
An evaluation into how the introduction of Secondary SEAL has impacted upon School Climate & Pupils' Emotional Literacy and Resiliency Levels.

Paper 1/2: The impact of SSEAL on pupils' emotional literacy and
resiliency levels – (Word Count 8669)

Paper 2/2: The impact of SSEAL on school climate – (Word count 8274)

Submitted by Mark Anthony Snape to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Educational Psychology in Educational, Child & Community Psychology, May 2011.

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Overview

There has been an explosion of research carried out into the social and emotional well-being of children and young people in the UK during recent years. Government policies, including the Every Child Matters Agenda (2003) along with a number of evaluative studies (both primary and secondary) have focused on the importance of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning Programme (SEAL) and the impact it has had on pupils' emotional literacy, behaviour and attainment, to name a few. Evidence suggests that the most effective approach to implementing a social and emotional learning programme is to use a whole school approach, which involves staff, students and parents (Weare & Gray, 2003).

Paper 1 & 2 sought to investigate whether the introduction of secondary SEAL has had an impact on school climate as well as pupils' emotional literacy and resilience levels. The current literature in the area of SEAL has predominantly focused on pupils' emotional literacy and has omitted focusing on pupil resilience. The SEAL documentation (DfES, 2007a) promotes pupils' emotional literacy, as based on Goleman's (1996) model of emotional intelligence and highlights the importance of promoting resilience.

Paper 1 explored the impact that secondary SEAL has had on pupils' emotional literacy and resiliency levels as measured by the NFER Emotional Literacy Questionnaire (Faupal, 2003) and the Child & Adolescent Resiliency Questionnaire (Prince-Embury, 2007). The data gathered from the questionnaires were

triangulated with the responses from the semi-structured interviews from paper 2 to increase the validity of the findings in paper 1. Moreover, by using the qualitative analysis of the results, it allowed the researcher to observe how SEAL has had an impact on pupils' emotional literacy and resilience.

The findings from paper 1 indicate that the introduction of SEAL had not impacted on pupils' emotional literacy scores on the questionnaire, but the qualitative responses from the teachers perceive that students are more aware of their emotions and the emotions of those around them. The quantitative results gained from the resiliency questionnaire indicated that the students' resiliency scores increased between 2010 and 2011 and their vulnerability scores decreased. The correlational data found significant associations between pupils' emotional literacy and resiliency scores.

Paper 2 explored the processes involved when introducing Secondary SEAL into the curriculum and/or pastoral system and whether SEAL had an impact on school climate. Semi-structured interviews elicited staff responses about how SEAL had been introduced into their curriculum and pastoral system and how effectively this had occurred. The results from the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) found three main themes: the management of SEAL, the social and emotional well-being of staff and students and school climate. Furthermore, the results gained from the OCDQ-RM (Hoy et al. 1991) found that School X had an Engaged Climate, School Y had an Open Climate and School Z had a Closed Climate.

The role of the EP was considered in both research papers and it was indicated that the role of the EP is significant in supporting schools to implement a whole school social and emotional learning programme as well as setting priorities for a school to meet their school improvement initiatives. Alongside, supporting whole school initiatives there is a role for the EP to work with schools in providing training about emotions and resilience and appropriate methods to assess and support these constructs.

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Paper 1- Abstract

This research paper forms the first half of this thesis exploring how the introduction of Secondary SEAL (SSEAL) has impacted on pupils' emotional literacy and resiliency levels (as measured by the NFER Emotional Literacy Questionnaire and the Resiliency Scales For Children and Adolescents – A profile of personal strengths (RSCA) Questionnaire).

The aim of Paper 1 is to explore whether the SSEAL programme is associated with relevant pupil skills, to show resilience with a difficult situation; be more in tune with their emotions and the emotions of those around them.

The research questions for paper 1 were:

Question 1: What are the associations between the introduction of SSEAL into a secondary school and Year 8 pupils' emotional literacy levels?

Question 2: What are the associations between the introduction of SSEAL into a secondary school and Year 8 pupils' resilience levels?

Question 3: How has the introduction of SEAL had an impact on pupils' emotional literacy and resiliency levels since the introduction of SEAL into the school?

Question 4: To what extent are there any gender differences from students' responses on the emotional literacy and resiliency questionnaires?

This paper adopted a pragmatic epistemological stance and used a mixed methods design, where quantitative data was gathered from teachers and Year 8 pupils using

both the NfER Emotional Literacy Questionnaire and the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents: A Profile of Personal Strengths Questionnaire. The quantitative data was triangulated with the semi-structured interviews from Paper 2 to inform the results of research question 3.

The sample was derived from three secondary schools in the East Midlands. There were 64 pupils (31 males and 33 females) and three form tutors who completed the questionnaires. The qualitative data was gained from 6 teachers from the three secondary schools in the East Midlands using a semi-structured interview.

The results gained from paper 1 found that there was not a significant result for pupils' emotional literacy scores between 2009 and 2010 for schools X, Y and Z. There was a significant ANOVA result for the teacher's version of the emotional literacy questionnaire. The results gained from the resiliency scores showed that School Y had a significant result for pupils' resourcefulness scores and School Z had a significant result for pupils' vulnerability scores. The ANOVA results showed that there was a significant result for both resourcefulness and vulnerability from the results gained in 2011. The correlational data for school X, Y and Z found an association between pupils' emotional literacy and resilience scores. The data indicated that males scored lower on the emotional literacy and resiliency questionnaires to females. A significant result was found for male scores on the Vulnerability questionnaire between 2010-2011 and there was a significant difference between males and females on the vulnerability questionnaire.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that SEAL had not significantly had an impact on pupils' emotional literacy, but had impacted on pupils' resilience scores. Moreover,

the qualitative data indicated that SEAL has made pupils more aware of their social and emotional needs and the emotional needs of others. Moreover, the results indicate that staff had become more aware of the social and emotional needs of their pupils. However, it can be concluded that the introduction of SEAL has not necessarily increased pupils' emotional literacy or resilience and other factors including, the Key Stage Three curriculum and the pastoral system has had an impact on these. From these results, the role of the EP could be to support schools in applying appropriate social and emotional assessment tools and interventions and support staff to recognise a pupil with high/low emotional literacy and resilience and the most appropriate way to support these.

Paper 2 - Abstract

The aim of Paper 2 was to focus on the processes involved within a secondary school when introducing SEAL and whether SEAL had an impact on school climate as perceived by school staff. The research questions for this study were:

Question 1: How has SEAL been implemented into the school's curriculum and pastoral system?

Question 2: What are staff perceptions of school climate since the introduction of SEAL?

Question 3: What are the most effective sources of analysis to explore how effectively SEAL has been introduced into a secondary school (including OFSTED reports, Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews) and its impact on school climate?

A pragmatic epistemological approach was adopted for this research study where a mixed design was implemented. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with six teachers, (two members of staff from the three secondary schools). A school climate questionnaire (OCDQ-RM) was administered to 42 teaching staff. The results from both the semi-structured interviews and the OCDQ-RM questionnaire were triangulated. A thematic analysis was completed on the semi-structured interviews adopting Braun & Clarke's (2003) model.

The results indicate that the three schools implemented SEAL into their curriculum

quite differently. School X implemented SEAL into all subjects using their curriculum competencies; School Y introduced SEAL into their creative arts curriculum and School Z introduced it into their Humanities and English curriculum. Each school introduced SEAL into their pastoral system in different ways – School X had an activity week, which involved the local community and completed CASE during tutor times and had SEAL-type themes in assemblies. School Y explicitly taught two of the SEAL units per term through the PSHE curriculum, and during tutor time and as part of the assemblies the students engaged in ‘Thought of the week’. Students were involved in an activity day about ‘Being Healthy’. The school had training staff to use Circle of Friends with students. School Z used SEAL type themes as part of their Global-Eye and Thinking Through Schools Programme, which were delivered during assemblies and in tutor time. The school had also trained Teaching Assistants to use the Circle of Friends programme with pupils.

The results gained from the OCDQ-RM indicate that school Z had a closed climate, school X had an engaged climate and school Y had an open climate.

The conclusions from this study suggest that SEAL had not improved school climate (as perceived by school staff) although it had made staff more aware of what school climate is and had improved relationships between students and staff.

Finally, the role of the educational psychologist is important when supporting a school when implementing a whole school social and emotional learning programme and when staff perceive the school climate as being Closed or Disengaged.

