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First step toward a comprehensive model of integrated socio-emotional guidance : investigating the effect of teachers' task perception and a supportive network at school

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## **A first step towards a comprehensive model on integrated social and emotional guidance.**

*Investigating the effect of teachers' task perception and a supportive network at school*

### **Abstract**

With a shift in education from the transition of knowledge to the facilitation of the fullest development of each student, social and emotional guidance of students has moved from the margin to the mainstream of education. With limited resources and many competing demands, however, implementing this social and emotional guidance is not always that simple. The aim of this study, therefore, was to investigate what facilitates teachers to integrate social and emotional guidance into their teaching by means of a survey study involving 3336 Flemish secondary education teachers. Several important factors including teachers' task perception, professionalization, teacher communication, clear structures and procedures and principal support were identified; making a first step towards the development of a comprehensive model on integrated social and emotional guidance.

*Keywords:* Teacher student relationships; caring; student guidance; social development; emotional development; whole-school approach

### **Introduction**

Over the past few decades, the focus in education has shifted. While people used to believe that knowledge of subject matter was sufficient for being a good teacher, nowadays it is widely accepted that this idea doesn't account for the complexity of teaching as being much more than the transition of knowledge (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). In Flanders, but also in several other countries around the globe, there is broad agreement

among researchers, educators and policy makers that facilitating the fullest development of each student in terms of enriching their intellectual development as well as their personal, social and emotional development has become an important objective (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Kidger, Gunnell, Biddle, Campbell, & Donovan, 2010; Steunpunt Gok & Vlaamse Onderwijsraad, 2005). The Flemish educational department explicitly states that social and emotional guidance is not of secondary importance but an integral part of education or of what is going on in the school (Steunpunt Gok & Vlaamse Onderwijsraad, 2005). Socio-emotional guidance therefore has moved from the margins to the mainstream of education (Lapan, Gysbers, Multon, & Pike, 1997). Nowadays, guidance in schools is no longer considered as an ancillary, crisis-oriented service delivered by a few individuals, but rather as a comprehensive programme integrated into the curriculum that aims to stimulate the social and emotional development of every student (Best, Lang, Lodge, & Watkins, 1995; Drefs, 2003). Because guidance has taken on this broader application - including prevention, remediation and student development - there has been a growing emphasis on guidance as a whole-school responsibility. This demands the involvement of all teachers and school personnel, rather than just specialists (Hui, 2002). Concepts like comprehensive guidance and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in the US and Greece (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Triliva & Poulou, 2006), personal and social education (PSE), pastoral care and Social and Emotional aspects of Learning (SEAL) in the UK (Best, et al., 1995), a whole school approach to guidance in Hong Kong and Australia (de Jong & Kerr-Roubicek, 2007; Hui & Lo, 1997), and in this study the Flemish notion of integrated guidance (Detrez, Bosman, & Gombeir, 2000), are used to describe this broader application of guidance; all of which emphasise the central role of the teacher, and the necessity of a supportive network at the school level.

Despite the attention given to integrated guidance in theory and policy, implementing integrated socio-emotional guidance in practice is not that simple. Schools have finite resources in terms of personnel and time and there are many competing demands for these resources (Cheng & Tsui, 1999; Yuen, Chan, Lau, Gysbers, & Shea, 2007). In many countries, including Belgium (Flanders), secondary school teachers are faced with a multitude of expectations formulated by different stakeholders which involve different - sometimes even contradictory - goals (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009; Van Veen, Slegers, Bergen, & Klaassen, 2001). The multitude of expectations and the strive of schools for 'excellence' might leave teachers chronically overloaded with work and little opportunity to develop caring relationships or to stimulate the non-cognitive aspects of students' development (Davies, Howes, & Farrell, 2008; Farrell & Tsakalidou, 1999; McNess, Broadfoot, & Osborn, 2003).

Integrated social and emotional guidance is therefore not that simple and thus investigating what facilitates or enables teachers to integrate socio-emotional guidance into the curriculum and their teaching practice could prove very useful. Previous findings on the implementation of (socio-emotional) guidance at school are mainly based on testimonials rather than empirical data, on qualitative data involving small case or single case studies, or on studies investigating only a few possible facilitators (Borders & Sandra, 1992; Hui, 2000; Lam & Hui, 2010). The aim of this study therefore is to take a first step in the development of a comprehensive model on integrated socio-emotional guidance by means of a large-scale survey study in Flemish regular secondary education and by taking into account several factors both at the teacher level and at the school level. Since the teacher is the key figure in implementing the social and emotional guidance programme at school, teachers are also the key participants in this study. As such, the facilitating factors at the teacher and the school level in this study are operationalized using teachers' perceptions and understanding of these factors. A model including these factors is obtained mainly by using empirical evidence

found in the specific literature on guidance, counselling and caring, but also by using some empirical evidence found in the more general educational literature on policy-making and innovations in schools. The concept of integrated social and emotional guidance and the facilitating factors as found in the literature, are described in the next paragraphs.

### **Conceptual framework**

#### *Integrated social and emotional guidance*

In becoming an integrated part of the curriculum, concerned with each student's development, guidance has evolved from an isolated position, taken on by one person (the counsellor), to a comprehensive programme (Aluede, Imonikhe, & Afen-Akpaida, 2007; Best, et al., 1995; Galassi & Akos, 2004). Such a comprehensive programme consists no longer of ancillary, crisis-oriented services, delivered to a small percentage of the student population, but rather offers a programme which addresses the different students' diverse needs by means of multifaceted activities and services which are remedial, preventive and developmental in nature (Drefs, 2003; Galassi, Griffin, & Akos, 2008; Green & Keys, 2001). Integrated social and emotional guidance can be defined as all of these activities integrated in the curriculum that aim to stimulate every student's social and emotional development. This can be attained through the quality of teaching and learning; through the nature of the relationships amongst pupils, teachers and adults other than teachers; through arrangements of monitoring pupils' overall progress and social and emotional development; through specific support systems; and through extra-curricular activities (Best, 1999; Detrez, et al., 2000).

As guidance has taken on this broader application to include development, prevention and remediation, there has been a growing emphasis on guidance as a whole-school responsibility. This has demanded the involvement of all school personnel rather than just

specialists. Consequently, roles have changed with counsellors carrying out more coordinating and supporting roles and teachers becoming the first line helpers and deliverers of the guidance programme (Agalotis & Kalyva, 2011; Emanuelsson, 2001). The latter is not surprising given that teachers are, by far, the key figures in the students' daily school life, making their personal involvement in pupils lives inevitable (Maples, 1992; Tatar, 1998). Given that teachers are the vital link for the integration of social and emotional guidance into the curriculum, no school guidance programme can be successful without the teachers' support and active involvement (Aluede & Egbochuku, 2007; Hui, 2002; Triliva & Poulou, 2006). As such, teachers' perception of whether or not social and emotional guidance is part of their task is regarded a crucial element for the success of an integrated social and emotional guidance programme at school.

Although teachers are the key figures to integrate social and emotional guidance in the curriculum, it is not their sole responsibility. This is reflected by the concept of a whole-school approach in which the involvement of all teachers is regarded as essential. At the school level this demands the recognition, clarification, organisation and planning of guidance (Aluede, et al., 2007; Detrez, et al., 2000; Hui, 2002; Steunpunt Gok & Vlaamse Onderwijsraad, 2005). Guidance results into additional responsibilities and, possibly, more stress and a higher workload. Consequently, at the school level, a supportive network becomes a necessity (Chan & Hui, 1998). Several supporting school characteristics have been identified in educational literature and stated to be important in (Flemish) educational policy, but it is not always clear to what extent this is evidence-based and whether all identified characteristics are equally important for the integrated social and emotional guidance of students.

The aim of this study therefore is to take a first step in the development of a comprehensive evidence-based model on integrated social and emotional guidance by using

large-scale survey data of secondary education teachers working in the Flemish educational context. Social and emotional guidance in this context is comparable to the situation in other countries worldwide, in the sense that the Flemish educational policy has the same opinion with regard to guidance as found in the international literature. Flemish policy states that social and emotional guidance is not of secondary importance and that teachers need to be aware of their responsibility with regard to students' social and emotional development. Furthermore they also states that it's not the teachers' sole responsibility and that a supportive network at school is needed (Steunpunt Gok & Vlaamse Onderwijsraad, 2005). The effect of this supportive school network and the task perception of the teacher on integrated social and emotional guidance as found in the literature, are described in the next paragraphs.

#### *Teachers' task perception and their provision of social and emotional guidance*

Implementing an integrated approach to guidance is a complex process that not only involves the participation and co-operation of all school personnel, but also their attitude towards guidance (Hui, 2002). Those involved might not always have the same attitudes and beliefs as presupposed by educational theory or policy. The successful implementation and eventual success of a socio-emotional guidance programme is therefore dependent on the receptivity and the school's attitude towards the concept and practice of social and emotional guidance (Cooper, Hough, & Loynd, 2005; Luk-Fong, 2000; Triliva & Poulou, 2006). In terms of this receptivity, no group could be more important than the teachers. Teachers are the vital link for integrating socio-emotional guidance into the curriculum and thus their perceptions are likely to have significant implications for guidance practices at school (Aluede & Egbochuku, 2007; Boyle, Topping, Jindal-Snape, & Norwich, 2012). Since, as has been well documented, teachers' implicit theories and perceptions of their own professional

identity have a significant impact on their approaches to teaching, their interactions with students, and their professional development (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; Beijaard, et al., 2000; Triliva & Poulou, 2006), we expect these perceptions also to have a significant impact on the social and emotional guidance of students. A recent qualitative study of Lam and Hui (2010) showed that teachers who consider themselves as guides, coaches, caregivers and role models are more likely to be involved in developmental guidance. Other studies indicate that unfavourable cognitions or beliefs about the responsibilities and appropriate strategies in dealing with the needs of students go hand in hand with less effective interactions (Koomen, Verschueren, & Thijs, 2006). We therefore hypothesise that the way in which teachers perceive both their task as a teacher and their role in guidance will have a significant impact on the provision of guidance at school.

#### *The effect of a supportive network at school*

As previously stated, however, social and emotional guidance is not the sole responsibility of the teacher, but requires a supportive network at the level of the school. School factors that have been identified by previous research and stated by Flemish educational policy to be facilitators of a whole school approach to guidance - and thus guidance by the teacher - are cooperation and communication amongst teachers, teacher training, clear procedures and structures, support from the school principal, a well-defined school policy or vision and a caring and inviting school climate (Aluede, et al., 2007; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; Best, et al., 1995; Detrez, et al., 2000; Hui, 2002; Hui & Lo, 1997; Lam & Hui, 2010; Steunpunt Gok & Vlaamse Onderwijsraad, 2005).

**A caring climate.** Of particular relevance, according to Tatar (1998), is the degree to which specific behaviour - in this case social and emotional guidance - falls within the normative organisational limits. Studies have shown that effective school environments in

terms of integrated social and emotional guidance need to maintain a climate that facilitates both learning and caring for students (Lam & Hui, 2010; Lapan, 2001). Schools have to be communities, in which those who play a part in it feel a sense of belonging, and feel appreciated and respected (Best, 2007; Detrez, et al., 2000; Harris, 2008). Such a caring and inviting school climate has been shown to facilitate teachers' sense of their mission and their understanding of the part they play in student guidance as well as their willingness to involve themselves with pupils (Lam & Hui, 2010; Tatar, 1998). A caring climate can nurture positive relationships among students, between students and teachers, and among teachers (Lapan, 2001) and can thus be regarded as facilitating social and emotional guidance at school.

**A clear and shared vision.** In addition to this caring climate, it is also important for schools to make the importance of social and emotional guidance, its educational function and the approach of focusing on student development rather than on responsive services for at-risk-students, explicit by means of a school vision (Lam & Hui, 2010; Steunpunt Gok & Vlaamse Onderwijsraad, 2005). Studies show that a clear vision can inspire teachers to devote themselves, to develop themselves, and to be optimistic about the results of their actions (Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996; Singh & Billingsley, 1998). This vision has to be more, however, than some statements written down by the school. If the visionary statement of a school does not appeal much to the teachers, they do not get into the teachers' hearts or minds and this will result in a lack of teachers' active involvement. Discussing the goals of social and emotional guidance with the teachers and involving them in professional decision-making can prevent this lack of active participation (Geijsel, Slegers, van den Berg, & Kelchtermans, 2001). This means that the school's vision on guidance needs to be based on the shared views of all school personnel, rather than on the preferences of the school's guidance team or the school's principal. Teachers' participation

in the creation and maintenance of the school's vision will lead to a shared vision that will facilitate the teacher's support for and involvement in the school's guidance programme (Hui, 2000).

**Principal Support.** Another feature that has been shown to be of central importance to the implementation of a school-based programme is the support of the school's principal (Greenberg et al., 2003; Kam, Greenberg, & Walls, 2003). The school team needs leadership from someone who takes responsibility for keeping the team on track and for monitoring the work and being accountable to others for that work (Best, et al., 1995; Richard, Schneider, & Mallet, 2012). The school principal, however, has to do more than being a leader. He also has the task of motivating and inspiring teachers to develop themselves professionally, to encourage teachers to take part in decision-making and to reduce feelings of uncertainty (van den Berg, Vandenberghe, & Slegers, 1999). Previous findings indicate that when teachers feel that the school's principal stands behind them, respects their opinion and supports them when problems arise they will be more willing to take some initiative (Geijsel, et al., 2001; Leithwood, et al., 1996). The support of the principal through organisation, motivation, and direction can thus substantially affect the implementation of a school's guidance programme.

**Teacher Communication.** In addition to this strong and motivating leader, previous studies also show that schools need an ethos of listening, good communication and effective co-ordination between all members of the school (Best, et al., 1995; Detrez, et al., 2000; Lam & Hui, 2010). As stated by Davies and colleagues (2008), schools are socially complex and diverse places with many individuals teaching and learning together. And although teachers' professional integrity is often based on being able to cope alone with a class of pupils, working alone can lead to missing opportunities to improve their professional practice (Davies, et al., 2008; Evers, Kreijns, Van der Heijden, & Gerrichhauzen, 2011;

Leonard & Leonard, 1999). Sharing common goals, communicating openly, exchanging ideas, and actively problem-solving with one another allows the members of a school to take risks, to learn from each other and to grow professionally (Greenberg, et al., 2003; Huber, 2011). Forming such positive interpersonal relationships in a school are believed to have a profound effect on the quality of an implementation since they build a sense of a professional community crucial to promoting positive student outcomes (Royal & Rossi, 1999). Teachers as part of a team who feel cared for and supported by others who share the same vision, have been shown to be more effective in their care for and guidance and support of students (Cassidy & Bates, 2005). The guidance programme at a school is therefore most effective when carried out by a team characterised by good communication and co-operation (Best, et al., 1995).

**Structures and Procedures.** Closely linked to this need for effective communication and co-operation is the need for clear structures and procedures (Best, et al., 1995). These are the means whereby responsibilities in the school are allocated and the flow of information is co-ordinated. Schools can only be responsive to students' social and emotional needs when information is collected and passed on to the right individuals. When people have the right information they will be able to adapt their teaching, to assess pupils' progress and to provide guidance and feedback in order to ensure that the school provides their students with the best guidance (Best, et al., 1995; Kam, et al., 2003). Structures and procedures, like a pupil tracking system and uniform guidelines about how to handle in case of social and emotional problems, therefore, can enhance the social and emotional guidance practices of teachers.

**Collaboration with parents.** For teams and individuals to have the right information, it is also necessary from time to time to seek assistance outside the school. Partnerships and alliances need to be established that increase the active development of parents (Lapan,

2001). After all, schools cannot ignore the contribution of parents to the education and development of their children and the great impact they might have (Best, et al., 1995; Hui, 2002). Home and school therefore need to establish a partnership that encompasses effective communication and information giving; schools should be accountable to parents, encouraging parents to support children's learning and development and creating a sense of shared purpose. Children's performance and their social and emotional development at school are believed to be most successful when such partnerships between the home and the school can be established (Best, et al., 1995).

**Professionalization.** A final feature that has been cited as crucial for teachers' participation in guidance is teachers' preparation and training. Teachers must not only see the value of fostering their students' social and emotional development, they must also have the necessary background knowledge to do so (Greenberg, et al., 2003; Steunpunt Gok & Vlaamse Onderwijsraad, 2005). This makes systematic and on-going in-service training on guidance for teachers a necessity (Lam & Hui, 2010; Lapan, 2001). A successful innovation presupposes and requires that teachers develop themselves (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992), and thus professionalization can be regarded as an important factor for the implementation of a social and emotional guidance programme at school. Whether teachers will develop themselves, however, depends on the characteristics of the teacher, but also on the characteristics of the environment in which teachers work and function. Teachers should be encouraged and supported within the school context to develop professionally (Geijsel, et al., 2001). Elements in the context of the school, which have been shown to encourage teachers' to grow professionally are the co-operation and communication within the school team (Greenberg, et al., 2003), the participation of the teachers in the creation of a shared vision (Geijsel, et al., 2001), the school's organisational climate (Lam & Hui, 2010; Tatar, 1998), and the school principal's support (Evers, et al., 2011; Leonard & Leonard, 1999).

These school characteristics are thus expected to also have an indirect effect on teachers' involvement in social and emotional guidance through their effect on teachers' professionalization.

### **This study**

Based on the literature we can subsequently hypothesise the model on integrated social and emotional guidance in schools as shown in Figure 1. To our knowledge, no such comprehensive model has ever been tested or developed, which is the aim of this study. Based on previous findings we hypothesise that the provision of social and emotional guidance by the teacher in the classroom is facilitated by the teachers' task perception on the one hand, and by the existence of some features at the level of the school, as perceived by the teachers, on the other hand. These features are hypothesised to be a caring school climate, a clear and shared vision, support of the school's principal, clear structures and procedures, collaboration between teachers at school, co-operation with parents and professionalization of the teachers. In addition to the direct effect of these perceived school features and teachers' task perception, we also expect the school's climate, vision, principal support and teacher collaboration to have an indirect effect through the mediating factor teachers professionalization. Since, to our knowledge, no study investigated the effect of all these different variables, it is not clear whether they are all equally important for the provision of social and emotional guidance by the teacher. The aim of this study therefore is to investigate whether all these factors have an effect on the provision of social and emotional guidance and whether they are all equally important.

Furthermore, it is also not clear based on the literature if and how these facilitating factors are related to each other. Because we expect the different school factors and the

school factors and teachers' task perception to be related, the interrelationship between the different facilitating factors in the model will be investigated.

By investigating this interrelationship and by testing whether all these factors have an equally important effect on the provision of social and emotional guidance by the teacher in the classroom we want to take a first, important step towards the development of a comprehensive model on guidance.

## **Method**

### *Participants and procedure*

The participants in this study were 3336 secondary education teachers from 198 different schools in Flanders. This sample of teachers was obtained by randomly selecting secondary education schools to participate in the study. The schools were selected based on a random stratified sample drawn according to province and type of secondary education (subsidised official education, subsidised private education, and community education). All these types of Flemish secondary education schools, as involved in this study, are government funded and tied to the Flemish national educational program that imposes final terms for schools and students to achieve. Private schools with an own educational program are rare in Flanders, and excluded from this study. As shown in Table 1, the eventual sample of 198 schools that participated in the study had a fairly representative distribution of these stratification variables, with only a slight underrepresentation of schools in West-Flanders (Department of Education and Training, n.d.). In each participating school, about 20 random teachers (depending on the size of the school) were selected to participate in the survey, leading to a total number of 3336 secondary education teachers. In an accompanying letter, the teachers were told that they participated in a large-scale Flemish survey study

investigating the perceptions of teachers on socio-emotional guidance. In addition, teachers were given the above-mentioned definition of integrated social and emotional guidance and some examples, in order to avoid misinterpretations when answering the questions. No information on the theoretical framework of this study (i.c. teachers as key figures and the need for a whole-school approach) was given to the teachers.

As in the total population of Flemish secondary education teachers, there were more female than male teachers; 67.8% of the teachers were female (Department of Education and Training, n.d.). The average age of the teachers was 38.89 years ( $SD \pm 10.41$ ) ranging from 20 to 64. The sample included both less experienced as well as more experienced teachers with 18.2% of the teachers having less than 5 years experience, 25.3% having 5 to 10 years experience, 15.8% 11 to 15 years experience, 10.4% 16 to 20 years of experience and 28.4% of the teachers having more than 20 years experience.

### *Measures*

A single questionnaire, namely the Socio-Emotional Guidance Questionnaire (SEG-Q) (Authors, 2012; Authors, In press) was administered, including both measures of teachers' guidance provision and task perception as well as the characteristics at the level of the school. The SEG-Q is a validated self-report instrument for teachers. The SEG-Q was developed based on a literature review, and focus groups research with several key-participants (e.g., teachers, guidance teachers, principals, trainers) ( $n=26$ ) in order to check for content validity, and a pilot study ( $n=115$ ) to check for difficulty, clarity and feasibility of the items. The factor structure and construct validity of the SEG-Q was investigated using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, both at the teacher level as well as the school level using multilevel analyses ( $n_{\text{teachers}}=1418$ ;  $n_{\text{schools}}=84$ ) (Authors, 2010). In a final stage of the validation of the SEG-Q, also measurement invariance analyses were used to

successfully confirm the factor structure and content validity of the SEG-Q for different groups of teachers (Authors, 2012). The final SEG-Q is a self-report instrument for teachers that consists of three parts, 10 scales and 38 items. All items are answered on a 5-point likert scale with 1 meaning 'I totally disagree', 2 'I rather disagree', 3 'I do not agree or disagree', 4 'I rather agree' and 5 'I totally agree'.

The SEG-Q consists of three parts. Part one – *coordination and organisation at the school* – consists of 17 items, which measure teachers' perception on the coordination and organisation of social and emotional guidance at the level of the school. Four different scales measure some of the earlier mentioned school characteristics. The first scale, *climate* (n=5), measures the extent to which a school maintains a borne climate that both facilitates learning and caring by means of items like "At my school, pupils are helped to achieve the best of their abilities" and "Teachers at our school have the same opinion regarding the care for pupils with socio-emotional issues". The second scale, *vision* (n=3), measures the school's explicit and shared vision with regard to the social and emotional guidance of pupils. Exemplary items are "We have a written down plan regarding the objectives the school sets itself in terms of socio-emotional guidance" and "At school, we reflect in a group about the strengths and weakness of the socio-emotional guidance provided". The third scale, *principal's support* (n=3), measures the extent to which the school's principal takes responsibility and supports the teachers at school with regard to their social and emotional guidance of pupils. Items like "The school's principal makes clear that caring for pupils with socio-emotional problems is a priority for our school" and "The school's principal stimulates initiatives to tackle pupils' socio-emotional problems" measure this principal support. The fourth and final scale of part one measures the presence of *structures and procedures* (n=6) regarding social and emotional guidance at school, with items like "At our school there is a

body to discuss the socio-emotional guidance provided” and “There are clear guidelines at school about how to act in case of socio-emotional problems”.

The other school characteristics mentioned in the literature are measured by part two of the SEG-Q – *support of the teachers at school*. This part consists of 9 items and 3 scales that measure the extent to which teachers feel supported at school when it comes to integrating social and emotional guidance. The first scale, *professionalization* (n=3), measures the extent to which teachers develop themselves with regard to social and emotional guidance as well as the support they get to do so. Exemplary items are “I look up information to be able to provide socio-emotional guidance to pupils” and “The school’s principal stimulates me to attend training regarding socio-emotional guidance”. The second scale, *teacher communication* (n=3), measures the extent to which teachers at school communicate and co-operate with respect to the social and emotional guidance of students. Items that belong to this scale are “At our school, teachers discuss how the socio-emotional development of pupils is going” and “Information about the socio-emotional guidance of pupils is exchanged between teachers”. The third and final scale of part two, *communication with parents* (n=3), measures the co-operation between teachers and the parents with respect to social and emotional guidance and students’ development. Items that are part of this scale are “In our school, information is requested from parents regarding the socio-emotional development of their child” and “Parents at our school are involved in tackling socio-emotional problems”.

The final and third part of the SEG-Q – *guidance by the teachers* – contains 12 items regarding the social and emotional guidance by the individual teacher. Teachers’ task perception with regard to social and emotional guidance is operationalized using two scales: *narrow task perception* (n=3) and *broad task perception* (n=3). The scale narrow task perception measures to what extent teachers perceive guidance as best provided by a specialists or specialised team (counsellors, a mental health centre,...), and not as the

teacher's main responsibility. Exemplary items are "The best help for socio-emotional issues is provided by a specialised team of external care providers" and "Socio-emotional guidance of pupils diverts attention from other pupils". The scale broad task perception measures the teacher's perception of education as being more than knowledge transition or the intellectual stimulation of students. Items like "My main task as a teacher is to assist young people on their road to adulthood", and "Developing social skills in pupils is just as important as developing intellectual skills" measure this broad task perception. The third and final scale of part three, *guidance provision* (n=6), measures the dependent variable in the hypothesised model. The scale measures to what extent teachers guide their students in their social and emotional development with items like "I talk to pupils about their socio-emotional development", "I try to help and find solutions for socio-emotional issues" and "In my lessons, I try to explicitly foster the socio-emotional development of pupils".

#### *Data analyses*

To gain insight into the interrelations between the different variables, correlational analyses were undertaken first. Since the aim of this study was to investigate the relations between the latent constructs in the hypothesised model, the second step was structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM is a technique that allows researchers to test theoretical propositions about how constructs are theoretically linked (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006) and thus suitable to test our hypothesised model. All analyses were carried out using Mplus 5 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998). We used the two-step approach as recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) whereby the measurement model was tested first using Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) and the structural model was tested subsequently using a more general SEM approach involving both the structural model and the measurement model. The measurement model of the SEG-Q obtained by Authors (2012)

in the validation study was tested (See Figure 2). The variables in the SEM model were construed using the full measurement model as tested in the CFA. Due to the complexity of the model and the large amount of parameters, the testing of the structural model was performed in two steps. In the first step the model with all the direct effects was tested and the significant direct effects were retained. In the second step the indirect effects through the mediating variable professionalization were added to the model. Because the data are ordered-categorical (items answered on a 5-point likert scale) the two models were compared using the DIFFTEST function in Mplus instead of just taking the difference in chi-square value and degrees of freedom between the two models. This function applies a correction that accounts for the fact that the difference in chi-square for ordered-categorical data is not distributed as chi-square (Muthén & Muthén, 1998). A non-significant chi-square difference test indicates that both models equally fit the data. In addition to a corrected chi-square difference test to compare models, the fit indices comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used to evaluate the fit of the individual models. A model is considered to have an acceptable fit when the CFI and TLI are above .90 and the RMSEA below .08 and a good fit when the CFI and TLI are above .95 and the RMSEA is below .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1995; Schreiber, et al., 2006). In case of a significant chi-square value or bad model fit, the significant modification indices (MI) ( $>3.84$ ), which give the expected drop in the model chi-square value when a parameter is freely estimated, were investigated and used to enhance the model (Muthén & Muthén, 1998). These MI's were calculated using the default chi-square test in Mplus. Also, the default function in Mplus of estimating the model under missing data instead of a pairwise or list wise selection was used (Muthén & Muthén, 1998). Since the data was ordered-categorical, a weighted least Squares means-variance adjusted (WLSMV) estimator with delta parameterization was used. In addition to this parameter we used the function

TYPE=COMPLEX to correct for the nested structure in the data (teachers nested within schools) (Muthén & Muthén, 1998).

## **Results**

### *Correlational analyses*

Table 2 presents the intercorrelation matrix for the latent variables involved in this study. All correlations between the variables are significant, varying from moderate to high. The relationships are all in the expected direction, with positive moderate to high relationships between all perceived school characteristics, broad task perception and guidance provision by the teacher, and negative low to moderate relationships between narrow task perception and all other variables. The different school characteristics regarding the integrated social and emotional guidance as perceived by the teacher are moderate to high positively interrelated. Guidance provision by the teacher is moderately positively correlated to all these perceived school characteristics and teachers' broad task perception, and strong positively correlated with professionalization.

### *The measurement and structural model*

The full measurement model with 10 latent constructs (scales of the SEG-Q), 38 observed variables (items of the SEG-Q) and 10 error covariances, as presented in Figure 2, proved to be a good fit to the data (CFI= .93; TLI= .98; RMSEA= .05). The standardised parameter estimates (factor loadings and residual variances) are provided in Figure 2. Each single indicator loaded significantly onto its associated latent factor with loadings ranging from .56 to .93. The different scales and associated items of the SEG-Q were confirmed.

In the following step, this measurement model was used in the SEM analysis to test the structural model, thus to test whether the hypothesized facilitating factors have an effect on

guidance provision by the teacher. The first model that was tested was a model containing only the direct effects on guidance provision that are shown in Figure 1. This hypothesised model with all the direct effects on guidance provision showed to be adequate (CFI=.93; TLI=.98; RMSEA=.05) and could account for 73.4% of the variance in guidance. This model with standardised parameter estimates is presented in Figure 3. The beta-values show that only the effect of narrow task perception, broad task perception, communication with parents, professionalization, and vision are significant. All effects are in the expected direction, except for vision, which has a negative effect on guidance provision. Only these significant direct effects are retained in further analyses.

Next, we tested the second model containing the significant direct effects of the first model and the hypothesised indirect effects of climate, vision, principal support and teacher communication through the mediating variable professionalization. This model with direct and indirect effects appeared to have a good fit to the data (CFI=.93; TLI=.98; RMSEA=.06), but the significant chi-square difference test indicated a worse fit for this model compared to the model with only direct effects ( $\chi^2_{diff}=151.96$ ;  $df=4$ ;  $p<.0000$ ). The model with only direct effects fitted the data better. The modification indices pointed out that adding an indirect effect for narrow task perception and for broad task perception on guidance provision via professionalization would enhance the model. We already stated that the professional development of teachers depends on the environment's characteristics as well the teacher's characteristics and thus this modification is also tenable based on theory. In addition to this extra indirect effect of task perception on guidance, the modification indices also showed that when taking into account all these indirect effects, the direct effect of structures and procedures that appeared to be non-significant (cfr. model 1) should be re-added to the model. This modified model with an added indirect effect for narrow and broad task perception and a direct effect of structures and procedures showed to have a

good fit to the data and thus to be a good model (CFI=.94; TLI=.98; RMSEA=.05). The chi-square difference test also showed that this model fitted the data equally well than the simple model with only direct effects ( $\chi^2_{diff}=0.028$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<.8678$ ). The total variance accounted for in this final model, as presented in Figure 4, is 47% for professionalization and 74% for guidance provision. The results show that all beta-values or effects in the model are significant, except for the variable communication with parents. It appears that when taking into account all the indirect effects, communication with parents no longer has a significant direct effect on guidance provision. As expected, the beta values show that there is a small negative effect for narrow task perception ( $B=-.08$ ;  $SE=.02$ ;  $p<.000$ ), a moderate positive effect for broad task perception ( $B=.23$ ;  $SE=.04$ ;  $p<.000$ ) and structures and procedures ( $B=.19$ ;  $SE=.07$ ;  $p<.01$ ), and a large positive effect for professionalization ( $B=.68$ ;  $SE=.02$ ;  $p<.000$ ). In line with the unexpected result in model 1, the final model also showed that vision has a moderate negative effect on guidance provision ( $B=-.20$ ;  $SE=.06$ ;  $p<.000$ ).

The values for the indirect effects can be found in Table 3 and show that all indirect effects on guidance provision through the mediating variable professionalization are significant. Principal support, teacher communication, broad task perception and narrow task perception have a small to moderate direct effect on professionalization and therefore a small to moderate indirect effect on guidance provision, with an expected negative effect for narrow task perception. Rather unexpectedly, we also found that climate has a moderate negative effect on professionalization and therefore a negative indirect effect on guidance provision. A caring climate thus leads to less professionalization and thus less guidance provision by the teacher. For vision we found an unexpected negative direct effect in the previous model. With respect to the indirect effect, however, it appears from Table 3 that vision has a positive effect on professionalization and therefore a positive indirect effect on

guidance provision. Because of these two contradictory effects, the total effect of vision on guidance provision (Table 3) appeared to be non-significant.

## **Discussion**

With a shift in education from the transition of knowledge to the facilitation of the fullest development of each student, the social and emotional guidance of students has moved from the margin to the mainstream of education (Aluede, et al., 2007; Beijaard, et al., 2000; Lapan, et al., 1997). With limited resources and many competing demands, however, implementing this social and emotional guidance at school is not always that simple (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009; Yuen, et al., 2007). The aim of this study, therefore, was to investigate what facilitates teachers to integrate social and emotional guidance into the curriculum and their teaching practice. By addressing this matter, this study made a first step in the development of a comprehensive model on integrated socio-emotional guidance, which has up until now been seen as lacking in the theory and literature on student guidance. The results of this study and implications for future research are discussed throughout the next paragraphs by first focusing on the results concerning the level of the teachers, then on the results concerning the effect of a supportive network at school and finally by discussing the limitations of this study.

### *Teachers as key figures: the effect of teachers' task perception*

For the teachers' characteristic task perception, which was operationalized as narrow and broad task perception, we found both a direct effect and an indirect effect through professionalization. As expected, teachers who report to have a broad task perception, and who thus consider teaching to be more than the transition of knowledge or the facilitation

of intellectual skills, are more likely to guide students in their social and emotional development and to professionalize with respect to socio-emotional guidance. For narrow task perception, or the perception that a specialist best performs social and emotional guidance because it diverts attention from (intellectually) educating students, we found the opposite effect. Our results thus confirm that teachers' attitudes towards guidance and their implicit theories or perceptions have a significant impact on their approach in the classroom (Beijaard, et al., 2000; Hui, 2002; Triliva & Poulou, 2006). More specifically, our results confirm that teachers who consider themselves as caregivers are more likely to be involved in guidance (Lam & Hui, 2010) and that unfavourable cognitions or beliefs go hand in hand with less guidance interactions (Koomen, et al., 2006).

*A whole-school approach to guidance: the effect of a supportive network at school*

For the school characteristics as perceived by the teachers we expected that structures and procedures, communication with parents and professionalization would have a direct effect on guidance provision, and that a caring climate, a clear and shared vision, support from the school principal and communication between teachers would have both a direct effect and indirect effect through professionalization. The results of our study confirm a direct effect for professionalization, a clear and shared vision and structures and procedures on the self-reported guidance provision by the teacher. Only an indirect effect could be found for climate, principal support and teacher communication, and for communication with parents no significant effect was found. The latter is rather surprising given that many authors point to the importance of a successful partnership between home and school (Best, et al., 1995; Hui, 2002; Lapan, 2001). As stated by Elias (2003), however, the close collaboration of home and school is especially important with respect to what students gain from a guidance programme and the enduringness and pervasiveness of these effects. We

can thus hypothesize that a good relationship between home and school, which encompasses effective communication and information-giving, the school's accountability to parents and parents supporting the school (Best, et al., 1995), is particularly important for children's learning and development but to a lesser extent for the social and emotional guidance provided by the teacher in the classroom. To confirm this hypothesis, however, further research on integrated social and emotional guidance and the role of communication and collaboration with parents is needed.

For the school characteristics vision and climate as perceived by the teachers, we also found an effect other than the one we expected based on previous findings (e.g. Geijsel, et al., 2001; Hui, 2000; Lam & Hui, 2010). While the positive correlations of climate and vision with guidance provision pointed to a moderate positive relation, the SEM results showed otherwise. It appears that when controlling for other significant variables in the model, like structures and procedures, which is highly correlated with vision and climate, vision has a direct negative effect on guidance provision and climate has an indirect negative effect on guidance provision through professionalization. The unique direct effect of vision and indirect effect of climate is thus negative. Furthermore, it appears that despite the negative direct effect of vision, the indirect effect on guidance provision through professionalization appeared to be positive. As a result, the overall effect of vision on guidance is not significant. It thus seems that the relation between guidance provision and climate is far more complex than initially assumed, and our findings could thus not directly confirm that a caring school climate or clear and shared vision facilitates teachers' social and emotional guidance of students (Hui, 2002; Lam & Hui, 2010).

A possible explanation for this unexpected result could lie in the role of the counsellors or guidance teachers at schools with a caring climate and clear and shared vision. A recent study in Flanders showed that in Flemish secondary schools guidance teachers devote

respectively about 50% of their time to guiding students and only 20% of their time to supporting teachers in their guiding activities (Struyf, Verschueren, Verachtert, & Adriaensens, 2012). In Flanders, guidance teachers thus seem to play an important role in guiding the individual student. A detrimental effect of this guidance offered by the guidance teacher, could be that teachers take less responsibility in providing social and emotional guidance themselves because they refer their students to the guidance counsellors at school. Thus, while the presence of a guidance teacher at school might result in more engagement with guidance and thus a stronger vision and caring climate at school, it might at the same time also lead to teachers in these schools being less likely to take full responsibility. Whether or not the presence of such a strong guidance team has the unwanted effect of teachers being less likely to be involved in guidance provision and whether this can explain the unexpected unique effects of vision and climate, can not be answered based on this study but could form the focus of future research.

A second explanation could lie in the differences in perception and therefore in the responses to the questionnaire of teachers working in schools with a good vision and climate as opposed to teachers working in schools which lack a vision on social and emotional guidance and a caring climate. It might be the case that in schools with a clear vision and caring climate teachers are more strict or realistic in their answers because they can compare their guidance provision with a vision or 'standard' as provided at school level. Future research can use measurement invariance to check whether there are differences in the interpretation of the items and in the likelihood of choosing the different response categories for teachers working in schools with a different climate and/or vision.

A third and final explanation for the unexpected result we found for vision might be, as stated by Fullan (1996), the overrated and overused role of vision and the need to rebalance it. He states that vision is very important, but that most of the visions are prematurely

formulated and only superficial paper products that do not mean very much. Vision is not created by talking about it or by bringing a group of people together to formulate it, it is created by actually doing something (Fullan, 1996). The extent to which the visions in the schools involved in this study were premature and superficial paper products cannot be answered based on the results of this survey study. Future qualitative in-depth research investigating the development, actual content and reach of a vision on social and emotional guidance in schools is needed.

The largest effect on teacher-reported guidance provision is exerted by professionalization. Our study thus confirms that the preparation, training and development of teachers is a crucial factor for teachers' participation in the social and emotional guidance of students (Greenberg, et al., 2003; Lam & Hui, 2010; Lapan, 2001; Male, 2011). This is not surprising given that several authors and organisations in recent years have stressed the importance of professional development for all workers in all occupational sectors, including the teaching profession (Agarao-Fernandez & Guzman, 2006; Evers, et al., 2011).

\_\_\_\_\_Despite this large effect and the attention being given to professionalization in the literature, however, teachers' professional development in practice is not that obvious. Studies show that there is insufficient training for teachers, both in the initial teacher training programme and in the in-service training, with regard to the social, emotional and relational aspects of teaching and the inclusion of children with more severe social and emotional difficulties, (Harris, 2008; Leung & Mak, 2010; Male, 2011). As a result, teachers feel unprepared for the emotional and relational demands of the job (Harris, 2008). The TALIS study shows that for the Flemish teachers in particular the situation is even worse, with teachers in Flanders devoting considerably less time to professional development in general as well as with respect to guidance compared to their colleagues in other countries (Deneire, Van Petegem, & Gijbels, 2009; OECD, 2009).

\_\_\_\_\_ Considering the importance of professionalization, which has also been confirmed by the results of this study, action is needed. Ensuring and enhancing the quality of schools by regulating and supporting the professional development of teachers should be one of the central concerns of educational policy-makers (Agarao-Fernandez & Guzman, 2006; Huber, 2011). As stated by Evers (2011), without offering learning opportunities and a sound learning infrastructure, professional development will be difficult, if not impossible. In this respect there has been a strong emphasis in the last decade on schools as learning organisations (Cheng & Tsui, 1999; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Within these learning organisations, not only is training regarded as important for the professionalization of teachers, but also the support provided for teacher development and collaboration and networking with other professionals within and outside the school are regarded essential (Agarao-Fernandez & Guzman, 2006; Avalos, 2011; Huber, 2011; Leonard & Leonard, 1999). The importance of internal support and collaboration, which can be formal, but preferably informal, spontaneous and voluntarily (Leonard & Leonard, 1999), is also confirmed by our results. We found that principal support and collaboration between teachers have a positive influence on teachers' professionalization with regard to social and emotional guidance. Establishing a learning organisation, which encompasses training opportunities for teachers as well as principal support and collaboration between colleagues at school, thus appears to be one of the crucial elements for implementing an integrated social and emotional guidance programme at school.

In general, the results of this study thus show that, except for communication with parents, all variables as hypothesised based on the literature, had a direct or indirect effect on teachers' social and emotional guidance of students in the classroom, though not always in the expected direction.

### *Implications for future research*

This study was a first attempt to develop a comprehensive model on integrated social and emotional guidance at school. As the results show, several important factors have been identified. Like any model, however, this research model only encompasses some of the factors, which account for teaching, learning and the complex organisation of the school. Future research should therefore also focus on other factors that could be important for the integrated social and emotional guidance of students. A first possible factor that could be taken into account in future research is the heavy workload, the lack of time available to teachers and the stress that results from this (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008). With reduced time available and academic achievement being emphasised, it is likely that teachers also reduce their involvement in the guidance of students or that they only deal with at-risk students instead of adopting a more proactive, developmental approach (Best, et al., 1995; Lam & Hui, 2010). Another factor that future research could take into account are teachers' feelings of uncertainty. A study by Geijsel (2001) showed that feelings of uncertainty have a negative effect on the implementation of the educational curriculum and the extent to which teachers undertake professional development activities. As stressed by many authors, emotions in teaching are important and should be taken into account (Geijsel, et al., 2001; Hargreaves, 1998). Finally, this study only examined internal school factors and the collaboration with parents. However, partnerships and alliances established with other partners, agencies and organisations outside the school might also have an influence on integrated social and emotional guidance (Lapan, 2001). It is therefore important that future research also focuses on the possible effect of collaboration with these external partners.

Apart from other factors, future research can also focus on further investigating and refining the in this study obtained model since only some of the possible indirect effects between the variables in the model were examined. Structural equation modelling, as used

in this study, is statistical technique that takes a confirmatory approach by testing an a priori model containing hypotheses about relations among observed and latent variables (Byrne, 2010; Hoyle, 1995; Kline, 2005). The a priori model in this study was obtained by using mainly literature on guidance, counselling and care and to a lesser extent by using other more general educational literature on policy-making and educational innovations in schools. The model was tested using confirmatory structural equation modelling techniques, thereby making (limited) use of modification indices to enhance the hypothesized model. As such, the direct and indirect effects in the tested model are limited to those for which we found evidence in the consulted literature and based on the modification indices. As stated by McCallum (MacCallum, 1995), 'the real world phenomena that give rise to our observed correlational data are far more complex than we can hope to represent using a linear structural equation model' (p.17). That is why we need to keep in mind that the model obtained in this study is one of the plausible models (MacCallum, 1995), and that testing other plausible and more extensive models, with for example more indirect effects and effects between the school characteristics should form the focus of future research in the domain of social and emotional guidance.

Furthermore, follow-up research should also use the perceptions of respondents' other than the teacher, like students, as well as other methods than survey-research, like direct classroom observations, the examination of policy documents, and interviews with teachers, students and other personnel, to confirm the results of this study. Because although teachers are the key participant in social and emotional guidance and research over the last decades has indicated that teachers' perceptions are important (Den Brok, Bergen, & Brekelmans, 2003), using only their perceptions measured by means of a questionnaire may produce a slightly coloured picture of the actual practice at school.

A final important suggestion for future research would be that longitudinal research on integrated social and emotional guidance could prove very useful for the further development and refinement of the developed comprehensive model. Because a cross-sectional survey design was used, the results of this study can only produce a brief glimpse into the situation, with developments and processes remaining invisible. As such, no causal statements can be made based on these results. In this study we were interested in the factors that facilitate teachers to integrate social and emotional guidance into the curriculum and their teaching practice and thus the results need to be interpreted accordingly. We found, for example, that teachers' task perception has an effect on teachers' social and emotional guidance. This doesn't mean, however, that teachers' task perception causes teachers' to guide their students nor that teachers' social and emotional guidance does not have an effect on teachers' task perception. Examining the opposite effect or making statements regarding this 'chicken and egg' scenario was not the purpose of this study and cannot be made based on the results.

## **Conclusion**

With social and emotional guidance becoming an important, integral part of education, and teachers being confronted with several expectations and a high workload, investigating the facilitating factors for an integrated model of social and emotional guidance is needed. In this respect, this study made an important first step towards the development of a model on integrated social and emotional guidance by investigating the unique effect of teachers' task perceptions as well as the characteristics of a supportive network at school, all in one study. Our results show that teachers' task perception, professionalization and the school's organisation are important features to take into account when examining the social and

emotional guidance of students by the teacher in the classroom. However, future research that validates and extends these findings is desirable.

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Table 1  
Distribution of province and type of school for the population and the sample

	Population (total n=963)	Sample (total n=198)	
		Desired n <sub>schools</sub>	Actual n <sub>schools</sub>
<b>Province</b>			
Antwerp	262 (27.2%)	54	65 (32.8%)
Limburg	144 (15.0%)	30	29 (14.6%)
Flemish-Brabant	134 (13.9%)	27	24 (12.1%)
East-Flanders	201 (20.9%)	41	46 (22.7%)
West-Flanders	188 (19.5%)	39	28 (14.1%)
Brussels Capital Region	34 (3.5%)	7	6 (3.0%)
<b>Type of school</b>			
Subsidized official education	70 (7.3%)	14	19 (9.6%)
Community education	222 (23.1%)	46	43 (21.7%)
Subsidized private education	671 (69.7%)	138	136 (68.7%)

Table 2  
*Intercorrelation matrix for the variables in the model*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Climate	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Vision	.68*	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Principal support	.65*	.66*	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Structures & procedures	.68*	.87*	.68*	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Professionalization	.38*	.51*	.49*	.54*	1	-	-	-	-	-
6. Teacher communication	.57*	.48*	.46*	.56*	.55*	1	-	-	-	-
7. Communication with parents	.59*	.57*	.53*	.68*	.39*	.52*	1	-	-	-
8. Narrow task perception	-.16*	-.17*	-.27*	-.25*	-.33*	-.23*	-.13*	1	-	-
9. Broad task perception	.35*	.25*	.31*	.31*	.40*	.34*	.33*	-.29*	1	-
10. Guidance provision	.39*	.42*	.43*	.50*	.81*	.52*	.41*	-.40*	.54*	1

*Note.* The correlations in the table are for the standardized model with mean = 0 and standard deviation = 1.

\* correlation is significant at the .001 level

Table 3

Unstandardized and standardized effects for the variables with an indirect effect in the final SEM model

Model	$\beta$						B					
	Climate	Vision	Principal support	Teacher commun.	Narrow T. Perc.	Broad T. Perc.	Climate	Vision	Principal support	Teacher commun.	Narrow T. Perc.	Broad T. Perc.
Direct												
Professionalization	-.19**	.31**	.13**	.30**	-.16**	.18**	-.21**	.32**	.15**	.37**	-.14**	.18**
Guidance provision	/	-.20**	/	/	-.10**	.24**	/	-.20**	/	/	-.08**	.23**
Indirect												
Guidance provision	-.14**	.22**	.09**	.21**	-.11**	.13**	-.14**	.22**	.10**	.25**	-.10**	.12**
Total												
Guidance provision	-.14**	.02	.09**	.21**	-.21**	.37**	-.14**	.02	.10**	.25**	-.18**	.35**

\* p&lt;.05; \*\*p&lt;.001

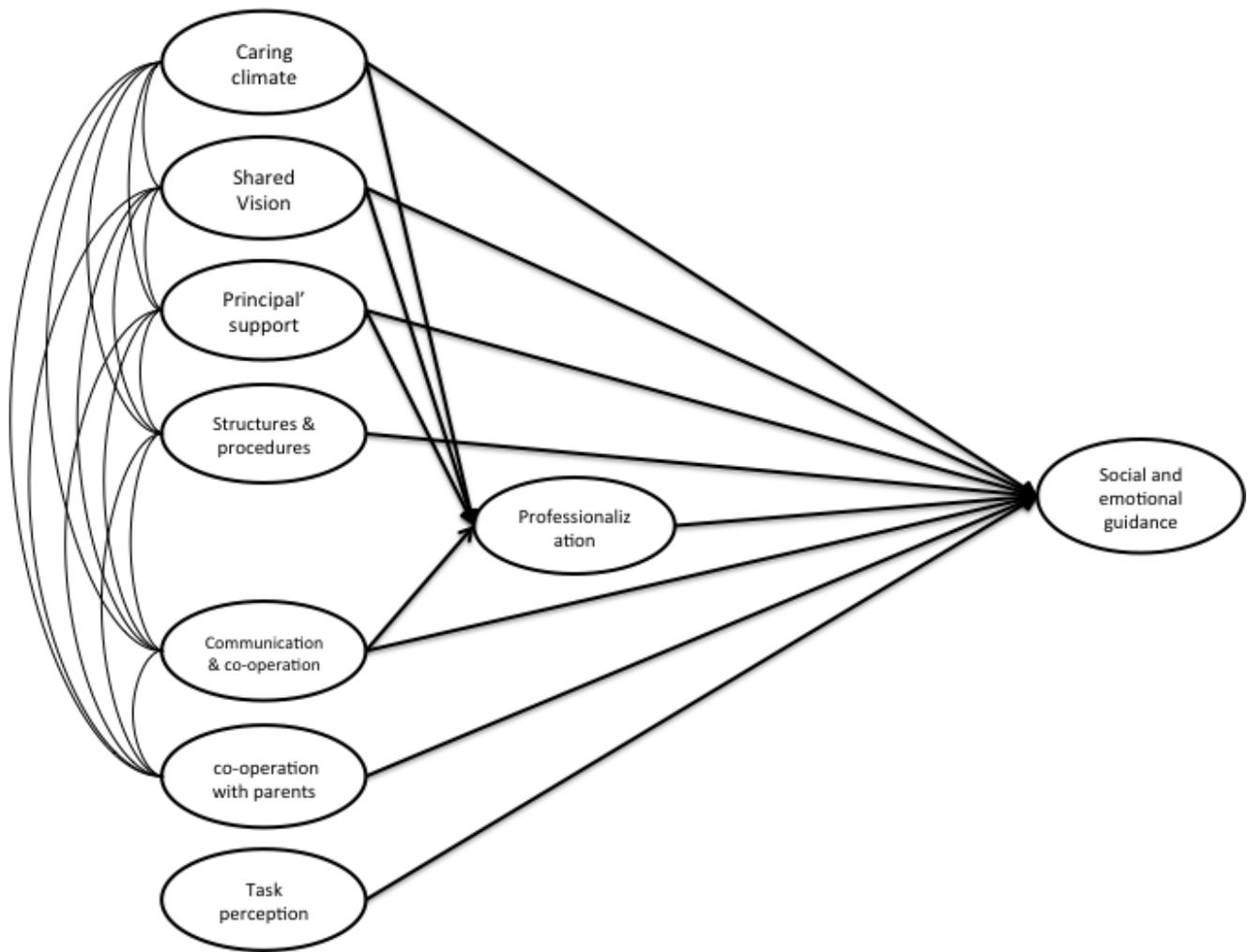


Figure 1. Hypothesised model.

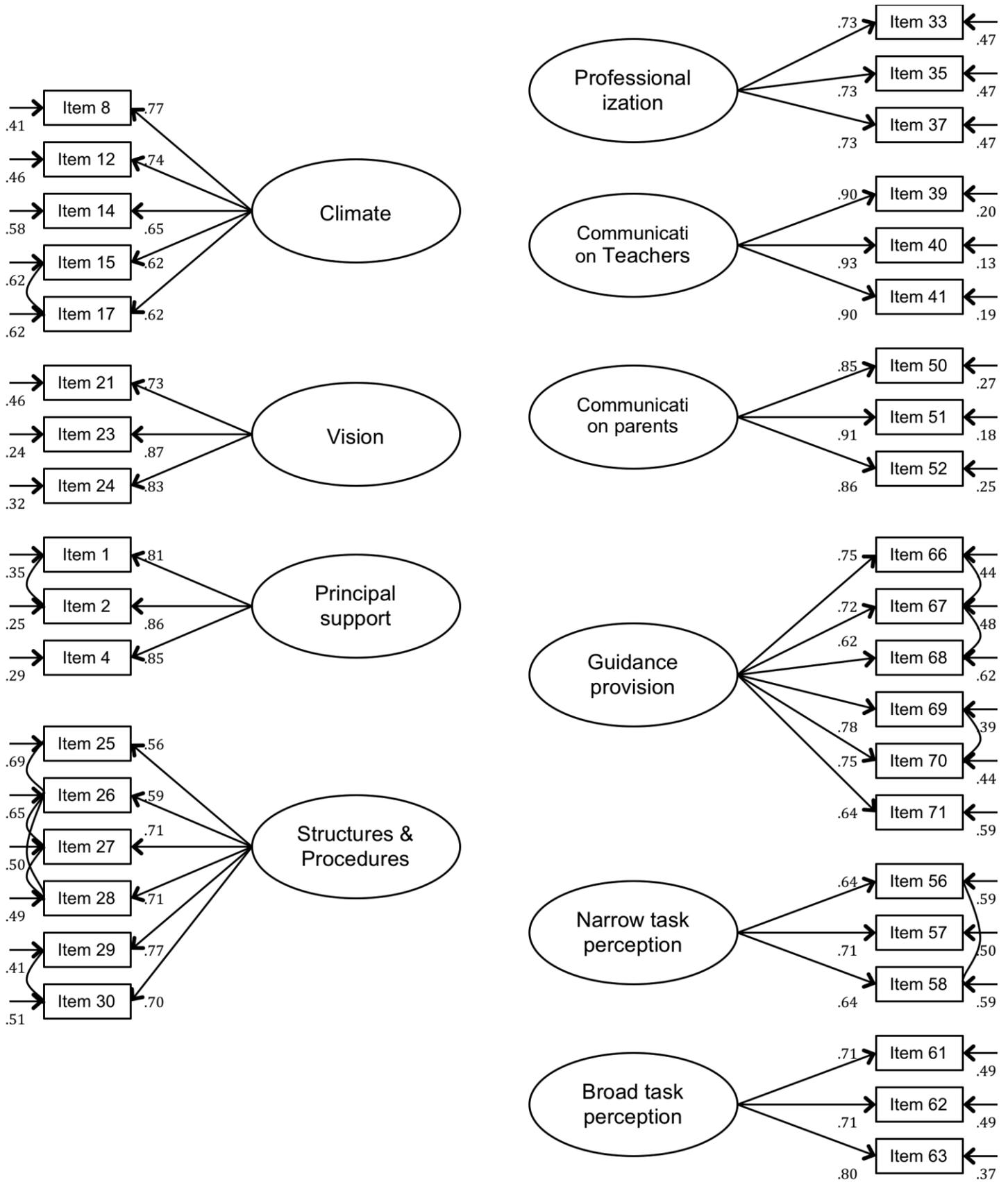


Figure 2. Measurement model with standardized parameter estimates (CFI=.93; TLI=.98; RMSEA=.05)

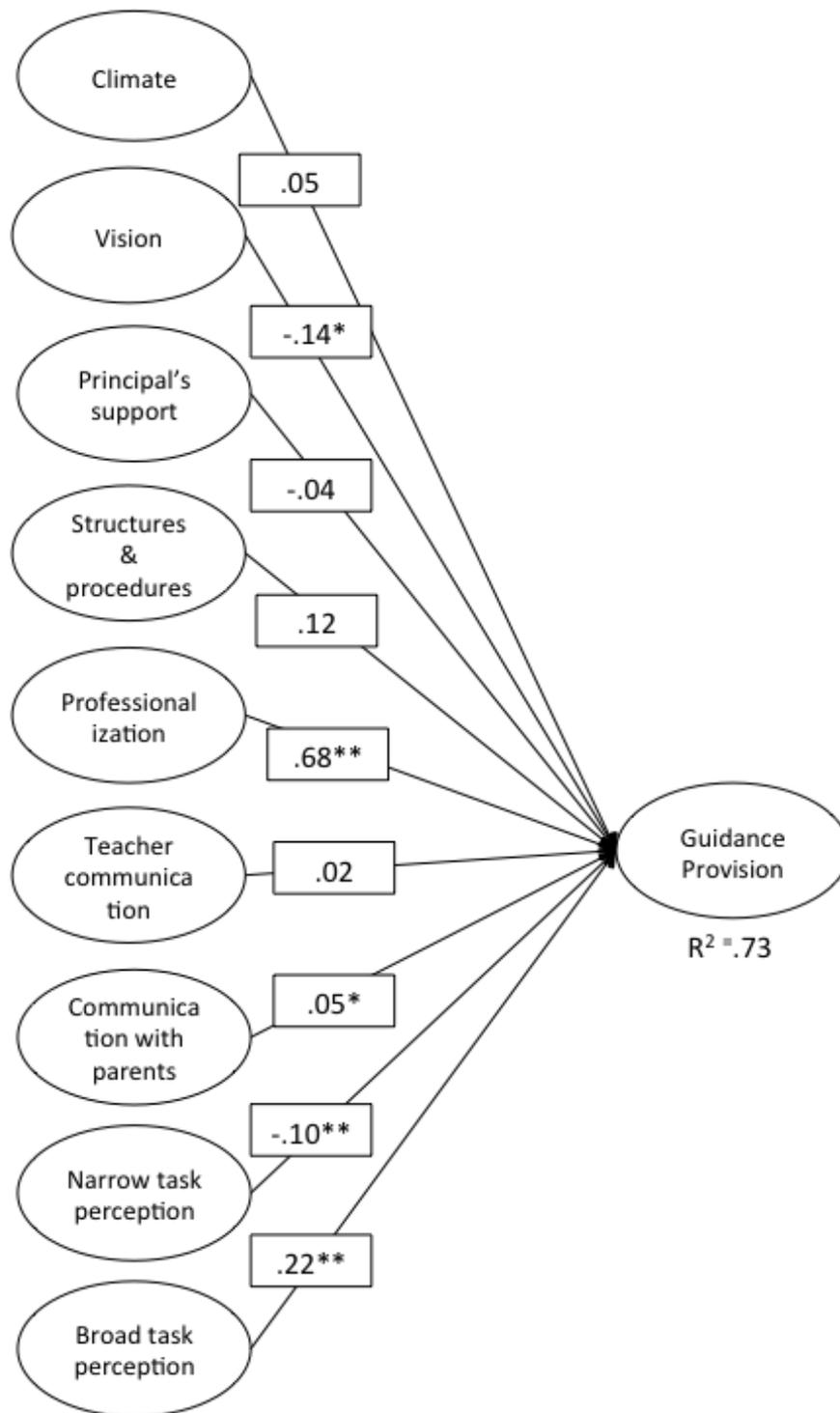


Figure 3. Standardized effects for the SEM Model with direct effects for guidance provision (CFI=.93; TLI=.98; RMSEA=.05). \* p<.05; \*\*p<.001

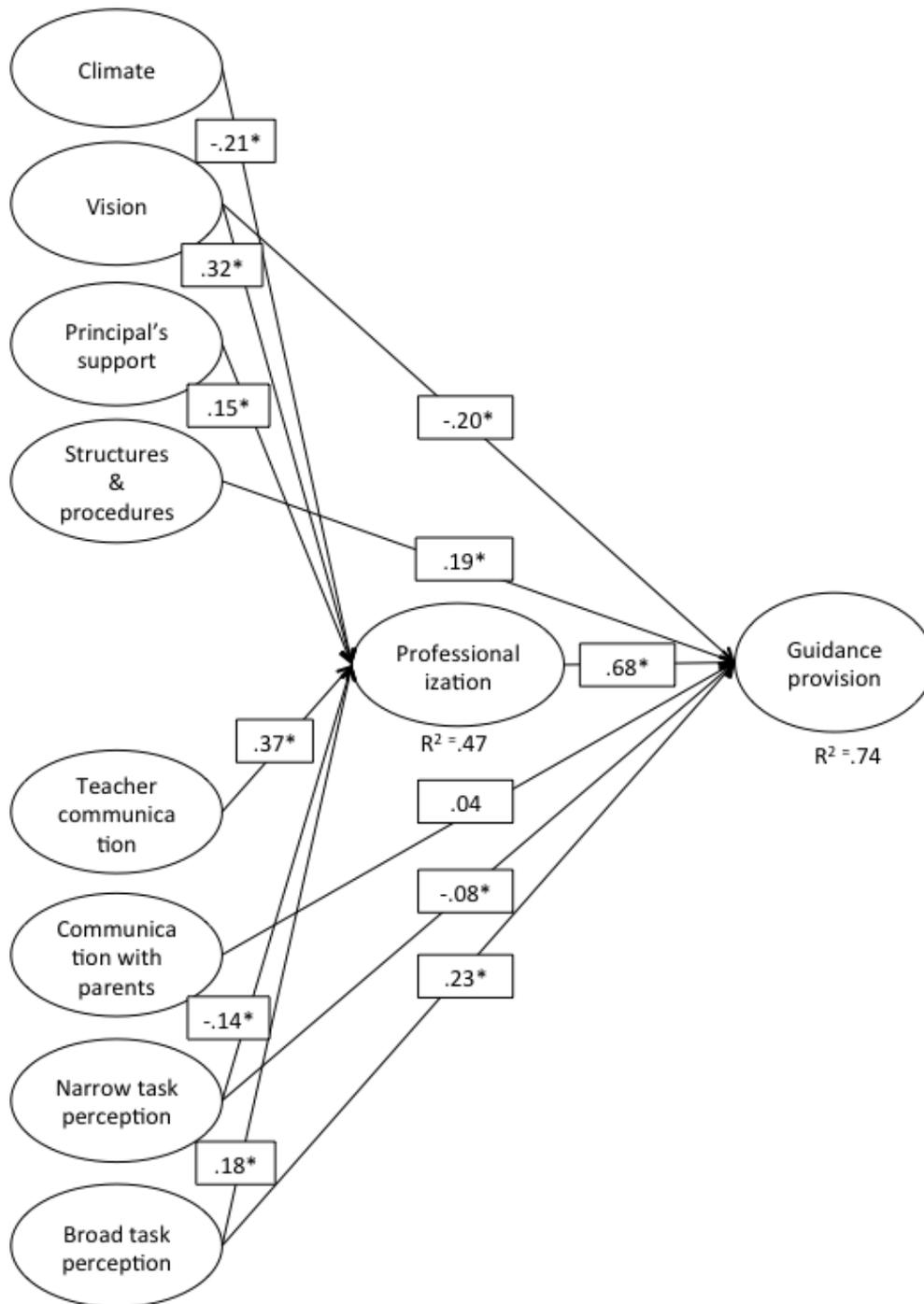


Figure 4. Standardized effects for the final SEM model with direct and indirect effects on guidance provision (CFI=.94; TLI=.98; RMSEA=.05). \* $p < .01$