Social and Emotional Learning and the New Normal

A summary of The Centre for Education and Youth and STiR Education's Roundtable, with accompanying expert thinkpieces

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STiR education

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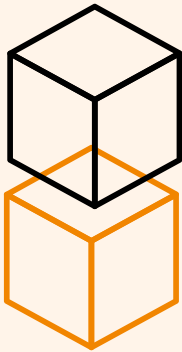
2.1 Introduction

In early 2020, The Centre for Education and Youth and STiR Education decided to jointly host a roundtable, to discuss social and emotional learning (SEL) and its role in preparing children for the future. From this, we wanted to produce a succinct discussion paper highlighting some of the key issues facing SEL, in the UK and further afield. Only a matter of weeks later, a global pandemic had the world on its knees.

We faced a decision: should we cancel the roundtable? Following conversations with colleagues and friends throughout our networks, one message shone through: the need for and value of social and emotional learning is only going to increase. Consequently, in May 2020 The Centre for Education and Youth and STiR Education convened a roundtable discussion involving a wide range of partners from the worlds of academia, policy-making, school leadership and teaching. The conversation was structured around the following questions:

1. **What is the role of SEL in a post-coronavirus world?**
2. **Up to now, how has SEL been developed?**
3. **What are the challenges in promoting SEL?**
4. **What will teachers and professionals want from SEL in a post-corona world and what support will they need?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education. As the virus has exerted its grip, schools have shut and children, their families and teachers have found themselves doing their best to adjust. Schools and governments are rethinking how they deliver education. Families are trying to create some sort of routine. Many are dealing with acute distress: bereavement, ill health, and financial uncertainty. Domestic violence and abuse have increased. Loneliness, boredom, anxiety, confusion and frustration run rife.

The crisis has highlighted more than ever the unpredictability of the world in which we live. Rightly, the impact on children's learning has been widely discussed, and we face difficult questions, now and into the future. If the role of education is to prepare children for life in a world of unknown unknowns, how should education now be responding to this 'new normal'?

This introductory summary presents an overview of the ideas explored during the discussion (which you can view in full on YouTube[1]). Importantly, rather than adapting to a 'post'-corona world, many participants emphasised that the virus will be a fact of life for the foreseeable future. Drawing on Franklin D. Roosevelt, we should therefore think about next steps in education in terms of 'Relief', 'Recovery' and 'Reform', and this is how the introductory section is structured. We also present a series of short thinkpieces written by our contributors, digging down into some of these key ideas and highlighting next steps.

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tV2mB2fyq4; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ta_0b4O7tx4; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVn3VyYO2c4

We would like to thank the following individuals for participating in our roundtable
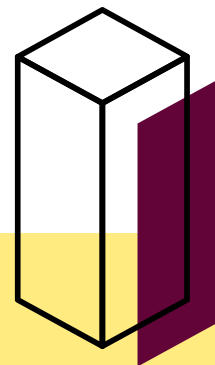
Name	Organisation
Alex Beard	Teach for All
Andy Smart	Consultant
Catherine Stevens	Scholé
Dame Susan Jowett	Scholé
David Good	University of Cambridge
Ed Page	The Xavier Project
Ellie Mulcahy	The Centre for Education and Youth
Elnaz Kashefpakdel	Skills Builder Partnership
Emily Savage McGlynn	Pearson
Eolene Boyd-MacMillan	University of Cambridge
Gavin Dykes	Education Advisor
Ian Jamison	Tony Blair Institute for Global Change
Jane Mann	Cambridge University Press
John Bishop	Evolve
John McIntosh	STiR Education
Joysy John	Nesta
Loic Menzies	The Centre for Education and Youth
Matthew Jukes	RTI
Rachel Seneque	Bengeworth CE Academy
Ross Hall	The Weaving Lab
Sharath Jeevan	STiR Education
Sir Toby Salt	AQA
Tiffany Smyly	The Economist Educational Foundation
Tom Ravenscroft	Skills Builder Partnership
Will Millard	The Centre for Education and Youth

2.2 What is social and emotional learning, and why does it matter?

Participants were at pains not to define social and emotional learning too narrowly. This was more a matter of principle than one of practicality. Definitions do exist, of course – for example, Andy Smart, one of our participants, has summarised some of the ways in which to conceptualise SEL in his research[2], and the Education Endowment Foundation draws on the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL's) definition.[3,4] Definitions generally agree on the interplay among cognitive, emotional and social processes that can enable or hinder academic attainment, establishment of secure relationships and later opportunities for employment and civic engagement. However, there was a wide acknowledgement that SEL means different things to different people, reflecting its inherent cultural and social dimensions. Andy Smart writes in greater detail about how we can conceptualise SEL in section 3, below.

SEL's ability to build resilience, and help children, young people and teachers alike to process their personal experiences will be especially pertinent as the world grapples with the virus's consequences. Education has always been a community-based enterprise, including a learner's home situation with siblings, carers and/or extended family members. Since lockdown and the ongoing need for social distancing, the distinction between home and educational environments has become even more fundamentally linked. The need is therefore greater than ever for SEL programming to include learner families as much as possible, along with all school staff. SEL's importance is only going to increase. These are issues that many of our contributors touch on in their thinkpieces, with Dr. Emily Savage-McGlynn and Tiff Smyly exploring this in detail in sections 3 and 5 respectively.

Many teachers and schools across the world embrace SEL and actively support it through their teaching and learning. Participants highlighted some of the good practice they've encountered in a wide range of countries including England, France, UAE, Portugal, Morocco, Australia, the States, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. On the other hand, some schools (including many in these same countries) need additional support to adopt and adapt SEL. In some contexts, this will include continued conversations with policymakers to increase understanding of the value and need for SEL. Readers will find illuminating Rachel Seneque's description of her school's approach to SEL, and Joysy John's overview of some of the innovation underway to support teachers and pupils, both in section 4.

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2 NISSEM GLOBAL BRIEFS Educating for the social, the emotional and the sustainable Diverse perspectives from over 60 contributors addressing global and national challenges
3 https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/SEL/EEF_Social_and_Emotional_Learning.pdf
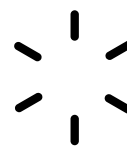4 http://secondaryguide.casel.org/#Definition

2.3 Relief

During the virus's immediate aftermath, schools will have a central role in helping children explore and process their feelings. However, teachers and school leaders will face decisions about how to adopt and adapt SEL so that it meets their needs and those of their pupils. There is no single, 'right' way to implement SEL; in fact, it's crucial that practitioners are able to interpret SEL to fit their contexts and cultures. One contributor highlighted that within one context, there may be many cultural representations.

SEL in emergency and non-emergency contexts will be very different, influenced further by the mix of cultures involved. Someone will express their culture differently in different contexts, depending on the cultural practices that are endorsed or permitted in that context. It seems particularly important that SEL recognise this as it impacts how learners experience their learning environment, and therefore their ability to learn. Matthew Jukes explores trade-offs between universality and context in his thinkpiece, in section 5.

Dr Boyd-MacMillan emphasised that SEL is not about replacing one set of values with another, but rather about exploring one's own and others' values simultaneously. This can result in a 'values tension', where two conflicting values are ranked as equally important (for example, freedom and security). Citing others' and her own research into this, Dr Boyd-MacMillan explained that exploring two important values in tension can motivate people to think more deeply about how they can integrate both values in their subsequent actions. This matters, because value tensions are foundational to more complex thinking, including critical thinking and metacognition. In turn, more complex thinking is associated with greater respect for difference and pro-social engagement despite disagreement.

Schools play a central role in their communities, and the crisis has highlighted just how pivotal their role is. Part of how education systems provide relief will be through supporting children's families, too. This is an end in itself, benefitting parents and carers, and a means to an end, making it easier for healthy families to support their children. Ed Page described, for example, how in some refugee camps the removal by international agencies of aid workers has precipitated greater levels of community involvement in local service provision, although this should be interpreted as an endorsement for local empowerment and responsibility in local service provision, rather than as a justification for service withdrawal.

Cognitive dissonance and tensions between school- and home-values can occur where SEL is supported in one but not both settings. Consequently, working with children's families is an important part of SEL. Dr Eolene Boyd-MacMillan describes some of this work in greater detail in section 4.

Schools will face considerable pressure from governments and parents to help pupils catch up academically. This is an understandable and important concern, but what will it mean for SEL and schools' ability to provide immediate emotional support to their pupils? Participants stressed that raising the profile of SEL needn't mean schools taking their eyes off the ball academically. We can and should have both. In the current situation, it is anticipated that strengthening SEL will simultaneously strengthen students' academic engagement as they return to school. Substantial research indicates direct and indirect benefits from SEL for academic attainment. Feeling safe and secure along with trust enable learners to focus and concentrate, essential precursors for learning. Dr Elnaz Kashefpakdel makes this the focus of her thinkpiece in section 3.

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5   Boyd-MacMillan, E., Andrews Fearon, P., Ptolomey, A., & Mathieson, L. (2016). I SEE! Scotland: Tackling Sectarianism and Promoting Community Psychosocial Health. Journal of Strategic Security, 9(4), p.60. http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.9.4.1556

6   See the application of this finding in SEL contexts in Boyd-MacMillan, E. & DeMarinis, V. (2020). Learning Passport: Curriculum Framework (IC-ADAPT SEL high level programme design). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press & Cambridge Assessment, pp. 28-29. Citing - Tetlock, P. (1986) A value pluralism model of ideological reasoning, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50(4) 819-827; and Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006, Biculturalism: A model of the effects of second-culture exposure on acculturation and integrative complexity. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 37(2) 173-190.).
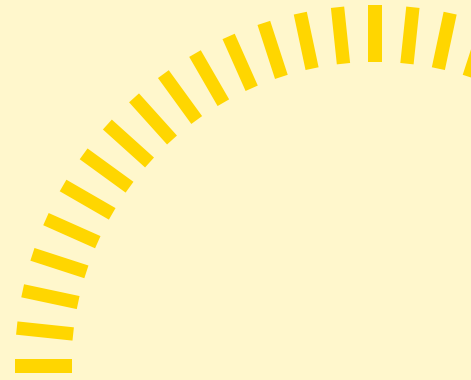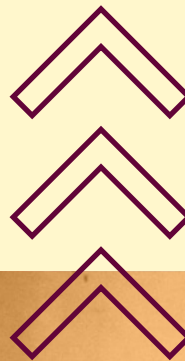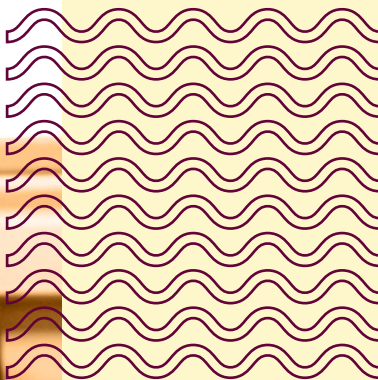
2.4 Recovery

A key message from the roundtable is that SEL can cultivate the social and emotional skills for dealing with uncertainty under the new normal. This will be an important part of recovery. For example, Tiff Smyly from The Economist Educational Foundation highlighted the potential for SEL to support learners and their families to think for themselves and use critical thinking skills when faced with contradictory news and information. Crucially, it may help pupils maintain an open mind when many families and wider communities want to close themselves off. Tiff talks more about this in section 5.

As education systems respond and adapt to this new normal, some schools may choose to embed SEL throughout the curriculum; others may prefer approaching it as a discrete activity. Some settings will undertake work with larger groups of pupils, while others adopt more targeted interventions. Creating a SEL milieu, or ecosystem, to reinforce SEL learning and application throughout the school environment may be an aspirational goal for many. Dr Boyd-MacMillan and Rachel Seneque explore these ideas more in section 4.

A perennial challenge for teachers and parents is time, and this issue is only likely to sharpen as they wrestle with new routines. Furthermore, a lack of confidence among teachers and parents in supporting SEL (for example, structuring conversations about what has been happening and how this has affected children, families and communities) could pose a barrier. While there are many resources available online and via other channels (including radio and TV), teachers and parents will need help navigating and adapting this content to fit their situation.

Education systems are learning as they go to use new systems and tools. Online learning has become ubiquitous in many developed countries, and in low- and middle-income countries governments have innovated by providing school activities via radio and TV. These responses have also faced significant teething issues, with lack of access to wi-fi and hardware or even just a quiet space to sit and listen at home derailing children's studies. Fundamentally, these approaches also necessarily involve a loss of the human-to-human contact that underpins SEL. In his thinkpiece about supporting teachers' intrinsic motivation in section 4, John McIntosh explores strategies that support access to training in Uganda.

2.4 Recovery

Staff wellbeing is vital. Teachers will need to dig deep to offer pupils support at a time when they may themselves be coping with trauma. SEL provides a means by which teachers can help pupils explore and process their emotions; it is consequently important that staff receive the SEL-focused resources and support they need to support their pupils and one another, a point emphasised in Dr Savage-McGlynn's thinkpiece in section 3. Third parties have an important role here in providing timely support and guidance to practitioners during the virus's immediate (and potentially recurring) aftermath, and Nesta's Joysy John looks at this in greater detail in her thinkpiece, in section 4.

These challenges won't vanish as children return to school. Many schools will likely need to adopt forms of hybrid teaching, some of which will be in-person and some of which will be remote. This poses risks for SEL. Teachers will need to learn how to develop pupils' intrinsic motivation to engage with content when they are not physically with teachers. Edtech companies and publishers have an important role to play here, designing content and resources that inspire engagement.

A major threat to SEL as systems pivot and adjust to the new normal is the fact that not everything done face-to-face easily translates to online and remote teaching. For example, Professor Toby Salt explained that teachers will need to find new ways to welcome new learners to a class or school and support the development of social cohesion. Online learning also raises safeguarding risks, and schools will have to adapt quickly to keep pupils safe from risky and negative behaviours, including bullying while online.
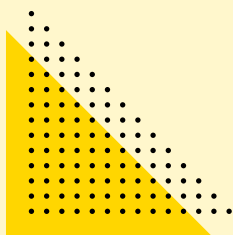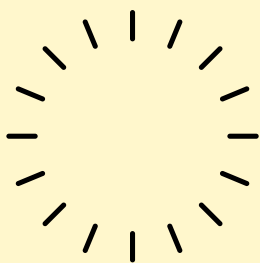
2.5 Reform

We need to think in terms of innovation, adaptation and reform, rather than quick fixes: we face a new reality. This is a daunting prospect, but also an exciting one. It raises the possibility of re-orientating or even resetting education to better serve pupils' needs in the long term. This is not about changing the goalposts while teachers and pupils find their feet as schools reopen; it's about giving teachers space and support to do what intuitively they know is needed: helping children and their communities make sense of and recover from this bizarre period as well as adapt positively to the changes that will endure. Jane Mann and Ross Hall expand on these ideas in section 6.

Many schools are already doing this, but what it looks like will vary hugely by context and culture. We cannot assume that what works in the UK or France will work in Tanzania or the UAE; or even what works with students from one culture will work for students from different cultures in the same school, each drawing on a variety of cultural resources and meaning-making processes. Matthew Jukes unpicks

this further in section 5. However, at a time when many communities are distancing themselves from one another (quite literally), perhaps SEL offers a mechanism by which to build bridges and help people rebuild relationships with one another.

While many teachers instinctively recognise the value of SEL, maintaining a longer-term focus on it will require alignment throughout education systems. This will include education ministries, possibly partnering across sectors in collaboration with health ministries for public mental health promotion, creating environments in which SEL can flourish. In many contexts, the relationship between schools' decisions about their curricula and other factors such as exams and school accountability will be crucial. As Dr Kashefpakdel explores in section 3, teachers working in systems that emphasise 'catching up' academically above all else may find it difficult to carve out sufficient time for SEL unless there is recognition of the importance of 'catching up' cognitively, emotionally and socially.
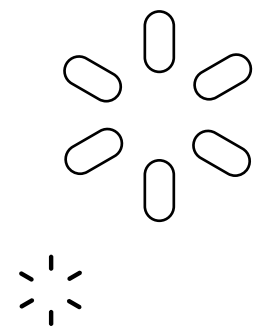
3.1 What is social and emotional learning and why does it matter?

Andy Smart, Co-Convener, NISSEM.org

Most discussions of social and emotional learning (SEL) start by outlining different ways to understand what social and emotional learning actually is. This is neither surprising nor unwelcome. Social and emotional learning *is* and *should be* contingent on culture and context. Education leaders (whether at school or national level) naturally value educational models but the models must make sense for each organisation's situation[7].

However, despite a variety of different definitions and models, the case for SEL needs a solid foundation, including evidence, that leaders can relate to, in whatever context they work.

This solid foundation starts with the common needs of learners in *any* context. Much of what we think of as the process of learning is universal. Even though 'learning does not happen in the same way for all people because cultural influences are influential from the beginning of life'[8], the underlying characteristics and needs of learners have much in common worldwide. Indeed, 'Culture coordinates the biological systems involved in learning and is the broader social context in which people engage in the experiences that enable them to adapt to the world and learn'[9].

Social and emotional learning could usefully be rephrased as 'emotional and social learning'. Learning is both emotional and social, but emotion lies at its centre. Without emotion, there is no learning: 'It is literally neurobiologically impossible to build memories, engage complex thoughts, or make meaningful decisions without emotion'[10]. The

emotional is the learner's recognition of themselves and the connections that learning makes to their lives, the engagement that goes hand in hand with achievement[11].

At the same time, most teachers would readily agree that young people's experience of schools and learning is emotional *and* social. The emotional and the social underpin cognitive development, memory, and emotional self-regulation; they address behavioural problems, and help with coping and the vital social relationships that can make all the difference to a child's experience of school. Our schools are social organisations and every classroom is a social laboratory.

In my own work with ministries of education – working with national curricula and textbooks in low and middle income countries – issues of universality and context are in constant tension. The universal question 'What works?' *doesn't* work in the way it is usually asked. But 'What works for you as *teachers*?' and 'What works for your *students*?' … these questions are the beginning of a valuable process of enquiry for education systems that are highly centralised and where teachers' autonomy and students' autonomy are both limited.

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7   http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/

8   National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. (2018). *How people learn, Vol. II: Learners, Cultures and Contexts*, p. 2. https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24783/how-people-learn-ii-learners-contexts-and-cultures

9   Ibid, p. 28.

10 Immordino-Yang, M.H. (2015). *Emotions, Learning and the Brain: Exploring the educational implications of affective neuroscience*. New York: W.W. Norton. https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/web.sas.upenn.edu/dist/8/471/files/2018/06/Mary_Helen_Immordino-Yang-1ucae1j.pdf

11 Toste, J.R., Didion, L., Peng, P., Filderman, M.J., & McClelland, A.M. (2020). A Meta-Analytic Review of the Relations Between Motivation and Reading Achievement for K–12 Students. Review of Educational Research, 90(3).

3.1 What is social and emotional learning and why does it matter?

This enquiry sees no false dichotomy between *teacher-centred* and *student-centred*, but rather seeks to move away from being *textbook-centred* to being both teacher-centred *and* student-centred, and where the emotional and the social dimensions of learning mesh with the cognitive. And, because textbooks in low and middle income countries are so central to classroom practice, the challenge is to embed all dimensions appropriately in the textbooks.

This is the dynamic relationship between curriculum, textbooks and pedagogy that is described by Jerome Bruner:

> *A curriculum is more for teachers than it is for pupils. If it cannot change, move, perturb, inform teachers, it will have no effect on those whom they teach… If it has any effect on pupils, it will have it by virtue of having had an effect on teachers.*[12]

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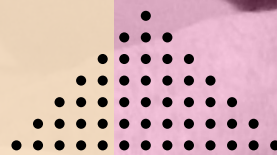
12 Bruner, J. (1999 [1977]). The process of education. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. xv.

3.2 Social and emotional skills are not another box to tick, but the means to supporting outcomes we value

Dr Elnaz Kashefpakdel, Head of Research and Impact, Skills Builder Partnership

The CfEY and STiR roundtable for social and emotional learning (SEL) raised an important point about education providers having to prioritise 'catching up' pupils academically, and preparation for exams, as schools re-open. This will put real pressure on teachers and students. But this issue also underlines the important role of social and emotional skills in overcoming the adversity caused by the pandemic.

During the lockdown, the life experiences of children and young people changed substantially, including increased economic and social pressures their families may face. With so much change, it may be difficult to look beyond the day-to-day. The pandemic will have an unpredictable impact on the current generation of young people and we need to discuss how we can prepare our children and young people for a new and uncertain world.

It is well-evidenced that education is partly about human capital accumulation. Teachers do their best to make sure their students achieve good academic results. But schools are a place for more than just academic development. Behind the scenes, schools are preparing to re-open, but when they do they will be facing new challenges. One might think every effort should be put into catching pupils up academically, but a more vital question is what support will young people need in order to overcome the consequences of isolation and fear they have experienced? How we can equip them with the social and emotional competences to cope with these pressures and future uncertainties?

Students are going to need a different kind of education if they are to face this new and uncertain world. Now is the time to start to teach students not just to do well academically, but also equip them with the skills they need to thrive.

These two points are critical: there must be a consensus that children and young people need more than good grades; and we must view social and emotional skills not as another box to tick but as a means of helping students to do well at school and beyond.

We can then take action to embed these skills in our day-to-day practice. Extensive research during the past three decades has clearly demonstrated that social and emotional competencies can be taught through school-based programmes. Principles of SEL can serve as an organising framework for underpinning academic success, health and wellbeing, and youth development activities. But this is easier said than done.

The lack of a universal definition of SEL, shared measurement frameworks, or recognition amongst senior education policymakers are all hurdles to embedding SEL in schools. Many programmes have been initiated to support social and emotional skills education but with the absence of cross-sector partnership and system change it will be challenging to prioritise this over academic achievement. More needs to be done perhaps by the research community to showcase the positive impact of SEL development on wider educational and social outcomes. Skills Builder Partnership offers a practical and innovative solution which clearly supports this work.
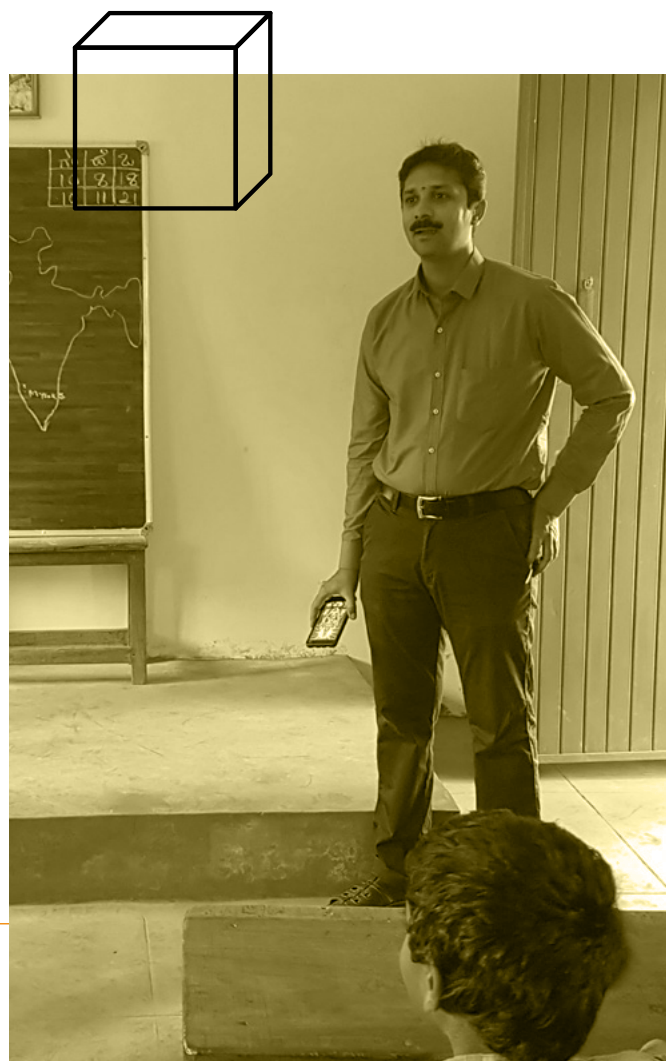
3.3 Teachers' social and emotional wellbeing will underpin educational success in the 'new normal'

Dr Emily Savage-McGlynn, Head of Research and Development, Pearson Clinical

As was highlighted in the roundtable discussions, a working definition of 'social and emotional learning' (SEL) is somewhat elusive and intangible. In different cultures, in different contexts, SEL can mean vastly different things, and as such will need supporting in very different ways.

Looking ahead, following this period of considerable change and uncertainly, it's my own and my colleagues' view that a unified, joined-up approach to help support emotional wellbeing and resilience will be key within schools, as defined by those within the setting itself. We believe that listening to teachers, children and families is a crucial first step in better understanding their needs. We can then identify the forms of resources and support to best respond to these needs.

We acknowledged at the roundtable that schools are central to their communities, and teachers are at the fore, offering a pivotal link between children and their families, and the community around them.

As a first step, teachers need support in safeguarding their own emotional wellness and health. This will afford them tools and capacity to begin integrating SEL into their classrooms. From here, social and emotional wellness could become much more widely integrated within society as a whole.
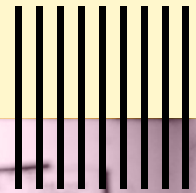
4.1 Supporting teachers' and pupils' emotional wellbeing

Joysy John, Director of Education, Nesta

Introduction

Online learning has become key in ensuring continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers have responded with creativity, flexibility and resourcefulness in taking their teaching online. In many cases, parents have had to support home learning while juggling challenging work and family commitments. Some learners are thriving in this new environment; others are struggling due to a lack of device, stable internet connection and interaction with peers.
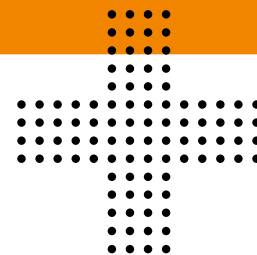
Many edtech companies with online platforms or apps are building in features that motivate their learners[13] and help them to persist when they are dealing with difficult tasks or problems. Pobble[14], Hegarty Maths[15], Seneca Learning[16], and MangaHigh[17] have all seen a rapid increase in their user base during the lockdown.

Social and emotional learning (SEL)

The achievement gap is widening[18] and there will be an immense focus on catch-up tuition as children return to school. This is an understandable and important concern but we must not lose sight of the social and emotional challenges that children and their families have experienced. Emotionally resilient students perform much better at school, so focusing on academic attainment alone will not solve the problem.

Teachers themselves might be facing burnout and stress[19]. They might not have the confidence to support SEL in their students.

Many schools will adopt a hybrid approach, blending in-person and remote learning. Teachers will need to engage students' intrinsic motivation in new ways. They need the time, space and support to help their students and communities to recover from this crisis.

13 https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2020/04/06/supporting-every-teacher-four-tips-for-motivating-students-to-learn-online/
14 https://pobble.com/
15 https://hegartymaths.com/
16 https://senecalearning.com/en-GB/
17 https://www.mangahigh.com/en-gb/
18 https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-impact-of-school-closures-on-the-attainment-gap/
19 https://theconversation.com/how-to-prevent-teacher-burnout-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-139353

4.1 Supporting teachers' and pupils' emotional wellbeing

Race and class have an impact on outcomes

Socio-economic disadvantage governs life outcomes for young people. Pupils eligible for Free School Meals made less progress[20] between 11 and 16 years than those not eligible. Racial inequalities and discrimination compound socio-economic disadvantage. Based on the Race Disparity Audit[21], white pupils from state schools had the lowest university entry rate. Pupils from Gypsy and Roma, or Irish Traveller[22] background had the lowest attainment and progress, and were least likely to stay in education after the age of 16.

Children of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) heritage are suffering much worse from the school closures made necessary by the pandemic. Data from one of the biggest providers[23] of NHS-funded online mental health support shows that the mental wellbeing of children and young people of BAME origin has been affected disproportionately over the past three months compared with their white counterparts.

The way forward

Change needs to happen both top-down and bottom-up. Policymakers need to provide funding to support social skills and emotional resilience. Schools and colleges need to work with evidence-based solutions to build SEL. Voice21[24], Foundation for Positive Mental Health[25] and Empathy Lab[26] are some of the examples of the interventions supported by Nesta's Future Ready Fund[27].

Where possible, teachers and parents can help by providing a safe space for children to have conversations about the challenges they are facing. Skills like empathy, oracy, critical thinking and openness will be crucial as schools and communities support the physical, mental and emotional health of their learners. Structural reform in education[28], intrinsic motivation[29], parental engagement[30] and additional tuition support[31] will be crucial to closing the achievement gap. Change is possible and it needs to happen now!

20 https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/uksectoraccounts/compendium/economicreview/february2020/childpovertyandeducationoutcomesbyethnicity#education-and-ethnicity
21 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686071/Revised_RDA_report_March_2018.pdf
22 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/report-files/36005.htm
23 https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jun/21/covid-19-hits-bame-youth-mental-health-worse-than-white-peers-study
24 https://voice21.org/
25 https://www.foundationforpositivementalhealth.com/
26 https://www.empathylab.uk/
27 https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/future-ready-fund-winners/
28 https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/reinventing-schools-future/
29 http://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/GAML6-Session4_Intrinsic-motivation-and-lifelong-learning.pdf
30 https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/school-themes/parental-engagement/
31 https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/national-tutoring-programme/

4.2 Supporting teacher motivation through offline forums

John McIntosh, Director of Design and Programme Readiness, STiR Education

The projected impact of the COVID pandemic on student learning makes for grim reading, particularly in low- and middle-income countries[32]. It is crucial that teachers are both motivated and prepared to face this challenge. Several teacher professional development initiatives, such as ResearchED in the UK, have temporarily shifted to online delivery channels so that teachers continue to have access to learning opportunities. In contexts where internet access is sparse, however, how do we motivate and prepare teachers to face a deepening learning crisis?

We need to start with goals, then consider how these might be best served within the operational parameters available to us. At STiR, we believe that inspiring a lifelong love of learning is the ultimate goal of any education system. Setting up entire education systems to deliver this at scale is far from a simple task, but we believe that investing in re-igniting the intrinsic motivation of teachers will play a critical role. This means fostering autonomy (a sense that teachers can change things), developing mastery (teachers feeling like they are getting better) and building purpose (a sense of connection to the mission of teaching, and to fellow educators undertaking the same journey).

Since the closure of schools in Uganda in April, we have worked with the Ministry of Education and Sports to re-ignite teacher intrinsic motivation through a series of 30-minute professional development sessions delivered on national and local radio. These aim to build intrinsic motivation in the following ways:

1. *Fostering autonomy.* The sessions focus heavily on building a narrative around the difference that teachers can make, and the central role they will play in ensuring that the impact of the COVID pandemic is minimised. We have also ensured that the radio scripts have been contextualised and delivered by local teachers and trainers in each district, to unlock the sense of possibility that what is proposed in the training can be successfully delivered in the teacher's own context.

2. *Developing mastery.* Both the content and structure of the sessions have been chosen based on the best available evidence. The content focuses on building resilience, checking for understanding, and breaking down learning. The structure of the sessions provides teachers with concrete examples of how a particular teaching strategy is used, before offering guidelines and reflective prompts on how this might be translated into their own teaching contexts.

3. *Building purpose*. Teachers are encouraged to connect with others in their local area to discuss their reflections on the sessions. We have also worked closely with district education officials to mobilise school leaders, to support the latter in regularly reaching out to teachers in their schools. This not only encourages teachers to engage in the radio sessions, but more importantly maintains that sense of professional connection that is in danger of erosion during the shut-down.

32   https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/simulating-potential-impacts-of-covid-19-school-closures-learning-outcomes-a-set-of-global-estimates

4.3 Recognising social and emotional learning in the curriculum

Dr E. M. Boyd-MacMillan, Senior Research Associate, Co-Director IC Research, Institute of Public Health at University of Cambridge

The emerging educational challenges related to the pandemic represent a historic opportunity to highlight the need for and potential benefits of incorporating social and emotional learning (SEL) programming for public mental health promotion within a Mental Health Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) framework. Pandemic-related mental distress, impairment and the consequent need for clinical interventions are anticipated to rise globally. Lower functioning for many will be linked with increases in inequalities, unemployment, economic hardship and sense of threat. For the moment, these and other pandemic-related effects have created a collective openness to SEL. Equipping staff with validated evidence-based methods to access and record students' lived experiences of a COVID-shaped world would meet very real mental health needs to maximise SEL engagement and sustainability.

Recognising the need for coordinated MHPSS-SEL programming through innovative education and public health sector inter-disciplinary partnerships, the IC-ADAPT Consortium combined two evidence-based frameworks to create the IC-ADAPT model, recently adapted for SEL programming in emergency contexts[33]. The model focuses on the developmental progression of the fundamental capacity underlying all SEL skills (self-regulation) and on the psychosocial impact among people of all ages experiencing change or damage in any or all five domains that characterise societies (safety and security; bonds and networks; justice; roles and identities; existential meaning—religious, spiritual, economic, political, other)[34]. In alignment with the above recommendations, the IC-ADAPT model includes validated evidence-based methods of accessing and incorporating into health-promoting interventions and programmes lived experiences of people in contexts of change. Enabling individuals and groups to access a wider range of their own values and recognise a wider range of behavioural choices when facing difference, disagreement and societal adversities, the model aims to develop complex skills like meta-awareness,

increase inclusion and reduce inequalities. The model can also operate as a framework through which to assess existing programming for relevance and appropriateness in this 'new normal', enabling adaptations where possible and informing the development or acquisition of new resources when necessary.

Given the scope of pandemic-related changes in education, home lives and society, the IC-ADAPT model supports the whole person with contextual relevance, cultural sensitivity and age appropriateness (while following public health guidelines). Supporting children and young people to make sense of the uncertainty and chaos that many have and are continuing to experience during this 'new normal' enables problem identification for early intervention while affirming, strengthening existing wellbeing and resilience resources as well as augmenting them (emotional, environmental, relational, somatic and other resources). This ecosocial model also supports teachers and families. The strengths-based approach of the IC-ADAPT model addresses risk factors, responding to signs of mental ill-health and their consequences while also promoting mental wellbeing associated with increasing academic attainment, enabling secure relationships, promoting civic participation and strengthening employment opportunities later on.

The IC-ADAPT Consortium are adapting the model for implementation in diverse contexts and cultures for addressing the mental health effects of the COVID pandemic. The Consortium members are Valerie DeMarinis and Maria Nordendahl, Umeå University, Sweden; Derrick Silove, University of New South Wales, Australia; Alvin Tay, University of New South Wales, and Perdana University, Malaysia; and Eolene-Boyd-MacMillan, University of Cambridge, UK.

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33 Boyd-MacMillan, E. and DeMarinis, V. (2020). *Learning Passport: Curriculum Framework (IC-ADAPT SEL high level programme design)*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press & Cambridge Assessment; and Cambridge University Press & Cambridge Assessment. (2020). *The Learning Passport: Research and Recommendations Report*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press & Cambridge Assessment, section four authored by Boyd-MacMillan & DeMarinis.
34 Ibid; Bailey, R., & Jones, S. M. (2019). An Integrated Model of Regulation for Applied Settings. Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 22(1), 2–23.; Tay, A. K., and Silove, D. (2017). The ADAPT model: Bridging the gap between psychosocial and individual responses to mass violence and refugee trauma. Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences, 26(2), 142–145.

4.4 Recognising social and emotional learning in the curriculum: one school's approach

Rachel Seneque, Associate Head and Inclusion Lead, Bengeworth Multi-Academy Trust, Bengeworth First School

As school leaders, we are inevitably kept busy with the day-to-day running of our schools. However, we must not lose sight of the real essence of what matters. There is absolutely no doubt that highly effective school leadership influences pupil progress and achievement for all. As leaders, our imperative is to use our educational expertise to ensure the wellbeing and social and emotional literacy of the children in our schools.

Without providing a solid foundation to enable children to build positive relationships, set goals, develop resilience, problem solve and express how they feel, we are not going to improve outcomes, now or in later life.

Social and emotional literacy should be at the heart of a school's culture, vision and values. As a community, it is important to focus upon the values that are essential in developing secure behaviours for learning, and cultivate them collaboratively. At Bengeworth CE Academy, our Christian values of friendship, forgiveness, responsibility, respect, perseverance and trust encourage the growth of behaviours that we believe equip pupils with an ability to demonstrate 'love for the world and everyone in it'.

It is important to foster an environment where staff and children develop positive relationships. Pupils feel empowered to take risks, make decisions and lead and guide one another. This is positively reflected in their behaviour and clearly defined sense of moral self. Children are encouraged to have a positive attitude to life's challenges and learn to work together, building a mutual respect and tolerance for one another.

SEL should be the basis on which the curriculum is built, the 'golden thread' interwoven throughout. Skills should be integrated and modelled throughout everyday teaching, and not solely something that materialises during 'crisis' moments. The pandemic has certainly highlighted and shifted the focus on to SEL's importance but, for me, it is not something that can merely be 'bolted on' or fixed with an intervention. It must form a whole-school approach.

4.4 Recognising social and emotional learning in the curriculum: one school's approach

The focus on SEL must happen from the outset, with skills being taught explicitly. In our school, there is a strong emphasis on supporting speech and language and the acquisition of vocabulary, ensuring our pupils are equipped with the language they need in order to articulate how they feel. As a school, we actively engage with parents to reinforce skills in the home environment and build secure links. A partnership approach enables us to provide opportunities where skills can be practised at home, sending positive messages and involving parents in events that promote SEL skills.

A rich and engaging curriculum should provide innovation and challenge. Accessing memorable experiences enables children to acquire a multitude of skills, allowing them to apply these and succeed as individuals beyond the school context. The curriculum must build sequentially, allowing for pupils who require additional support and differentiation. We should periodically monitor and refine our approaches, carefully considering and evaluating their impact. When supporting children with more targeted support, one must ensure it is evidence-based and consider whether it is suitable for the individual's needs and context. Highly trained, skilled staff have learnt to evolve our curriculum, amalgamating the best practice with more bespoke approaches. Each school should have a curriculum that is pertinent to their community and reflective of their pupils' needs.

Ultimately, it is vital as school leaders that we recognise our responsibility in ensuring that SEL is integrated into whole-school systems and processes. That it is interlaced and not competing or lost amongst other school priorities. Where we provide a nurturing, emotionally literate and inclusive environment, staff and pupils will flourish.

4.5 Creating space for social and emotional learning

Gavin Dykes, Education Advisor, Cellcove Ltd

In the 1950s, Lt. Gilbert S. Daniels investigated the reason why air force pilots could not keep control of their planes, and the accidents that followed[35]. Of 4063 pilots investigated, Daniels discovered not one matched the 10 standard dimensions on which aircraft cockpit design was based. Average suited nobody[36].

Fifty years later, with internet access growing in schools, challenges of security caused increasing concern. Schools required internet filters. Filters required constant development in response to anticipated threats. Norway's "You Decide" programme[37] instead sought to develop student skills and behaviours to manage the risks. Norwegian students were the filters.

Andrew Barnes, founder of Perpetual Guardian, moved his business to a four-day working week in 2018. His 200 employees seemed happier and more productive. They said the regime had benefits for mental and physical health, the environment, family and social lives, and climate change[38]. Discussing the impact of Covid, Barnes recently suggested New Zealand could retain the productivity benefits of working from home, including cleaner air, reduced traffic gridlock, and lost productivity through time spent commuting while helping businesses stay afloat. He added, "We have to be bold with our model. This is an opportunity for a massive reset."

What might these brief examples suggest? Could it be that we underestimate the contribution that learners make to their own learning, its direction and management? Could it be that it is all too tempting to nurture and trust the system rather than the people within it? Might it be that that temptation leads to strengthening curriculum, assessment, and leadership by teachers rather than leadership of learning? Might it also raise the possibility that leaving behind some of the seemingly sacred tenets of education could lead to a better system for learning?

Perhaps if we worry about tensions between getting through academic curricula and social and emotional learning, we are simply missing the point. Strong foundations make for spectacular structures above. I applaud those who focus on developing strong learning foundations, through mutual trust, understanding and good relationships. There are many examples of schools and areas where this is done. Some countries seem to do it particularly well. I like to celebrate the ideas and agency of students and teachers working together. Where systems demonstrate such behaviours and qualities, learning becomes broader, better and easier.

Improvement comes from agency where there is room for teachers and students to contribute their ideas and action. Where trust and support come together. When learning is driven by collective intelligence[39].

No curriculum has the time to cover every part of a subject. Perhaps we should judge our curricula by the space and time they leave and approaches they take to encourage development of trust, mutual understanding and respect and to draw in the thoughts, ideas and innovations of students and teachers. Perhaps development of SEL should be seen less as curriculum, and more as forming the underpinning behaviours that help us to share, contribute and enhance all our learning, our own confidence and our appreciation of people.

35 Todd Rose (2017) The end of average: how to succeed in a world that values sameness
36 https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2016/01/16/when-us-air-force-discovered-the-flaw-of-averages.html
37 https://www.cisco.com/c/dam/en_us/solutions/industries/docs/education/YouDecide.pdf
38 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/20/jacinda-ardern-flags-four-day-working-week-as-way-to-rebuild-new-zealand-after-covid-19
39 See for example Matthew Syed (2019), *Rebel Ideas: The Power of Diverse Ideas.*

5 WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

5.1 Supporting communities across different contexts to promote social and emotional learning

Matthew Jukes, RTI International

In order to promote social and emotional learning (SEL) in different contexts we need to understand how different SEL competencies are interpreted around the world, and the role they play in helping children thrive in each context. Very little research has been conducted outside WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) societies[40]. Research from anthropology[41] and developmental psychology[42] suggests most societies can be characterised as being on a continuum between small-scale, rural, agricultural societies and WEIRD societies. WEIRD societies value independence, self-expression, curiosity, and extraversion. Individuals in these societies are more likely to try to stand out and be unique, to compete with others, have more self-esteem, and focus on the self and internal feeling states. By contrast non-WEIRD societies value respect, obedience, social responsibility and fitting in. Individuals in these societies are more likely to be shy, to cooperate with others, and to focus on and empathise with others.

40 Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). Most people are not WEIRD. *Nature, 466*(7302), 29. https://doi.org/10.1038/466029a
41 Lancy, D. F. (2014). *The anthropology of childhood: Cherubs, chattel, changelings.* (Second Ed). Cambridge University Press.
42 Greenfield, P. M. (2016). Social change, cultural evolution, and human development. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 8, 84–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2015.10.012

5.1 Supporting communities across different contexts to promote social and emotional learning

However, cultural systems are not static. Most societies' values are evolving, driven by industrialisation and urbanization, for example[43,44]. Education is also a driving force, partly because of intentional goals of education (e.g. teaching 21st century skills) and partly because the processes of education can embody the values associated with WEIRD societies (self-expression, curiosity etc.). The following implications derive from the above discussion on (i) global variation in valued competencies; (ii) the evolution of values in societies; (iii) the role of education in that evolution.

1. Teachers and parents value different competencies. In Tanzania parents told us that children needed respect, obedience, politeness, calmness, and discipline to succeed in school whereas teachers said that children needed to have confidence and curiosity[45]. Facilitating dialogue between parents and teachers may be needed to bridge the gap and avoid the two groups undermining one another[46].

2. There are societal and individual trajectories for the development of new competencies. You cannot replace respect and obedience with critical thinking and self-expression overnight. Intermediate steps are required. The aforementioned work in Tanzania suggested that the development of confidence and curiosity is a good first step for children raise in rural villages entering school for the first time. Evidence suggests that this can be achieved through safe, emotionally supportive learning environments where children are encouraged to speak up[47,48].

3. As societies evolve, hybrid values may emerge. For example, there are apparent contradictions between encouraging curiosity in children and a culture of respect and obedience in which children are not expected to question adults. Respondents in Tanzania told us that the ideal child was both obedient and curious[49]. Understanding how these two values mesh together helps us identify a more Tanzanian, contextually-relevant conceptualisation of 'curiosity'.

4. Teachers in non-WEIRD societies place importance on the values of togetherness, fairness and avoiding embarrassment when making pedagogical choices[50]. These values can be built on to further develop a supportive environment that cultivates SEL competencies.

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44 Jukes, M. C. H., Zuilkowski, S. S., & Grigorenko, E. L. (2018). Do schooling and urban residence develop cognitive skills at the expense of social responsibility? A study of adolescents in the Gambia, West Africa. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 49(1), 82–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022117741989
45 Jukes, M. C. H., Gabrieli, P., Mgonda, N. L., Nsolezi, F. S., Jeremiah, G., Tibenda, J. L., & Bub, K. L. (2018). "Respect is an investment": Community perceptions of social and emotional competencies in early childhood from Mtwara, Tanzania. *Global Education Review*, 5(2), 160–188.
46 Wolf, S., Aber, J. L., Behrman, J. R., & Tsinigo, E. (2019). Experimental Impacts of the "quality preschool for Ghana" interventions on teacher professional well-being, classroom quality, and children's school readiness. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 12(1), 10–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2018.1517199
47 Aber, J. L., Torrente, C., Starkey, L., Johnston, B., Seidman, E., Halpin, P., Shivshanker, A., Weisenhorn, N., Annan, J., & Wolf, S. (2017). Impacts After One Year of "Healing Classroom" on Children's Reading and Math Skills in DRC: Results from a Cluster Randomized Trial. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*. https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2016.1236160
48 Education Quality Improvement Program-Tanzania (EQUIP-T). (2017). *School Readiness Programme Pilot Review*. EQUIP-T.
49 Jukes et al. (2018).
50 Jukes, M. C. H., Tibenda, J., & Mgonda, N. (2020). *The social and cultural context of Tanzanian teachers' pedagogical choices*. Unpublished manuscript.

5.2 Moving towards constructive conversations

Tiffany Smyly, Programme Director, The Economist Educational Foundation

Lockdown has forced people into contained bubbles with limited access to others. But invisible bubbles have been building in society for years. Increasingly polarised political discourse, online echo chambers and social media algorithms have led to a narrowing of the perspectives we are exposed to. This has contributed to growing fissures and tensions in communities where people are neither feeling heard nor listening to others.

We need to support young people to re-engage with different perspectives on current issues in order to have constructive, open-minded conversations about subjects affecting them and their futures.

We need to give young people more experiences of engaging with, and unpicking, different perspectives. This helps to build empathy and understanding. It also allows them to see the whole picture before building their own opinions, so that their views will be better informed and well-reasoned. This doesn't mean that every perspective always needs to be given equal weighting. Giving the same amount of time to consider 'flat-Earth theory' on a science platform wouldn't be appropriate when factual evidence refutes it, but understanding that the viewpoint exists, and exploring why, can be a valuable exercise.

In order to hear a range of voices on an issue, young people must be supported to engage with peers across different communities. Classroom discussion is not able to represent all experiences. We should support young people to engage with others who come from different backgrounds, including those with different ethnic heritage, socio-economic status, sexuality, disability, etc. This is not so that these people become the 'representative voice' for their group, but so that young people can explore issues together, with as wide a range of experiences and perspectives as possible. Well-managed online platforms can be a powerful place to make these connections.

We also need to place more importance on the skills required to listen with an open mind, and to form and support opinions based on logical reasoning. These are essential for constructive conversations that build understanding between people who see things differently. Conversations based on these skills support a tolerant society and enable everyone to get a more complete, accurate picture of the world by engaging respectfully with several perspectives, even those with which they disagree, and developing their own ideas through exchange with others.'

Young people are too often trained to see a right and wrong opinion, and to defend their own passionately. Training in debate techniques, for example, is excellent for building confidence and structuring arguments, but it can also erode open-mindedness. Covering issues with young people in 'real time' means engaging with perspectives as events unfold. Consequently, young people will learn that changing their mind, and developing their opinions based on new information, is not 'conceding defeat' - instead, it's healthy.

So - some tangible steps that we can take to move towards supporting constructive conversations:

1. Provide experiences for engaging with different perspectives
2. Connect young people with different communities and voices
3. Support the development of essential skills like open-mindedness and reasoning
4. Explore issues with young people as they unfold

The Economist Educational Foundation's weekly news club, The Burnet News Club, covers a different news story in depth for six weeks every half term. Students explore different perspectives on the issue in classroom sessions and then join conversations with peers all over the UK on their dedicated discussion platform. The programme is suitable for 9-to-14-year olds and available to all non-selective state schools in the UK. Find out more here.

6.1 Rewarding what we value

Jane Mann, Education Reform Director, Cambridge University Press

How can we make social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions stick? So often it seems that even impactful and well-intentioned SEL efforts struggle to embed themselves in education practice and thinking at the system level. They ultimately become piecemeal or short-term as other areas are funded or prioritised. In the wake of the global pandemic, how can the clear need for enhanced SEL as students return to school be translated into long-term change? Two key directions come to mind.

First, the education sector must continue to build up the evidence base for SEL's effect on positive outcomes across the curriculum, and do so in different cultural and educational contexts. Second, education leaders and ministries of education have to make structural decisions in curriculum design and in the allocation of teaching hours, giving teachers assurance that devoting time to SEL – time that they already know has benefits for their students – will be endorsed and valued by the systems in which they work.

6.2 Building the right mindset

Ross Hall, Co-Founder, The Weaving Lab

When we think about focusing on SEL at the system level, two big questions are important.

First, the question of what social and emotional learning is. For me, I think this needs to be extended to include physical and spiritual learning so that we are focusing on the holistic development of the human being – and doing so in a way that equips people to live for universal wellbeing (of self, society and the planet). For me, we need to maintain a focus on our position as humans in a larger, interconnected world.

Second, the question of what we mean by 'the system'. It's common to think of it as the policies, processes, curricula, assessments, incentives and other mechanisms. While these mechanisms are critical to the functioning of the system, we must also focus on the mindsets of the people who animate the system – and that means everyone in it. It is through everyone's choices and actions, from moment to moment, that the system is defined.

In other words, we need to address systemic mechanisms and mindsets. We need to ensure that policies, processes, curricula and other systemic mechanisms put the development of the whole human being at their heart. At the same time, we also need to help everyone in the system pay attention, from moment to moment, to the development of the whole human being.
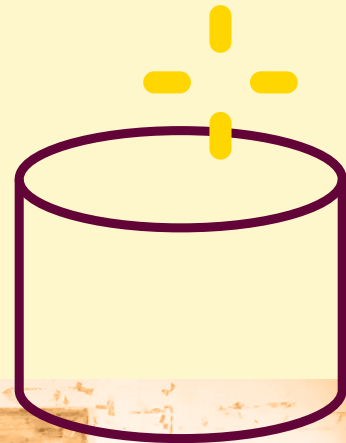
This report was compiled by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' The Centre for Education and Youth and STiR Education.

The Centre for Education and Youth is a social enterprise - we believe that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

STiR Education believes that the most sustainable way to build the foundations of lifelong learning is by reigniting intrinsic motivation at all levels of an education system. STiR Education supports governments to employ practical strategies that promote positive behaviours in teachers and officials. And in turn, these build the foundations of lifelong learning in children.