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The social emotional revolution: Centralising the whole learner in education systems

Louka Parry

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Introduction

As educators, how often do we pause for a moment to focus on how we feel? If you were to stop and pause now, what emotions come up for you? Who do you feel deeply connected to at this moment as part of the social connectedness in your life? Where are you physically in our world? And what was the last moment that brought you true joy, besides reading this paper?

We humans beings have a foundational need to develop deep social bonds and emotional connections. This social and emotional awareness, reflection and learning, needs to be deeply integrated into our daily school and work lives. After all, our wellbeing is fundamentally dependent on multiple dimensions: our physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual health all interact in dynamic and complex ways, to shape how we experience our learning and our life.

This multidimensionality is what makes us uniquely human and yet many of our legacy social systems, including mass schooling systems, were designed within a paradigm that has long since past. With our ever-expanding understanding in the science of human development, historically even some of the most innovative thinkers articulated what are now considered rather narrow views of success. For schools, we need to move beyond the notion that academic achievement is the most important part of learning. For societies, we need to move beyond a singular obsession with economic growth, largely measured through Gross Domestic Product, that does not consider social or environmental impact. I wonder how our own framing and discussions, including this paper, will be judged in 2030 or 2050 by new generations of learners and educators. Perhaps, they will feel somewhat smug at just how little we knew back in 2020.

As I write this we find ourselves not just in a global pandemic, but also in the midst of the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution.[1] Our world today is a VUCAH one: volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous and hyper-connected. VUCA was initially proposed in the late 1980s and was used to describe the post cold war period (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). It is an incredibly apt description for our current COVID-19 pandemic.

In a VUCAH world, learning needs to be lifelong, life-wide and life-deep, emerging through a sophisticated focus on social, emotional and cognitive dimensions. A more holistic, evidence-informed understanding that also considers the crucial vitality factors, such as sleep, nutrition and movement, can only improve the value that education offer to learners. Only an integrated social, emotional and cognitive understanding will create an experience that enables all children and youth to grow and thrive as whole people, and it must be further embedded across curricula, pedagogical approaches, initial teacher education, and learner journeys from pre-school to pathways.

Only an integrated social, emotional and cognitive understanding will create an experience that enables all children and youth to grow and thrive as whole people

Although definitions can vary, social emotional learning (SEL) is broadly defined as the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain and deepen positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020; UNESCO MGIEP, 2020a and b; Weissberg et al, 2015).

In this paper, I strive to articulate why SEL matters now more than ever. I begin with an outline of our global grand challenges, share evidence on the effectiveness of SEL, summarise different SEL frameworks for understanding, before illuminating the benefits in creating taxonomies to better navigate the terminology and frameworks in the field of SEL. Finally, I provide some guidance for how we might move forward in our schools and systems.

In all, my intention is to prompt reflections that are unapologetically cognitive, social and emotional, as you consider your role for improving learning from whatever vantage point you hold in the ecosystem; be that as a learner, educator, parent, leader, policy maker, researcher or in industry.

Our global challenges: Economics, ecology and education

Globally we are in the midst of profound change and, although we will overcome this current pandemic, the converging forces of the Fourth Industrial Revolution will not just continue, they will continue to accelerate. There has been much written on the era in which we find ourselves, particularly by the World Economic Forum's founder and Executive Chairman, Klaus Schwab.

According to Schwab (2015), the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is characterised by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres with three key aspects, namely velocity, scope, and systems impact, that distinguish it from previous waves. The First Industrial Revolution of the late 18th century used water and steam power to mechanise production. The Second used electric power to create mass production. The Third used electronics and information technology to automate production. The underlying principle driving our current revolution is the law of accelerating returns, or Moore's Law, named after Gordon Moore the co-founder of Intel, who noted that computational power was doubling every 18 months to two years in the 1970s.

When I first encountered these ideas they were revolutionary to my thinking as an educator and school principal. As educators we may not need to know all the details of products and services that are emerging in this new 4IR economy, but what is absolutely vital is a deep understanding of this foundational principle of accelerating change that is impacting everything across the ways we live, work and learn. McKinsey and Company (2020) recently noted that

> *social, emotional and technological skills are becoming more crucial as intelligent machines take over more physical, repetitive and basic cognitive tasks*

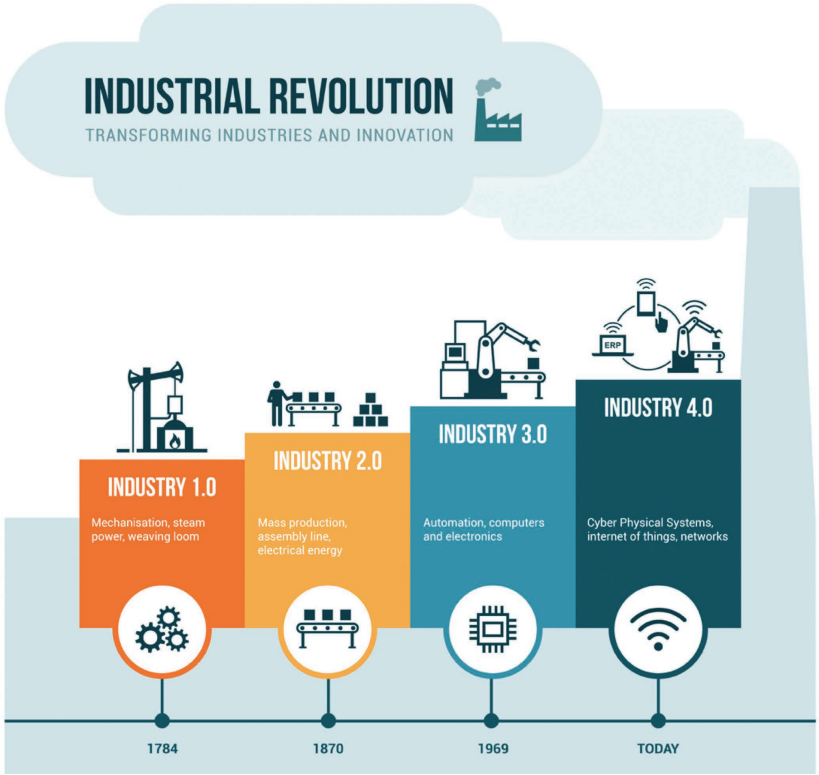
… a direct consequence of accelerating computational speed and converging technologies.

So, some key questions might be the following.

- How well do you and your learning community understand the velocity of change?
- In a world where the future of work will evolve ever faster, what emotion does this trigger in you?
- How might you better enable learners with the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to thrive for a lifetime of learning beyond school?

As we find ourselves adapting to the emerging technological realities (see Figure 1), a key priority remains how we respond to the large number of ecological crises that we have inadvertently created from our own behaviour as a global species. To put it simply, we cannot continue with business as usual, otherwise we risk creating increasingly severe ecological crises and social inequity.

Figure 1. Industrial revolution stages, from steam power to cyber physical systems, automation and internet



Source: Google Image

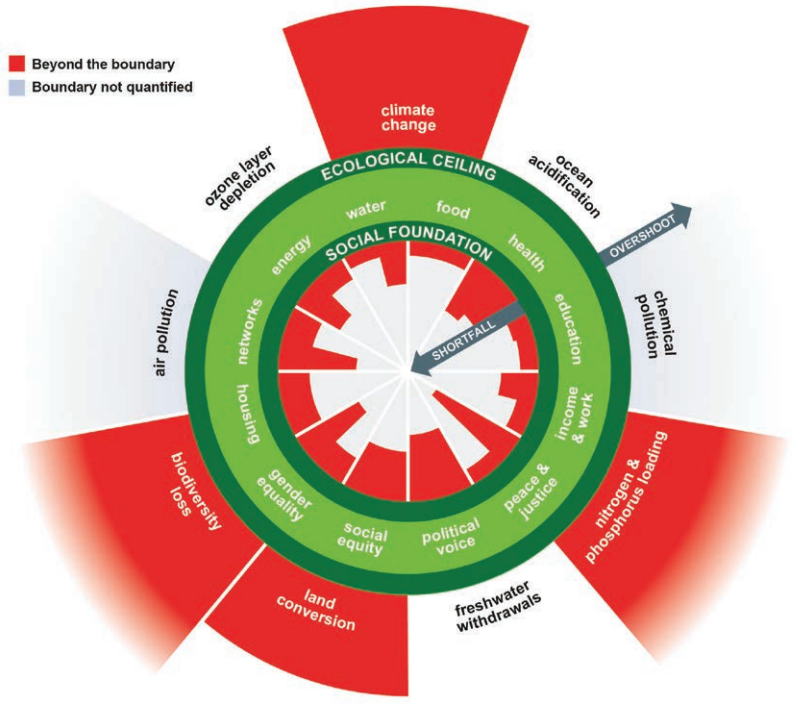
Part of this challenge is our short-term focus on results, both financial and academic but, if we were to zoom out properly to the big picture, we would be called to become not just good learners, but responsible global citizens and even good ancestors. To think long-term in a short-term world, applying Roman Krznaric's (2020) framing, we must collectively and globally change course. Indigenous knowledge systems, too, have long understood the collective aspects of sustainability and 'deep time',[2] as Tyson Yunkaporta (2020) puts well in his book *Sand Talk*, 'our role as a custodial species is to sustain creation formed from complexity and connectedness'. We would do well to take this moment to pause and consider how we understand and articulate progress economically, ecologically and educationally.

One of the best models inspiring my own current reflections comes from Professor Kate Raworth, an Oxford economist and author of *Doughnut Economics* (2017). Rather than advocating linear economic growth, Raworth proposes a 'doughnut of societal and planetary boundaries' (see Figure 2), which cleverly integrates both social foundation and environmental limits. This reimagined economic model shows how we might create regenerative, distributive economies that work within the planet's ecological limits to address and avoid climate change, biodiversity loss, land conversion, pollution and ocean acidification.

As educators we do not need to be economists, but we must understand the larger societal principles at play as we seek to inspire and nurture our younger generations – indeed, to create a world where we can all live within our ecological ceilings, whilst also providing for every human being on the planet. At this moment in our history, we have never before had so much societal data and remarkable technology at our fingertips. Yet the promise of an education that appropriately

many systems do not yet liberate educators to fully design and facilitate the development of the social and emotional alongside the cognitive.

Figure 2. The 'doughnut' of social and planetary boundaries (2017)



Source: kateraworth.com/doughnut/

inspires and equips for the challenges and possibilities of the modern world remains too often unfulfilled. It is not for lack of trying, of course. Overwhelmingly, educators with strong moral purpose are skilled professionals and show dedication to their learners to deliver quality teaching, but many systems do not yet liberate educators to fully design and facilitate the development of the social and emotional alongside the cognitive.

Thankfully, education is emerging from this past paradigm, and there is an incredible range of organisations, leaders, schools and educators moving it forward. As we innovate learning for this Fourth Industrial Revolution, social emotional learning is coming increasingly into focus, especially to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all – and its associated indicators, especially 4.7.

> *By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.*[3] (Also see Education Progress, undated.)

All this global technological and economic discussion can seem rather abstract and big picture but hopefully I have made the case that these macro-environments and value positions ultimately filter into our communities, schools, classrooms, and our own mental models. What, then, are the specific challenges that education should seek to solve?

As one of the contributors to the Salzburg Statement for Social Emotional Learning, released via Salzburg Global Seminar in 2019, my colleagues and I identified five key challenges for our work in schools and education systems across the globe (see below and Figure 3 over page).

1. **The future of work:** How can education equip all young people with the skills and competencies for rapidly evolving economies and the digital revolution?
2. **Innovation capacity:** How can schools foster initiative, resilience and entrepreneurial spirit?
3. **Educational attainment:** How can we improve learning outcomes in all contexts, especially for those children and adults on the margins of society and living in crises and emergencies?
4. **Mental health:** With depression being one of the leading causes of adolescent ill health and disability worldwide, what can education do to help promote psychological wellbeing and reduce mental health difficulties?
5. **Social cohesion:** With societies more fluid and fragmented than ever, how can we help young people feel confident in their own identities and become vested in community at local to global levels?

Source: *Salzburg Statement on Social Emotional Learning and Life Skills*, Salzburg Global Seminar, 2019.

If this moment offers us anything, it is a collective opportunity to reimagine, reframe and remake the learning experience for everyone. My passionate view is that a reimagined education would elevate our focus onto the social and emotional dimensions of learning, and create significant positive impact not least of all during our current health and wellbeing emergency.

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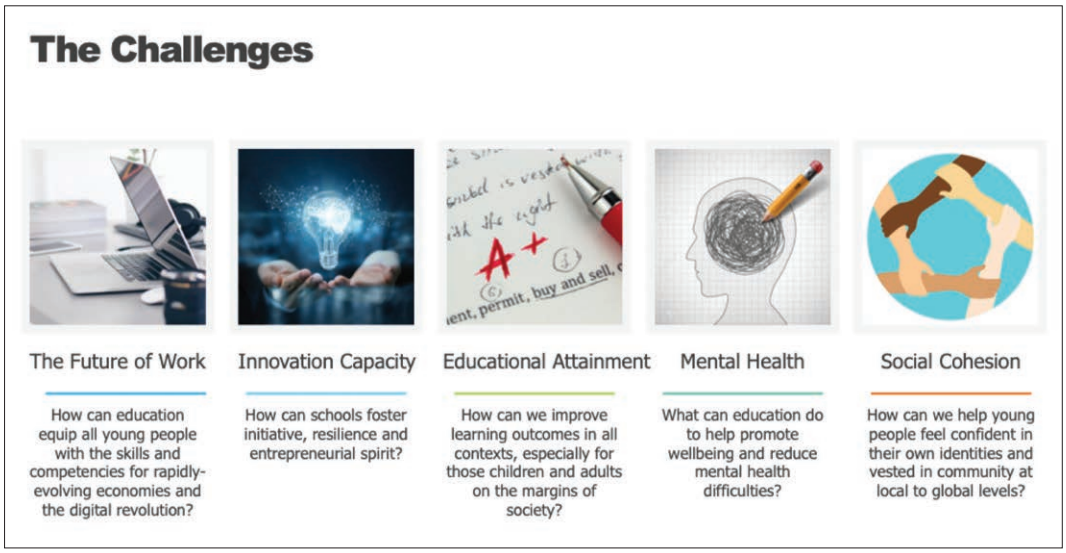
Figure 3. Iconography for the five challenges



Source: Karanga Global 2020.

There is an ever-growing body of more than two decades of research around the world demonstrating that SEL programs can address the key concerns above and deliver a wider range of long-term benefits to individuals and society. The findings come from multiple fields and sources, including student achievement, neuroscience, health, employment, psychology, classroom management, learning theory, economics and the prevention of youth problem behaviours (CASEL,[4] 2020).

Firstly, research indicates the positive impacts of SEL can be long-lasting. Research from 82 research studies involving 100,000 students worldwide showed that SEL programming can have a positive impact up to 18 years later on academics, conduct problems, emotional distress and drug use. The lasting effects of SEL taught in kindergarten even lead to a decreased likelihood of living in or being on a waiting list for public housing, receiving public assistance, having any involvement with police before adulthood, and even spending time in a detention facility.

Secondly, SEL can improve skills, behaviours and academic performance. A 2011 meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal SEL programs – involving more than 250,000 kindergarten-through-high-school students in the USA – showed that compared to controls, SEL participants demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behaviour and academic performance, which reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement (CASEL, 2020)

Thirdly, the economic value of SEL is also significant, with an average return on investment as 11 to 1, meaning for every dollar invested there is an $11 return,[5] according to a study (Belfield et al, 2015) from the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education at Columbia University.

Armed with this evidence, our challenge can then become: How might we [re]design schools and universities, sectors and social systems to elevate the social and emotional learning alongside academics so learners are ready for our future world?

To move forward we need to understand what we mean by social emotional learning and how frameworks can help us make sense of the complexity of human development.

Elevating social and emotional learning: Four frameworks for understanding

> *Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.*
>
> Carl G Jung[6]

The reason that models and frameworks matter is that they make visible aspects that may previously have been hidden or deemed less important. A framework is simply a tool that helps organise ideas in order to provide a foundation for thinking, communicating and acting. Frameworks too can come in different forms from theory, models, rubrics, taxonomies. (CASEL, 2018) Global education systems are still better at measuring academic outcomes, which therefore are seen as more highly valued, and we must intentionally seek out different framings that support an evolution in understanding, based on what we are discovering about how people learn best.

As the National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development (2019) of the Aspen Institute stated,

> *the promotion of social, emotional and academic learning is not a shifting educational fad; it is the substance of education itself.*
>
> (NCSEAD, 2019)

Below, I share four different frameworks related to SEL, from across the globe, to help illuminate understanding and help us focus, align and mobilise our specific action efforts. As we move through these frameworks, we should remember the words of British statistician George E P Box (1976), in that 'all models are wrong, but some are useful.' As every educator knows, there is no silver bullet, perfect lesson, ideal curriculum, nor is there a 100 per cent comprehensive framework for the complexity of human development in schools and classrooms. Many educators and schools also have been focusing on social emotional learning for decades, yet I suggest that a more systemic and systematic approach across the entire learning ecosystem will increase its impact, through initial teacher education, curriculum, pedagogy, assessments, ongoing professional learning and leadership development.

With those caveats aside, I shall illuminate SEL through four distinct frameworks: the CASEL framework; the European Commission LifeComp; the OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills; and the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, EMC2.

As every educator knows, there is no silver bullet, perfect lesson, ideal curriculum, nor is there a 100 per cent comprehensive framework for the complexity of human development in schools and classrooms.

The CASEL Framework (2020)

CASEL has one of the best known SEL frameworks (see Figure 4), largely because the organisation played a key role in founding the field decades ago. Developed as a systemic approach that considers curriculum and instruction, practices and policies, as well as family and community partnerships, it centres around the 'big five' competencies and infuses SEL into every part of students' daily lives at home and at school.

CASEL (2020) defines each of the five core competencies as shown in Table 1 on page 9.

Figure 4. The CASEL Framework

Table 1. Definitions of the five core competencies

CASEL (2020) defines each of the five core competencies below:	
Self-awareness	The ability to accurately recognise one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behaviour. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
Self-management	The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
Social awareness	The ability to take the perspective of and empathise with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour, and to recognise family, school, and community resources and supports.
Relationship skills	The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
Responsible decision making	The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the wellbeing of self and others.

EU LifeComp (2020)

The LifeComp framework was developed by the European Commission (2020) and has nine competences across three domains, as shown below.

LifeComp Conceptual Model – competences and domains

1. **Personal domain:** self-regulation, flexibility, wellbeing.
2. **Social domain**: empathy, communication, collaboration.
3. **Learning to Learning area/domain:** growth mindset, critical thinking, managing learning.

Source: ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/lifecomp/conceptual-reference-model

These competences are a set that can apply to all spheres of life to help learners thrive. Following a thorough literature review and several consultations with experts and stakeholders, this framework was crafted with a tree metaphor (see Figure 5). Offering a holistic perspective, it proposes that the interdependence between elements of the framework as a complex ecosystem can be more effective. This framework is conceptual and non-prescriptive, so it can be used by educators to develop curricula and learning activities that specifically seek to foster personal, social, and meta-learning.

OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills (2020)

The influential Paris-based think tank has been running an international effort to develop a comprehensive set of metrics around social and emotional skills. The project selected a set of the most relevant social and emotional skills to include in

Figure 5. Framework tree metaphor

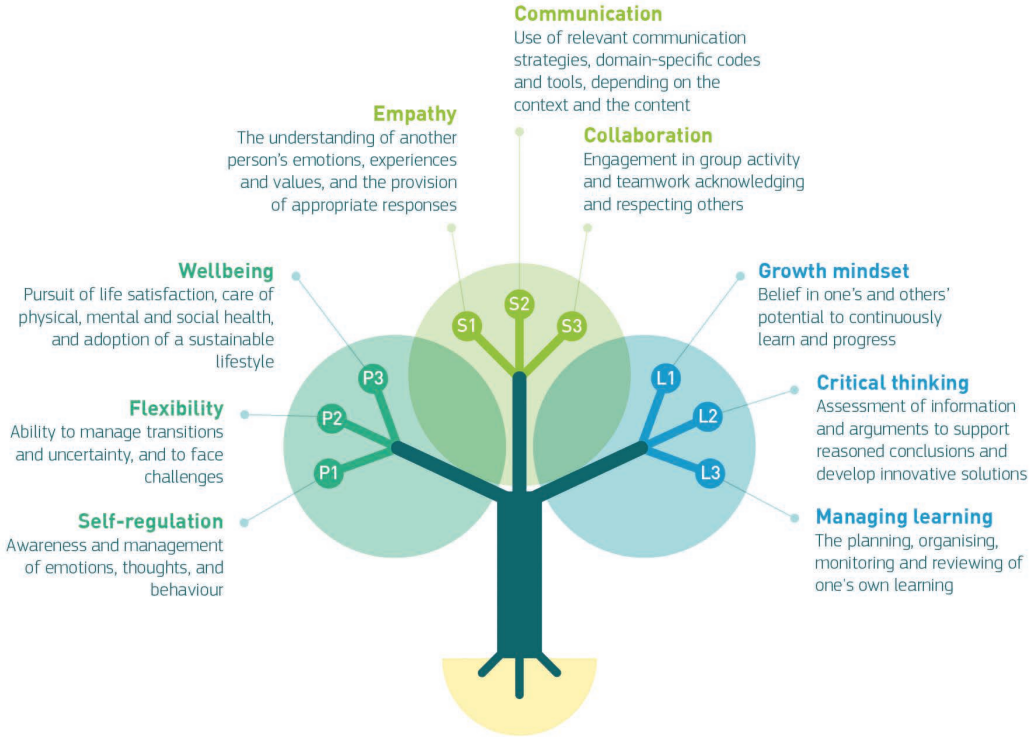


Figure 6. OECD study's dimensions and compound skills

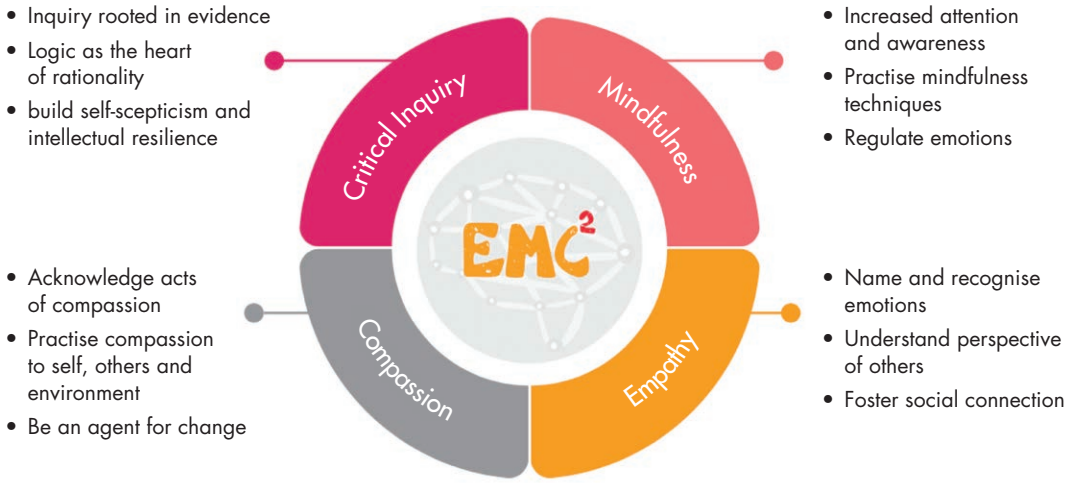
the study, based on a significant literature review for what might be the most powerful skills predictive of success in a wide range of important life outcomes. The study will assess 15 social and emotional skills, spread across the six broad domains – the 'Big Five' dimensions and a group of compound skills (see Figure 6).

Apart from assessing students' social and emotional skills, the study will also gather a wide range of information on the children's family, school and community environments, from their teachers, parents and school principals.

UNESCO MGIEP EMC2 (2020)

The UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development – which has a focus on achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.7, towards education for building peaceful and sustainable societies across the world – has designed the EMC2 framework to support the growth of mindful, compassionate global citizens. It integrates recent research from the neurosciences that shows the proximity in the emotional and cognitive centres of learning in the brain, and focuses on four main elements: Empathy, Mindfulness, Compassion, and Critical Inquiry (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. UNESCO's four main elements



Towards transparency: navigating the field of SEL

> *If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don't bother trying to teach them. Instead, give them a tool, the use of which will lead to new ways of thinking.*
>
> Buckminster Fuller[7]

In international and comparative education we often consider the differences between jurisdictions, systems, countries and cultures, and meet the complete minefield of terminology, acronyms and definitions that are enough to make one's head spin – and that is just in English! The Explore SEL initiative seeks to solve this challenge. Created by the EASEL Lab (the Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning Lab, at the Harvard Graduate School of Education), Explore SEL is led by Professor Stephanie Jones and is designed to be a 'navigator for the field of social and emotional learning, providing information and tools that summarise and connect the major frameworks and skills in the field to support transparency and informed decision-making' (Explore SEL, 2020).

As the EASEL team explains (see Jones 2020; Jones et al, 2016; Jones et al, 2019), the complex and conflicting terminology used in the field can make it difficult to understand and organise for an experienced researcher, let alone a school leader, educator or parent. This murkiness of the social and emotional learning field is problematic and confusing as people, including undoubtably me in this paper, will misinterpret, overlook and then miscommunicate the different terms and constructs. When this happens, the links that connect different points along the research-to-practice cycle become lost or obscured, the cycle breaks down and we lose the power of evidence.

I am more of a practitioner than researcher, yet, as an educator and linguist, I know well that the words we use matter (see, for example, Box 1), especially as we try to understand and measure the art and science of human development.

Box 1. WHAT'S IN A NAME? The non-cognitive domain (and see Jones et al, 2016)

Researchers, policy makers and practitioners have used many names to describe various parts of the non-cognitive domain. These are often rooted in different applications, but the underlying constructs are similar. A selection of relevant fields include:

- Social and Emotional Learning
- Non-Cognitive Skills
- 21st Century Skills
- Deeper Learning
- College and Career Readiness
- Soft Skills
- Academic Mindsets
- Character
- Student Agency
- Emotional Intelligence
- Nonacademic Skills
- Employability Skills

Furthermore, the non-cognitive constructs within each field are described using a wide range of terms, including:

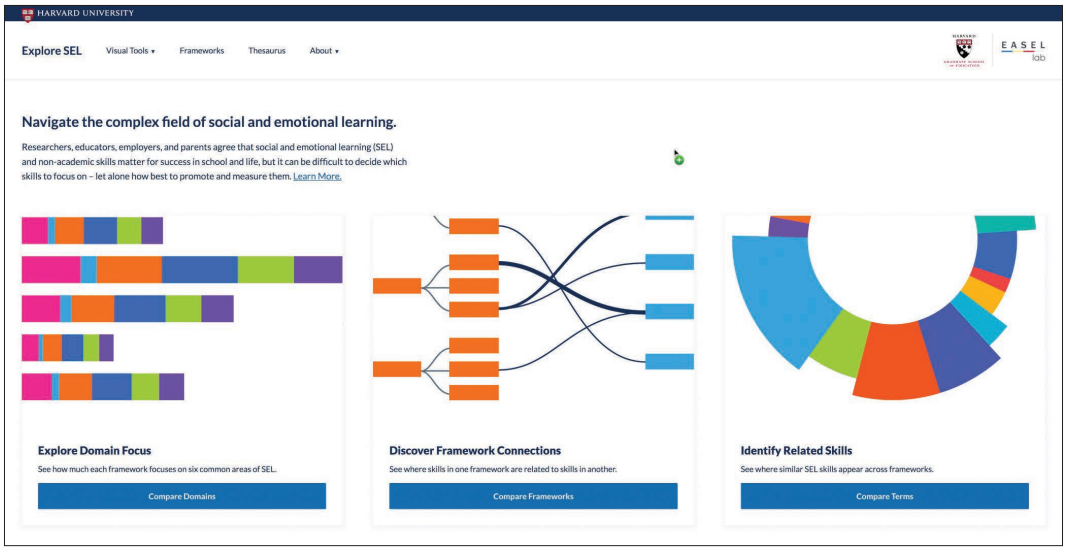
- Skills
- Mindsets
- Attributes
- Competencies
- Traits
- Strengths
- Behaviours
- Progressions
- Virtues
- Constructs
- Abilities
- Dimensions
- Feelings
- Attitudes
- Strategies
- Strands
- Habits

Each of these areas often work in their own silo, but there fundamental similarities between social-emotional learning, character, 21st century skills and each of the rest. However, nothing exists to show how they are related to each other, or just as important, where specifically they differ. The Taxonomy Project aims to make these connections clear for researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

Explore SEL (2020) seeks to solve this problem in a highly visual and comprehensive way by enabling visitors to explore the domain focus, framework connections and related skills (see Figure 8).

In comparing domain focuses, Explore SEL details both the relative and absolute emphasis each framework places on six skill areas common to the non-academic domain: cognitive, emotion, social, values,

Figure 8. Exploring focus, connections and skills



Source: exploresel.gse.harvard.edu

perspectives, and identity. Using this visualisation enables us to understand the depth and range of concentration within the non-academic domain.

In discovering framework connections we can quickly compare two or more frameworks and identify major areas of overlap, and points of divergence between them (see Figure 9). Remarkably, Explore SEL even allows one to select specific terms from one framework and compare them with similar terms from another, with a relatedness scale showing the conceptual overlap.

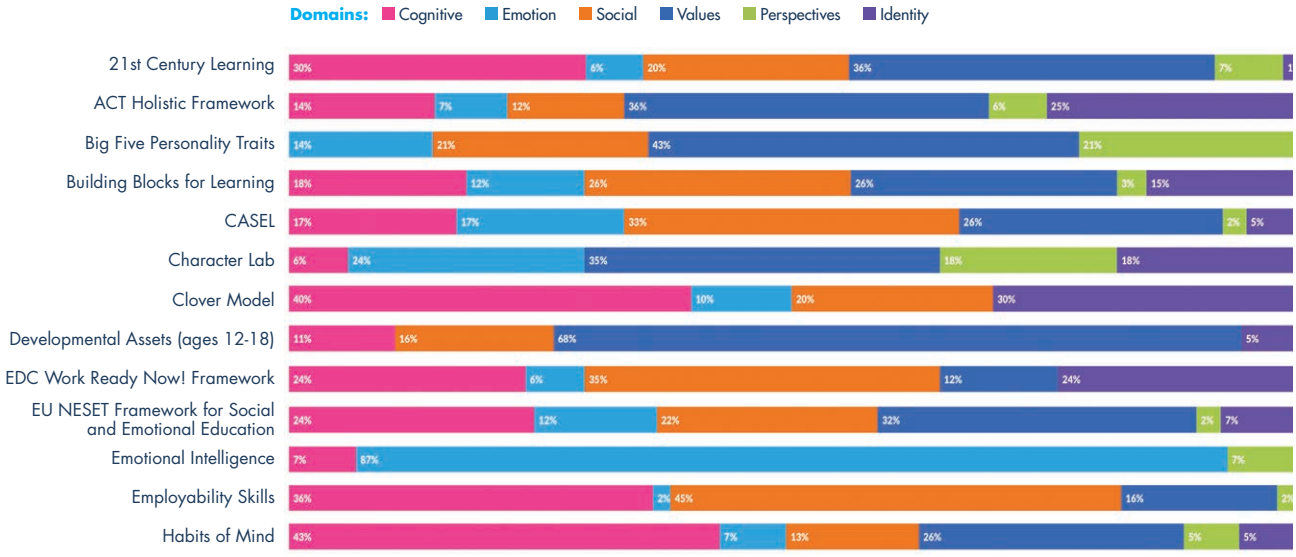
This deconstruction effort is critical to create clarity in a field already filled with an abundance of loose terminology, and helps create an understanding of which terms with different names may have similar definitions and which terms with the same name may have different definitions.

These descriptions really do not do the site justice, and I encourage you to visit exploresel.gse.harvard.edu, as it is an incredible way to understand the commonalities and intersections of different frameworks that inform education in different parts of the world, and of course offers some truths about the world.

Complementing this work is the RAND Education Assessment Finder (RAND, 2020),[8] a web-based tool that provides information about assessments of K–12 students' intrapersonal, interpersonal and higher-order cognitive competencies. It has available over 200 different assessments for measuring social, emotional and academic competencies, what they are designed to measure, how they are administered, what demands they place on students and teachers, and what kinds of uses their scores support.

The tools of both Explore SEL and the Rand Education Assessment Finder enable us to use our discretion as educators to select a framework to guide our SEL work, and to develop a broader and deeper understanding of SEL and related fields.

Figure 9. Comparison of framework connections (partial list only)



Education remade: Time for action

> *The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones.*
>
> John Maynard Keynes[9]

There is real power in understanding the emerging practices and frameworks from the field of social and emotional learning. A powerful discovery occurs once we see how these programs and practices can enhance teaching and learning approaches to create environments where children and adults feel and show empathy for others, learn to manage their emotions, make responsible decisions, set and achieve positive goals, and establish and deepen positive relationships.

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we should really go back to first principles to reimagine many things about our societies and our world. For education systems, that question might be, what are our schools really for?

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we should really go back to first principles to reimagine many things about our societies and our world. For education systems, that question might be, what are our schools really for?

Only by asking better questions can we get to a better understanding of success. To elevate and integrate social and emotional learning would only lead to powerful system-level transformations. The Salzburg Statement for Social Emotional Learning (2019), available through karanga.org, offered the following.

- Every education system should explicitly include SEL in its pedagogical, curriculum and assessment practices across all ages from early childhood through adolescence to adulthood – the sooner, the better. Investing in one area without the other will not produce the desired transformation.
- SEL learner-centred pedagogical practices, curriculum and assessment approaches should be tailored to each country's context in order to reflect different cultural considerations.
- SEL requires a learning and school environment that is physically and emotionally safe and inclusive. SEL training has a positive effect on teachers' wellbeing and their relationship with their students, which has a positive impact on student outcomes.
- Assessment influences how people (students, parents, governments, and the public) judge what is important in education. The design and scope of educational testing therefore has far-reaching societal and professional implications.
- Meta-analyses have shown that social and emotional skills are good predictors of both short-term and longer-term academic outcomes, labor force readiness, and health and wellbeing. However, these skills are left out of most assessment and measurement programs.
- We believe that all children should have access to social and emotional learning opportunities. Therefore, all assessment systems need to embed social and emotional learning assessment. An important next step in this field will be the development and validation of context-specific social-emotional learning progressions.
- Family and community-based education creates opportunities for greater impact beyond formal education. It has the potential to reach the most marginalised and therefore help to reduce the opportunity gap.
- In some cases, the community may be the only space for SEL. Communities can foster and reinforce SEL, provided that approaches are authentic, contextually relevant, and community centred.

So now what?

An education for tomorrow's world will not prepare young people for a job, rather it will enable young people to be highly adaptive for a life of learning and work, whilst also being equipped to lead a societal evolution that becomes increasingly human and socially and ecologically just. To build upon the words of the late Sir Ken Robinson,[10] we should think of schools not as factories, but as more akin to forests, with an ecology of ideas, skills, passions and people.

I propose that efforts to enhance education and to properly engage learners must involve elevating social and emotional learning to its rightful place alongside academic learning. To do this well would not just reform education, but transform it. As explored in this paper, there is no universal SEL framework, but there are foundational aspects of our learning ecosystems that we can help shift so they focus increasingly on wellbeing and social, emotional and cognitive aspects of learning for every child and adult.

So, whatever your role, I invite you to delve further into the field of social emotional learning, to adapt or create a framework that works best for your learners, and to become an advocate not just to increase the academic outcomes of students, but to help create kinder and more human learning experiences, where we are more likely to thrive as human beings. In this way we can fulfil the promise of education: where lifelong, life-wide and life-deep learning emerges through a focus on social, emotional and cognitive dimensions equally. Only a holistic and integrated focus on social, emotional and cognitive understanding will create an experience that enables all children and youth to thrive and create a better world for us all.

Endnotes

1. World Economic Forum: weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-what-it-means-and-how-to-respond/.
2. See, for example, Billy Griffiths' book, *Deep Time Dreaming: Uncovering Ancient Australia*, blackincbooks, Carlton, VIC.
3. unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata?Text=&Goal=4&Target=4.7.
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Louka Parry

About the Author

Louka Parry is CEO and founder of The Learning Future, an organisation that supports schools, systems and companies to thrive in tomorrow's world. He is also Founding Executive, Karanga: The Global Alliance for SEL and Life Skills. A former teacher, he became a school principal at 27 years old and was named Inspirational Public Secondary Teacher of the Year for South Australia. A rapid learner, he holds two Masters degrees, speaks five languages and recently completed a fellowship at Stanford's d.school. He works globally supporting leaders and educators to create thriving learning environments with a focus on innovation, social emotional learning, future skills, wellbeing, technology and organisational culture.

About the Paper

The author explains why social and emotional learning (SEL) matters now more than ever. He begins with an outline of our global grand challenges, shares evidence on the effectiveness of SEL and summarises different SEL frameworks for understanding. He then illuminates the benefits in creating taxonomies to better navigate the terminology and frameworks in the field. Finally, he provides guidance for how we might move forward in our schools and systems. His stated intention is to prompt reflections that are unapologetically cognitive, social and emotional, as readers consider their role for improving learning from whatever vantage point they hold in the ecosystem – as learner, educator, parent, leader, policy maker, researcher or in industry.

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Mercer House 82 Jolimont Street
East Melbourne Victoria 3002
Phone +61 3 9654 1200
Fax +61 3 9650 5396
Email info@cse.edu.au

www.cse.edu.au

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