

**THE SOCIAL AND SCIENTIFIC-PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES
BASED ON SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING THROUGH PROJECTS**

Holikova Laylo Fakhriddinovna, associate professor (acting) of
Samarqand State Institution of Foreign Languages (PhD)
layloholikova390g@mail.com

Abstract:

This article explores the social and scientific-pedagogical foundations of developing students' professional competencies through the integration of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Project-Based Learning (PBL). In an era where technical knowledge alone is no longer sufficient, fostering emotional intelligence, social skills, and collaborative abilities is essential for professional success. The study highlights how SEL competencies—such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision-making—are crucial for students' personal and professional development.

Keywords: Social-emotional learning (SEL), professional competencies, project-based learning, pedagogical foundations, social skills, emotional intelligence, higher education, student development, collaborative learning, interpersonal skills, educational psychology

In today's rapidly changing world, higher education systems are increasingly focusing on developing students' professional competencies in a holistic way, going beyond just technical skills to include emotional and social intelligence. One of the most promising approaches to achieve this is Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), which emphasizes the importance of understanding and managing emotions, establishing positive relationships, and making responsible decisions. When integrated with project-based learning (PBL), SEL offers students an opportunity to develop both cognitive and emotional abilities in real-world contexts. This combination not only helps students enhance their personal and interpersonal skills but also fosters a more profound understanding of their professional roles. The ability to communicate effectively, collaborate in teams, and navigate complex social situations are all vital components of

professional success. The article explores the social and scientific-pedagogical foundations of SEL in the context of project-based learning, shedding light on how these educational approaches can significantly contribute to students' professional competency development. By incorporating SEL into project work, students are encouraged to think critically, work collaboratively, and engage with real-world issues, preparing them for the demands of modern professional environments. This research examines how SEL principles can be applied within project-based learning environments to cultivate well-rounded individuals who are not only experts in their fields but also emotionally and socially intelligent professionals.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) plays a crucial role in shaping students' overall professional competencies. SEL focuses on helping students develop five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies are essential for personal development, as well as for success in the workplace, where interpersonal relationships and emotional regulation are key. Through project-based learning, students can apply these SEL skills in practical scenarios. For example, working in teams on a project requires students to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and understand the emotional dynamics within a group. By practicing these skills in real-life settings, students build emotional intelligence, which enhances their ability to collaborate, lead, and make informed decisions—qualities that are indispensable in the professional world. Moreover, SEL fosters resilience and adaptability, preparing students to cope with stress and setbacks, which are common in any career.

The integration of Social-Emotional Learning with Project-Based Learning (PBL) is grounded in constructivist pedagogical theories, which emphasize learning through active engagement and real-world experiences. According to Vygotsky's social constructivism, learning is a social process, where cognitive and emotional development are intertwined. By embedding SEL within PBL, students not only learn the technical aspects of their discipline but also develop social and emotional competencies that enable them to navigate complex professional

environments. Educators play a vital role in creating an atmosphere where students feel safe to express their emotions, work collaboratively, and reflect on their experiences. This approach is supported by educational psychology, which highlights the importance of a supportive learning environment that fosters both cognitive and emotional growth. Teachers can use project-based activities to simulate real-life challenges that require students to practice empathy, manage stress, and engage in reflective thinking, which are all integral parts of emotional intelligence and professional success.

The combined use of SEL and PBL not only prepares students to excel in academic contexts but also equips them with the necessary skills to succeed in the workplace. Project-based learning provides opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning, while SEL enhances their capacity for self-regulation, effective communication, and teamwork. For instance, students who engage in projects related to community service or business ventures often have to work with diverse teams, navigate cultural differences, and address real-world problems. These experiences foster skills such as negotiation, leadership, and conflict resolution—core elements of professional competencies. Furthermore, as students are exposed to complex projects that require both technical and emotional intelligence, they become more adept at managing ambiguity, making ethical decisions, and adapting to changing circumstances. In essence, the integration of SEL into PBL creates a more comprehensive educational experience, one that not only shapes students' technical abilities but also develops the social-emotional skills that are increasingly valued in professional settings.

In conclusion, integrating Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) with Project-Based Learning (PBL) offers a powerful framework for developing well-rounded, competent professionals. By emphasizing both cognitive and emotional growth, this approach prepares students to face the challenges of the modern workforce. SEL enhances key professional competencies such as communication, collaboration, decision-making, and leadership, while PBL provides the practical experience necessary to apply these skills in real-world contexts. The social and

scientific-pedagogical foundations of this integrated approach highlight the importance of fostering emotional intelligence alongside technical expertise in higher education. As the demand for emotionally intelligent professionals increases, educational institutions must prioritize the inclusion of SEL in their curricula, ensuring that students not only possess the knowledge and skills needed for their careers but also the interpersonal and emotional abilities to thrive in diverse and dynamic professional environments.

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