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From Policy to Practice: The Implementation Gap of Social-Emotional Learning, Adversity Quotient and Affective Learning Provisions in Pakistan's Educational Policy Framework

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Submission: June 22, 2026 Revised: July 06, 2026 Accepted: July 20, 2026 Available Online: August 05, 2026 Keywords: <i>Social-Emotional Learning, Adversity Quotient, Affective Learning, National Education Policy, Pakistan, curriculum reforms, teacher resilience</i> Corresponding author: Ambreen Fatimah Mooman Email: ambreenfatimah22@gmail.com	This research investigates the persistent disconnect between the lofty rhetoric of Pakistan's national macro-level educational policy and the classroom realities with specific reference to Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Adversity Quotient (AQ), and Affective Learning (AL). Whilst, in spite of evolving National Education Policy and reform guidelines placing holistic student education as a national priority, the way teachers are expected to realise such vision lags far behind the text's aspirations. Through a process of thematic analysis, this research traces how policy words are screened, remoulded, at times simply omitted altogether en route to a real, classroom, taking for inspiration qualitative data gathered from twenty Pakistani state and privately engaged teaching practitioners via a structured process of field accounts, reflective diaries, and a number of focus groups. It presents what virtually anybody, any practitioner from under-resourced settings could instinctively predict: that teachers intrinsically already understand the significance of psychological equilibrium and resilience as pre-conditions of the learning process but continue operating within systems that prioritize syllabus coverage, massive class sizes and the rote, not reflective. A pervasive and somewhat passive approach towards open discussion of any kind exacerbates those pressures by both discouraging such displays culturally and through an incongruent range of emotional language presented alongside that of students' everyday thinking; what and where indeed lies the challenge to effective development and learning... notwithstanding it shows: when teachers do manage to intercede, even informally, such impact is indeed perceptible; calm classes, stronger peer rapport and the significant measurable leaps in students' engagement. Hence, closing this gap warrants an approach rooted in practical consciousness that recognizes and leverages a non-cognitive potential inherent in the existing structure as supplement, not supplement.

Introduction

Background and Significance of the Study

If anything, the past 20 years has seen a significant shift in global conversation about education. The discourse is gradually becoming less about testing-scores and more about what schools actually need to be doing...” non-cognitive development is no longer a niche idea within global human development- discourse in international policy frameworks-especially in the Global South, is rapidly accepting the importance of this phenomenon, alongside cognitive success (CASEL, 2020; Goleman, 1995). These conversations are even more relevant given Pakistan’s need to de-learn and re-frame their entire education system. In Pakistan, the emphasis of education in policy as well as practice has, to date, been centered around the ‘purely,’ rote cognition of students, and simple literacy skill building... yet “the learner comes to school... no child comes to school empty of experiences... the capacity for learning the curriculum that a child has, that changes each day, by reason of their particularities of experience, suffering, and resiliency (Dewey, 1938).

In Pakistan’s case, at the policy level, there seems to be progress made towards global trends. The National Education policy (NEP) has introduced terminology that is quite noticeably more progressive than its earlier generations’ policy frameworks-e.g. The NEP called for explicit support for ‘moral development’, social cohesion and overall student development, in addition to the traditional goals of literacy and numeracy; it even explicitly calls for the development of soft-skills (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

What makes the problem complex is not the absence of this language in policy- that is widely present but the growing distance between discourse at policy level, and pedagogical practices at the classroom level.

That writing a paragraph about holistic student development, does not automatically transform into effective implementation on a Tuesday morning- the gap between policy-to-practice is the crux of this project.

The Non-Cognitive Construct Triumvirate

The research is organized around three intertwined constructs. First, this refers to as School-Social Emotional Learning (SEL), a programmatic approach for how kids acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills-including to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, care and also have empathy to some other people, create positive relationships in their lifestyles, and the other one important issue of having to come up with soundChoices(CASEL, 2020). In other hand, refers for the Adversity Quotient(AQ) this is psychological build relating for that structural power of somebody –’s ability to deal with, react to, andrecoverfrom adversity without an entire loss of function and or the complete decline in the guy of being”-(Stoltz, 1997). The third area of educational practice is called Affective Learning (AL), and it deals with emotions, attitudes, values, and ethical motivation. It is the aspect of a student's development that goes hand in hand with their cognitive development rather than beneath it (Krathwohl et al., 1964).

These three concepts clearly address living circumstances in the Pakistani context rather than being abstract theoretical imports. Pakistani students often require a solid emotional and psychological foundation just to remain involved in their education, regardless of the subject matter being taught that day, due to socioeconomic inequality, ongoing systemic instability, uneven infrastructure, and changing family structures (Osher et al., 2018). A policy mandate that disregards this fact runs the risk of characterizing a form of education that differs from the classroom it is intended to regulate. These three concepts clearly address living conditions in the Pakistani context rather than being abstract theoretical imports. Pakistani students often require a solid emotional and psychological foundation simply to remain involved in their education, regardless of the subject matter being taught that day, due to socioeconomic inequality, recurrent systemic instability, inadequate infrastructure, and changing family structures. A policy directive ignoring this fact has the potential of describing an educational institution that it aims to police that it isn’t in the class that it is trying to police.

Table 1

Policy Layer	Description
Mandates for National Policy (NEP and Provincial Curricula)	Describe character education, social cohesiveness, and holistic development as national objectives.
Systemic Limitations	Large class sizes, inflexible pacing, an excessive amount of curriculum, and a lack of organised teacher preparation.

Implementation in the Classroom

Affective learning, social-emotional learning, and adversity quotient/resilience development as they actually happen—or don't happen—in regular education.

Problem Statement

Although non-cognitive language has already explicitly been enshrined in the NEP as well as the provincial policy (Government of Pakistan, 2009), an acute disconnection with curriculum application in classroom realities is observed. Whereas the State sets out with the ambitious objectives of molding loving, responsible and morally upright Pakistanis; most of the schools still tend to focus on fast delivery of the syllabus and achievement in high stakes tests predominantly requiring cognitive abilities. Teachers are placed at crossroads of an impasse: being ordered to shape well rounded competences on paper, they are almost evaluated on the basis of their effectiveness in piloting their students through a defined syllabification.

The lack of specialised teacher training in non-cognitive pedagogy, abnormally high student-to-teacher ratios in much of the public sector, and linguistic or cultural barriers that make it more difficult to support emotional expression in a multilingual classroom are structural factors that exacerbate this tension and receive far less policy attention than the aspirational language itself. Any change to the policy runs the risk of staying a document-level exercise, one more well-meaning line added to a policy that classrooms have no practical ability to implement, if the educators handling these conditions on a daily basis are not directly consulted.

Research Objectives

This research aims to achieve four interrelated goals:

1. To determine the structural, systemic, and cultural obstacles that result in the discrepancy between Pakistan's declared educational policy and the actual SEL, AQ, and AL that takes place in classrooms.
2. To record frontline Pakistani educators' lived experiences and pedagogical assessments of how non-cognitive development influences pupils' social and academic behaviour.
3. To investigate the relationship between teachers' experiences with professional adversity and their own Adversity Quotient and ensuing professional development.
4. To propose a resource-rational structural framework that, within the actual operational constraints of Pakistani schools, can reduce the gap between policy and practice.

Literature Review

Theoretical Development of AL, AQ, and SEL

Non-cognitive educational philosophy has conceptual foundations that predate the development of SEL. Dewey (1938) maintained that a child's emotional and moral development could not be clearly separated from their intellectual development, arguing that education is inextricably linked to a social and moral process rather than just an academic exchange. The taxonomy of educational objectives, which distinguished the affective domain from the cognitive and psychomotor domains and described a hierarchy ranging from simply receiving and responding to phenomena to the internalisation of a coherent value system, later gave this claim a more formal structure (Krathwohl et al., 1964). For the first time, this taxonomy provided educators with a common terminology to describe ethical and emotional development as something that could be monitored inside a formal curriculum, as opposed to something that merely occurred or did not occur alongside it.

As the concept of emotional intelligence gained popularity, this foundation grew significantly. Drawing from a large body of psychological research, (Goleman, 1995) contended that social competence, drive, self-awareness, emotional control, and empathy were all powerful indicators of long-term success, frequently outperforming cognitive capacity alone. Through Social-Emotional Learning, which the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning CASEL (2020) categorised into five interconnected competencies—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—educational systems assimilated this argument. These five competences now serve as something of an international reference point for SEL courses, including the Pakistani policy documents this study looked at, at least in terms of vocabulary.

The conceptual foundation of CASEL's five-competency model is formed by this genealogy, which includes Dewey's insistence on the inseparability of moral and intellectual development, the Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia taxonomy, and Goleman's popularisation of emotional intelligence. However, it is important to note that nearly all of this theoretical growth occurred in comparatively well-

resourced Western school systems, whose assessment cultures, teacher training pipelines, and class sizes already differed significantly from those found in a typical Pakistani classroom. Although the theory was developed under the covert assumption that certain background conditions already existed, it is neither incorrect nor inapplicable in and of itself. This work aims, in part, to expose those underlying presumptions by testing them against a system where they often fail.

Instead of interpreting this emotional development as something that happens inside a child in isolation, a similar theoretical thread places it inside its surrounding environment. Development is the result of nested systems family, school, community, and larger culture—that interact constantly with one another, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979). This paradigm helps explain why a SEL model designed for one social milieu does not always translate to another. Higher psychological functions, including much of what SEL now refers to as self-regulation, are first learned socially through language and shared interaction before being internalised individually (Vygotsky, 1978). This is why the particular language used to teach an emotional concept matters just as much as the concept itself.

Alongside this body of work, a different line of psychology research focused on how people react to persistent adversity as opposed to single emotional situations. Drawing on cognitive psychology, Stoltz (1997) developed the Adversity Quotient, which is commonly abbreviated as CORE, to characterise resilience along four dimensions: Control, the degree to which an individual believes they can influence a challenging situation; Ownership, the degree to which they accept responsibility for how a hardship is handled regardless of who caused it; Reach, the extent to which a particular adversity is perceived to spread into other areas of life; and Endurance, the anticipated duration of the adversity. A strong AQ profile in an educational setting enables both teachers and students to view structural barriers, a packed classroom, a missing resource, or an unexpected interruption as transient and manageable rather than as long-term evidence of failure.

International Applications and Differences in Policy

Depending on local circumstances, attempts to include SEL and affective goals into national educational systems have had remarkably varying outcomes worldwide. For instance, social cohesiveness and emotional well-being have been integrated into regular teaching practices in the Nordic region (Durlak et al., 2011)—a phenomenon linked as much to both curriculum development and reduced numbers and greater independence of teachers. In high-stakes East Asian countries a number of recent government initiatives have made a well-being and resilience focus in schools, in part to address the negative toll of brutal competition; though these still come against a cultural expectation that still prioritises formal test results above all else. The shift of emphasis to, and integration of the concept is seen in terms of a review of the basic public good components of a social contract in education led by UNESCO (2021) who argue for the inclusion of civic and emotional competencies along with literacy and numeracy rather than the current emphasis solely on the traditional skills. This seems thanks in no small measure to a well thought-out curriculum and an even better curriculum-student/teacher balance: that a larger teacher / less students. Elsewhere in some hot-competition East Asian contexts, well-being/resilience schemes have been rolled out by governments in attempts to defuse the emotional fallout from hyper-competitive education; unfortunately many can clash with a cultural emphasis on academic score above almost anything else. Another layer of complexity is added by work done in lower and middle income countries. In a number of sub-Saharan African settings non-cognitive policies transferred with little amendment from Western curricula have come to grief where their local translation doesn't fit the existing local emotionally vocabularies, and the indigenous ways of community ordering norms. Taken as whole the comparative work so surveyed suggests a somewhat predictable finding: that wherever and in however firm a position it is installed non-cognitive policy founders whenever, by failing to consider the local it attempts to float over such grounds – it only achieves the levels of success at which it is accommodated to the existing local capacity levels, resource endowments and norms - advice offered at a nascent point by Elias et al. (1997) and most recently repeated by Weissberg et al., (2015) in their review on the development of SEL implementation in diverse countries.

The Context of Pakistani Policy: NEP and Provincial Curriculum Reforms

Pakistan's education policy post-independence has gone through various evolutions shifting gradually from a purely literacy focused, infra-oriented development to a consciously values motivated type of education. For instance, in its successive generations of policy formulations, spanning generally from 1998 to 2010, considerable significance had been placed on ideology, physical infrastructure as also on access in the 2009 National Education Policy (Government of Pakistan, 2009): for instance it defined holistic development and clearly articulated desired outcomes around civic skills, analytical skills and values development etc.

Curriculum power was transferred from federal to provincial governments in 2009: that made education much more devolved (Federal-Provincial Transfer Payment System]. “Given its mandate to help students learn to navigate a diverse and multicultural

world with empathy, respect, peacefulness, and emotional competence, Languages, Islamic Studies and Ethics, and Social Studies were chosen as the first subjects deemed ‘essential for fostering national cohesion’” (NNEP [2009]). Later provincial versions of the languages and social studies curricula have carried on similar value-laden phrasing. Instead of one set, consistent, fixed, official set of curriculum documents the provinces, over time, tend to have a rather simple policy reflex: they reiterate the value and the broad pedagogical importance of a wholesome, values-based development in more or less the same kinds of words time after time, without any significant impact on teaching methods.

This pattern is important for the current study since it indicates that the implementation gap under investigation is not specific to any one curricular material that could be easily substituted with a better one. The high-stakes, cognitively weighted assessment system, teacher training pipelines, and school infrastructure funds have all stayed mostly consistent over the course of both provincial and federal curriculum reform rounds. Regardless of the curriculum framework that is in use at any given time, the outcome is a recurrent mismatch between policy ambition and system capacity. This paper aims to investigate this mismatch, which is likely to continue throughout any subsequent reform unless the underlying structural conditions are directly addressed.

It is worthwhile to consider why this specific mismatch frequently occurs during policy cycles rather than being fixed by a single reform initiative. System transformation and policy writing frequently include entirely separate institutional players and work on quite different timescales. While restructuring teacher training pipelines, renegotiating the incentive structure built into national examinations, or expanding school infrastructure require sustained investment across multiple budget cycles and, frequently, multiple changes in government, a relatively small committee can rewrite a curriculum document in a matter of months. There is a structural tendency for language to outpace capacity because updating the language of policy is very inexpensive, while changing the implementation machinery is rather costly. This is not specific to Pakistan, but because of the enormity of the public education system and the extent of the private and religious-seminary sectors that operate alongside it, each with its own resource realities and relationship to the national curriculum, it takes on a special form here.

Non-cognitive constructs are more difficult to assess than literacy or numeracy by nature, which makes it more difficult to defend them in an accountability framework based on quantifiable results. It is much simpler to declare an increase in standardised test results when a ministry or school board is requested to show progress than to report a measurable indicator of a student's developing empathy or self-awareness. Teachers are frequently the only people in the system monitoring these outcomes at all, even informally, which is one of the reasons this study treats their qualitative accounts as such an important source of evidence. But, if unevenness of ‘measurability’ implicitly influences the placement of institutional attention even contrary to stated priorities.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitatively based, phenomenological design using a critical interpretivist philosophical stance and was ideally suited for this line of inquiry which explores how individual understand their own lived experiences (Cresswell & Poth 2018, Merriam & Tisdell 2009), as the phenomenon is the people's interpretations of how policy language was revisited, contested and renegotiated in the real-life classroom which a statistical design could not do justice. The texture of practice the particular demands a teacher discusses, the improvisations they have already created on their own, and the vocabulary they use when discussing their own limitations was what the study needed. The design emphasises the direct, first-hand testimony of the educators who live inside this policy-to-practice divide on a daily basis, as opposed to reducing these realities to numerical indicators.

Participant Matrix and Sampling

Twenty working teachers from Pakistan's primary and secondary educational levels were chosen using a purposeful sampling technique. Given how differently these two systems are funded and assessed, the sample was purposefully designed to cover both the public and private sectors. Ten participants were focus-group members from government institutions and ten were classroom teachers largely from the private sector.

Tools for Gathering Data and Analytical Procedures

The practical challenges of operationalising SEL at the classroom level, the particular challenges of integrating Affective Learning within the current curriculum, the professional impact of coping with systemic adversity, narrative accounts of how non-cognitive growth manifested in student outcomes, and teacher perceptions of how policy directives could realistically be integrated into daily instruction were the five thematic nodes around which the data were gathered through structured themes.

Thematic coding, which blended deductive and inductive components, was used to advance the analysis. In order to allow categories to develop from the data itself, transcripts were first open-coded. These first categories were then mapped into more general structural, systemic, and cultural themes. Throughout this procedure, reflexive notes were cross-checked against participant disclosures to prevent overinterpretation and maintain the final thematic map's descriptive accuracy.

Findings

Structural and Systemic Barriers to Integration in the Classroom

Time constraints and syllabus requirements

The conflict between non-cognitive objectives and the sheer strain of completing a set syllabus within a set amount of instructional time was the most commonly mentioned challenge across all sectors included in our sample. Teachers' reported about teachers trying not to become victim to "the tyranny of the clock," the institutional rhythm which determines that any time devoted to reflecting, managing emotional states, or any other activity, is at the expense of time spent actually transmitting knowledge (Dewey, 1938).

The difficulty of sustaining reflection and mindful engagement in emotional instruction: Some have argued that a primary obstacle to embedding mindful practices is the perceived "high stakes with heavy syllabus coverage pressures tied to strict teaching time" (quoted in [x]). Affective engagement may be seen as a distraction away from the primary academic activity itself since the teacher's 'bureaucratic' culture dictates pacing.

Pressure in public sector is compounded by factors wholly out of a teacher's hands. However tests' stress is increased when the frequent, unpredictable closings-caused by weather, strikes, or other school related issues, the teacher added-bite off entire chunks of time in already tight calendar, virtually push everyone back towards primitive cognitive tests' preparation.

The practical effect is a drift toward simple rote coverage. As one teacher summed up frankly: "It is simply not possible within the constraints of my timetable to allow for many of the experiences that develop higher-level critical thinking, innovation and self-reflection skills." Another framed the same argument more vividly, by arguing that since the focus is so strongly and so heavily upon cognitive exam-related criteria, even the students begin to feel that unassessed effective domain activities are "just something to get up and do".

Excessive Student Densities and Overcrowding

The size of many Pakistani classrooms is a second structural barrier. Teachers in the private sector already report having a hard time keeping track of the emotional needs of about thirty pupils at once a number that participants in the public sector would find almost enviable. A teacher gave an account of a class of 60 pupils, portraying it as a significant difficulty to instruct the group, let alone foster positive behaviour. In the context of government schools, a teacher described classes with up to 70 students and recalled a previous experience of more than 100 students in a single class conditions in which managing a shifting, loosely defined cohort nearly completely replaces individual tracking. The relationship-building and social-awareness capabilities at the core of CASEL's (2020) architecture become nearly structurally impossible under these densities because they rely more on a teacher's capacity to truly observe a particular student than on curriculum content.

The physical layout of the classroom exacerbates the issue. A teacher clarified that her school's seating arrangement does not allow students to work in groups or face one another; instead, desks face the teacher and the board in fixed rows. This arrangement promotes passive, teacher-centered instruction and makes it structurally challenging to set up the peer-to-peer interaction that SEL depends on.

Lack of Training for Specialised Teachers

A teaching workforce that is already capable of handling complex emotional and behavioural dynamics is implicitly assumed by policy guidelines that call for SEL and Affective Learning (CASEL, 2020). According to the data, this assumption is mainly incorrect. Since none of this can be supplied without training in the first place, a teacher pointed out that a lack of training in how to incorporate social-emotional learning makes implementation nearly impossible.

The identical disparity from the opposite side of the system is confirmed by public-sector accounting. A teacher claimed that when behavioural or emotional problems occur, teachers must rely on trial and error because neither the government nor school

administration offers training that would equip them with the knowledge necessary to use these skills. Another teacher expanded on this idea, noting that inexperienced educators first find it difficult to control their own emotions, which makes it more difficult for them to assist in regulating their pupils. Instead of being enthusiastically adopted, new policy expectations typically result in staff tiredness and subtle opposition when this institutional support is lacking. When combined, these three structural obstacles time constraints, overcrowding, and inexperienced employees do not function independently of one another; rather, they interact and reinforce one another in ways that make it more difficult to address each issue alone. A teacher with 60 students already has very little practical way to monitor each student's emotional needs, and because she hasn't had any training, she doesn't even have a framework to try it in the few minutes that the syllabus pacing gives her. If a reform attempts to dismantle only one of these three barriers, e.g., increasing training but keeping size unchanged, or changing the evaluation but not the teacher Preparation, only fragmented and tenuous improvement will result. The dependent nature of the three structural barriers is a lesson that the data make particularly obvious, and it shapes the whole frame of resource-rational recommended later in the text.

Socio-Cultural and Linguistic Obstacles

Expressing Emotions Obstacles and Cultural Limitations

It is necessary that students are at ease enough in a non-cognitive training classroom to become open and honest regarding their inner sentiments. However, statistics show that Pakistani teachers come from an environment that is rather discouraging than encouraging for open expression, the following was noted: one of the teachers pointed out that students of a disparate culture sometimes struggled with displaying emotions freely in public school classrooms if family and community would judge them. Some students even hesitate to admit that something is bothering them (Goleman, 1995).

According to a teacher, more introverted students exhibit a similar trend, finding it challenging to discuss their emotions or interact with value-based subjects since they are just uncomfortable disclosing anything intimate. The stakes can seem considerably higher in areas that are more conservative or economically disadvantaged. Another teacher said that when basic emotional-awareness exercises were introduced to kids from underprivileged backgrounds, it was practically considered taboo because these students had not previously been exposed to appropriate ways of naming or processing their feelings.

The Disconnect Between Instructional Language and Mother Tongue

The discrepancy between a child's native tongue and the formal terminology used to teach emotional ideas in the classroom is a related but different problem (Vygotsky, 1978). Emotion charts and English-language evaluative vocabulary are common components of SEL tools used in Pakistani schools. Despite the fact that many students, whose native tongue is Urdu or a regional language, are merely unfamiliar with the concepts being presented to them, a teacher observed that most classrooms employ emotional charts based on English vocabulary.

Students are burdened twice by this mismatch: they have to interpret a foreign language before they can even start to identify how they are feeling. One of the teachers used the example of rage to demonstrate the ensuing confusion, pointing out that students frequently struggle to articulate their feelings because they are limited to a small number of vocabulary and are ignorant of the several different categories that a single emotion like anger actually encompasses. The emotional tools that schools offer run the risk of remaining abstract and unrelated to what pupils are truly going through in the absence of a truly local, culturally grounded lexicon (Krathwohl et al., 1964).

The Relationship Between Professional Development and the Adversity Quotient

Dissecting Adversity in Teaching

For Teachers Pakistan's formal education sector is an area where a great deal of institutional struggle is involved ranging from desperate lack of resources/inadequate facilities, administrative burden, very low emoluments etc. According to data these teachers do not react passively but their professional identity & practices/pedagogy get developed by their very coping style with them. Such trend correlates with Bandura (1997) whose argument regarding development of beliefs, including self-efficacy that is gained through experiences of repeated mastery experiences, instead of gifted from the outside, apply equally to the teachers' coping processes at the school. As noted, Patricia & Greenberg (2009) observed that schools are peculiar in that the teacher's socio-emotional competence could equally affect students' outcomes/classroom learning and subject mastery. In their Control-Ownership-Reach-Endurance Model Stoltz (1997) described coping behaviors at the point of distress. So in fact, confronting the

tough conditions serves as developer rather than sheer destroyer that the ease of the working setting might never have asked them to be as patient, adaptive, and creative problem solvers as they prove when faced with tough challenges.

It's important to state clearly what this reframing of issues also means is not the case. It doesn't mean those structural inequities, analyzed elsewhere in this paper, are tolerable simply because a number of teachers do achieve greater maturity as they struggle with them, and it does not suggest in an general sense that suffering is conducive to the building of the teacher's character, far from it. It does however imply that one particular factor, a teacher's response to a specific set of imposed constraints - that response tending, incidentally, to correlate with those that any thoughtful, reasonable attempt at alleviating inequity would have us address - to whether they burn out or thrive - and the fact that such a response is not entirely preordained - then such a factor, a capacity to cope with these kinds of issues: "AdversityQuotient," must be among the component traits of a effective system of teaching care which should accompany those already commonly cited under the labels SEL and Affective learning, rather than being treated, on an isolated individual level, as a personality trait.

She further elaborated this concept in a sentence: I have learned to focus on what is within my control; make quick adaptations when conditions changed, and to see these situations as learning experiences rather than roadblocks. Adversity had also taught me the importance of adaptability, patience, and fortitude in teaching. This kind of reframing, where structural limitations are perceived as manageable, but temporary manifestations of impossibility; demonstrates a robust functional Adversity Quotient. The similar thought was expressed by another teacher: I have slowly changed my classroom from an static space which functions to transmit knowledge, to an adaptive one built on student realities. In other words, hardship taught me that flexibility and adaptability are the keys to good teaching.

The Vector of Resilience-Growth

From the readings, it is understood that the ability to cope with institutional demands and a teacher's growth over their career are somehow interrelated. Unlike just reiterating behaviours that had worked on small scales, when teacher encountered systemic friction, instead of doing the exact same thing, this kind of teacher tended to engage into thorough and genuine self-reflection. A teacher succinctly put it in a manner such that; when obstacles do crop up, teachers critically analyse their practices and generate their own way of addressing it. In her terminology, it is "a self-developed ownership" or "critical thinking of one's practices". If teachers were never exposed to such challenges, they are likely to be a non-progressing, stagnant force.

Teachers who engage in this type of reflection are more likely to adopt a broader, learner-centred philosophy of practice rather than a purely exam-driven attitude. The four CORE characteristics of the Adversity Quotient especially appear in the Pakistani educational system that participants mentioned, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Core Dimension	Manifestation in the Pakistani Educational Context
Problem-Solving Skills	Creating practical, affordable interventions in schools with actual resource constraints.
Reflective Capacity	Continuous self-evaluation of one's own emotional self-control and teaching strategies.
Adaptability and Agility	Quick pedagogical adaptation to weather-related closures, power outages, and other interruptions.
Leadership Capacity	Increasing staff collaboration, peer mentoring, and professional self-assurance.

This potential for development is not limited to the classroom. Teachers who have a high Adversity Quotient are more likely to actively look for possibilities for collaboration and self-directed professional development, turning their individual resilience into a common institutional asset. A teacher outlined precisely this trend, pointing out that positive reactions to hardship typically foster teamwork among coworkers, so transforming individual fortitude into a resource that the entire staff can utilise.

Classroom Realities: How Non-Cognitive Maturity Affects Social and Academic Results

Empirical Narratives of Academic Transformation in Students

In line with Hattie (2008) synthesis of classroom-level research demonstrating that relational and motivational factors are frequently as influential on achievement as instructional technique itself, frontline teachers consistently reported that a student's socio-emotional and affective state directly shapes their academic engagement, retention, and performance. In line with Goleman (1995) claim that emotional regulation is frequently a stronger predictor of sustained performance than raw cognitive ability alone,

students' cognitive effort shifts from self-protection and anxiety to actual learning and participation when they feel emotionally stable and genuinely supported in the classroom. One of the teacher summarized this relationship by saying that when children feel safe, feel good and balanced they pay attention, are motivated to do the activity and will engage because then they focus on understanding, not about how they would fare or fail.

There was quite the amount of research contributed from participants illustrating the theory through case studies, for example one of the teachers talked about a Grade 2 student whose unstable mood and impulsive reactions led previous teachers to consider him as sub-par. This teacher through observing carefully and discussing the case, introduced a range of small strategies like "leadership roles, extra playtime for positive behavioural management, basic emotion regulations skills for example; taking deep breathes". She concluded that the behaviour was caused by stress in the home, a lack of parental attention, and basic nutritional neglect. The student's academic status significantly improved into the above-average range, and her behaviour stabilised.

One more teacher reported a similar pattern with a reclusive student who had declined to take part in group projects due to a lack of confidence. The kid's confidence was steadily bolstered by regular encouragement, smaller group settings, and frequent peer validation. This emotional stabilisation directly transferred into improved academic performance as the student became more comfortable discussing his challenges with his teacher. A third example was provided by a teacher, who described a secondary student with consistent attendance but incomplete assignments, low grades in all subjects, and obvious conflict with peers. The student's behaviour and exam performance significantly improved after a single focused one-on-one discussion revealed the pressures she was dealing with at home, informing her parents, and conducting frequent check-ins thereafter.

Peer Relationships, Cooperation, and Social Dynamics

Beyond individual academic improvements, non-cognitive development transforms the classroom's social structure, frequently transforming a competitive environment into something more akin to a true community. Students typically become notably better at handling conflict, demonstrating empathy, and collaborating effectively in groups as they learn to comprehend and control their own emotions. A teacher told the story of a student who had repeatedly requested to be taken out of his assigned group. Instead of granting his request, she made him the group leader, which improved cooperation, reduced peer conflict, and increased engagement with the group's work. This caused students to empathize with the pressures that leadership entails.

Another said that emotionally healthy kids are inclined to reflect rather than jump into action, establish genuine and enriching relationships with educators and peers alike, and resolve conflicts more constructively-or less emotionally. One teacher's idea: Because shared perspectives often yield superior outcomes compared to solo endeavors, "collaboration that includes empathy, trust, and transparency teach kids the value of another person's thoughts and experience, prompting more in-depth dialogue and greater scholarly yield." As a sum of these narratives, we begin to see that beyond calming classroom conflicts, emotional intelligence helps neutralize some of the socioeconomic and cultural gaps that would otherwise set students apart.

Discussion

Trying to Match Micro Constraint and Macro Mandate

When added together, the statistics illustrate a commonly repeated pattern in the administration of Pakistani schooling - as aspirational policy language, so too the effort to transform the conditions within institutions required in order for schools to make any meaningful sense of it. The NEP outlined genuinely beneficial objectives for student development (Government of Pakistan, 2009), and subsequent provincial curriculum reforms have continued to restate similar objectives. However, implementation has remained constrained by long-standing systemic features, overcrowded classrooms, overly demanding curricula, and an assessment culture that is almost exclusively focused on high-stakes testing. Education planners must stop treating SEL and Affective Learning as optional add-ons that sit outside of the core curriculum in order to close this gap. Instead, they must incorporate non-cognitive goals directly into subjects and routines that already exist. This lesson is consistent with the comparative finding that non-cognitive policy succeeds primarily when it is adapted to local institutional capacity rather than imported wholesale (CASEL, 2020).

Table 3

Policy Ambition (NEP and Provincial Curricula)	Micro-Level Classroom Reality	Reconciliation Strategy
Requires distinct character development for moral, social, and emotional aspects.	Time constraints, rigorous pacing requirements, and a heavy curriculum load.	Integrating emotional goals directly into current subject plans is known as "covert integration."
Need national exams that are cognitively demanding and standardised.	Need national exams that are cognitively demanding and standardised. Since affective labour does not count in grades, it is deprioritized.	Reforming tests involves incorporating situational, reflecting items.
Assumes a teaching staff that is both instructionally nimble and emotionally capable.	Instructional weariness is caused by a complete lack of institutional training.	Short, peer-led professional development modules are known as localised cascading training.
Uses consistent English materials to standardise emotional abilities.	Language and cultural limitations that restrict the expressing of emotions.	Validating emotional expression in regional mother tongues is known as bilingual scaffolding.

Interestingly, without waiting for official policy support, frontline educators have already started to improvise their own versions of these tactics. In keeping with Dewey (1938) original contention that moral and social learning are best absorbed through regular classroom experience rather than delivered as a separate unit of instruction, creative teachers incorporate emotional reflection directly into core academic subjects rather than asking for extra instructional hours that are unlikely to occur. While STEM courses can use cooperative lab work to teach patience, shared problem-solving, and conflict resolution, language classes whether in English, Urdu, or a regional language offer a natural setting for examining character, motivation, and empathy through literature. A teacher explained that this integration can occur almost imperceptibly, acting as a sort of covert curriculum that doesn't need to be disclosed to students. However, she was cautious to note that it should still be documented in official lesson planners so that the practice is visible to the system even if it is not visible to the class.

In policy talks, the distinction between the published curriculum and the concealed curriculum should be given greater consideration than it typically is. According to the instructors themselves, a significant portion of the non-cognitive growth that takes place in Pakistani classrooms is undocumented and solely supported by personal effort rather than any institutional records or support systems. When a teacher quits a school, gets moved, or just runs out of energy due to an increasing workload, this type of practice tends to evaporate because nothing about it has been recorded in a way that a supervisor or successor may pick up and continue. In addition to validating what teachers are already doing, formal recognition even something as simple as a single item in a lesson planning template would make that practice enduring in a way that individual kindness alone cannot.

The Framework of Resource-Rational Structural Design

This paper suggests a resource-rational structural framework, a collection of low-cost, useful tactics created especially to work in overcrowded, under-resourced classrooms rather than assuming ideal conditions that the majority of Pakistani schools lack, in order to make these organic strategies replicable across truly diverse school settings. Each of the following strategies maps into one or more of the previously stated Stoltz (1997) CORE elements of Adversity Quotient or CASEL (2020) competency categories, but they are purposefully scaled down to need no additional manpower, training budget, or classroom time.

1. **Instructional Check-In Circles:** Targeting the self-awareness and social-awareness qualities CASEL (2020) describes as foundational, the class begins with a five-minute contemplation or organised peer exchange to establish emotional safety and settle attention before academic content begins.
2. **Anonymous Communication Channels:** A low-cost solution to the expression restrictions listed in Section 4.2.1, physical drop-boxes or anonymous note systems allow students to voice personal issues or seek advice without worrying about peer criticism or social labelling.
3. **Linguistic Bridging Frameworks:** Giving pupils the opportunity to express their feelings in both their native tongue and institutional vocabulary so that complicated interior experiences can be expressed without first passing through a foreign vocabulary.

4. Flexible Group Dynamics: By encouraging students to engage outside of their current social circles through the use of randomised or numerical grouping techniques for group projects, CASEL (2020) places the development of interpersonal skills and responsible decision-making at the core of its model.

Conclusion

Synthesis of Criticism

According to this study, there is a recurring discrepancy between what policy requires of teachers and what the system really empowers them to do, which hinders the transition from policy to practice in Pakistani education more than a lack of good intentions. Although national frameworks are beginning to acknowledge the importance of Social-Emotional Learning, Adversity Quotient development, and Affective Learning, the majority of schools' everyday operations are still based on a strict, exam-driven approach that is nearly entirely based on cognitive measurements.

But the data I have reported shows educators who have had success adapting to use flexibly emotional and responsive pedagogical approaches experience and their students also experience an increased ability to collaborate socially and to engage more effectively. It also appears to apply to us as individuals; to successfully navigate what is difficult within our system is precisely how many people describe their true personal resilience and professional growth not despite overcoming it. In other words, the system will need to begin speak about what actually occurs in the classroom rather than aspirationally in order to get policy and practice to converge, will need to support teachers appropriately, better use the resources we already have, and to reconstruct assessment to support rather than contravene policy goals that purport to be valued.

There is a real need to spell out the constraints of this study; although the study intentionally selects educators to reflect the two predominant educational establishments; twenty educators do not give a representative cross section of Pakistani education, and the seminary sectors are absent altogether. Moreover the study is about teacher-view rather than objectively documented student results as the data were provided by the educators and relate to teachers talking about their practice and pupils. The argument presented here would be greatly strengthened by future research that combines this type of qualitative teacher testimony with either direct classroom observation or longitudinal student-level data. This would help determine the precise proportion of the academic improvement reported by participants that can be attributed to non-cognitive intervention, as opposed to the general advantages of increased individual attention. However, none of these drawbacks undermine the main assertion that policy language and classroom capacity have become increasingly disconnected in Pakistan. This assertion was shown to be remarkably consistent throughout a sample that included ten different institutional contexts.

Practical Suggestions for Policy Change

1. Redesign Curriculum Evaluation Architecture: In order to give emotive learning outcomes equal weight with cognitive metrics, the national evaluation system should be updated to incorporate reflective, situational, and value-based items in board and national exams.
2. Embed Non-Cognitive Paradigms in Teacher Training: Pre-service and in-service teacher education should incorporate hands-on courses on resilience techniques, classroom management, and socio-emotional co-regulation.
3. Provide Integrated Lesson Plans. Offer sample lesson plans, with instructions to teachers, outlining social-emotional/affective content that can easily be integrated into subject lessons and not require separate instruction time.
4. School Facility and Spatial planning : Consider classroom space constraints. School resources will be put towards maintaining school infrastructure, class sizes will be kept small whenever possible and versatile room arrangements would serve the need for cooperative than merely lectured instructions.

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