



POLICY BRIEF:

How ready is the Jharkhand public education system in implementing SEL?

Findings from the IDinsight survey

MARCH 2023

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1. Introduction: Why is socio-emotional learning important for whole child development?

Socio-emotional skills help students successfully navigate evolving circumstances within and around them -- learn how to manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions etc. Studies show a positive impact of socio-emotional learning (SEL) on many aspects of students' lives, including academic performance^{1,2}, school graduation, and attendance rates. Better socio-emotional development can also build a positive school culture, leading to increased engagement, better relationships between students and staff, and improved school safety.³ Overall, SEL is an essential component of a comprehensive and well-rounded education.

Adolescents' socio-emotional development is influenced by all facets of their lives and interactions with others. The family environment, relationships with peers and teachers, socio-economic status, and cultural background are among the primary factors that shape an adolescent's social and emotional development.⁴ Specifically, supportive school environments can enhance an adolescent's self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills.⁵ Teachers can play a key role in developing social and emotional skills in students, which can further lead to academic and long-term success.⁶ In contrast, social isolation, bullying, and discrimination can hinder an adolescent's socio-emotional development and lead to emotional and behavioural problems that can continue into adulthood.⁷

A focus on socio-emotional development is critical in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, which witnessed an alarming increase in out of school students and worsened mental health among students throughout the world.⁸ School closures exacerbated feelings of loneliness, stress and depression. Studies show that extended periods of isolation have lingering effects on students' mental health and impact their education and social inclusion⁹. Many students might have also experienced grief or trauma related to the loss of loved ones, financial instability, or other pandemic-related stressors. Integrating practices that support social-emotional development in schools can go a long way to alleviate student distress, build resilience, and contribute to whole child development.

2. Background of this brief

In July-August 2022, IDinsight conducted a multi-stakeholder survey in Jharkhand to understand the state's readiness to implement an intervention dedicated to socio-emotional learning. We collected data on the current state of school climate (teacher-student relationships, student safety, presence of platforms for extra curricular activities, and for parent engagement), teachers' pedagogical practices, and roles and responsibilities of teachers and school leaders.¹⁰ We also looked at education stakeholders' knowledge and attitudes towards SEL. This helps us understand the readiness of the Jharkhand public education system to integrate SEL in public schools.

We conducted a survey with students from grade 8-12 (N = 1,321) and teachers (N = 186); in-depth interviews with school leaders and government officials; and classroom observations in some schools using the TEACH observational tool developed by the World Bank.¹¹ The survey covered Schools of

Excellence (SoEs) in Jharkhand - a set of government schools that have been selected by the state to be model schools with quality education and education infrastructure.¹²

This brief describes our findings about the readiness of Jharkhand to integrate socio-emotional development into public education. We start with describing the current context in which stakeholders are operating in section 3. We then identify necessary changes and key enabling factors to make the education ecosystem ready for SEL, in sections 4 and 5.

3. What is the current context in which education stakeholders are operating?

Schools selected as Schools of Excellence are largely established higher secondary level schools with availability of basic facilities. Our survey found that most Schools of Excellence have functional toilets, enough classrooms, and school grounds. **However, they lack important resources which complement learning.** Two in three schools do not have functional libraries, and while 9 out of 10 schools have computer labs, only two-third of these have access to the internet. Additionally, 1 in 3 schools do not have adequate desks and benches in most classrooms, leading to overcrowding.

Given these challenges, education stakeholders in Jharkhand are focused on meeting basic needs and foundational outcomes. When asked about key education priorities for their districts, most government officials mention ensuring schools have sufficient teachers, increasing student enrollment, and reducing dropouts. Most government officials and school leaders we interviewed also define 'a good school' in terms of foundational outcomes such as infrastructure, teacher quality and student discipline. The lack of essential resources and infrastructure may hinder implementation of SEL programmes in schools, but this also makes the role of teachers and school leaders even more important. By leveraging existing resources creatively and adopting innovative approaches, educators can create inclusive and supportive environments that prioritise students' social and emotional development.

Current roles and responsibilities of teachers and school leaders

To successfully integrate socio-emotional learning in public schools, teachers and school leaders must play a pivotal role. Their existing responsibilities will influence their readiness to integrate SEL in schools. Socio-emotional development also requires a rethinking of traditional pedagogies and role of teachers in students' lives -- which, in turn, need effective support systems to help teachers learn and implement new teaching methods.

A commonly recognised problem in government schools is the shortage of teachers.¹³ We also found that almost a third of teachers we surveyed teach multiple subjects, leading to overburdened teachers and high student-teacher ratios. **Further, school days are often used for non-teaching activities.** Large high schools often function as exam centres for state-level examinations, decreasing available teaching days.

Our study found that teachers spent significant amounts of time on non-academic work. Apart from having to teach multiple subjects, teachers report spending more time on administrative tasks than on teaching, with responsibilities ranging from office work to handling government initiatives such as midday meals, and creating bank accounts and Aadhaar cards for students.

Currently, pedagogical support and supervision of teachers barely exist. Supervising teachers isn't a core part of school leaders' responsibilities; they engage in discussions on curriculum in staff meetings and some informal classroom observations, leaving little scope for feedback on pedagogy. **The current systems of promotions and rewards offer teachers limited incentives to gain new skills or change teaching methods.**

Figure 1: Reported time spent by teachers in the preceding day



The challenges of teacher shortages, overburdened teachers, limited pedagogical support and lack of incentives may hinder educators' efforts in fostering SEL in students. The shortage of teachers and burden of non-teaching activities reduce the time available for meaningful engagement with students, while lack of support and incentives can affect teacher motivation in adopting SEL programmes.

Figure 2: Self reported attitudes on SEL

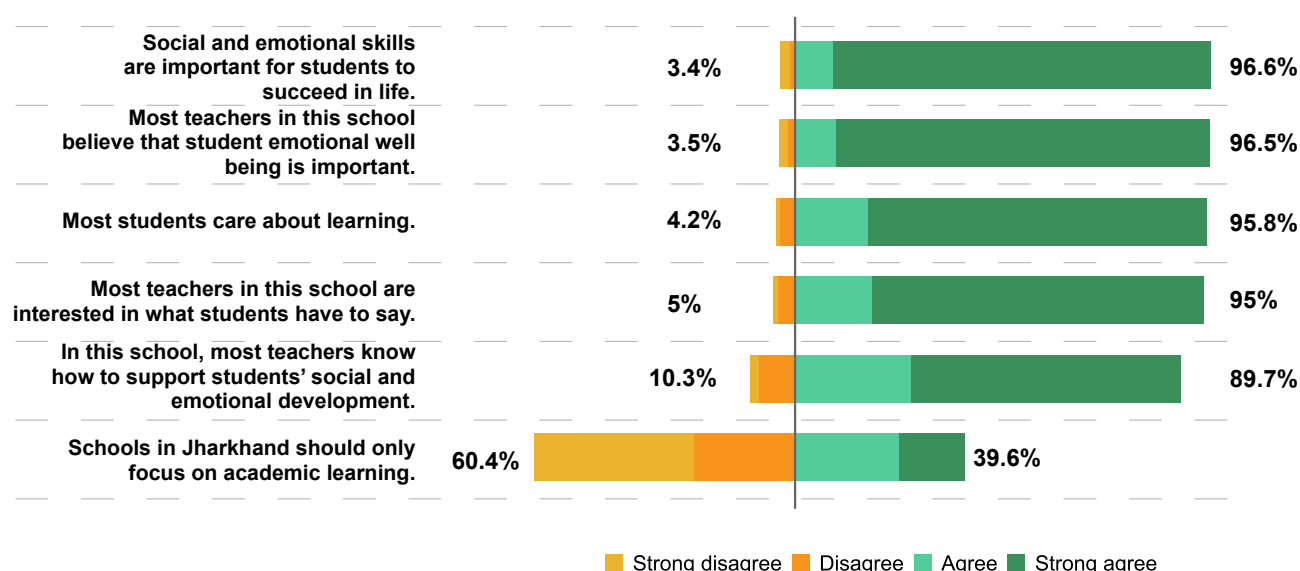
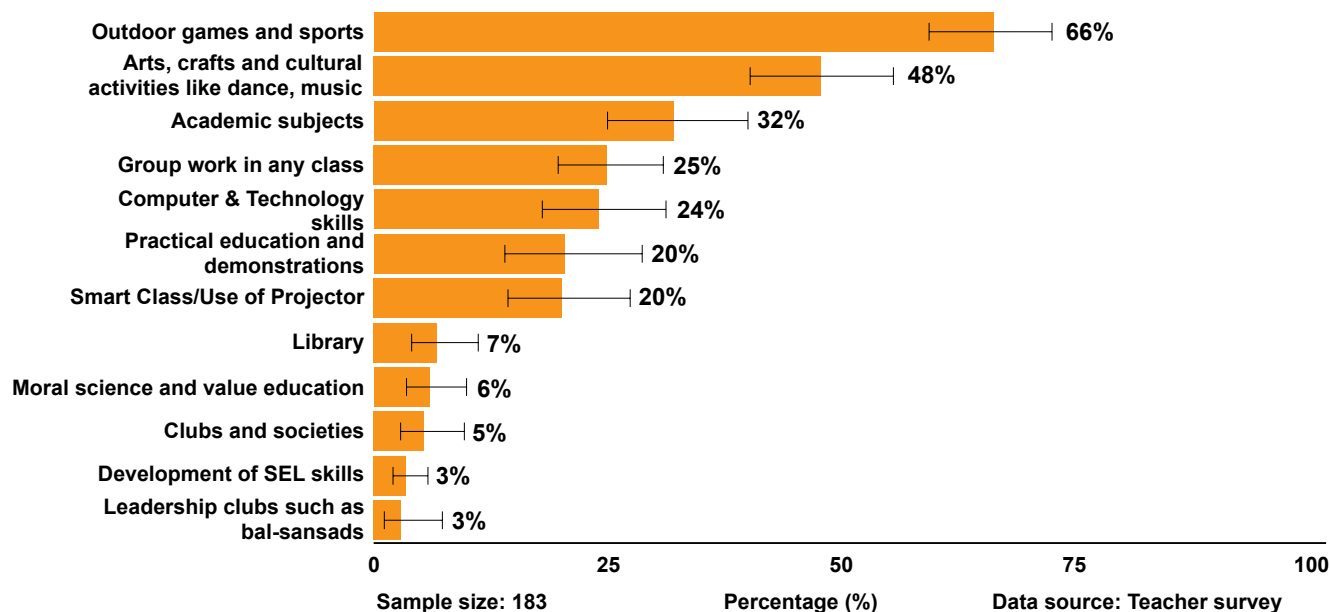


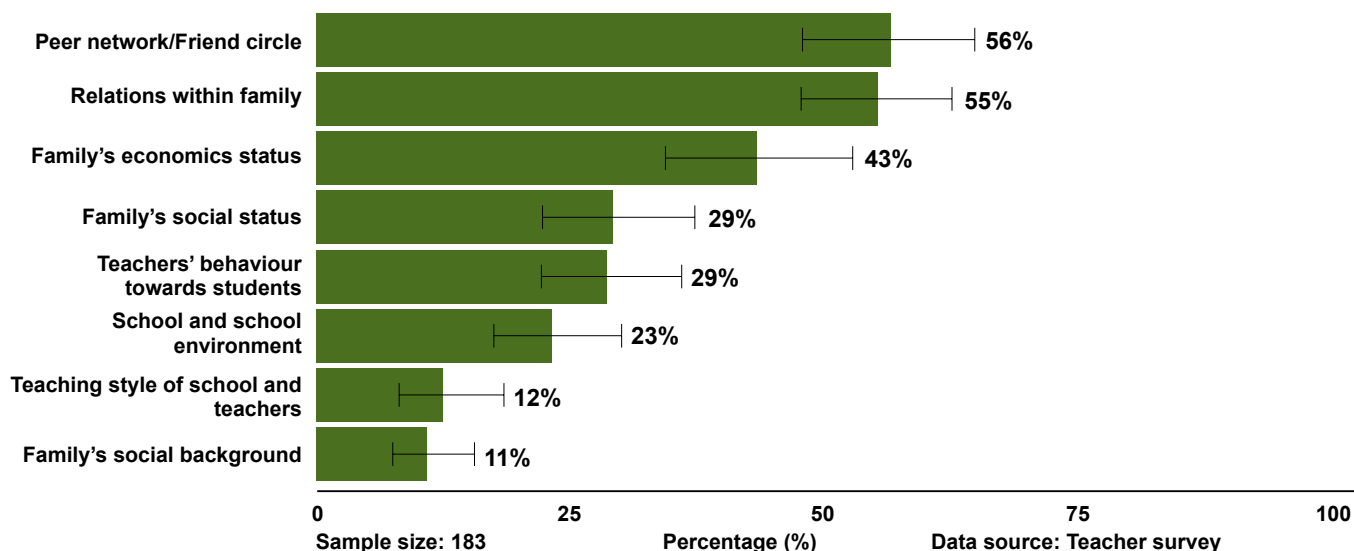
Figure 3: Top components for student learning according to teachers



Current attitudes towards SEL

We found that teachers, school leaders and government officials are largely aware of SEL and believe in its importance, but have a limited understanding of their own role in supporting adolescents’ socio-emotional development. A strong majority of teachers and school leaders agreed with multiple statements on the importance of SEL and positive teacher-student relations, and were able to correctly identify the effects of greater socio-emotional development on students’ social and academic lives (Figures 2 and 3). Teachers are invested in their students - if given more time, half of teachers said they would like to spend it with students or on extra curricular activities. Government officials and school leaders also identify ‘a good teacher’ using a combination of socio-emotional and academic skills.

Figure 4: Most common factors that affect SEL according to teachers



However, teachers devalue their own role in affecting SEL, and identify peer networks and family circumstances as the most important contributors to SEL (Figure 4). This perspective may undermine their sense of agency and overlook the significant influence they have on students' socio-emotional well-being. Teachers also identify family problems and low self-esteem as primary reasons for disruptive behaviour in students during classes, while overlooking any factors related to school climate that could affect student behaviour.

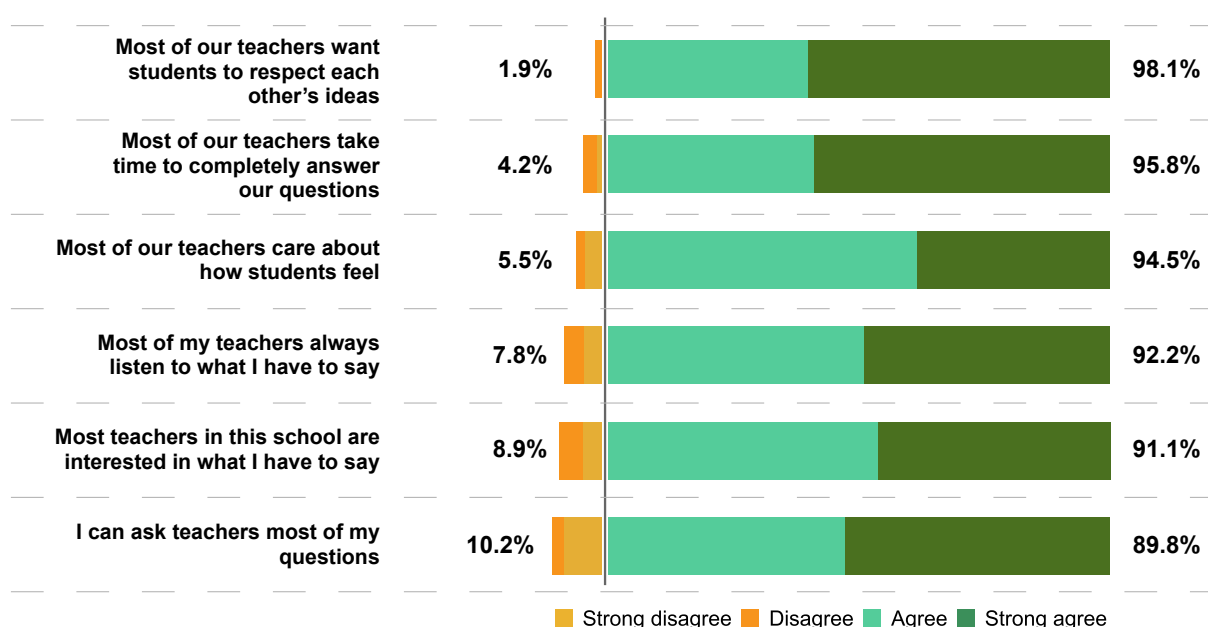
In conclusion, while the focus remains on meeting basic educational needs, there is scope to increase SEL readiness in Jharkhand. On the plus side, education stakeholders value positive student-teacher relationships, and understand the importance of socio-emotional skills in students. While basic knowledge and explicit attitudes towards SEL are positive, these attitudes have not changed actual behaviour in schools. **A major challenge however will also be overburdened teachers, operating in a largely unsupportive environment with little pedagogical support.**

4. What positive factors contribute to SEL?

While several challenges exist in Jharkhand's public education system, some positive areas can be leveraged to improve the uptake of SEL in the state.

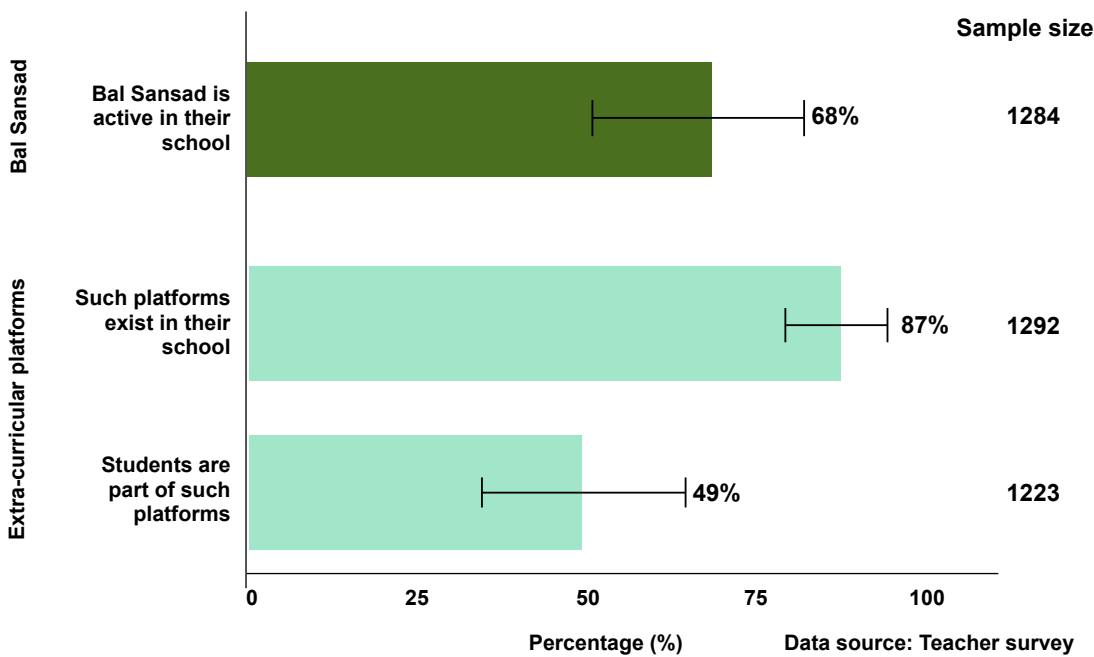
First, teachers know about socio-emotional learning and value its importance. Additionally, students also report positive teacher-student relations. More than 90% of teachers and students agree with several statements on the existence of positive teacher-student relations in their schools (Figure 2 & Figure 5). An SEL-positive mindset among education stakeholders is crucial for the success of any strategy to integrate SEL in schools. Therefore, leveraging these attitudes to teach new pedagogies, which include SEL competencies, can be an effective approach.

Figure 5: Student reported attitudes on teacher-student relationships



Second, school engagement and discussion platforms are active and happen at regular intervals in schools. These include meetings of School Management Committees (SMC) or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), Bal Sansads in schools, and morning assemblies. Students report extra curricular platforms such as Bal sansads, morning assemblies exist in their schools (Figure 6). These platforms can be used to integrate activities and events that promote SEL outside classrooms. SMC and PTA meetings can be used to increase SEL awareness and discussion among parents, teachers and school leaders.

Figure 6: Student-reported presence of Bal Sansads and extra curricular platforms in their school



5. What needs to change to get the ecosystem ready for SEL?

1. Restructure classroom lessons to encourage student participation

First, a major change is needed in the way classes are conducted, to create a more conducive environment for socio-emotional development. Classrooms in Jharkhand schools are currently exclusively lecture-based, with very limited student participation. Regular group work activities need to be prioritised in classrooms, such that students learn to cooperate, build leadership skills, foster connectedness and improve social relations by interacting with others who are different from themselves.¹⁴

2. Make schools safer spaces for students

Education stakeholders in schools need to take proactive steps to create safer student spaces. Critically, 1 in 4 students reported being treated differently by a teacher based on their gender, caste or religion. This estimate was even higher in another recent study¹⁵ by the Centre for Science of Student Learning, where 1 in 3 students reported being physically abused, verbally abused or given differential treatment by teachers. The study also showed that 50% of students in Jharkhand reported being physically or verbally abused by their schoolmates.

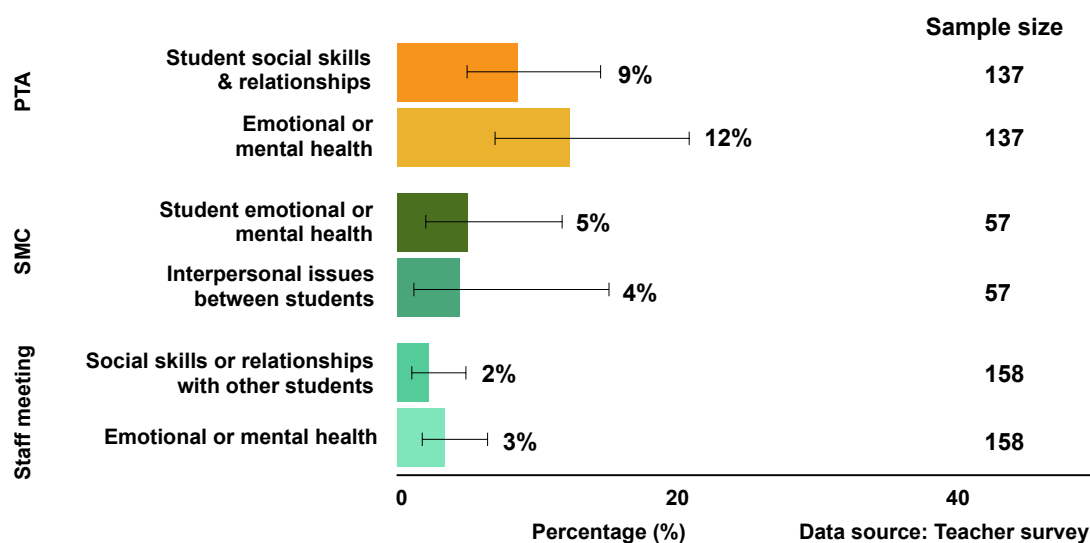
3. Encourage teachers to support students in and out of school

Schools should develop a culture that encourages teachers to support issues that students face in or out of schools. While students overwhelmingly report feeling safe and heard in schools, only 17% reported reaching out to their teacher for a school-related issue in the last month, while only around 6% did so to discuss a home-related issue.

4. Engage with SEL topics in community and parent meetings

School leaders and teachers need to engage with SEL related topics in community and parent meetings, to encourage the perspective that adolescents' socio-emotional development is influenced by all facets of their life, not just school. At present, staff, community or parent meetings largely focus on academic and curricular issues, with no time dedicated to discuss school climate, student behaviour, well-being and social relationships (figure 7).

Figure 7: SEL Topics discussed in the last 3 PTA, SMC, and staff meetings as reported by teachers



5. Encourage students to engage in extracurricular activities and student platforms

Lastly, teachers and parents should encourage students to participate in extra-curricular activities and engage in student-centred platforms. Studies show that extra-curricular platforms, sports and art are great tools through which students gain a sense of belonging and learn essential interpersonal skills such as teamwork, the ability to overcome failures, and confidence to build positive relationships with other students.¹⁶ Currently, while platforms for art, music and other activities exist in schools, half of the students report not actively engaging with such platforms.

6. Conclusion

Both contextual and behavioural challenges hinder SEL integration in Jharkhand's public schools. Education stakeholders are focused on meeting basic needs, such as hiring more teachers and reducing dropout rates, and dealing with the large-scale learning losses due to COVID-19-induced shutdown of schools. Moreover, teaching pedagogy in schools is still lecture-based, with limited student participation and engagement.

Despite the challenges, there are opportunities to strengthen the integration of SEL in Jharkhand's schools. Education stakeholders know the value of SEL, and platforms that can complement SEL in schools such as Bal Sansads and school community meetings, are operational in most schools. Teachers' positive views towards SEL make them more receptive to SEL-based programmes or training. Interventions that help teachers and school leaders recognise their own role in students' social and emotional development, and that focus on promoting SEL pedagogies in and out of classrooms can pave the way for better integration of SEL practices in schools of Jharkhand.

To effectively foster socio-emotional learning (SEL) in Jharkhand schools, there is a need to restructure classrooms for student participation, create safer spaces to address discrimination, encourage teacher support inside and outside of school, engage with SEL topics in community and parent meetings, and promote student engagement in extracurricular activities. These efforts prioritise holistic development and well-being.



About Sampoorna

Project Sampoorna, a whole child development initiative, is one such intervention that aims to improve the SEL competencies of adolescents growing up in extreme adversities by creating safe space at schools, promote parent engagement, enabling teachers to understand their role in students' development and to build their capacity to integrate SEL in their classrooms, and support Government officials to embed SEL-based policies and practices in local and regional levels.

Sampoorna is a partnership between Dream a Dream, Quest Alliance, Kaivalya Education Foundation, and Sattva Consulting with support from Porticus Foundation.

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