreciating diverse perspectives). This was especially true for the United Kingdom, although these results might just indicate that the emotional and social skills that were part of the questionnaire were more relevant to UK teachers than to teachers in the other case study countries - especially since the framework of skills used in the study was similar to the UK's SEAL framework. As for the cultural differences regarding gender, this highlights a fundamental flaw in Hofstede's Masculinity Index: the cultural dimensions depend on cultural differences remaining the same, and culture is treated as a relatively stable concept with 'centuries-old roots'. The inability of the dimensions to predict gender differentiation in three out of the four cases begs to differ. The changes in gender relations over the 30 years since Hofstede wrote his dimensions (and almost 50 years since Inkeles and Levinson's meta review) highlight how culture is not that stable a concept.

The Masculinity Index, however, was found to be able to predict the difference in 'self-concept'. Barrett and McIntosh (1982) identified this as the differences between Right and Left political ideology. The Left represents the self as one dependent on other people, and the schooling environment is portrayed as a locus of affection that improves students' social and emotional skills for these interdependent relationships. The Right represents the need for self-help, self-support, self-sufficiency and self-respect, and sees the family (and concomitantly, the school system) as a means of instilling authority and a code of behaviour. Another correct prediction was the similarities between Greece and the UK, both high on the masculinity index, where teachers were found to not be as confident about teaching social and emotional skills to students as they were more traditional subjects, and where teachers were more likely to be divided about the importance of academic attainment versus social and emotional education.

Intraregional versus international comparisons

The results show that in the case of teachers' opinions regarding SEE, the more intranational variation there is, the less international variation, and vice versa. In other words, cultural differences regarding the socialisation of emotion do exist, along with differences in SEE provision. This is an important finding for future comparative research. A limitation to this analysis was the size of the samples of the individual regions - especially in Sweden and Greece - and this intranational comparison would need to be recreated with a larger sample to assess the differences more thoroughly.

Recommendations

Despite the weaknesses in Hofstede's dimensions to predict cultural differences in SEE provision, it was still an incredibly helpful starting point to begin to research a topic that has received little attention in the past. As Feyerabend (1975) advised, 'Theories become clear and reasonable only after incoherent parts of them have been used for a long time. Such unreasonable, nonsensical, unmethodical foreplay thus turns out to be an unavoidable precondition of clarity and of empirical success' (p. 18). Precisely for this reason, more detailed variables of cultural differences in SEE need to be identified, and for this reason the current

study recommends using an updated conceptual framework to study social and emotional education in the future (see Figure 1). This conceptual framework combines all of the correct predictions of Hofstede's dimensions in the current study: the dimension of ideal affect (whether the teacher is more likely to feel comfortable expressing emotion in the classroom or not), and ideal self (whether the teacher is more likely to focus on skills for interdependence or independence). However, this conceptual framework could not incorporate the incorrect predictions of Hofstede's dimensions – such as the cross-cultural difference in emotional expression according to teachers' gender – and other conceptual frameworks are needed to study these particular cross-cultural differences.

It is important for future cross-cultural SEE research to highlight the differences between SEE provision in cultures that are more likely to suppress emotion compared to those that do not, as well as research the outcomes of differing 'ideal affect' on mental wellbeing in general. That teachers in some cultures are more likely to suppress emotion in the classroom is an important finding considering that adults socialise children's emotions by modelling (and thus students are being taught to suppress their emotions). In this respect, it does not matter how extensive and timetabled social and emotional education is if the aim of the provision is to more easily suppress emotion; negative consequences to regularly suppressing emotion have been extensively studied, particularly to the teacher's mental health and the concomitant desensitisation to other people's emotions (Cameron & Payne, 2011; Taxer & Frenzel, 2015; Lee et al., 2016). Without discounting the effects of income inequality and socio-political factors on mental health (World Health Organisation, 2009), emotional wellbeing can be influenced by many other variables that have not received as much attention in the research literature, and it should be a subject of further study just how much culture and the socialisation of emotion in schools are factors in overall emotional wellbeing.

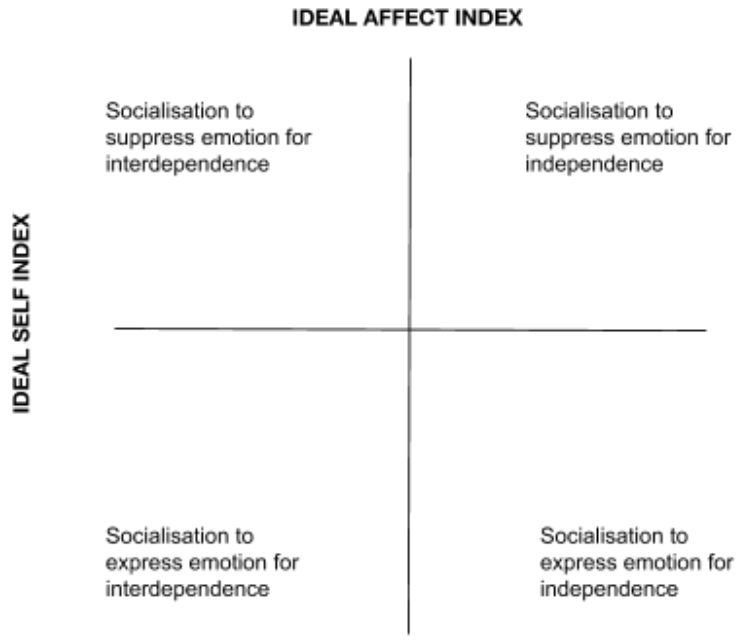

Figure 1. Plot graph of Ideal Affect (suppression versus expression of emotion) and Ideal Self (interdependence versus independence skills).

Conclusion

Cultural differences in teachers' opinions regarding social and emotional education were found to exist in the present study, along with differences in SEE provision from culture to culture. Hofstede's dimensions were able to predict cross-cultural differences in two aspects: the suppression versus expression of emotion, and the emphasis on intrapersonal skills versus interpersonal skills. These correct predictions have been used to create a conceptual framework for future research to identify how SEE seeks to develop ideal affect and the ideal self. However, the correct predictions of Hofstede's dimensions were vastly outnumbered by what they failed to take into account, including: differences in teachers' opinions according to gender, the differentiation of the teacher-student relationship between primary and secondary school, and what countries were more likely to teach SEE more implicitly (relational) rather than explicitly (competence-based approach). The author's hope is that the present study can serve to highlight the basic differences in SEE from culture to culture and serve as a foundation on which future research can be built.

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