

# Competent and Responsive Education (CaRE) Toolkit for Learners' Psychosocial Needs.

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## Abstract

This developmental research aimed to create a guidance toolkit based on the level of teachers' mental health, social, and emotional competences; and on the extent of learners' psychosocial needs as perceived by teachers. Stratified and cluster samplings were employed to determine the 135 teachers who answered the Questionnaire on Teacher Competences and Psychosocial Needs validated by experts with reliability coefficients of .914 to .972. The fishbowl technique and purposive sampling were used to determine the evaluators of the toolkit who included the 32 teachers and seven experts in the fields of education, psychology, guidance, and counselling respectively. The data gathered were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Overall the teachers have high mental, social, and emotional competences, and perceived learners as having high need for teacher assistance and guidance in promoting their psychosocial well-being. The CaRE Toolkit is composed of ten modules. Module 1 presents the rationale of competent and responsive education; and the need for teachers to develop the three competences. Module 2 discusses elementary children's psychosocial development and general strategies to support learners' socio-emotional needs. Modules 3 to 10 present key concepts related to learners' psychosocial needs and provide teachers with strategies to address them. The CaRE Toolkit was rated outstanding by both experts and teachers in terms of its physical attributes, objectives, content, usefulness, and self-help features. Elementary teachers may use the toolkit to better address the psychosocial needs of learners. Moreover, they are encouraged to pursue graduate studies and trainings that will enhance their knowledge and skills in supporting learners' socio-emotional needs and holistic development in general.

**Keywords:** competent, responsive education, learners' psychological need

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## Introduction

On June 21, 2018, Republic Act 11036 or the Mental Health Act was signed into law. It was an initiative that established "a national mental health policy for the purpose of enhancing the delivery of integrated mental health services promoting and protecting the rights of persons utilizing psychiatric, neurologic, and psychosocial health services." Included in the provision was the integration and promotion of mental health in educational systems (Muthuchellappan, Shaikh, Surve, Ganne, & Philip, 2018).

Schools are mandated to integrate in the curriculum age-appropriate content pertaining to mental health, develop programs and policies to raise awareness on mental health issues, provide support and services for individuals at risk, and facilitate access of individuals with mental health conditions to treatment and psychosocial support including referral mechanisms. Furthermore, both private and public schools are required to have a complement of mental health professionals.

The educational and professional trainings of teachers ensure that they are competent in transferring knowledge and skills in terms of curriculum content. On the other hand, in view of holistic development, how well-equipped are teachers in addressing the socio-emotional and mental health needs of their learners?

How responsive are they in addressing the stress signals of learners who need psychosocial support and who are at risk due to problems and anxiety? With the increasing rate of childhood depression and suicide and in elementary schools, where guidance counselor items are not made available, teachers take on a greater responsibility of providing their pupils the guidance and counseling they need in general.

Based on school year 2016-2017 public elementary school enrolment of 14, 488, 231 learners, a total of 28,976 Registered Guidance Counselors (RGC) are needed to meet the 1:500 RGC-to-student ratio (Van Scoy, 1994). In the present set up, only secondary schools are provided with guidance counselor items which make the guidance and counseling needs of elementary learners as concerns to be addressed by teachers.

According to (Haney, 2003) psychologist and behaviour analyst, half of all mental health disorders show first signs before the age of 14 and that early interventions prevent or mitigate onset of mental disorder. Intervention during middle childhood appears to have the greatest impact. Children between 6 and 11 years of age possess the neurobiological capacity and psychosocial maturity to effectively practice and learn socio emotional skills (Acosta, Igarashi, (Khan et al., 2020) Interventions in middle childhood can also pave the way for the further development of these skills during adolescence.

(Merry, 2021) It is in the light of these situations that the researcher decided to conduct the study in public elementary schools. In the Philippines, an elementary school is divided into three years of primary level (Kindergarten to 3) and three years of intermediate level (Grades 4 to 6). Experts believe that the nature of teaching and learning in these two groups vary because of differing developmental needs (Van Scoy, 1994; Wanzer & McCroskey, 1998) This would also mean variation in these two groups' social and emotional experiences as well as psychosocial needs. In consideration of this perspective, Grades 3 and 6 teachers were chosen as respondents of the study for representation of the primary and intermediate levels respectively.

As a teacher counsellor in high school for ten years and in college for eight years now, the researcher has handled serious counselling cases of students who have suicidal ideation or attempts due to depression or students at risk of drop out because of lack of motivation due to family or relationship problems. Counselling sessions with these students most often revealed that the root causes of these behaviour problems and personality maladjustments were low self-esteem, poorly developed coping and social skills, and lack of proper guidance from responsible adults.

It is the researcher's belief that if these students were able to receive appropriate support and assistance during their childhood years, they could have developed the necessary skills and the strength of character to effectively handle even life's most difficult situations. The researcher also believes that the school can be a key setting for

the promotion of mental health and prevention of psychosocial problems because school-age children spend majority of their day here.

Furthermore, elementary teachers can play an important role in early problem detection. Teacher responsiveness can help in reducing the prevalence of children's mental health issues that may

escalate up to their adolescent or adult life. This can also reduce the severity of emotional and behavioral disorders that can lead to low academic performance and poor well-being of learners.

The purpose of this study then was to find out competences of elementary school teachers in the third and sixth grade levels that are considered essential for promoting learners' well-being as well as to determine the extent of learners' psychosocial needs as perceived by teachers that became the bases for developing the guidance toolkit.

## Statement of Objectives

This study aimed to develop a guidance toolkit based on the level of elementary teachers' mental health, social, and emotional competences; and on the extent of learners' psychosocial needs as perceived by teachers. This research investigation wanted to determine mental health, social, and emotional competences of elementary teachers; examine the extent of learners' psychosocial needs as perceived by elementary teachers; and for the development of toolkit to aid teachers in addressing the psychosocial needs of the learners, and assessment of experts and elementary teachers 'of the guidance toolkit in terms of its physical attributes, objectives, contents, usefulness, and self-help features.

## Literature Review

Research would show that prevalence of mental health problems among children and adolescents is rising. A study conducted by (World Health, 2017) has found out that in a given year in the United States, a total of 13% to 20% of children suffer from a mental disorder. An investigation done during 1994 to 2011 had shown an increasing occurrence of such condition. Suicide was established as the second leading cause of death among young people aged 12 to 17 years in 2010. The overall suicide rate for persons aged 10 to 19 years was 4.5 suicides per 100,000 persons in 2010. Furthermore, the study revealed that in the past year an estimated 4.7% of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years reported an illicit drug use disorder, 4.2% had an alcohol abuse disorder, and 2.8% had cigarette dependence in the past month.

For several years now, the World Health Organization has been consistent in its effort to monitor children's health in different parts of the world including the Philippines. The organization spearheaded the conduct of the Global-School Based Student Health Survey (GSHS) which was participated by thousands of Filipino adolescents aged 13 to 17 years old. Results showed that there had been a steady rate of suicidal ideation for the past twelve months among Filipino youths in 2003 (16.1%), 2007 (16.8%), 2011 (16.3%) and a drop in 2015 (11.6%). However, there had been an increased prevalence of students who actually attempted suicide in the past twelve months, from 12.9% in 2011 to 16.8% in 2015. It was also interesting to note that bullying victimization has increased to almost half of the student respondents. In 2003, 36.6% were bullied on one or more days during the past 30 days. A steady rate in 2007 (47.9%) and 2011 (47.7%), and the highest was recorded in 2015 which was 48.8%.

Mental health problems in children and youth that are not addressed early in life can inflict a high cost on young people themselves as well as their families and society. The consequences of mental health problems can be painful and can include serious difficulties at home, with peers, and in school; a higher risk for dropping out; and increased risk of engaging in substance use, criminal behavior, and other risk-taking behaviors (Murray, Low, Hollis, Cross, & Davis, 2007).

Psychosocial support in schools is mainly delivered by teachers and only a few schools have part-time or full-time mental health professionals (World Health, 2017). They may often encounter learners with social and emotional issues, therefore, it is important that teachers recognize signs of mental health problems and that they know how to assist and support someone in these circumstances. Appropriate help and support may facilitate both recognition and help-seeking and may play a significant role in a child's recovery from emotional or behavioral problems.

A systematic literature review done by (Merry, 2021) established that teacher responsiveness is vital in order to increase the engagement of preschool children with aggressive behavior. Provision of social-emotional support, positive classroom management, and high-quality class and activities focused on the interest of the child are among the leading factors that greatly contributed to student engagement.

(Haney, 2003) conducted a study to examine the relationships between perceived sixth-grade transition experience, perceived teacher support, and student externalizing and internalizing behavior problems. The findings showed that students who perceived greater levels of teacher support reported lower levels of defiance, which means that students are less likely to challenge teachers' authority if they perceive the teachers to be kind and understanding.

According to (Wanzer & McCroskey, 1998) it is crucial for educators to have the skills in identifying risk-taking behaviors of students since they serve as early warning signs for an onset of mental health issues. For students who have difficulty articulating their feelings or those who deliberately refuse to disclose their problems, teachers need to know and observe behavioral indicators that will signify that they are in need of support or intervention. It is important that these students receive appropriate support and proper guidance to change their risk-taking behaviors into prosocial ones. It is also essential to help students identify and adopt realistic and practical ways of recognizing triggers of their emotional distress, of working out emotionally difficult situations, and of learning self-calming techniques.

However, despite the fact that teachers are now expected to be responsive to a wide range of student needs and circumstances, studies would point out that teachers lack the necessary education, training, and resources to address the psychosocial health needs of the learners. Several studies highlighted the significant role of teachers not only in learners' academic pursuits but in their psychosocial development as well but have found out that teachers lack the knowledge and skills to promote learners' mental well-being (Murray et al., 2007; Muthuchellappan et al., 2018; Van Scoy, 1994). Findings showed that teachers recognize this important role, however, that teacher education programs are not providing them enough preparation and that they lack knowledge about mental health issues nor have the resources or skills to support the psychosocial needs of their learners (Khan et al., 2020; World Health, 2017).

In the Philippines, (Murray et al., 2007) pointed out that teachers are not appropriately trained to foster the development of socioemotional competencies. In addition, it was mentioned that although the Philippines has implemented advancements in improving the education level of its labor force, it was noted that years of formal schooling is an inadequate measure of workforce skills. They also discussed the inadequacy of the educational system to develop some of the necessary workforce skills that, interestingly, are not forms of academic knowledge or technical expertise but rather "non-cognitive skills," "soft skills," or "behavioral skills" also known as socioemotional skills.

Teachers are placed as frontliners in advocating positive mental health and social well-being for children. Hence, their competences of the needed concepts and ideals should range from basic knowledge up to the more complex notions for application and evaluation of situations, needs, risks, etc. Teachers should be equipped with the appropriate preparations to suffice the set expectations.

The Prosocial Classroom Model of (Neupane, 2020) emphasized the importance of teachers' social emotional competence (SEC) in the different aspects of instruction and school relationships. They proposed that teachers' SEC was related to positive teacher-student relationships, effective classroom management, and successful implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) practices. They believe that a relationship exists between teachers' SEC and these three variables. According to (Van Scoy, 1994) teachers' SEC fosters a healthy classroom climate that results to positive outcomes in the different aspects of their students' lives (social, emotional, and academic).

Elementary teachers' perceptions of their own emotional intelligence (EI), Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competences and their association with students' emotional and behavioral difficulties were explored in the study of (Merry, 2021). Results revealed that teachers' perceptions of EI and SEL skills were not related to students' emotional and behavioral difficulties, while teacher-student conflictual relationships were mainly linked to these difficulties. This implied that teachers' perceptions of their own EI and their SEL beliefs have an indirect link to students' emotional and behavioral difficulties, through their association with teacher-student relationships. It was concluded that the relationship between teachers' perceived EI and student misconduct was mediated by teachers' attention to student needs. Poulou emphasized that enhancing teacher social-emotional and teaching competences and skills, both personal and professional, would potentially promote positive teacher-student relationships, and therefore prevent student emotional and behavioral difficulties.



It is evident that mental health, social, and emotional competences of teachers in the classroom is beneficial for both teachers themselves and the students. The data suggests that teachers can benefit from trainings and resources that can enhance these competences.

## Research Design

In this study, the researcher employed the Type 1 developmental research model. "Type 1 developmental studies focus upon a given instructional product, program, process, or tool. They reflect an interest in identifying either general development principles or situation-specific recommendations. Typically Type 1 studies address not only product design and development, but evaluation as well." (Van Scoy, 1994),

In this study, the instructional product is the guidance toolkit. The development was based on the results of the survey on teachers' mental health, social, and emotional competences and their perceived extent of learners' psychosocial needs. Furthermore, this research focused on situation-specific recommendations that will enhance teacher competences in the three domains and support learners' psychosocial well-being.

The conduct of the study had several phases, which included gathering data that made use of the survey method. Fraenkel, (World Health, 2017) define survey as a method of obtaining data from a sample population to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. This study involved a sample composed of randomly chosen respondents in order to determine the level of mental health, social, and emotional competences and the extent of learners' psychosocial needs. These became the bases for developing the guidance toolkit for elementary teachers.

## Research Environment

This study was conducted in the Schools Division of Iloilo which is the largest schools division in the country in terms of enrolment and number of classrooms. It has a total of 1,341 public schools and 274 private schools in the elementary and secondary levels.

Imperative of the concerns as the largest schools division, the office has one Schools Division Superintendent and three Assistant Schools Division Superintendents. This number of top administrative posts secures and oversees the management of five congressional districts in the Province of Iloilo, which is subdivided into five legislative districts composed of different municipalities

## Respondents and Sampling Technique

This study involved two sets of respondents. The first set included 135 teachers who answered the survey. The second set was composed of 32 teachers and 7 experts who evaluated the developed guidance toolkit. The two sets of respondents are not mutually-exclusive; that is, the teachers involved in the evaluation came from the group of teachers who answered the survey. The 135 respondents of the study were the grades three and six elementary teachers of 30 randomly selected elementary schools in the Division of Iloilo for school year 2018-2019. The study combined stratified and cluster random sampling method. The following steps were observed in the selection of participants. The list of all public elementary schools in the Division of Iloilo was obtained, (a) the schools were then grouped by congressional districts, (b) to ensure representation of each district in the sample, stratified random sampling was used in order to obtain 30 participating schools. The identification of the participants was done through cluster sampling, that is, for each district, schools were selected randomly through the use of random numbers generated in Microsoft Excel, (c) based on the list of schools from the Department of Education – Schools Division of Iloilo, the researcher assigned a number for each school, (d) the generated number of the corresponding elementary school determined the participating schools of the study, and (e) all grades three and six teachers of the selected schools were considered as part of the sample. On the other hand, in determining the second set of respondents for the evaluation phase, the fish bowl sampling technique was used for the selection of 32 teachers and the purposive sampling was employed to select the 7 experts.

## The Research Instruments

Two researcher-made instruments that were subjected for validation by experts were utilized for data-gathering: the Questionnaire on Teacher Competences and Learners' Psychosocial Needs and the CaRE Toolkit Evaluation Questionnaire.

### Questionnaire on Teacher Competences and Learners' Psychosocial Needs.

The instrument is divided into five parts. Part One, Personal Data Sheet, gathered information about the participants' sex, age, position, length of service, grade level assignment, undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and congressional district for profiling purposes.

Parts Two, Three, and Four are questionnaires on Mental Health Competence, Social Competence, and Emotional Competence respectively. These questionnaires contain three sections. Section A contains items that measured the level of teachers' perceived mental health, social, and emotional skills. Section B includes statements that intended to validate the teachers' perceived skills. Section C covers statements that revealed how the teachers' typically respond when they encounter learners with problems or issues that is indicative of their mental health, social, and emotional competence.

The Cronbach's alphas for the mental health, social, and emotional competence items were .921, .923 and .914 respectively, while Cronbach's alpha for items on learners' psychosocial needs is .972.

Responses to Mental Health Competence, Social Competence and Emotional Competence items were: Excellent (4), High (3), Moderate (2), Low (1).

Responses to Learners Psychological Needs items were: Very High (4), High (3), Moderate (2), Low (1).

Responses to Learners Psychological Needs items were: Very High (4), High (3), Moderate (2), Low (1).

Responses to Care Toolkit Evaluation items were: Outstanding (4), High (3), Moderate (2), Low (1). In interpreting the scores on the Mental Health Competence, Social Competence, and Emotional Competence, and Care Toolkit evaluation and its variables portion of the questionnaire the following scales were used with an interval of .75:

## Data Gathering Procedure

### Phase I: Development, validation, and reliability testing of the researcher-made questionnaires.

This part included the researcher's development and validation of questionnaire needed for the study. The Questionnaire on Teacher Competences and Learners' Psychosocial Needs was developed by the researcher based on the objectives of the study and the existing related literature. It was then presented to the research adviser for comments and suggestions. After which, it was submitted for validation of seven experts.

To determine the reliability of the items contained in the instrument, it was pilot tested to 25 purposively chosen elementary teachers from three public elementary schools in the Schools Division of Iloilo City. The instrument obtained a high coefficient reliability that ranged from .914 to .972.

### Phase II: Collection of data through the questionnaires.

Permission to conduct the study was secured from the office of the Schools Division Superintendent (see Appendix D) and the Principals (see Appendix E) of the identified schools involved in the study. The researcher personally distributed, administered, and retrieved the instruments. The DepEd District Offices served as venues. For the eight schools in isolated areas, the researcher personally conducted the survey in their respective towns. They were informed that the set of questionnaires is answerable within thirty minutes to one hour. They were also encouraged to have breaks after answering one part of the questionnaire.

### **Phase III: Processing, analyzing, and interpreting of the gathered data.**

Upon retrieval of the accomplished questionnaires, the data were tallied, computed, analyzed, and interpreted. Statistical computations were processed by a statistician through the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software at the Iloilo National High School Research and Development Center.

### **Phase IV: Development of the guidance toolkit.**

The development of the toolkit was based on the results of the survey. The analyzed data showed some specific skills from the three competence areas that need to be strengthened which were considered in the making of the toolkit. The guidance toolkit is composed of ten modules. Modules 1 and 2 aimed at updating teachers' knowledge on current issues and trends related to the three competence areas of teachers and their roles on promoting learners' mental health as well as children's socio-emotional development. The modules also provide them with general strategies that can help enhance their skills in addressing learners' psychosocial needs.

### **Phase V: Evaluation of the guidance toolkit by experts and elementary teachers.**

The validated CaRE Toolkit Evaluation Questionnaire was used in assessing the physical attributes, objectives, contents, usefulness, and self-help features of the resource material. There were two groups of toolkit evaluators:

#### **The Experts.**

This group was composed of professionals in the fields of psychology, education, social work, and counseling. A request letter (see Appendix C) was sent to 1 psychologist, 2 licensed social workers, 2 registered guidance counselors, 2 education specialists.

#### **The Teachers.**

The group consisted of 32 teachers from randomly selected elementary schools in the Schools Division of Iloilo who also served as respondents of the study. Finally, the teachers were given the evaluation questionnaire and were oriented with the criteria and instructions on how to assess the toolkit. They were requested to answer truthfully and were encouraged to write comments and suggestions for the improvement of the resource material. The sessions lasted for about three hours.

## **Statistical Tools**

The data gathered in this study were subjected to the following statistical treatments:

**Frequency count.** The frequency count was used to determine the number of responses to each item in the questionnaire.

**Percentage.** The percentage was used to describe the proportion of the respondents of the study based on certain categories.

**Mean.** The obtained mean scores were used to determine the general description of the teachers' mental health, social, and emotional competences as well as the extent of learner's psychosocial needs as perceived by teachers. Mean scores were also used to interpret the experts and elementary teachers' level of assessment of the CaRE Toolkit.

**Standard deviation.** This was used to determine the dispersion of the scores from the means obtained from the different constructs included in the study.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of the mental health, social, and emotional competences, can be seen in table 1. In terms of mental health competence showed high, ( $M= 2.73$ ). Social Competence showed high ( $M=2.98$ ). Emotional Competence showed high ( $M=2.84$ ).

**Table 1.** Results of mental health, social, and emotional competences

| Indicators               | Mean | Description |
|--------------------------|------|-------------|
| Mental Health Competence | 2.73 | High        |
| Social Competence        | 2.98 | High        |
| Emotional Competence     | 2.84 | High        |

### Results of teachers' mental health, social and emotional competences

As an entire group, the elementary teachers had **high** levels of mental health, social, and emotional competences.

In terms of specific mental health skills, elementary teachers had **excellent** level of competence in the following indicators: *appreciate that I keep records of their performance; maintain a classroom atmosphere that promotes respect for individual and cultural differences; feel that I accept and respect them because I acknowledge their uniqueness as persons; feel safe and secure in the classroom and that their well-being in the classroom is given priority; know that I care about their academic needs as well as their personal concerns; and enjoy as they learn because of the classroom activities and lessons that cater to their developmental needs and interests.* On the other hand, elementary teachers had **moderate** level of competence in some mental health skills. This included: *conduct small group discussions regarding family, personal, or academic issues; can identify community-based resources to support learners' psychosocial needs; effectively implement mental health programs and services offered in school; organize support groups or employ the buddy system; conduct needs assessment to find out the mental health concerns or issues of learners; know and understand the provisions stated in Republic Act 11036 or the Mental Health Act; consult with other professionals (guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, pediatricians) concerning their emotional and behavioral problems; make referrals for them and their families to mental health professionals or other service providers; share relevant (not all) information to other teachers, so they may also know the concerns of the learners with problems; and find it easy to motivate parents to be actively involved in their children's education and personal well-being.*

When specific social skills are considered, elementary teachers had **excellent** level of competence in the following indicators: *constantly remind my learners to observe good manners in different situations; encourage positive behaviors by affirming learners' good behavior; maintain honest and open relationship with learners; discuss with my learners about how and why classroom procedures/rules are implemented; am aware of how I treat each learner; use positive feedback and encouragement; commensurate to the learners' effort; strive to treat my learners fairly; encourage them to remain strong by giving empowering remarks; learners have the impression that I am approachable; am able to teach positive social behaviors to learners; and employ effective strategies to motivate student involvement in class.* Conversely, elementary teachers had **moderate** level of competence in the following social skills: *do not only focus my assistance on academic-related concerns; facilitate group sessions for common concerns; guide learners on how they can solve their problems; build support groups for them; can ignore misbehavior that are minimal or non-disruptive in class; do not need to exert more effort in motivating learners to actively participate in class; cheer them up and encourage them to face their problems.*

As to the emotional domain, elementary teachers had **excellent** level of competence in these specific skills: *acknowledge positive behavior; show them that I care and understand how they are feeling; make them feel that I am willing to listen and be of help; encourage them to freely express their true feelings; exhibit concern for the learners' education; and discuss with the learners their academic and non-academic concerns.* In contrast, elementary teachers showed **moderate** level of competence in teaching learners how to handle negative feelings and encouraging them to write down concerns and feelings which were considered as emotional skills.



## Results of learners' psychological needs

Over-all, the extent of learners' psychosocial needs was **very high** as perceived by elementary teachers. The elementary teachers perceived to a **very high** extent that learners need assistance and guidance in the following psychosocial concerns: *handle bullying in school; develop self-esteem and self-worth; demonstrate enthusiasm and cooperative behavior in class; handle discouragement/ frustrations and not lose hope and motivation in life; know themselves, their strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes; respect authority and follow rules and regulations; learn healthy ways of coping with problems; develop skills in relating with others; develop tolerance and acceptance for individual differences; stay away from people who are bad influences; employ effective strategies to manage stress; manage impulses and violent behaviors such as shouting or throwing things at classmates; and manage life's losses such as death of a loved-one, broken families, debilitating illness, disability, etc.*

The elementary teachers perceived to a **high** extent that learners need assistance and guidance in the following psychosocial concerns: *effectively communicate thoughts and feelings; effectively work in a team/group; resolve interpersonal conflicts; improve interpersonal skills and form friendships; regulate disruptive behaviors such as attention-seeking and excessive talking; develop resiliency in facing difficulties and not easily give up on challenging tasks or problems; feel secure and overcome distress due to verbal and physical abuse; develop help-seeking skills and increase awareness of possible persons who can help them; manage negative feelings such as anger and envy; handle close or intimate relationships; monitor and regulate emotions; and feel secure and overcome distress due to sexual abuse.*

## Results of the survey and data analysis of competent and responsive education toolkit

As a result of the survey and analysis of data, the Competent and Responsive Education Toolkit (CaRE) was constructed. The CaRE Toolkit is composed of 10 modules. Module 1 discussed the three competence areas of teachers: mental health, social, and emotional. Module 2 included topics on elementary learners' socio-emotional development and ways on how teachers can support this process. Modules 3 to 10 focused on learners' psychosocial needs. All 25 psychosocial needs listed in the survey questionnaire were included as topics for the toolkit because as perceived by teachers, learners need assistance and guidance in addressing these concerns from a high to very high extent. Psychosocial needs of learners with the same themes were grouped together that resulted to seven clusters. The elementary teachers' specific mental health, social, and emotional skills that indicated a **moderate** level of competence were seen by the researcher as aspects that can be improved with the help of the toolkit, hence, these items were considered in the creation of the resource material.

## Results of the assessment of CARE toolkit as evaluated by the experts

Over-all, the experts and elementary teachers' assessment of the CaRE Toolkit was **outstanding**. Likewise, all criteria (physical attributes, objectives, content, usefulness, and self-help features) were rated **outstanding** by both groups of evaluators.

## Conclusion

The elementary teachers demonstrate very good mental health, social, and emotional skills and are highly responsive to learners' psychosocial needs; hence they are able to promote learners' well-being. Teachers' mastery level of the three competences seems to suggest that they are capable of providing early interventions to learners with problems and of building supportive relationship with learners that enable them to successfully perform their nurturance role as second parents of learners

This finding may also lead to the idea that this caring and nurturing attitude of teachers is possibly extended to colleagues in school. This gives the impression that they can be capable of mentoring or coaching fellow teachers to help them effectively address learners' psychosocial needs.

Through their role modeling of the competences, both learners and colleagues can learn from these teachers appropriate ways of managing emotions and behaviors

The elementary teachers appeared to have basic skills in organizing and facilitating group support for learners. Although the K to 12 Curriculum has pointed out cooperative and collaborative learning as having significant impact on learners' development, it seems that teachers need to see and explore how these strategies can be applied in the context of addressing learners' psychosocial concerns. For instance, conducting a group guidance session where learners with common issues can share about the difficulties they are experiencing and can discuss possible ways on how these challenging situations can be addressed.

The results seem to suggest that teachers find it challenging to work with parents, fellow teachers, and other mental health professionals such as guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, etc. Teachers may have the need to exert more effort in reaching out with parents and encouraging them be actively involved in all aspects of their children's lives. Also, considering that teachers have perceived that there is a high to very high demand for promoting learners' psychosocial well-being, this result is suggestive of the need to expand their network of support by establishing consultative and collaborative relationships with other mental health professionals and service providers.

Another notable result relates with elementary teachers' ability to teach learners' problem-solving skills. They have basic skills in assisting learners on non-academic concerns, and in providing them guidance and support to solve problems. On the contrary, it is interesting to note that teachers rated themselves outstanding in expressing their concern for both learners' academic and non-academic problems. This seems to show that although teachers have the desire to help learners, they may be constrained by their limited capacity to assist learners in effectively solving some of their personal issues and concerns. The same limitations can be observed in teachers' ability to help learners manage their emotions, especially negative feelings.

The elementary teachers have basic skills in effectively implementing mental health programs and services in school which can be attributed to their limited knowledge and skills in identifying community-based resources to support learners' psychosocial needs and conducting mental health needs assessment of learners. An effective mental health program is one that answers to the psychosocial needs of learners, hence teachers may need to identify these needs first as well as identify possible resources that can support these needs.

Significantly, several indicators on teachers' mental health and social competences which are considered as teachers' strengths seem to show that they are consistent in maintaining a safe and caring classroom climate that fosters acceptance, fairness, and respect for learners' needs and individuality. Evident of teachers' high mental health, social, and emotional skills, it can be said that providing a supportive learning environment is a key characteristic of teacher competence in these three domains.

The results also suggest that teachers are consistent in teaching learners appropriate behaviors and in order to reinforce these behaviors, they regularly use positive feedback, encouragements, and affirmations. These skills are associated with effective behavior management that is one important pillar of a prosocial classroom.

Interestingly, teachers' response implies that to some extent they need to exert more effort in motivating learners to actively participate in class. This is in contrary to their outstanding ability to employ effective strategies to motivate student involvement in class. This seems to show that because teachers try their best to think and try out different motivational strategies, they become more effective in fully engaging learners in classroom activities.

Based on the findings, the teachers' may have shown high levels of competence in the mental health, social, and emotional domains but at the same time they recognize that to a very great extent, learners' need teacher assistance and guidance in promoting their well-being. It can be said that teachers may have observed or encountered increasing number of learners with psychosocial concerns. This seems to suggest that aside from the teachers' high responsiveness and support, learners may be needing a more intensive and comprehensive mental health intervention program to ensure that they are guided and assisted in life as they go through developmental adjustments and as they face challenging situations. This suggests that teachers can benefit from the use of the guidance toolkit as an aid to help them support learners' psychosocial needs.

The Competent and Responsive Education (CaRE) Toolkit can be a rich source of information in understanding learners' psychosocial needs and can provide strategies that will enhance

teachers' mental health, social, and emotional competences. Since its contents were based on the results of the survey, it contains information and strategies that are relevant to the needs of both teachers and learners.

The excellent rating given by both experts and elementary teachers suggests that the CaRE Toolkit can really serve its purpose of addressing the different psychosocial needs of learners, and in helping them to become well-adjusted and self-directed individuals. This leads to the idea that teachers, with the support of the toolkit, can teach learners with the necessary emotional and social skills they need in order to effectively handle challenges and problems that may come their way.

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