

While the timeframe for progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals is tight, steps to embed Target 4.7 themes and integrate social and emotional learning (SEL) into policies, programs, curricula, materials and practice are feasible and clearly demonstrated in the briefs in this volume.

- More than sixty peer-reviewed insights by NISSEM co-conveners and specialists from around the world
- Engaging, wide-ranging, practical and insightful
- Aimed at helping education ministries, donors, consultancy groups and NGOs to advance SDG Target 4.7 and SEL in textbooks in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in fragile and post-conflict settings



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# NISSEM GLOBAL BRIEFS

## Educating for the social, the emotional and the sustainable

*Diverse perspectives from  
over 60 contributors addressing  
global and national challenges*

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**NISSEM**  
GLOBAL BRIEFS

Educating  
for the social,  
the emotional and  
the sustainable

*Diverse perspectives from  
over 60 contributors addressing  
global and national challenges*

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The brief by the OECD, 'The OECD's Study on Social and Emotional Skills': © OECD

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# Contents

page 18	<b>Editors' preface</b>
20	<b>Acknowledgements</b>
20	<b>Introductory overview</b>
	AARON BENA VOT   JEAN BERNARD COLETTE CHABBOTT   S. GARNETT RUSSELL   MARGARET SINCLAIR   ANDY SMART   JAMES H. WILLIAMS
<hr/>	
	<b>SECTION ONE</b>
50	<b>Section One overview: Looking to embed Target 4.7 themes in school textbooks</b>
	AARON BENA VOT   MARGARET SINCLAIR
<hr/>	
	<b>1</b>
64	<b>The past and future of SDG Target 4.7</b>
	AARON BENA VOT
<hr/>	
	<b>2</b>
82	<b>How are topics under Target 4.7 included in textbooks? A global perspective</b>
	NIHAN KÖSELECI
<hr/>	
	<b>3</b>
100	<b>Educating young people towards sustainable development and a more inclusive, global society?</b>
	SEUNGAH LEE   PATRICIA BROMLEY
<hr/>	
	<b>4</b>
120	<b>Rethinking schooling for the 21st century: The state of Education for Peace, Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in Asia</b>
	YOKO MOCHIZUKI

---

page 132 **5** **How Japan interprets Education for Sustainable Development and social and emotional learning**  
SUGATA SUMIDA

---

140 **6** **How are Target 4.7 themes and related issues addressed in non-formal and youth and adult education from a lifelong learning perspective?**  
ULRIKE HANEMANN

---

**SECTION TWO**

160 **Section Two overview: Contextualizing social and emotional learning**  
COLETTE CHABBOTT | MARGARET SINCLAIR | ANDY SMART

---

182 **7** **Contextualizing the goals of social and emotional learning curricula and materials**  
MATTHEW C. H. JUKES

---

198 **8** **The central role of school culture and climate in fostering social and emotional learning: Evidence from Malawi and Uganda**  
ELIZABETH RANDOLPH | LAUREN EDWARDS | JULIANNE NORMAN

---

214 **9** **Researching cultural nuances and values for a contextually and culturally relevant social and emotional learning in Ghana: Methodological and conceptual challenges**  
JISUN JEONG

---

---

page 228 **10** **Adolescent social and emotional learning in contexts of conflict, fragility and peacebuilding**  
SARA CLARKE-HABIBI

---

250 **11** **The Journeys approach to building a safe, inclusive and positive school and fostering social and emotional learning**  
ELIZABETH RANDOLPH | GERI BURKHOLDER | HOSEA KATENDE SEMPA

---

264 **12** **Connecting with the education eco-system for societal transformation**  
#ONLYCONNECT - RAE SNAPE

---

**SECTION THREE**

---

280 **13** **Integrating neuroscientific and educational research: How an interdisciplinary and holistic science of human development can inform the SEL agenda and classroom practice**  
ANDY SMART AND MARGARET SINCLAIR  
INTERVIEW MARY HELEN IMMORDINO-YANG

---

294 **14** **Cognitive development mechanisms underlying socioemotional learning**  
ALYA AL SAGER | RANA DAJANI | DIMA AMSO

---

---

## SECTION FOUR

page 310 **Section Four overview: Identity, inclusion and social cohesion**

JAMES H. WILLIAMS | MARGARET SINCLAIR

---

**15**

334 **Teaching about citizenship, human rights and gender in post-conflict contexts: The case of Rwanda**

S. GARNETT RUSSELL | DANIELLE FALK

---

**16**

350 **The citizen within: Supporting teachers to develop their own civic capacity and the development of young democratic citizens**

KAREN MURPHY | SEAN PETTIS | DYLAN WRAY

---

**17**

370 **Understanding yourself as a foundation for exploring the world**

KATHERINE PEDERSEN BLANCHARD | HEIDI GIBSON | CAROL O'DONNELL

---

## SECTION FIVE

388 **Section Five overview: Curriculum and context: constraints and possibilities for including SDG Target 4.7 themes and SEL in national textbooks**

MARGARET SINCLAIR | S. GARNETT RUSSELL

---

**18**

400 **Textbook content as a symptom of deeper struggles: A '4Rs' framework to analyze education in conflict-affected situations**

T.A. MIEKE LOPES CARDOZO | MARIO NOVELLI | ALAN SMITH

**19**

page 414 **Constructing national identity in the midst of ethnic diversity in Botswana's junior secondary schools**

BETHANY MULIMBI

---

**20**

426 **Linking teacher training to effective delivery of curriculum reform: Why listening to teachers is key to achieving progress toward SDG 4 in Somaliland**

ALEXANDRA LEWIS

---

**21**

440 **'If youth are given the chance': Effects of education and civic engagement on Somali youth support of political violence**

BEZA TESFAYE | TOPHER MCDUGAL | BETH MACLIN | ANDY BLUM

---

## SECTION SIX

452 **Section Six overview: Bringing it to life in the classroom**

ANDY SMART | JEAN BERNARD | MARGARET SINCLAIR

---

**22**

478 **Redesigning school texts to develop democratic and socially responsive citizens**

POONAM BATRA

---

**23**

494 **Teachers' humility, openness and moral responsibility: An emerging grassroots theory of change for history education reform**

BASSEL AKAR | NAYLA HAMADEH

---

page 512 **24** **Refining primary social studies textbooks for behavior change in Bangladesh**

ANDY SMART

---

532 **25** **Social and emotional learning as a theme and cross-cutting issue for quality education in the new curriculum for South Sudan**

VIKKI PENDRY

---

558 **26** **Challenges of addressing SDG Target 4.7 themes and the role of textbooks in promoting social and emotional learning in post-conflict countries: The Rwandan experience**

DR JOHN RUTAYISIRE

---

568 **27** **Emerging citizens in functional basic education for adults**

KATARINA POPOVIĆ

---

## **SECTION SEVEN**

---

592 **Section Seven overview: The social dimension of reading and writing**

JEAN BERNARD | ANDY SMART

---

602 **28** **Field Notes: Social and emotional learning in USAID's Afghan Children Read project**

SUSAN HIRSCH-AYARI | AGATHA VAN GINKEL |  
MUHIB UR RAHMAN MUHIB

---

---

page 614 **29** **Building peace capacity through stories for children and youth in Afghanistan**

MARY-JO LAND | SEDDIQ WEERA

---

632 **30** **Literacy learning for peaceful communication: the USAID-funded QITABI project in Lebanon**

EVA KOZMA

---

640 **31** **Alt Shift Change: How Pratham Books is exploring social and emotional learning in picture books**

BIJAL VACHHARAJANI | YAMINI VIJAYAN

---

656 **32** **How to actively engage young children in reading the word and the world**

JEAN BERNARD

---

676 **33** **Bloom: Putting the power of stories into the hands of local authors**

PAUL FRANK

---

688 **34** **What is the secret sauce? The story of the We Love Reading program**

RANA DAJANI

---

## **SECTION EIGHT**

---

706 **Section Eight overview: Measurement, monitoring and assessment**

AARON BENAVIDES | MARGARET SINCLAIR

---

---

page 728 **35** **Working towards a common framework for assessing 21st-century skills**

ESTHER CARE

---

742 **36** **The OECD study on social and emotional skills**

OECD

---

752 **37** **Measuring social-emotional learning outcomes for children in crisis: An education in emergencies open-source measurement library**

SILVIA DIAZGRANADOS FERRÁNS | JAMIE WEISS-YAGODA | CARLY TUBBS DOLAN

---

760 **38** **Adopt, contextualize, or adapt? Understanding the complexities of modifying or developing a measure of children's social and emotional competencies**

NIKHIT D'SA

---

## **SECTION NINE**

774 **Section Nine overview: Strategic measures**

COLETTE CHABBOTT | MARGARET SINCLAIR

---

788 **39** **Institutionalizing children's right to education: Getting organized**

COLETTE CHABBOTT

---

806 **40** **Narrating our violent pasts in curricula and textbooks**

ATIF RIZVI | AYL A BONFIGLIO

---

---

page 816 **41** **The global to local impact of networks for social emotional learning, peace, and conflict resolution education**

JENNIFER BATTON

---

864 **42** **Promotion and implementation of Global Citizenship Education in crisis situations**

TINA ROBIOLLE

---

## **SECTION TEN**

**Section Ten: What does NISSEM propose?**

AARON BENA VOT | JEAN BERNARD | COLETTE CHABBOTT | S. GARNETT RUSSELL | MARGARET SINCLAIR | ANDY SMART | JAMES H. WILLIAMS

**Contributors' biographical details**

## Editors' preface

In early 2017, a group of international academics and practitioners joined forces to promote the integration of Target 4.7 themes and related social and emotional skills into textbooks and other education materials, particularly in countries facing resource shortages, prolonged violence or post-conflict reconstruction. Following workshops at the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conferences in 2017 and 2018, as well as at UKFIET 2017, the UCL Institute of Education (2017) and George Washington University (2018), this group undertook a soft launch of a structured networking initiative, entitled Networking to Integrate SDG Target 4.7 and Social and Emotional Learning into Educational Materials (NISSEM), at the CIES workshop in March 2018.

In early 2019, the NISSEM co-conveners decided to prepare a publication that would bring together the experiences and views of those working on the ground in the domain of Target 4.7 and social and emotional learning (SEL). It was our hope that the publication of the volume would also provide a spur to decision-makers seeking evidence and experiences in order to support research and application of the key principles that we have set out in the NISSEM Position Paper. We were pleased by the warm response that we received when approaching potential contributors. The result is this volume, *NISSEM Global Briefs: Educating for the Social, the Emotional and the Sustainable*.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be achieved by 2030 without significant reform to current systems of education. SDG Target 4.7 is critical in this regard. Implementing Target 4.7 is particularly pressing in settings where conflict has damaged education systems or where insufficient resources or traditional pedagogy limit the range and relevance of teaching and learning materials.

In this volume, the editors have chosen to use the form 'social and emotional learning' but have not changed the wording that other contributors have used, such as 'social emotional learning' or 'socio-emotional learning'. All forms are abbreviated throughout as SEL.

The editors of the *NISSEM Global Briefs* welcome feedback. The contact details for all editors can be found in their biographies. Further opportunities for dialog around the content of the papers in the volume will be explored through the [website, NISSEM.org](http://www.nissem.org). We look forward to meeting you there.

ANDY SMART, MARGARET SINCLAIR, AARON BENAVIDES,  
JEAN BERNARD, COLETTE CHABBOTT, S. GARNETT RUSSELL  
and JAMES WILLIAMS  
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### Commonly used abbreviations

LMICs Low- and middle-income countries

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

SEL Social and emotional learning

## Introductory overview

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### In a nutshell

The contributors to *NISSEM Global Briefs* all share a concern for education to support:

At the personal level:

- values of and commitments to gender equality, social inclusiveness, respect for diversity and rejection of negative stereotypes; personal wellbeing and sense of agency; responsible citizenship.

At the societal and global level:

- social cohesion, peace not conflict; sustainable, equitable development; a sustainable environment.

The above aims are referred to collectively in this volume as Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7 themes (4.7 themes). Underpinning them are concepts and processes referred to here as social and emotional learning (SEL), sometimes called ‘soft skills’ and included within ‘21st century skills’. As part of SEL, students should learn about Target 4.7 themes and values and have the opportunity to practice the skills necessary to realize those themes and associated values, including empathy, a sense of fairness, gender equality, respect for each human being, collaboration, etc.

*NISSEM Global Briefs* explores the potential for embedding 4.7 themes and SEL in textbooks and educational materials in order to advance these goals in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and post-conflict contexts.

### Spoiler alert

Relatively small amounts of funds from education ministries and/or donor agencies can advance this important work.

### Signposts for the reader

This introductory overview begins with some of the issues relevant to educational materials development inherent in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and especially Target 4.7 themes. It then explains the focus on educational materials as an example of a ‘selective’ approach, in contrast with a comprehensive approach, which would attempt to bring the 4.7 themes to bear on all aspects of education systems in a more holistic way but may be difficult to achieve. The goal of this selective approach is to support a limited number of high-impact, relatively low-cost interventions that can help policymakers and practitioners in low-resource or traditionally organized classrooms to introduce students more effectively to SEL and 4.7 themes and to motivate positive action on the part of those students within the coming decade. The overview subsequently reviews some of the following:

- SDG Target 4.7 themes and their current (under-)representation in textbooks
- social and emotional learning (SEL), and how it may differ between cultures and may support study of and action on 4.7 themes;
- evidence from neuroscience;
- textbooks and identity formation—both national and personal aspects;
- strengthening 4.7 themes and SEL in textbooks: constraints and possibilities;

- enhancing 4.7 themes and SEL and associated pedagogy in textbooks: an exploratory model;
- enhancing SEL and 4.7 themes in reading books—in early grades and thereafter;
- aspects of monitoring and evaluation related to the above.

A final section explores strategic aspects of innovation in this area, including the role of practitioner/academic networking.

These key points are explored in later sections of this volume. Each section (except Sections Three and Ten) has its own overview, written by the *NISSEM Global Briefs* co-editors, followed by specialist briefs from senior practitioners who bring their current thinking to the fore.

All contributors to the volume were invited to write from their personal expertise as academics or practitioners, to avoid jargon and to keep references to the essential, when possible.

## Issues and openings

*NISSEM Global Briefs* examines ways in which policymakers, researchers and practitioners can help address current global and national issues and thus contribute to realizing SDG Target 4.7. Many of the contributors work in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and in conflict or post-conflict situations. We are all aware of the threats posed by insecurity, armed violence, environmental degradation and economic crises that help drive conflict and forced migration. We are acutely aware of the millions living in rural poverty and in atrocious urban slums, lacking access to basic health care, clean water, and arable land for farming or employment that pays a decent wage. We are conscious of the difficult decisions families face in sending all their children to school, including having to allocate scarce household resources to pay for school fees, uniforms, books and transportation. We have read population projections and climate change predictions that suggest these challenges will proliferate and intensify in the coming decades. As an example, the population of Africa, now 1.2

billion, is forecast to reach nearly 5 billion by 2100—that is, within the lifetime of children who are already in school.

Every year, the effects of climate change, population growth, economic insecurity and armed conflict force millions of young families to uproot themselves from their rural communities and move to urban areas or across dangerous borders to other countries, only to find meager and insecure livelihoods and take shelter in destinations near or far, surrounded by people from other ethnic groups, regions and religious affiliations, or by hostile host communities. Will those who either choose to ‘stay put’ or take risks to migrate internally or to other countries be equipped with the social skills needed to deal with those who are ‘different’ and with would-be leaders who blame their troubles on minority scapegoats? Will they have the emotional wherewithal to cope constructively with situations in which their basic rights are out of reach and the environmental conditions impacting their lives deteriorate due to climate change?

Many national actors and international agencies have seriously considered the potential contribution of education to addressing these challenges, often in terms of increasing *access* of marginalized and disadvantaged groups to schooling. But what happens once children from these groups actually enter classrooms in poor-quality and low-resourced education systems? More often than not, schools fail to help children and adolescents acquire basic proficiencies in literacy, numeracy and comprehension, and higher order skills such as critical thinking. To what extent is the push by governments and donors to improve access, completion, literacy and numeracy feasible in the SDG timeframe (2015–30) and, importantly, is it sufficient? Would getting children to complete a full cycle of basic education serve to meet the complex challenges noted above? Should school curricula ignore the personal, societal and global concerns of our time, and fail to integrate them into curricular content and classroom practice while focusing exclusively, for example, on the mechanics of reading and basic computational skills?

The framers of the transformational 2030 UN Agenda on Sustainable Development certainly had such concerns in mind. They recalled previous commitments to education in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and later international covenants, conventions and recommendations, and formulated SDG Target 4.7 as follows<sup>1</sup>:

- 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 non-violence,
- global citizenship and
- appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to
- sustainable development.

The vital themes of SDG Target 4.7, as well as the social and emotional learning (SEL) they entail, constitute a potent blueprint for transforming education to address many contemporary challenges. While the timeframe for progress is tight, significant steps to embed Target 4.7 themes and integrate SEL into policy, programs, materials and practice are feasible and clearly demonstrated in the briefs in this volume.

## A selective strategy

For all schools—from pre-primary to upper secondary—to reach a high standard of general education, including meeting Target 4.7, in such a limited timeframe is unlikely. How, then, may Target 4.7 themes be meaningfully addressed? In this volume, we look to a ‘selective strategy’ that offers a low-cost channel to bring 4.7 themes supported by SEL into classrooms in LMICs and post-conflict contexts. The concept of a selective strategy (see Colette Chabbott’s

1 Bullet points added to enhance readability.

brief) draws from the experience of the health sector. Rather than focusing all efforts on building a comprehensive health system—an undertaking to be measured in decades—certain health professionals identified a few relatively low-cost interventions that could make a dramatic impact on tens of millions in some of the least advantaged areas of the world, within 5–10 years. Rather than reducing funds for health system development, selective efforts such as the Child Survival initiative and PEPFAR<sup>2</sup> have had a snowball effect, leading to more funding for a broader range of health problems over time and rendering the populations most at risk healthier and hopefully better able to sustain other, more complex interventions in the future.

We explore here a selective strategy of influencing policy change for integrating 4.7 themes and SEL into all dimensions of curriculum implementation—in particular through textbooks and other learning materials—as a channel for potentially wide, relatively low-cost and sustainable outreach. Within this strategy, our intention is to focus on LMIC or other centrally governed school systems with national, or government-approved, textbooks. We suggest that a practical and effective strategy is to work directly with those who write and revise national textbooks, teacher guidance and teacher training materials, supplementary readers, and non-formal and other educational materials. Impetus in this direction is evident in many of the briefs in this volume.

Is there evidence to support this approach? Evidence is strong for some elements of the strategy—such as the effectiveness of SEL packages in the USA for improving student wellbeing, academic achievement and life trajectory. There is also emerging evidence from low- and middle-income countries for the effectiveness of integrating SEL concepts into early grade reading programs and of partnering structured pedagogy with the needed curricular content. It is our belief that educational advances are based on a *combination* of such evidence with experience and persuasion.

2 (US) President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

What is crystal clear is that if strong 4.7 and SEL content is *not* placed before students in meaningful and appropriate ways, especially in LMIC settings where other sources of information are lacking for many, then much 4.7 and SEL content will *not* reach students. This is the basis on which the international community established an important global indicator for SDG Target 4.7, focused on the mainstreaming of 4.7 content in national policies, curricula, teacher preparation, and assessment.<sup>3</sup>

### Selective strategy spoiler alert

We suggest that education ministries and donors allocate modest budget lines on a multi-year basis to train and support writers of textbooks and other education and teacher educational materials on integrating priority 4.7/SEL cross-cutting issues, including the generation of contextualized and motivational materials for different levels of schooling and to support country-level research.

### Where did the Target 4.7 themes come from? (see Section One)

Over the past century, changing economies and political configurations and protracted armed conflict and wars have contributed to the emergence of education goals that go beyond literacy, numeracy and core school subjects. UNESCO's 1945 constitution reflected the hope of the international community that, in the aftermath of two catastrophic world wars, the nations of the world could come together to build sustainable peace. The constitution declared: 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men (and women) that the defenses of peace must be constructed.' The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among other international instruments, required education to build support for

<sup>3</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment-uk.github.io/4-7-1/>

peace, human rights, understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, with gender equality further reinforced by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and the 1995 Beijing Declaration. The Geneva Conventions sought to lessen the impact of armed conflict and required civil instruction on this in times of peace. The 1974 UNESCO 'Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms' set out technical requirements. With international concern over environment degradation growing during the previous century, the UN declared a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). Tensions within as well as between nations since the end of the Cold War period in 1991 led UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon to stress that education should 'foster global citizenship' in order to promote a sense of shared humanity within and across national boundaries (GEFI, 2012).

At the level of the individual, continuing concerns about gender equity led the previous Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to propose the UN Girls Education Initiative, in 2000. Educators responded to the HIV/AIDS crisis by disseminating key facts, though not always living up to the UN's 'life-skills' approach, which was built around cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal education (WHO, 2003). Today, there is a groundswell of support for SEL, aimed particularly at laying strong foundations for early years learning and also later, at improving academic achievement and helping adolescents cope with complex problems, including immediate threats, such as substance abuse, unwanted pregnancies and gang violence. The term 'social and emotional learning' sounds less politically contentious and thus easier for education ministries to adopt than terms naming specific problems to be addressed. It also underlies children's experience of school, which is social and emotional. For children and young people, on a day-to-day basis, everything flows from this. Likewise, the concept of '21st century skills' is more politically acceptable than previously used terms that target



problematic issues. Skill sets included under this banner typically include some of the items listed as SEL, though it implies different content in different contexts (e.g. Care et al., 2018).

In reality, the content of lessons for the various societal and individual life goals often overlaps. For early childhood, for example, 4.7/SEL content may include helping and sharing, cooperation, and inclusion of those who are different. At the pre-adolescent level, often in upper primary or middle school, social and emotional components will often be applied in a simplified form, whether in relation to socially useful topics (e.g. reforestation) or an individual value and skill (e.g. the idea or practice of cooperating to grow tree seedlings). The former may be an enrichment of the science curriculum, while the latter may be part of language studies or social studies. In either case, the teacher includes knowledge related to trees and, we would hope, to cooperation. At this stage, the core social and emotional skills may be learned explicitly, as concepts with examples and practice. Sinclair (2004, pp.123– 124) explores the idea that primary school curricula may introduce a particular social-emotional skill to a simplified real world issue, while for adolescents, SEL skills may be applied in combination: adolescent students could focus on particular societal or life themes, and use a combination of social-emotional skills, along with knowledge, to engage with them.

Section One includes the transcript of a podcast by Aaron Benavot, discussing the emergence of SDG Target 4.7 itself as part of international consultations on goals for education within the SDGs. Sugata Sumida then offers insight into the origins and interpretation of education for sustainable development (ESD) in Japan, a leading advocate of SDG Target 4.7 in concert with South Korea, a strong advocate of education for global citizenship. We further note trends in the representation of these topics in textbooks, drawing on the global brief by Nihan Kösoleci, trends in the Arab world in the analysis by Lee and Bromley, and trends in the Asian region as reported by Yoko Mochizuki. Representation in adult learning is reviewed by Ulrike Hanemann.

## **What are the core social-emotional skills? (see Section Two)**

Section Two illustrates how international actors have created their own interpretations of social-emotional skills. In the US, the term ‘social and emotional learning’ (SEL) has gained impetus from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which has both advocated for SEL and drawn attention to its benefits for students’ well being, academic progress and life chances. CASEL’s five-fold taxonomy—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making—is widely used. A somewhat different approach spearheaded by Stephanie Jones and colleagues at Harvard was recently highlighted by a National Commission convened by the Aspen Institute (Aspen Institute, 2019).

OECD has adopted another approach, using the Big Five psychological traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) as a starting point, but with subcategories partially overlapping with the child development approach to SEL, as described in the brief by the OECD. Various formulations of ‘21st century skills’ also incorporate some elements of SEL (see Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2019, for example) as well as digital literacy and other skills relating to worker productivity in modern economies, but often vary by country.

UNESCO’s guide to learning objectives and content for Global Citizenship Education (UNESCO, 2015) offers illustrative age-related content under the categories of ‘cognitive’, ‘social-emotional’ and ‘behavioral’ learning objectives. Social and emotional concepts are introduced separately, as well as in combination with cognitive elements, to prepare for learning prosocial behaviors. The same threefold framework has been applied to Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2017) and in a forthcoming publication prepared for UNESCO by NISSEM and the Sustainability and Education Policy Network (UNESCO, 2019, in press). Thus, SEL is implicit in SDG Target 4.7 themes. It is clear that without emotional

and social engagement and cooperation, young people will not be motivated to address the 21st century's critical challenges.

### **Insights from neuroscience (see Section Three)**

Neuroscience shows up the rapid brain changes of early childhood and adolescence, and points to the close relationship between cognition, emotion and social interaction (Jones and Kahn, 2017; Immordino-Yang et al., 2018). Neuroscience research charts the brain's early differentiation between in-groups and out-groups, which, if unchecked, can lead to negative stereotyping of other groups. It helps us understand the behavior of adolescents, with their still developing cognitive/emotional balance and sense of identity. Educators seeking to influence adolescents' values and behaviors can build upon their need for respect from their peers and for a sense of personal agency. The overall aim of SDG Target 4.7 is that every learner—whether in formal or non-formal education—develops prosocial behavior in support of 4.7 themes as well as personal wellbeing. To achieve this, contextualized research into adolescent learning is an important place to begin.

Given the emphasis in this volume on educational materials, the growing evidence from neuroscience showing the powerful impact of emotionally relevant content and of inspirational stories on children of all ages is particularly striking. As Mary Helen Immordino-Yang says in her interview, 'It is literally neurobiologically impossible to think deeply about things that you don't care about.' Neuroscience is also beginning to show how brain responses vary with culture. In low-resource settings, the possibility of achieving adolescent engagement and agency through relevant and motivational narratives embedded in school texts to amplify core content is an especially promising avenue for future action (Sinclair, 2018). The brief by Alya Al Sager, Rana Dajani and Dima Amso examines how innovative, community-centered reading programs, notably the We Love Reading program, provide natural support to the 'executive function' aspect of SEL in early childhood.

### **Textbooks and identity (see Section Four)**

In many countries, textbooks generated or approved by a central, national authority are a shared aspect of childhood that contributes to a positive sense of national identity—hopefully to patriotism (*making my country better*), rather than nationalism (*my country right or wrong*).<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, textbooks may also help build negative stereotypes, not only of neighboring countries, but also of ethnic minorities, migrants or marginalized groups within the country. This has sometimes been deliberate, contributing at worst to armed conflict and genocide. Briefs in this section from S. Garnett Russell and Danielle Falk, and from Karen Murphy, Dylan Wray and Sean Pettis, illustrate this all too well, and show the challenges and possibilities for moving forward after genocide and conflict.

At other times, the tendency toward negative stereotyping in textbooks may be subconscious or culturally rooted. For example, the predominance of male characters in stories and in visual material found in mathematics textbooks (UNESCO, 2015) is unlikely to be part of a conspiracy against females, but may contribute to undermining the status of women.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, textbooks may be harnessed to build positive perceptions of different groups within society, as described in the briefs by Poonam Batra as well as by Atif Rizvi and Ayla Bonfiglio.

The concept of identity can be narrow or broad. Future textbooks will hopefully emphasize the multifaceted nature of identity—one's multiple roles, characteristics and preferences—and show that each of us shares significant personal characteristics and 'sense of belonging' with many

4 Williams, J.H. (2014). *(Re)constructing memory: School textbooks and the imagination of the nation*. Rotterdam, NL: Sense Publishers.

5 Blumberg, R.L. (2007). Gender bias in textbooks: a hidden obstacle on the road to gender equality in education. Background paper for *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008*. Blumberg, R.L. (2015). Policy reform and programmes to eliminate gender bias in textbooks. Background paper for *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015*.

different groups. Immordino-Yang puts forward a broader concept in her brief:

Part of identity is a set of skills, a set of knowledge, a way of comporting yourself, a set of habits of mind for affiliating in particular ways and for valuing particular kinds of things. It is the knowledge base that you have, the kinds of experiences that you have had, the ways in which you have interpreted those experiences, and the way you build skills and utilize those skills to do things.

Relevant to our focus on educational materials, it may be possible to adapt elements of this wider concept of identity, through training of textbook writers. The brief from the Smithsonian Science for Global Goals program and Childhood Education International by Katherine Blanechard, Heidi Gibson and Carol O'Donnell describes an approach based on exploring personal identity and relating it to SDG-inspired socio-scientific and other global issues: students begin by reflecting on their own identity, and then share that identity with their peers, noting similarities, differences, and common themes. They move on to particular sustainable development issues and how those issues relate to themselves. Thus, the issues of identity and agency are linked to science and social science as well as humanistic concerns.

*Our aim is that learners perceive their identity as multifaceted and inclusive, with a sense of positive agency towards personal life and current global challenges exemplified in Target 4.7.*

### **Constraints to innovation (for 4.7/SEL) at a practical and political level (see Section Five)**

In well-resourced schools and classrooms, well-trained teachers can address education around SEL and Target 4.7 by asking students to cooperate (SEL) in groups to investigate a specific 4.7 theme on the internet, selecting a particular aspect or issue to consider in depth and then to consider possible actions based on what they have learned. Many countries face practical constraints in adopting this approach, however, due to under-prepared teachers working with

minimal resources in crowded classrooms, without connectivity, and where students may have limited reading skills and may indeed be struggling with the language of instruction. In such situations, the textbook is often both the effective curriculum *and* the main resource—for many teachers and most students.

From the viewpoint of inserting SDG Target 4.7 themes and SEL into textbooks, there are additional practical constraints that are not adequately addressed in the textbook development process. Themes such as 'gender equality,' 'human rights' and 'sustainable development' are often specified as 'cross-curricular' or 'transversal' issues. The textbook writers who are charged with making this cross-curricular approach work for 4.7/SEL may lack knowledge and confidence in these new areas and in their local application. This is a major constraint. To be impactful, a science lesson teaching the water cycle should show how this relates to the country concerned and to the students themselves. Writers need time to locate and generate content specific to their own country or region that is both informative and motivational to the students. The same applies to those preparing training and support materials for teachers.

NISSEM stresses that (modest) resources, space and time are needed for generating such context-specific and motivational materials and preferably trialling them in advance of final incorporation in educational materials. This process may beneficially include inputs from young people themselves, obtaining their feedback and their suggestions for new content that is relevant to their lives. This process also should enable materials writers to understand the longer-term impact of the academic content, which is the nub of student agency. Without this, it is doubtful that 4.7 themes and SEL can be integrated on a cross-cutting basis in a way that can impact student identity and agency. Inclusion of new types of contextualized and impactful content on locally prioritized 4.7/SEL-related themes is at the core of the 'selective strategy' advocated in this volume.



Countries may also face a political challenge in strengthening certain 4.7 themes, which may require a wider view of personal and national identity, and a challenge to interest groups (for example, the '4Rs' model in the brief by Lopes Cardozo et al.). We suggest that—especially in low- and middle-income countries—the generation of new content must be undertaken in an inclusive way, with stakeholder buy-in, so that it is acceptable to students, teachers and families from the various population sub-groups and is sustainable despite changes of government. Modalities of response may include ensuring diversity in textbook guidance and appraisal committees, to include education experts from the different population groups (notably gender, ethnic, religious, regional) and other key stakeholders and to assure balance in terms of gender, professional experience and age.

The briefs on Somaliland in this section illustrate the practical and political problems of context. Alexandra Lewis shows how difficult it is for poorly trained teachers to integrate reformed textbook content when working on an hourly paid basis. She notes also the political sensitivities around the local clan system and its representation, or lack of it, in school texts. Extracts from a study by Mercy Corps illustrate that students who are given the opportunity for secondary education including civic engagement are less likely to endorse political violence. The brief by Bethany Mulimbi shows that Botswana's early focus on education centred on the majority Tswana culture has been compatible with the country's peaceful national development, raising the question of how to give greater recognition in the curriculum to minority cultures when many stakeholders are reluctant to change the status quo.

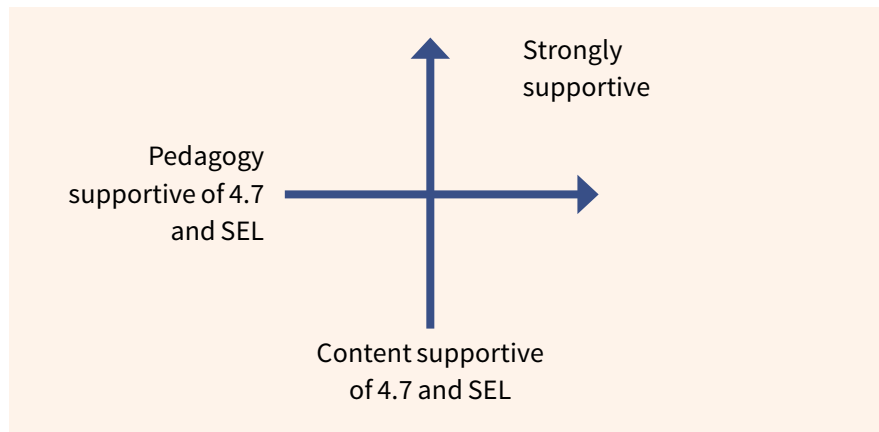
It is critical to devise a way to close the implementation gap between the ideals of official curricular policies and frameworks, on the one hand, and lesson plan implementation, requiring textbook writers' familiarity with and commitment to including Target 4.7/SEL content, on the other. The scope and sequence of core required subjects must enable inclusion of relevant cross-cutting issues, with horizontal (between subject) and vertical (age-group)

harmonization. Collaboration and coherence between examination bodies and textbook writers in this process is vital, given the importance of high-stakes examinations in determining what is actually taught in the classroom.

## **Our model for textbook developers (see Section Six)**

This volume presents several practitioner examples of producing textbooks supportive of Target 4.7/SEL (Section Six) and of how school reading materials can support this goal (Section Seven). A first essential in this regard is that textbooks must be highly readable, to enable social and emotional engagement of students, including for older students engaging with the complexity of Target 4.7 themes. For younger children, the use of read-aloud stories by teachers and ensuing class discussion can provide a strong basis for engagement of heart and mind. Text for students themselves must be reader-friendly and adjusted to the actual reading levels of most students in the country, not just those in elite schools. One of the case examples (by Andy Smart) shows how text-heavy social studies textbooks, covering core themes such as tolerance, were redesigned to allow more time for discussion and student engagement. It also shows how simple types of structured pedagogy can be built into the lesson text, guiding the teachers and students to ensure comprehension, sharing of ideas through conversation and practicing critical thinking rather than rote learning. The key to this approach is consideration of both the *content* and the *pedagogy* of the textbooks. This example leads to the model presented in this volume, of strongly supportive 4.7 content and strongly supportive SEL pedagogy. Our selective strategy aims to move textbooks and educational materials in LMICs and post-conflict settings to the strong-strong quadrant (top right):

It is not suggested, however, that this orientation towards including SEL-based approaches to learning should be at the expense of planning textbook content around conceptual,



**Figure 1:** Integrating both pedagogy and content that are supportive of Target 4.7 and SEL into textbooks and educational materials

cognitive, curricular frameworks. Stronger thinking derives from more diverse thinking. This is the intersection of the *what*, the *why* and the *how* of teaching and learning.

Other problems arise where students and often teachers lack proficiency in the language of instruction, as noted in the briefs on reform by Vikki Pendry for South Sudan and John Rutayasire for Rwanda. Discussion of 4.7/SEL issues is vital and more impactful when they take place in the mother tongue, but this may not be practical where a class includes multiple language groups.

In terms of the *content* axis in the above model, the first task is to identify key 4.7/SEL areas of great importance in the particular country. A group of writers, teachers, youth, women's groups and other stakeholders, assisted by supportive university staff, can ideally be formed to identify priority national concerns and opportunities that can be embedded as enrichment of core school subjects. Discussions with students and school leavers can further help identify what impact in terms of SEL and 4.7 aims the current textbooks are providing, and what these young people would suggest as priorities for future students in terms of education for citizenship, life skills and environmental support. After identifying priority national themes or sub-themes from Target 4.7, writers

can then find ways to introduce and reinforce the relevant content across subjects and the years of schooling, while also embedding pedagogic support.

Additional to those already mentioned, briefs by Poonam Batra, Bassel Akar and Katarina Popovic—of which the latter brief addresses the needs of diverse adult learners in nonformal settings—illustrate ways of bringing 4.7/SEL themes to life in different cultural settings.

## Early grade reading and other supplementary materials (see Section Seven)

In low- to middle-resource countries in the midst of curriculum reform, the emphasis of many international donors has begun to shift from supporting (only) the teaching of the mechanics of reading in the early grades toward teaching reading for meaning. The shift can be observed in efforts to enable local writers to produce early grade reading materials in children's first language (mother tongue), which reflect the children's world and engage them emotionally in the content, with teacher guidance and prompts for discussion and writing responses embedded in the lessons. This 'new wave' of teaching and learning materials can be used in a variety of ways, for example as traditional language arts textbooks, or as supplementary materials (Sinclair and Bernard, 2019).

These materials provide multiple openings for integrating SEL as well as Target 4.7 into both the content and the approaches. Since they are mostly story-based, there is the possibility of engaging students at both cognitive and social-emotional levels. Simple stories can explicitly illustrate SEL concepts and prosocial behaviours (as illustrated in Jean Bernard's brief), while all materials can be checked for balance regarding gender, ethnicities and so on.

Getting the balance right between writing an engaging narrative and promoting prosocial values is challenging. This is especially

true for low-level, beginner books for independent reading, where the range of language is necessarily limited. For such beginner readers in the early grades, and even in upper primary grades, there is a strong argument for exploring prosocial topics through teachers using ‘read aloud’ books with the whole class, in addition to literacy skill-building texts.

Reading aloud to children, by teachers or others in the community, creates a sense of belonging and gives all children access to more challenging themes and literary language without placing literacy demands on them. This is of particular importance for 4.7/SEL themes, where the teacher can build a clear picture of a story orally and engage the class in discussion regarding the cognitive, social and emotional content and implications for social action. Reading aloud, with children themselves then telling or reading the story, can be enhanced through community engagement, as demonstrated by the We Love Reading program described in the brief by Rana Dajani.

Generating prosocial content is sometimes more difficult than it seems. Local writers are often selected from a pool of textbook authors, teachers and children’s book authors. In order for such writers to generate relevant and motivational material, training on the general principles of 4.7 and SEL can include inputs by young people to help established or emerging writers to create new content.

## **Measurement, monitoring and assessment (see Section Eight)**

Measuring, monitoring and assessing progress towards Target 4.7/SEL themes raise notable challenges, many of which have been extensively discussed since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015. To date, information on the inclusion of such themes and skills is not systematically compiled by international agencies, definitional variation of key concepts abounds, and specific educational contexts leave their mark on both what gets taught and how. And

yet, despite such challenges, an array of monitoring approaches and instruments have taken root in order to explore country commitments and curricular mainstreaming of 4.7 themes/SEL. While the strategies and tools developed are far from uniform, many informative analyses have been reported, including one undertaken by the editors of this volume on the emphasis on cognitive, social and emotional and behavioural learning in the teaching of education for sustainable development and global citizenship education in ten countries (UNESCO, 2019, in press).

Given the current state of measurement and monitoring in these areas, there is less value in promoting a single metric or yardstick to assess country progress. Much more is likely to be gained by supporting a multiplicity of measurement and monitoring efforts, some more contextually sensitive than others, to reflect how system planners, curriculum specialists and teachers are finding ways to actually integrate, mainstream and promote 4.7 themes/SEL in the educational contexts under their responsibility.

The papers in Section Eight focus on certain monitoring and assessment issues, and indicate areas that need further development. Esther Care’s brief highlights the value of constructing global learning progressions for each Target 4.7 theme or SEL skill in order to better define standards and expectations per age or grade level and to map the results from different assessment platforms. The tension between contextualized understandings of these themes and skills and the need to develop a broader monitoring framework to capture country progress over time is also discussed. She also stresses the importance of aligning what is set out in the curriculum and included in teaching and learning materials with what is included in assessment processes. This revisits the earlier point, about bringing textbook writers and those who write examination papers together in the pursuit of 4.7/SEL-enriched learning processes and materials.

The OECD authors offer insight into their upcoming Study on Social and Emotional Skills and the assessment and contextual tools to be used in their study of some 66,000 students together

with teachers and parents in 11 cities/countries. As the main study is taking place in October/ November 2019, the results will be reported in the latter part of 2020. The study uses a skills taxonomy built around the 'Big Five' psychological traits, including three or four skills for each trait as well as a compound skill (self-efficacy).

Nikhil D'Sa provides a technical briefing on how to adapt or develop a SEL competency measure, illustrating this with the development of Save the Children's ISELA measure. Sylvia Diazgranados Ferrás introduces ongoing research that will lead to a library of tools used for measuring SEL in settings of crisis and conflict, drawing initially on the set of tools being tested in the INEE-NYU- IRC project in the MENAT<sup>6</sup> region. This groundbreaking work illustrates the potential of practitioner-academic partnerships.

In addition to the focus areas of these briefs, UNESCO's regional office in Bangkok has assessed progress in the Asia region on the inclusion of 'transversal issues' including global citizenship education. The Global Partnership for Education has also conducted a landscape review of 21st-century skills and the extent of their inclusion (or exclusion) in Education Sector Plans and grant requests. It is hoped that this volume will complement such initiatives and promote greater inclusion of 4.7 themes in all levels of country policies and plans.

## Reaching a selective strategy (see Section Nine)

The publication of *NISSEM Global Briefs* is, in itself, part of a selective strategy to increase the number of low- and middle-income countries and post-conflict settings where Target 4.7 themes and SEL are integrated effectively into core subjects and educational materials in such a way that they are seen as useful and engaging by teachers, students and other key stakeholders.

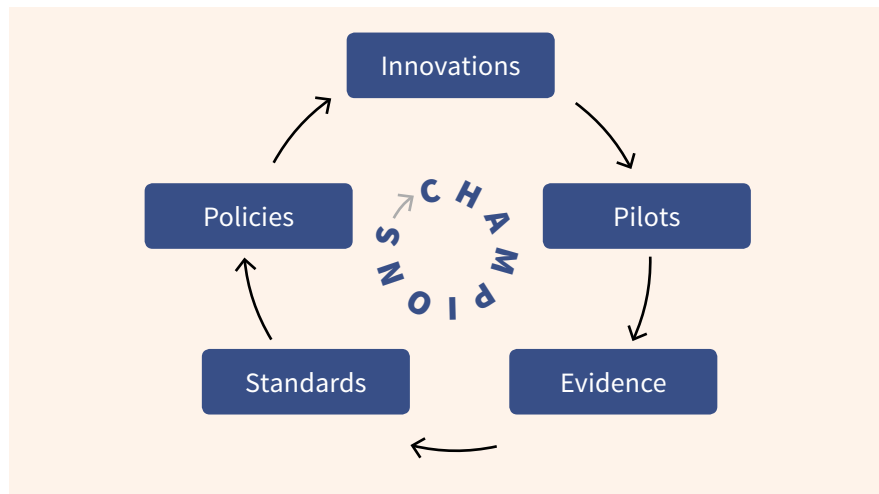
Much attempted innovation has weak impact in LMICs because of practical constraints such as oversized classes, lack of classroom resources, insufficient professional development of teachers and

<sup>6</sup> Middle East, North Africa and Turkey.

the backwash effect of high stakes examinations. Our selective strategy does not depend on high-resource inputs across a fragile and perhaps insecure state, required for in-service teacher training. It does not assume that teachers can be trained in a few days of cascaded training events to absorb the transformative thinking of 4.7 themes and SEL. Experience shows that while training using the cascade model may work for simple messages, sustained, *continuous professional development* is far more effective (and more cost-effective) for complex messages and skills such as those inherent in Target 4.7 and SEL.

The selective strategy focuses on preparing contextualized and evidence-informed guidance materials, supported by coaching, for a limited number of writers of textbooks, educational materials and assessment professionals. This is feasible, provided that the national ministry of education decides to give it priority, including creating an ongoing budget line covering 4.7/SEL (or the national equivalent term for its key cross-cutting issues). This would support creation of contextualized content, as well as editing, trialling, assessment of impact, research and feedback. The aim would be to generate impactful and relevant cross-cutting content into the materials already budgeted for. This can make sense to education planners and others who control the purse strings.

The strategy derives likewise from an analysis of the factors that govern the uptake of innovations at national and global level (Chabbot, 2015). Now near the end of the fourth year under the SDGs, where are the entry points for individual professionals, NGOs and networks to help accelerate the process of achieving SDG 4 or Target 4.7 themes specifically as an innovation? The drivers for achieving the education goal and all its related targets include several things that networks such as NISSEM and other non-governmental entities can support. As per the diagram below, a critical factor is the presence of champions on the inside of key organizations, who may be able to move this process faster than external organizations trying to push it along from the outside. Thus, in addition to generating innovations, pilots, evidence,



**Figure 2:** Activities to advance a selective strategy

standards and policies, advocates of Target 4.7 and SEL need to put significant effort into recruiting and supporting national and local champions.

Empowerment of national advocates is the theme of Jennifer Batton’s brief on the work of an international Peace Education Working Group. Atif Rizvi and Ayla Bonfiglio present a current initiative focused on empowering champions to work towards eliminating negative stereotypes from national textbooks.

Indeed, if there is not sufficient impetus for pruning of existing content—and if the academic timetable does not designate more time for subjects that integrate Target 4.7 themes, and if those themes are not included in annual and school-leaving high-stakes assessments—the ambitions of 4.7/SEL content may not progress beyond words in a policy document. As noted above, if there is no clear guidance for textbook writers on how to generate new, contextualized and impactful 4.7/SEL content and methods, the new material may not convey the necessary cogency and immediacy of the new topics to students.

Textbooks are normally prepared in times of relative stability. Yet these materials are used for education even in times of crisis

and conflict, whether by students and teachers who are refugees, internally displaced, or at home. It is important that crisis-affected children use textbooks that incorporate messages of inclusion, rather than negative stereotyping, with respect for diversity, gender equality and all the 4.7 themes. Ideally, there will be supplementary materials and timetabling for addressing their psychosocial needs (INEE, 2016, 2018), although this is not always possible. The brief by Tina Robiolle addresses some of the additional challenges faced in such times of crisis.

Donors are interested in the potential for education to strengthen social cohesion (Roberts-Schweitzer et al., 2006), including nowadays a requirement for environmental sustainability and conflict-sensitive approaches (GPE, 2016). Donors are now also focusing on strengthening the SEL content of schooling, as in USAID’s revised education policy (2018). This volume offers suggestions on a way to bring these complementary aims together.

### Takeaway message

Innovation is not easy. Identifying and prioritizing key national concerns and preparing new textbook content to address them is not easy. Addressing the readability issues of textbooks as well finding ways of integrating pedagogical guidance into them is not easy. Yet these are the challenges that demand attention from the education and development community in the first half of the 21st century. Regardless of the broader UN processes and targets, it is essential to equip both young and adult learners for the demands this era will make of them. For some of us, the concern is social cohesion and peace. Others focus on the environment. For others, it is the wellbeing of students living with temptations to anti-social and addictive behaviors. In many countries, the education sector is the major channel for direct outreach to families, with children and young people from most families engaged daily in study. And within many countries, textbooks are, in effect, the curriculum.

Hence, the ‘selective’ strategy. Putting the 4.7/SEL and similar



transversal content into educational materials is a priority. Materials production is already funded in one way or another and the cost of transformative work with the writers of these materials is not great. This is why we see the approach that this volume supports as being relatively low-cost and high impact, and why the spoiler alert at the start of this overview suggested that relatively small amounts of multi-year funding from education ministries and/or donor agencies can advance this important work.

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## SECTION ONE

Looking to embed Target 4.7  
themes in school textbooks



## Section One overview: Looking to embed Target 4.7 themes in school textbooks

AARON BENAOT

MARGARET SINCLAIR

### Representing humanity and the environment in school textbooks (valuing Target 4.7 themes)

This overview introduces SDG Target 4.7 themes and reviews their connection to related thematic or ‘umbrella’ terms. It then notes some of the textbook analyses that have looked for content in these areas. The briefs in this section report that while representation of these themes in textbooks has increased in recent years, the gap between country commitments to Target 4.7 and inclusion of actual textbook content remains wide. The briefs also show how the representation of specific themes varies over time, and across regions and countries.

It is worth recalling that all 169 Sustainable Development Goal targets, including Target 4.7, which 193 countries adopted in 2015, are part of a comprehensive development and education agenda understood to be relevant to *all* countries. The universal applicability of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stands in contrast to the previous global development agenda, known as the Millennium Development Goals, which focused on poverty reduction and social development in less developed regions of the world. The wide-ranging themes reflected in Target 4.7—sustainability, global citizenship, human rights, gender equality, peace and non-violence—are indeed universally applicable (see Box 1). That said, it can be assumed that different countries will draw on their respective political, cultural and educational traditions in deciding which aspects and understandings of 4.7 themes to give greater or lesser emphasis. In fact, a recent ten-country study of official policy and curricular documents in education found

significant variation in the relative emphasis on education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED), as well as the actual topics subsumed under these ‘umbrella’ concepts (UNESCO, 2019, in press).

NISSEM focuses on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and conflict-affected settings, in which 4.7 themes are indeed important—for example, sustainable development, promotion of a culture of peace, appreciation of cultural diversity, and gender equality. In addition to universalizing access to basic education and improving the provision of good quality education, LMICs face real challenges in how best to translate their commitments to Target 4.7 into concrete policies, lesson plans and textbook content. It is to progress in this latter realm that NISSEM seeks to make a substantive contribution. A critical message of this volume is that 4.7 themes are most effectively integrated into textbooks and other educational materials when the social and emotional learning (SEL) components of these topics are emphasized, explicitly and/or implicitly. (A more detailed discussion of SEL follows in Section Two.)

The first brief in the section is a transcript of a podcast interview with Aaron Benavot, who discusses the emergence of SDG Target 4.7 in international agreements on education and in conjunction with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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 non-violence,
- global citizenship and
- appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

#### Box 1: The formulation of SDG Target 4.7

In another brief, Sugata Sumida offers insight into the origins and interpretation of education for sustainable development (ESD) in Japan, a leading advocate of SDG Target 4.7 in concert with South Korea, which is itself a strong advocate of education for global citizenship. Nihan Kösoleci's brief provides a global overview of the mainstreaming of Target 4.7 themes in textbooks, while the briefs by Seungah Lee and Patricia Bromley, and by Yoko Mochizuki, provide an important regional focus—in the first instance regarding trends in the Arab world and in the latter, trends in the Asian region. These briefs illustrate common patterns in how themes listed in Target 4.7 are integrated (or not) into curricular policies and textbook content. Especially important is the brief by Ulrike Hanemann, who moves beyond the formal education system and examines the representation of 4.7 themes in adult learning and education.

## Country commitments to SDG Target 4.7

On September 25, 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 169 SDG targets. This global agenda constituted an ambitious, comprehensive, universal and transformative vision of how the world could achieve sustainable development by 2030. Many aspects of the 2030 Agenda are interdependent and interlinked; the global goal on education (SDG4), in particular, is viewed as a key driver of change in other SDGs. Target 4.7 and its constituent themes have special meaning not only because they represent important values and principles in and of themselves, but also since they resonate with substantive concerns found in the targets of other SDGs. Thus, while the implications of 4.7 themes are most salient for education policymakers, the pool of people, organizations and countries committed to 4.7 is much broader.

Education decision-makers and practitioners in countries throughout the world are thus committed to enhancing learner knowledge and skills in these areas, and by implication associated values (e.g. to value peace rather than seeking to undermine peace

and in turn sustainable development). Education authorities around the world are likewise committed to these values by their country's obligation to implement Article 29 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child:

### **1 States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:**

- The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- The development of respect for the natural environment.

SDG Target 4.7 seeks to lift these elements from being each child's individual right in some abstract sense to being a fundamental requirement for national and global attainment of sustainable development. Many of these concerns, first expressed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, had been further endorsed through international declarations and UN 'decades' (e.g. the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–14) as discussed in Section Nine. The drafters of Target 4.7 sought to underscore and reiterate prior country commitments in these areas. Hence the long-winded sentence that defines the target!

Arguably, international concern for the sustainability of people and planet and peace has increased since 2015. The question

therefore arises: What exactly does Target 4.7 propose and how feasible is it? Clearly, science textbooks should reference risk reduction through limiting greenhouse gas emissions, given the strong possibility that they may cause or add to climatic changes that threaten sustainable development worldwide. Textbooks should also address resource conservation, waste management and reforestation as areas where communities can take action to support locally impactful sustainability. Those of us who have worked on education for social cohesion and peace emphasize that sustainable development relates not only to the treatment of the environment but also to avoiding disruption of development due to armed conflict, often linked to disappearing natural resources, political insecurity and forced migration. Educators' efforts to protect the environment and to protect peace thus come together in the '4.7 collection', as listed above. Section Five of this volume shows the importance of embedding such content in core school subjects like language, mathematics, social and natural sciences, since 'stand-alone' initiatives—outside the 'traditional' curriculum—are often short-lived and difficult to implement successfully at scale.

## SDG Target 4.7 topics and learning objectives

A good place to start is UNESCO's (2015) guidance on the content of global citizenship education (GCED), which addresses the age-wise progression of content, and may therefore be helpful in the context of all Target 4.7 themes. The 2015 document<sup>1</sup> sets out three dimensions of learning: cognitive, social and emotional, and behavioural<sup>2</sup>, and suggests content suited to: (1) lower primary (including pre-primary); (2) upper levels of primary

1 UNESCO. (2015). Global Citizenship Education: Topics and learning objectives. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002329/232993e.pdf>

2 Note that the term 'behavioural' here refers to learning objectives and not to behaviourist theories of learning.

schooling; and (3) lower and upper levels of secondary schooling. Readers of the document would be expected to contextualize the proposals to address national and local conditions and priorities. Neuroscientists emphasize the constant intertwining of cognitive and emotional aspects of brain circuitry, but for expository purposes these dimensions of the learning agenda can be considered separately. UNESCO's (2015) guidance notes set out suggested topics as follows:

### Cognitive

- Local, national and global systems and structures
- Issues affecting interaction and connectedness of communities at local, national and global levels
- Underlying assumptions and power dynamics

### Social and emotional

- Different levels of identity
- Different communities people belong to and how these are connected
- Difference and respect for diversity

### Behavioural

- Actions that can be taken individually and collectively
- Ethically responsible behaviour
- Getting engaged and taking action (p.29)

These topics and the detailed suggestions for each level of education are mainly illustrative, offering a checklist for national curriculum specialists. However, they do emphasize the importance of an explicit focus on GCED themes, which—as cross-cutting issues—are often neglected by textbook writers. At secondary level, attention is given to the linkage of global and local aspects of current global issues, but at primary school level the focus has to relate to the real-world experiences of younger students.

There are many other interpretations of education for global citizenship, but the above gives a general feel for what was intended. In 2012 the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, established the Global Education First Initiative, based on three priorities, one of which was to ‘foster global citizenship’ (UN, 2012). He mentioned individual and national, not solely global, concerns: for example, ‘Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.’ (p.20). This admixture of local, national and global corresponds to an educational principle that students should begin with what is around them, and then continue this connection with widening horizons as they mature.

There is much debate about the concept and different definitions of global citizenship (Tawil, 2013). Related terms such as global education, global competencies, cosmopolitanism and international-mindedness are important for education systems in countries where students have substantial international exposure. However, they will not be discussed in detail here for lack of space and because of the focus of this volume on less privileged settings.

## **Inter-relatedness of Target 4.7 themes**

The reader who examines the suggested topics in UNESCO’s 2015 guidance on global citizenship education cited above will see that all the themes and topics of Target 4.7 are reflected there, including preservation of the environment. Guidance on education for sustainable development (ESD)—based on the SDGs and using the same framework of cognitive, social and emotional and behavioral dimensions—is set out in UNESCO (2017), taking each SDG in turn (though not by age-group). A valuable in-depth review of the origins of the concept of ESD, progress to date, and possible future directions is provided in a recent collection of articles (UNESCO, 2018).

Although there is considerable overlap in content and pedagogical intent among the 4.7 themes (e.g. education for human rights, gender equality and culture of peace), each has its own special features. Human rights education has additional status, being related to international law, but can be politically difficult for national education ministries to embrace; or it can be subject to restriction when governments change. While ‘gender equality’ might cause anxiety to some parties, the striking slogan of ‘Women’s rights are human rights’ helped set gender equality as a matter of human dignity and value. Education for a culture of peace draws on human rights while also setting out the importance for all human beings of learning to deal with interpersonal as well as larger group conflicts, being attentive to emotions and finding creative win-win solutions.

‘Appreciation of cultural diversity’ is essential to a culture of peace, as well as to non-discrimination, which is a key pillar of human rights. Earlier formulations still have resonance, recalling the concept of ‘learning to live together’ put forward by the Delors Commission (UNESCO, 1996) and the 1974 UNESCO ‘Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.’ Some countries have periodically sent reports of their progress in implementing the 1974 Recommendation; in recent years, this reporting has been expanded to inform progress on SDG Target 4.7, as discussed in Section Eight. Often neglected is ‘humanitarian education’, which can be seen as part of human rights education but may not be given priority, though ‘instruction’ about the Geneva Conventions is required of all states parties to these treaties (ICRC, 2009; Martins-Maag, 2013; Ashton & Sinclair, 2013).

It is noteworthy that while ‘cultural diversity’ is prioritized among the 4.7 themes, issues related to moral and ethical education, as well as knowledge of religion and religious tolerance, are not cited in Target 4.7, and for that matter in any of the other SDGs. Perhaps due to the contested terms of debates around



religion in UN fora, reference to religious issues or religious education is rarely made explicit. This seems a curious omission since there are important religious sources that call on believers to protect the planet and respect the dignity of all humans as well as other key principles and values embedded in the 2030 agenda. From a curriculum and textbook perspective, this omission may represent a lost opportunity since many countries allocate considerable instructional time to religious and moral education and prepare textbooks to facilitate instruction in these areas (Benavot, 2008; Meyer et al., 2017, chapter 10).

As noted in Section Five, this volume does not discuss the topic of education to counter extremism, due to lack of space and the considerable focus of most research on responses suited to European settings (see, for example, Davies, 2018). For school systems in other settings, the approach to prevention adopted by ministries of education may reflect some of the 4.7 themes (de Silva, undated; UNESCO, 2016). One of several studies undertaken by Mercy Corps is reported in the brief in Section Five.

## Developing national terminology and content

‘Target 4.7’ is a short-hand term mainly used by national and international policymakers as well as advocates and education researchers of the SDGs. A well-established umbrella term that encapsulates all of the 4.7 themes does not exist. Moreover, the notion of Target 4.7 is not widely used by teachers, students and parents, nor is it likely to catch on in the future. (That said, many of the specific notions contained under 4.7 are understood widely and used.) One of the volume’s co-editors has elsewhere argued that the most practical umbrella term may be ‘education for citizenship’, or ‘citizenship education’, which is less politicized since successive governments may fine-tune the definition of citizenship education without discarding the concept (Sinclair, 2013). Yet the criterion for deciding on terminology must be country-specific—what is widely understood and acceptable in the country itself—leading to terms such as Kenya’s 2017 cross-cutting ‘Pertinent and

Contemporary Issues’, which embeds elements derived from a 2016 education needs assessment by the Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development.

Another approach to consensus-building is to focus on ‘education for the 21st century’. This approach is politically sound: each and every government is aware that it faces an array of new changes and challenges and that it will benefit from appropriate education reform. The content of 21st century education is best derived from broad consultations involving many interested parties in-country. The various lists currently circulating are mostly general and abstract or are aligned with issues emerging from well-developed education systems and economies. In many low income and low resource settings, young people face the prospect in the 21st century of living in a fluctuating ‘informal economy’, or in a gig economy<sup>3</sup>, involving a discontinuous career trajectory, which requires its own set of skills. Moreover, the focus of 21st-century education in many formulations is at the level of the individual, while little is discussed in terms of community or societal ambitions. On the other hand, the notion of 21st century education is often related to that of 21st century competencies or skills, which is a more contested issue.

There is likely to be a tension among different stakeholders between utilitarian approaches that mobilize education to support economic growth, skill enhancement and employability skills, on the one hand, and a more expressive, social and humanistic approach that focuses on quality of life, peaceful coexistence, shared humanity, and the nature of the social values and attitudes that education engenders, on the other. This tension exists in many, if not most, national contexts; it was certainly palpable during discussions over the specific targets to include in SDG4 (Sayed & Moriarty, 2019). Arguably, the prominence of utilitarian approaches to education might be expected in less advantaged contexts characterized by persistent poverty, marginalization and

3 Economic activity that involves the use of temporary or freelance workers to perform jobs typically in the service sector.

external dependency, but economic issues likewise feature strongly in the approaches of well-resourced countries and in organizations like the OECD. Expressed differently, the topics and values inherent in Target 4.7 are often perceived in contradiction or opposition to targets or indicators in SDG4 that emphasize a more utilitarian approach—e.g. foundational skills (SDG Target 4.1), digital skills (4.4), functional literacy and numeracy (4.6) and scholarships in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (4.b). That said, the premise of sustainable development is a life with dignity, of peace and security, without which loss, death and displacement become everyday occurrences. In short, the relevance and importance of the issues raised in Target 4.7 are universal and, in context-specific ways, urgent.

Besides contextualizing Target 4.7 themes to country settings, educators need to find ways to integrate associated topics that motivate children and especially adolescents as they prepare for adult life. Although younger students often study ‘my community’ in social studies or language classes, what titles and content might effectively resonate among older boys and girls? And how should schools address situations in which some students are overage relative to their peers, since they started school late or left for a year or two and then returned? In such age-varying classes, quite common in LMICs, policymakers, curriculum experts, teachers and—in particular—adolescents themselves need to work together to find creative solutions. The potential of older students to contribute to the content of education is as yet undervalued, in particular in identifying and supporting high-priority contextualized elements of Target 4.7 themes.

Keeping in mind differences between and within national cultures, discussed in Section Two, it is worth pointing to shared concerns and common curricular challenges regarding Target 4.7 among neighboring countries. Dialog and exchange among educators in the same region should be encouraged in areas such as textbook revision, consultative strategies, and teacher preparation. Country representatives should discuss how best to report to

international bodies on their 4.7 efforts and achievements to date. Reporting formats under SDG Target 4.7 continue to evolve, as discussed in Section Eight.

In the past, national education systems may have been adversely impacted by frequently changing global buzzwords—for example, the movement from education for tolerance (1990s) to education for inclusion (post-millennium), from education to reduce fragility (mid-2000s) to education for resilience (2010s), and from education for peace (implying a current lack of sustainable peace) to education for social cohesion (implying that the task remains important). The adoption of the SDGs ‘education for sustainable development’ has clearly taken on greater significance as compared with ‘environmental education.’ Rather than feeling oppressed by this evolving array of priorities, we encourage national leaders to utilize their ‘follow up and review’ processes under the SDGs to articulate their challenges and solutions in mainstreaming 4.7 themes in syllabi, lesson plans and textbooks.

The data provided in the briefs in this section—though approximate, due to limited coverage of educational materials as well as definitional and coding issues—clearly show that there is a long way to go before Target 4.7 themes are adequately reflected in textbooks. Later sections touch on problems of adjusting or revising textbook content, including how to address the presence of negative stereotypes or the lack of representation of minority groups. The whole volume aims to put forward elements for a more effective strategy to build meaningful and relevant content in support of Target 4.7 themes in textbooks and educational materials. Our aim is that interested countries take immediate positive steps towards developing, trialing and embedding creative and forward-looking 4.7-oriented, cross-cutting content in their national textbooks and other educational materials in a way that impacts the lives of young people and helps them address personal, national and global challenges.

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# 1

## The past and future of SDG Target 4.7

AARON BENAVIDOT<sup>1</sup>

### KEYWORDS

education, sustainable development, global citizenship, SDG Target 4.7, global monitoring, indicators

NISSEM thanks FreshEd for allowing reproduction here of the transcript of the December 2018 FreshEd podcast interview between Professor Aaron Benavot, of the University at Albany–SUNY, and recent Director of the Global Education Monitoring Report, and FreshEd’s creator, Will Brehm. The transcript itself has been edited for brevity and clarity.

WILL BREHM: Welcome to FreshEd.

AARON BENAVIDOT: Very glad to be here.

BREHM: So, to start, Aaron, I want to read SDG Target 4.7 and I’d like to hear what your reactions are. So, the target reads: ‘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 non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation

1 This podcast interview between Aaron Benavot, Professor of Education, University at Albany–SUNY, and recently Director of the Global Education Monitoring Report, with Will Brehm, Assistant Professor at the Waseda Institute for Advanced Study at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan, is reproduced here by kind permission of FreshEd. Citation: Benavot, Aaron, interview with Will Brehm, FreshEd, 141, podcast audio, December 24, 2018. <http://www.freshedpodcast.com/Benavot/>

of cultural diversity and of cultures contribution to sustainable development.’ What are your thoughts?

BENAVIDOT: I remember the first time I read that. You have to take at least two breaths to get through the whole thing. And I also remember saying, especially when I would present this to various audiences I came into contact with, it seems like every idea that they hadn’t included in the first six targets, they put into Target 4.7. The sense is that everything but the kitchen sink was included here. And so, at the beginning, there was a certain contradiction: on the one hand, people understood that 4.7 includes important concepts; on the other hand, they thought that any attempt to measure or monitor progress about any of the issues in 4.7 was not going to be serious. Yes, it is clear that these are aspirational targets. And yes, we’re trying to move policies of countries in a particular direction. But if we’re also trying to hold governments to account, to a target they’re actually committing themselves to, then what does it mean if we have no systematic information pertaining to the target? Thus, there was this ambivalence about Target 4.7. It’s lovely to aspire to such wonderful ideals in these concepts, but we can’t be serious about reporting on them. It took quite a few months for this attitude towards 4.7 to subside. It began to change for all kinds of different reasons. There were, first and foremost, a lot of people who understood that this is actually a very serious and important target in relation to the broader 2030 Agenda. And if you compare the contents of 4.7 to international educational policies in the past, then you realize that this is a transformative, even revolutionary target. No previous global education policy regime had included a goal or target speaking to the humanistic, moral and social purposes of education.

BREHM: Usually, it’s more economic.

BENAVIDOT: Well, it’s not only economic, it was usually about getting kids into school.

BREHM: Access.



**BENAVOT:** Access. And completion. Making sure that children in school complete a full cycle. Mainly for primary education, but now also secondary education. In addition, it was about making sure that countries reach gender parity in enrollments. And a few other issues too. For example, adult literacy and early childhood education, but these are problematic targets for different reasons, mainly in terms of measurement. And then there was this broad category of quality. Historically, quality education was all about inputs: Are there sufficient numbers of teachers? Are the teachers well-qualified? How much is being spent per pupil? How large and well-equipped are the classrooms? Do schools have roofs over them? Do they have heating in the winter? Do they have air conditioning in the summer? Do students have enough textbooks? Do they have access to the textbooks in school? There were few attempts to explore what actually happens in the classroom.

**BREHM:** And is that where 4.7 comes in?

**BENAVOT:** Yes, 4.7 opens up quality issues in many ways. Much of the new agenda is focused at outcomes, not inputs. It's much more about learning outcomes and how to improve them. Learning issues can be found in many of the SDG4 targets. Achieving a minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics, improving literacy for youth and adults, digital skills, and employability skills. These learning outcomes have strong links to economic priorities. But Target 4.7 uniquely talks about other kinds of learning—knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, global citizenship, peace, human rights, cultural diversity, among others. So, Target 4.7 is also about outcomes, but it talks about outcomes that have rarely been on the international education agenda in a meaningful way. In this sense, it is really a target without precedent. The other thing to pay attention to about Target 4.7 is that it refers all learners, not just learners in school. It includes learners outside of formal education. It could be youth outside of school, it could be adults. But in fact, most people who think about this target,

mainly think of school-based programs that promote education for sustainable development or global citizenship education in, let's say, primary and secondary education, which already narrows the intent of Target 4.7.

**BREHM:** So, on the one hand, it's comprehensive in terms of who they're targeting.

**BENAVOT:** Yes.

**BREHM:** But, I mean, even there's so many different terms in that target. And so, one of the terms, global citizenship education. I have a student who is struggling! She struggles with this idea and has done this massive literature review of how all different academics and development agencies talk about it. And she comes back to me, and she says, I'm more confused now than ever. So, how on earth does the UN or UNESCO even begin to say, with just that one term? How do they then begin to say, how do we measure it? How can we agree upon particular measures or indicators of that target?

**BENAVOT:** I'll answer your question, but I need to do a bit of a back story here. All the terms in 4.7 have real histories in international agendas and agreements. Some of these concepts go back quite a few decades, even before World War Two. So, one of the things that it took me a while to figure out -- partly because there isn't a good history of how this thing was put together and why -- is that governments saw in this target a way of echoing past concerns, which had animated political discussions and agreements, and bring them under a new umbrella, or a new framing. So, all the terms in 4.7 actually have important histories. These need to be reconstructed, to be sure. Indeed, there is value in doing an 'archaeology' of these terms. And to your point, each of these terms does not have a consensus around how they should be conceived and defined. Not only among scholars, but also in international organizations and civil society, there isn't a conceptual consensus. Now, you could say that conceptual clarity is needed when you bring such terms into a global framework.

And yet, conceptual flexibility might be better precisely because you are bringing together people from different backgrounds and cultures, who speak many languages, and by including terms like these, you can build a sense of collaboration and solidarity around a document like the 2030 Agenda. So, using terms that can be understood by different people in different ways both highlights their importance and allows people to move forward in support of an international consensus document. On the other hand, if you're an academic, this approach is a problem. Including unclear concepts like these undermines your analysis, especially if you're trying to quantify their meaning. An academic who's interested in global citizenship will ask: 'What are the different dimensions of global citizenship? What precise definitions am I going to use for each dimension for the purposes of my work? And how am going to operationalize the concept so it can be measured using different indicators? Can I find some measures that are well aligned between the conceptual and operational definitions?' And then the academic would find ways, using different measurement strategies, to measure the various parts of global citizenship.

The other thing that's probably less known around this target is that there have been countries that have pushed certain terms politically and other countries that have pushed other terms. And so, this is also a way of bringing countries that have different interests to agree on a single comprehensive target.

**BREHM:** Do you have an example? Like, what countries were—

**BENAVOT:** Take, for example, the term 'education for sustainable development', which has an older history than global citizenship. ESD has been supported through funding and other mechanisms by the Japanese. And in fact, the cultural roots of ESD are really interesting. For the purposes of the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report, we had a Japanese colleague who read the Japanese literature around sustainable development, and helped the team to understand the idiosyncratic history of this term

in Japanese academic circles, which is not widely understood. Most people think of ESD as a Scandinavian concept that likely started in, let's say, the 1980s and 1990s. But in Japan sustainable development has a very different history. And perhaps, it is not surprising that the Japanese, who believe strongly in sustainability, have promoted ESD at UNESCO and elsewhere. And then you have the South Koreans, who have been the big backers of global citizenship education. In South Korea, the notion of global citizenship has been a way of engaging with the world and the planet. The idea of global citizenships aligns in some ways with the notion of sustainable development, but in fact they are distinct concepts. At the international level, global citizenship has become an umbrella term within which there are elements that are not all that dissimilar to certain ideas found under ESD. South Korea invested quite a substantial amount of money to promote this particular concept. And to support its incorporation as part of the global goal on education. So, it's interesting how certain countries have promoted and built consensus around particular concepts in the global agenda. And remember that there are some countries that find the term global citizenship an anathema and have no intention of using it. They deeply believe that education should promote national rather than global citizenship. In their view, education involves loyalty, patriotism, national identity, and a sense of belonging to a country. We commissioned a study that looked at the content of social sciences textbooks. The study found that in the vast majority of textbooks, there is no mention, or very little mention, of countries outside of the borders of the country in which the textbook is used. Critical views towards the term 'global citizenship' is one of the reasons, for example, that the OECD chose the term 'global competence', and not global citizenship, when they initiated work in this area. Colleagues at OECD believe that there's less political contestation, or antagonism or antipathy toward the notion of global competence in contrast to the notion of global citizenship.

**BREHM:** So, it's interesting that international politics sort of demands this consensus building by adding terms that can be understood differently, or different terms that have different histories in these different member states. And then you sort of create this long string of these terms, like 4.7, to in a sense appease or support everyone's idea and get people to adopt the SDGs in the end. But like you said, there's that academic side. And so, it seems like there's going to be an inherent tension for when the UNESCO Institute of Statistics has to actually operationalize these targets.

**BENAVOT:** Probably so. One way to understand this is to recall that the 17 SDGs and 169 global targets, including 4.7, were part and parcel of a long, protracted negotiation leading up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The negotiations that preceded the final formulations of the goals and targets were run out of New York City. Typically, they included representatives of ministries of foreign affairs (and not ministries of education or health or labor). International agencies were not deeply involved in these negotiations, although representatives of civil society played an important role. Representatives of member states, from each region, were in the driver's seat in this process. Certainly, if international agencies had been more involved, we likely would not have had so many SDGs, and we certainly would have had fewer targets and global indicators, and they would have been formulated differently. In some deep sense, UNESCO's education sector was not really actively involved in the so-called post-2015 process. They received reports and from time to time sought to intervene, but at a distance. The big decision by the international education community happened in May of 2014 when they convened a meeting in Muscat, Oman. At that point, the community made a critical decision to end the EFA process and merge into the broader post-2015 development process. Up until then, there had been two parallel tracks, a comprehensive education approach known as Education For All (EFA), and a fairly comprehensive

development approach with a minor education component known as the Millennium Development Goals. The EFA goals and the MDGs had been running parallel to each other, with different education agendas. And then in Muscat, governments and non-government representatives and international agencies decided to bring these tracks together as part of a single post-2015 framework, which didn't have a name yet, emerging in New York City. This decision meant that the education community was going to give up, in some sense, its sole control over determining the priorities of the education agenda, because now you had other people, many of them with a strong voice in New York, who were constructing the new agenda.

However, members of the education sector understood the value and legitimacy of declarations coming out of big international meetings, such as the 2015 World Education Forum, which was scheduled to take place in May of 2015 in Incheon (South Korea). They knew that developing consensus formulations about the specific targets of the global goal of education at such an international education forum would be influential. And after such a meeting they could come to New York and say, listen, we had 160 or 180 ministers of education, we had civil society, and international agencies and the private sector in attendance. Everybody contributed in the process. And here's what the education community believes should be the key target formulations. People in New York would have to pay attention, since it wasn't the view of one agency or organization, it was the view of almost all member states, who negotiated a difficult text, presumably for implementation purposes, called the Education 2030 Framework for Action in which alternative formulations of the targets were clearly articulated.

So, to your point, then. After this long process of formulating and then agreeing to the 17 goals and 169 targets, what would be the next big issue? Measuring, monitoring and accountability. Finding ways to develop clearly defined indicators and concrete measures that would enable countries and the global community

to assess progress. However, here the process shifted. Once the discussions turned to indicators and measures, it no longer just involved politicians or representatives from ministries of foreign affairs. Now it shifted to expert statisticians and demographers in representative countries and the UN statistical commission. The UN created the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators made up of statisticians, people who are really serious about number crunching. And, they're the ones who began to formulate the indicators for each of the 169 targets. After months, actually years, of discussions, they agreed to 230 global indicators (July 2017). And that involved a rather different process. So, this is the challenge now: how to come up with high quality measures for these 230 global indicators, including the global indicator for Target 4.7. They're not trying to measure Target 4.7 per se, but rather to agree on how to measure the global indicator for Target 4.7.

**BREHM:** And there's agreement on that indicator?

**BENAVOT:** Up until now, there's been agreement on the global indicator for Target 4.7 (SDG 4.7.1). I just want to point out that in some important ways, this global indicator has reduced the intended scope of the target. Now, we are mainly talking about things that are going on in formal education and not among lifelong learners. So, we're not including all learners, only those in school. And instead of looking at outcomes (knowledge and skills), the global indicator looks at inputs. The indicator asks: Are countries mainstreaming education for global citizenship and sustainable development, and other thematic areas, into their policies, curricula, teacher preparation and assessment practices?

**BREHM:** Yeah, so we're not worried about what the student learns after finishing school, how they act?

**BENAVOT:** Well, let's just say in the absence of any kind of methodology or instrument that actually captures an outcome of this kind, they are relying on measuring inputs. It's a fair

point. But it basically assumes precisely what you're saying. In other words, the more a country succeeds in mainstreaming GCED, global citizenship education, and ESD in their education policies, their curriculum, their teacher training and their student assessments, other things being equal, this shift should basically produce students who have more knowledge and skills in these areas. Notice, by the way, it doesn't talk about attitudes and dispositions, which many people argue are probably as important, if not more so, in this particular area, than knowledge and skills. You could maybe take the idea of skills and distinguished between hard skills and soft skills, and then bring these in through the back door. But the overall assumption is that countries that are including GCED and ESD in policy and curriculum and so forth are going to produce students who are going to have more knowledge and skills, and that these outcomes are not epiphenomena, which students learn just to pass a test and then forget everything the next day or week. Rather, they're going to carry these learning outcomes with them into adulthood, accompanied by some positive attitudes, though these are unmeasured. Well, that's a pretty big assumption. And it's not like we have a lot of evidence to validate it.

**BREHM:** Yeah, you might know a lot of information about climate change but you're still going to go buy the gas-guzzling SUV car. So, we can all agree that climate change is happening, but we're still going to hop on the airplane and travel all over the world.

**BENAVOT:** We can know about the science around it, we can even think that it's important, we can have the right attitudes, but it doesn't mean we are going to change our behavior.

**BREHM:** It also sort of misses that the students in Australia who are protesting that they want more climate change education, but the government is saying no, and so the students are protesting. And to me that sort of symbolizes global citizenship. They are participating as active citizens on a topic of global importance, and that also wouldn't be captured in any of the indicators or in the indicator of SDG 4.7.



**BENAVOT:** It would not. And that actually brings up a very important point about the limits of the global indicator 4.7.1. Even if young people and students are involved in lots of extracurricular or out of school activities, these are not captured by the global indicator. They could be going to museums to learn about the world, they could be doing scouting and learning about sustainability. They could be involved in all kinds of activities organized by youth organizations, or they can be demonstrating in the streets, and they can learn a lot from these forms of participation, but this would not be included in the indicator since it exclusively focuses on formal education. Many would argue that participation in non-formal educational activities, or even informal ones, can be incredibly important with respect to the knowledge gained, the attitudes altered, and the skills acquired in these areas. All that is certainly not captured in the current global indicator.

**BREHM:** So, you have been an academic and then you worked with UNESCO as the Director of the Global Monitoring Report or the Global Education Report, or what is it called?

**BENAVOT:** The Global Education Monitoring Report, the GEM Report.

**BREHM:** That's right, okay. The GEM Report. More acronyms and terms that are hard to keep track of when you're dealing with international politics. And now you are back in the academic world, but you still maintain a strong foothold in the UNESCO sort of policy debates and the SDGs in particular. So, I want to ask you, what is the role of academics in this sort of convoluted process. Three years after the adoption of the SDGs, what have academics done? Or what could they do, or what can they do in the future to sort of help us accurately understand if these SDGs are being met? Or maybe providing some sort of critical angle on areas the SDGs are simply missing?

**BENAVOT:** I think academics can play a lot of different roles. Let me begin from the point of view of having been director of a major

international report on education. Certainly, the GEM reports would not have been possible without the many important contributions and input we received from academic experts from around the world. After each report is initially conceived, the team would put together a concept note, and we would involve academics in various kinds of consultations, and they would say, you should look at this, or these questions need to be looked at, or we know of some new studies in this area. After we had a detailed outline, and began work on a zero draft, there were decisions about asking particular academic experts to carry out a small study or desk review on issues or research related to the planned report. We would commission anywhere from 30 to 50 background papers for each report and, by and large, these were done by researchers and experts with academic degrees. They're not always located in universities, some of them are working in research institutes or serving as consultants, but they're all very well informed. So, the report would not be possible, if not for these academic inputs. And these inputs were used not only for the thematic part, but also for the monitoring part, of the report, which we're talking about now.

Fairly early on we asked ourselves how best to monitor the substance of Target 4.7? What steps would I, as the GEM Report Director, need to take? Who should the team contact? Who might have useful information we could use? For example, we knew that the International Bureau of Education in Geneva is a storehouse of curricular information on countries. So, we turned to them and asked if they could support a coding process that would go through certain curricular materials they had in their possession. We also knew experts involved in textbook research and we reached out to them. We knew people who had studied teacher training programs in different parts of the world, we also thought about asking them if they could contribute something. You know, there are ways to take a look at different policies from different sources. We thought like academics: here are the concepts that are embedded in the target, and here's what

we know and here's what we're trying to figure out, and so what kind of content analysis might we conduct once we have access to certain kinds of documents or official statements? We needed to identify someone who could carry this out, and we needed to develop a basic coding scheme, which would be understood by academics. And that was what we did.

**BREHM:** Is that how they measure this now?

**BENAVOT:** No, that was what we did for the 2016 GEM report.

Keep in mind that the GEM report is an editorially independent report. UNESCO, the agency that had the responsibility for measuring Target 4.7, and UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, had not yet figured out how to measure the global indicator 4.7.1. Eventually UNESCO, with UIS's help, would figure out a measurement strategy. But we had our own deadlines and were considering different pathways -- things we could do more or less systematically, others that might take a lot more time. But we thought that for the purposes of the report it was worth trying to capture precisely what the global indicator talks about. At some point in time, somebody at UNESCO came up with the brilliant idea that UNESCO was already monitoring (basically soliciting reports from national commissions) several terms from an international recommendation that UNESCO member states had agreed to in 1974, which were also embedded in 4.7. And part of this agreement mandated that UNESCO should take stock of country progress every four or five years. The idea was that if you're going to carry out a survey on some of these themes anyway, why not expand it to include things like global citizenship and Education for Sustainable Development, which weren't in the 1974 recommendation when it was adopted, but could be added to it. This made sense. So now UNESCO could say, we have a mechanism, and we have the mandate to implement this mechanism. Member states are providing feedback on particular themes, which we're going to expand a little so that it is more closely aligned with the concepts in Target 4.7. And so a decision was made to survey countries. They worked with

UIS to figure out what would be the concrete items to include in the questionnaire. What would the format look like? And what questions would member states be asked to respond to? They basically took the global indicator 4.7.1 and mapped out a questionnaire that made sense, and sent it off to countries.

**BREHM:** But methodologically, it's very different from doing some sort of content analysis using a coding scheme of documents put out by the government versus asking people's perceptions based on a questionnaire?

**BENAVOT:** Well, I wouldn't say its perception. Basically, the survey is asking countries to self-report. It's not exactly subjective, but it does entail allowing countries to tell you what they're doing without actually validating that information through some other means. So, the countries can say, 'Yes, we're doing all these wonderful things', and that's what they write in the survey and then nobody's really checking whether it's true, at scale.

**BREHM:** There's no validation of it.

**BENAVOT:** There's no validation based on documented evidence.

**BREHM:** So, what incentive would a country have to sort of say, they're not doing any of this?

**BENAVOT:** Well, because there's a certain level of transparency. In the end all this information is going to come out in reports and on-line. Governments might be reporting or not. But then you have NGOs in the country saying, 'The government reported that they are mainstreaming human rights education in their curricula. We don't think that that's the case.' In other words, people who know what's going on in the country will take them to task. So governments can't really pull the wool over everybody's eyes. And the more this is done, and data are collected, the more it becomes institutionalized and you would see trends over time. I mean, I haven't seen all the data, and there's certainly a degree of, 'This is what we intend to do, not what we're actually doing.' That said, there is a sense that countries are over-reporting the extent to which these things

are being mainstreamed. And it's also not clear what is meant by 'mainstreaming'? It could be that a country has a sentence in a textbook that says, global citizenship, and counts that as mainstreaming. And another country devotes a whole hour every week during the first four or five grades of primary education to global citizenship or something along those lines, meaning they have a very elaborate curriculum. In the survey these realities are treated in a similar fashion. Because the countries are basically saying, I mainstreamed here, and I mainstreamed there, there's no difference.

From an academic point of view, you would never get the results of such a survey published. Somebody would come along and say, this is just not valid information. When the GEM Report conducted its monitoring activities, experts commissioned by the team compiled and reviewed the documents that countries are producing. The team developed a coding scheme and asked that a content analysis of the documents be conducted. Such an analysis can look at the issues more superficially or more in depth, but it is basically an analysis of materials country produce and use. It could be a textbook, it could be a national curricular framework, or it can be an explicit policy, and you review it and come to certain conclusions. And yet it is important to remember that it still doesn't tell you what is actually going on in the classroom. But you are using a kind of objective measurement strategy to determine: Are the themes present at all? To what extent? And then you can report on the global indicator accordingly. If they are reported as absent, that is a definite finding!

**BREHM:** So, is this like the first step? Because it's interesting, like you said that the 4.7 was quite revolutionary, to even include it. And yes, there's all sorts of measurement issues as you discussed in depth. But the optimist in you would say, okay, this is sort of the first step, we're building it up, that survey is certainly not perfect, but maybe there will be future steps that we can take and make it more robust, add additional measurement tools,

or strategies or future indicators. I don't know if that's even possible. Would that be, from the international politics point of view, pushing countries in a way to consider these aspects of education that we know people think are important.

**BENAVOT:** Yes and no. The fact that these issues and topics have been placed on the agenda is important in and of itself. And it opens up all kinds of actors—governmental, non-governmental, academics and all kinds of civil society organizations—to say: 'Listen, you've signed on to this agenda, this is one of the targets, we think this is really important, what are you doing about it?' And regardless of the reporting, or international comparability, having Target 4.7 as a target, and putting 4.7 issues on an agenda, and having groups getting organized to promote activities along these lines, is important. It is also a way of saying we think our government should be more involved in 4.7 issues, and it produces all kinds of interesting activity at the national level, which absent the target, might not exist, or may not exist as extensively. And these activities wouldn't have the same legitimacy as they currently do because of Target 4.7. So, all that is important.

But another take on this is: the things that policymakers pay attention to are the things that can be counted and shown to exist. Maybe there isn't an agreement as to how to do the counting or how to build an index, or the kind of methodological strategy implemented. But when a number or an index is produced, it's a way of getting countries to be more proactive and indicate beyond just signing their name to a piece of paper, that they're doing something in relation to the target.

**BREHM:** The naming and shaming.

**BENAVOT:** Right. And I do think this is important. I mean, having some quantification or some systematic assessment, even qualitative data about these issues, helps to promote them, helps to keep them visible and helps to secure commitments for policies and resources and to make sure that they are sustained.

That said, there is a different kind of danger: say, for example, we tried to measure 4.7, but the measure and data we came up with are not so hot. And then when countries take a look at the data or constructed index, they go, this is really not very serious. Which might create a negative reaction even though you've tried to measure Target 4.7, but you've done a fairly poor job. I personally can give you anecdotal evidence of instances where countries see themselves as very seriously committed to topics in Target 4.7 and then when they review the data used to measure the global indicator of 4.7, it just doesn't match with the country's commitment. It doesn't align very well. So, then they question the whole measurement strategy, and they question the indicator. And you can end up going backwards rather than forwards. So, there's a danger here of using weak data to capture such an important target.

**BREHM:** So, how would you change the measurement strategy, if you could have a magic wand?

**BENAVOT:** First and foremost, I'd go back to the intent of the target, which is trying to capture a set of learning outcomes. I'd want to invest in developing assessment modules that were, let's say, culturally sensitive, and which could be used in different ways in different settings for different topics in 4.7. There would be modules that countries could integrate into their current assessment frameworks, which would try to tap into the extent to which learners both in school and maybe out of school have acquired knowledge and skills around 4.7 issues. I would also want to collect information on inputs. I would set up a platform to which countries and civil society can contribute documents, and strategies, and curricula and so forth. UNESCO or someone else could be commissioned to go through these materials and come up with a strategy of measurement (keeping in mind that you have to know quite a lot of languages), and maybe you would need more than one coder to ensure coding inter-reliability and so forth. I think this is possible, since in fact my colleagues and I are doing something similar for another study

now, involving 10 countries. We have been compiling documents at different education levels, and then using a coding scheme to systematically review them and determine how much of a particular GCED or ESD theme or topic is embedded in the intended policy, or curriculum framework, or assessment. And in the end, with this information about both inputs and outcomes, you could return to the larger question, which is what we started with: is it the case that the more you mainstream GCED and ESD etc in official documents and policy, does it increase the actual knowledge and skills of learners? That would be the key issue somewhere down the line.

**BREHM:** Well, we'll have to bring you back on. I mean we have 12 years until 2030, we're only three years in, and we're still talking about indicators. We will have to bring you back to give us an update about where we're going and how we're doing. So, Aaron **BENAVOT**, thank you so much for joining FreshEd.

**BENAVOT:** My pleasure.



## 2

# How are topics under Target 4.7 included in textbooks? A global perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Based on a review of selected research studies between 2010 and 2019, this brief shows that textbooks in many countries still fail to deal comprehensively, clearly and fairly with concepts that are crucial for social cohesion, political stability and the future of the planet, including gender equality, human rights, environmental protection, peace and non-violence, and cultural diversity. As soon as curricula have been reformed, textbooks should be reviewed and revised to meet the needs of the new sustainable development agenda. Guidelines explicitly related to topics under Target 4.7 need to be integrated within textbook review processes.

### KEYWORDS

textbooks, sustainable development, curriculum

## Introduction

Textbooks and learning materials are likely to have a strong influence on children and adolescents, both inside and outside the classroom. They convey not only knowledge but also social values and political identities, and an understanding of history and the world. Textbooks are often the first and sometimes the only books that a young person may read. As such, they also

<sup>1</sup> The opinions expressed in this brief are the author's own, and do not reflect the opinions or policies of the European Investment Bank.

constitute an early type of 'media', and reflect the values and knowledge that any society sets out (Lässig & Pohl, 2009).

This brief looks at how the concepts under Target 4.7—such as education for sustainable development and global citizenship, including gender equality, human rights, environmental rights, peace and non-violence, and cultural diversity—are currently portrayed in some textbooks. It is based on a desk review of selected research studies published between 2010<sup>2</sup> and 2019, providing detailed accounts of how different country contexts shape whether and how textbooks incorporate these topics. Some caveats, however, should be mentioned. The brief does not intend to be a comprehensive systematic analysis of textbooks studies. The studies included in this brief are mainly published in English or in French and focus on countries where there is public availability of access to textbooks. Most of the studies focus on social science textbooks in secondary education.

## Environmental knowledge

Environmental emphasis in secondary school textbooks has grown over the past 40 years. The proportion of textbooks that discuss environmental protection or damage in the period since 2000 (50%) is more than double the level in the 1970–79 period (20%). This increase conceals some wide regional variations: in Latin America and the Caribbean, 80% of textbooks from the 2000s cover environmental issues compared with 32% of textbooks in Northern Africa and Western Asia (Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez, 2016).

Although textbooks increasingly focus on environmental issues, some continue to communicate uncertainty about scientific findings on climate change, while others have been criticized for

<sup>2</sup> The brief focuses on a period preceding the formulation of SDG 4 in 2015. Reforming the curriculum and issuing new textbooks can be a slow change taking nearly five years. There is, therefore, reason to start the analysis from 2010 assuming that most textbooks in use in 2015 were like those in use in 2010.

the way they describe the relationship between environmental damage and human activity. In their analysis of 17 top-selling upper secondary school textbooks, Meehan, Levy & Collet-Gildard (2018) find that some textbooks and supplemental curricular materials published between 2007 and 2012 in the USA fail to present accurate, science-based evidence on the environment and climate change. Two textbooks deny that climate change is caused by human activity. Six indicate that human beings could be having an impact on climate change but frame this topic as an issue on which not all scientists are in agreement. Such messages could reduce the sense of urgency for students to take action to address climate change. Indeed, none of the textbooks call for collective action or the need to adopt climate change adaptation strategies.

In Germany, textbooks explicitly link global environmental issues, the scarcity of resources and conflict. Of 49 civics and geography textbooks in use in 2015, the vast majority (73%) discussed the relationship between environmental stress and conflict. Yet, in their discussion of the links between environment and conflict, German textbooks mostly focus on poorer countries, conveying the notion that people in developing countries are responsible for the environmental stress they face and unable to solve their environmental or conflict-related problems (Ide, 2016).

## Global citizenship

Global citizenship education aims to inculcate students with a notion of not merely belonging to their own country but to the world; it encompasses global issues, including human rights, democracy, social justice, and conflict. Countries have increasingly been incorporating a global perspective into educational curricula to prepare young people for an interconnected global environment. However, the inclusion of these themes remains low. Between 2000 and 2011, globally, 25% of textbooks mention global citizenship compared with 13% in the 1980s. Latin America and the Caribbean registered the largest increase, from 20% of textbooks

mentioning global citizenship in 1980s to 50% in the 2000s (Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez, 2016).

In the Republic of Korea, a study documented the rapid rise of global citizenship education by describing trends in civic education textbooks based on the average number of mentions of major national and global themes by page. Global citizenship themes such as 'globalism' received either no or very little attention in textbooks in 1980s and 1990s, but treatment of these themes in texts undoubtedly increased in the 2000s. While mentions of global citizenship themes are not as frequent as national citizenship themes, there is one mention in every five pages (Moon & Koo, 2011).

In many textbooks, global citizenship is not necessarily portrayed as undermining the importance of the nation and national citizenship. While textbooks increasingly seek to impart global knowledge and values, they also continue to create a sense of national identity by instilling national values and ideals. In the late 2000s, across 76 countries' secondary school social studies and history textbooks, nearly 90% of those that mentioned global citizenship also mentioned national citizenship issues, suggesting that both conceptions of citizenship can be compatible and are increasingly found in the same textbook (Buckner & Russell, 2013). In Rwanda, textbooks for political education and social studies spanning the period 1999 to 2011 relate citizenship to obligations to the state but also to a global human rights discourse (Russell, 2018).

Portrayals of global citizenship are found to be tightly linked to a textbook's mention of international or regional events. The percentage of textbooks mentioning events outside their own borders increased from nearly 30% in the early 1970s to over 40% in the late 2000s. There has also been a rise in the mentions of globalization in textbooks over time: while mentions were non-existent in 1970s, they were found in nearly 40% of textbooks in the late 2000s. Economic globalisation made up 46% of these mentions, while political globalisation accounted for 28% and socio-cultural globalization for 25% (Buckner &

Russell, 2013). A comparative analysis of secondary citizenship and social science textbooks published between 2009 and 2012 in England, Germany and Sweden points to wide differences across countries in the way globalization is portrayed: German textbooks display globalization as a threat to society's existing structure (for example, social welfare) while English textbooks put the emphasis on the economic advantages and disadvantages of globalization (Wermke et al., 2015).

## Conflict resolution and peace

Textbooks' presentation of the history of a country and its people can detail social, cultural and ethnic diversity and promote mutual respect and tolerance. It can provide an integrative historical narrative with implicit and explicit message of peace, inclusion and reconciliation, which may cross societal divides and promote peace and non-violence. On the other hand, textbooks can be controversial and contribute to conflict and violence situations by teaching narrow nationalism, religious bias, imbalanced perspectives, historical inaccuracy, physical force and militarization, and propaganda through persuasive techniques.

A glorification of war and military heroes, the exclusion of pluralistic perspectives and the undermining of minority, marginalized or formerly subjugated populations, create an environment where teaching peace, non-violence and reconciliation becomes difficult. In the past, textbooks and curricula, combined with other challenges, have played a major role in exacerbating social tensions and violent conflicts. In pre-genocide Rwanda, Hutu-dominated governments used textbooks to spread a version of history designed to generate prejudice against Tutsis, portrayed as outsiders who had conquered the country, imposed feudal role and oppressed the Hutu peasantry (King, 2014).

In Pakistan, some textbooks have been criticized for normalizing militarism and war and for including biases, historical errors and distortions, promoting intolerance and

bigotry (Afzal, 2015). An analysis of language and social studies textbooks from 1995 to 2010 highlights that textbooks contain many narratives about military battles from early Islamic history and wars between Pakistan and India. Prominent Pakistanis other than military heroes and leaders of the nationalist movement are excluded from textbooks (Naseem, 2014).

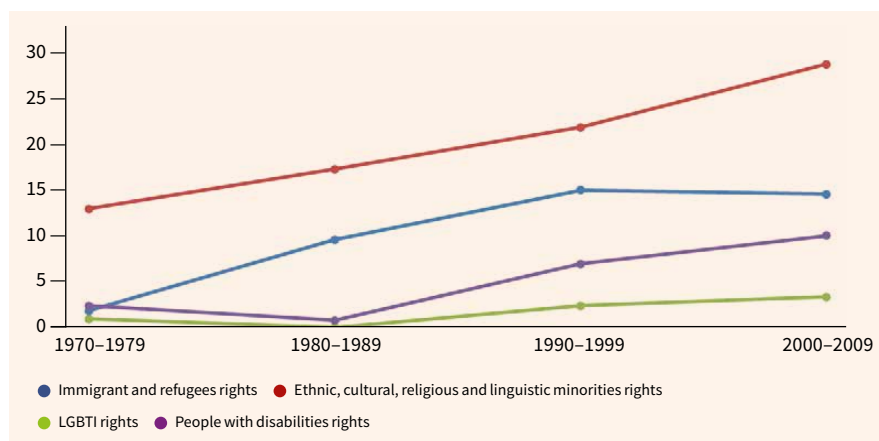
Some textbooks omit text that would recognize the existence of others. Israeli and Palestinian textbooks present their history and contemporary situation from a unilateral perspective that provides many more negative than positive descriptions of the 'other.' There is also little information about each other's religions, culture and everyday life. A content analysis of 74 Israeli and 94 Palestinian textbooks shows that, while dehumanizing and demonizing characterizations of the other population group were rare, the vast majority of maps in those textbooks omit the existence of the other entity. Of 83 post-1967 maps in Palestinian books, 58% had no borders within the area, no reference to Israel and referred to the entire area as Palestine. Similarly, 76% of 258 post-1967 maps in Israeli textbooks did not indicate any borders between Israeli and Palestinian areas, although borders were indicated between Israel and neighboring countries and Palestine was not labelled anywhere on the maps (Adwan, Bar-Tal, & Wexler, 2014).

In Sri Lanka, a study of six history textbooks spanning grades 7 to 11 published in 2007–08 shows that while recent textbooks no longer include strong explicit stereotypes of the Tamils, they largely brush over their story, culture, and religion by providing a Sinhalese-centric history of the country. They present role models that are almost exclusively Sinhalese, such as the great kings Vijabahu I and Parakramabahu or prominent Sinhalese politicians. The absence of Tamil or Muslim role models throughout the textbooks offers little with whom pupils from minority communities would identify. Textbooks also fail to recognize multiple interpretations of historical events or to encourage students critically to engage with the past (Gaul, 2014).

If education is to contribute to the development of peaceful societies, textbooks should provide a platform to discuss issues around conflict prevention and resolution and reconciliation. Yet, despite an upward trend since 1980–89, only a small percentage (10%) of textbooks include an explicit statement on conflict prevention or conflict resolution and reconciliation mechanisms. In Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of textbooks referring to conflict resolution and reconciliation mechanisms is highest, standing at around 15% (Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez, 2016).

## Diversity

Since the 1970s, there has been an increased interest in multicultural education to teach respect for diversity, empower minorities and disadvantaged groups, and deal with issues of inequality and inequity. However, the coverage of diversity remains elusive in many parts of the world (Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez, 2016). Figure 1 reports the percentages of secondary textbooks that mention whether the following groups possess basic rights: immigrants and refugees, indigenous peoples, other ethnic,



**Figure 1:** Percentages of textbooks mentioning various measures of diversity  
Source: (Bromley et al., 2016)

cultural, religious and linguistic minorities, people with disabilities and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI).

## Migrants and refugees

The coverage of migrant and refugee rights in textbooks steadily increased between 1970–79 and 1990–99, from 1% to 14%. It then stagnated and remained at the same level in the period 2000–11. Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe and Northern America are the two regions where the coverage is highest: one in five textbooks mentions migrant and refugee rights (Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez, 2016).

Despite an increasing coverage of migrant and refugee rights in European and Northern American countries, some textbooks have a tendency to reproduce stereotypical figures of migration and migrants. In Austria, an analysis of 22 secondary school geography and history textbooks in use between 2011 and 2013 points to the depiction of migration as a problem. This kind of depiction is accompanied by the representation of certain groups of migrants only, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa and Western Asia (Hintermann, Markom, Weinhäupl, & Üllen, 2014). In Dutch primary school history textbooks published between 1980 and 2011, migrants are also depicted as fleeing from underdeveloped, poor and violent countries and causing problems for the society. Nearly half of textbooks describe migrants as outsiders with strong cultural differences regardless of the length of residency in the Netherlands (Weiner, 2018).

## Indigenous people and other ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities

Textbook coverage of ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities has also been increasing since 1970s (Jiménez & Lerch, 2019). Yet, only one in four secondary social studies textbooks



mentions ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities in the 2000–11 period. Latin America and the Caribbean is the region where the coverage is highest (40%) followed by Europe and North America (35%). The coverage in textbooks in Northern Africa and Western Asia remains lowest, at around 3% (Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez, 2016).

This overall figure is echoed in country-level analyses. In Turkey, a review of 245 textbooks taught in every subject in the 2012/13 academic year indicates that most textbooks do not incorporate the cultures, lifestyles and histories of ethnic and religious minorities living in the country, one exception being the inclusion of Alevis in the religious culture and moral textbook (Çayır, 2015). In China, only 2% of the texts and 3% of the pictures in 12 language textbooks used from grade 1 to 6 are related to ethnic minorities (Chu, 2015). In Japan, an analysis of lower secondary textbooks on English as a foreign language published from 1987 to 2002, shows that while textbooks represented a diversity of countries, they did not represent the diversity of ethnic groups within the country (Yamada, 2011).

In addition to a lack of diversity, some textbooks have been criticized for the stereotypical views they portray, leading to overly simplistic interpretations of ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities. In the USA, across six primary and secondary school health textbooks published from 2005 to 2008, Latino minorities were overly represented in sections dealing with gangs, violence, and drug and alcohol abuse: they accounted for 23% of high-risk images, but only 8% of the images in the full textbook sample (Deckman, Fulmer, Kirby, Hoover, & Mackall, 2018).

In many countries in Europe and North America, the collective memory narrated in world history textbooks established a version of Islam and Arab societies that is riddled with violence and conflict, which risks promoting stereotypical images of Muslim communities and intolerance towards them. An examination of 72 world history secondary school textbooks from

16 countries<sup>3</sup> investigates the included and excluded content related to Islam and Arab societies. Across those countries, 50% to 75% of all of the textbook coverage of Islam and Arab societies is related to conflict, nationalism, extremism or terrorism, representing them as violent and unstable. There are of course more positive references to the contributions of ancient Islamic societies to civilization through art, science, and architecture, but the overwhelming representations of Islam and Arab society are negative (Wiseman, 2014).

Teaching about ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities is even more challenging in post-conflict situations. An analysis of 573 secondary social studies textbooks from 80 countries over the 1950–2011 period shows that instead of incorporating multicultural narratives, textbooks in post-conflict countries appear to place significantly stronger emphasis on national identity (Lerch, 2016).

## People with disabilities

Across the world, people with disabilities are underrepresented in textbooks, which perpetuates their invisibility and places them in disadvantageous positions. The rights of people with disabilities are mentioned in only 9% of secondary school social studies textbooks in the 2000–08 period, up from a very low level of 2% over the 1970–79 period (Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez, 2016). In South Africa, a review of 40 textbooks in use in 2015 shows that images or photos of disabled people are found in only two textbooks (Adonis, 2015). In Spain, across 36 secondary school physical education textbooks published between 2000 and 2006, out of the 3,316 illustrations, only 45 (1%) show people with disabilities. Women with disabilities are even less represented

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3 Countries include Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Israel Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.



than men with disabilities: 58% of illustrations showed men compared with 24% showing women and 18% included both men and women (Táboas-Pais & Rey-Cao, 2012).

## LGBTI people

Textbooks are also failing to meaningfully incorporate sexual and gender diversity (Banks, 2009; Terra & Bromley, 2012). The rights of LGBTI people appear in only 3% of secondary school social studies textbooks, with almost no change since 1970s. In Latin America and the Caribbean, textbooks have the highest coverage of LGBTI rights (20%), followed by textbooks in Europe and Northern America (10%). In sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa and Western Asia, the coverage of this topic remains minimal (Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez, 2016).

Country examples also confirm that LGBTI people are barely represented in textbooks, or textbooks strictly follow a heteronormative worldview, or LGBTI is reduced solely to homosexuality. In South Africa, an analysis of three grade 10 life orientation textbooks shows that the coverage of sexual diversity is as low as 1%. While there are no examples of illustrations of diverse family structures, most sexual and gender diversity discussions occur in contexts of violence and sexual abuse (Wilmot & Naidoo, 2014). In Norway, an analysis of science textbooks currently in use in grades 8 to 10 finds that heterosexuality remains the only reference when it comes to addressing sexual practice, contraception, and sexually transmitted infections (Røthing, 2017). In the USA, the most commonly used secondary school world history textbooks do not even include statistics about homosexuals sent to concentration camps during World War II (Wylie, 2012).

## Gender equality

Textbooks might disseminate gender bias, prejudice and discrimination through ways in which men and women are depicted in stories and illustrations, as if these roles and values were simply the way that the world naturally is. Gender biases in textbooks might directly or indirectly shape gender identities that will impede progress towards gender equality in education and the empowerment of women for social and economic development (Blumberg, 2007).

Content relating to gender equality has increased in textbooks across the world over time. The percentage of textbooks mentioning women's rights increased from 15% in the 1946–69 period to 37% in the 2000–11 period. Similarly, depiction of discrimination against women increased from 16% in 1946–69 to 38% in the 2000–11 period. The highest rates of inclusion of women's rights in textbooks are found in Europe and Northern America (43%) followed by sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, textbooks in Northern Africa and Western Asia have the lowest coverage rates, standing at around 14% (Bromley, Lerch, & Jimenez, 2016).

However, implicit messages in textbooks continue to perpetuate gender inequality, even though in some cases explicit messages advocate against it. An extensive number of studies have pointed to the invisibility of women in teaching and learning materials and the effect this has on perpetuating women's marginal status in society. In many countries, the stories, images or examples either do not include women or describe them in submissive, traditional roles like cleaning, cooking and serving men.

In their analyses of 24 Pakistani textbooks (Urdu, English and social studies) from class 1 to 8, Ullah and Skelton (2013) report pervasive gender biases. For example, males are portrayed more often as leading characters and make up 73% of those represented in 30 biographies. In contrast to their prevalence in domestic

settings, depictions of females in public domain are fewer than those of men. When women appear in the public domain, they are assigned to a limited number of occupations.

Textbooks often leave out influential women in history or do not accurately portray the lives of women. A study reviewed 9 Jordanian and 13 Palestinian history, civics and national education textbooks used from seventh to twelfth grade and published between 2004 and 2008. In Jordan, men and boys feature in 79% of images in history textbooks compared with 21% for women and girls. In Palestine, history textbooks have no focus on women's roles: a 2004 history textbook for grade 10 gives examples of Western scientists and inventors such as John Dalton, Isaac Newton, and Albert Einstein and refers to the two scientists Marie and Pierre Curie. Despite being the first Palestinian history textbook to show a picture of a woman, Marie Curie is primarily mentioned as the wife of Pierre Curie, rather than as a scientist in her own right (Alayan & Al-Khalidi, 2010).

## Implications

School textbooks have traditionally ignored or misrepresented key priorities that are now believed to be crucial to achieve sustainable development. With textbooks revised only every 5–10 years, this review underscores the need for governments to reassess the content of their textbooks to improve their alignment with core values for sustainable development which countries themselves have committed to, including human rights, gender equality, environmental concern, global citizenship and peace and conflict resolution. In the case of environment and climate change, this should include ensuring that the text reflects scientifically accurate information and includes specific agents, thereby helping to foster students who can meet the environmental challenges they will face.

In the case of gender equality, textbooks should not confine women to employment that is an extension of their domestic and maternal activities. In addition to eliminating discriminatory

gendered representations, textbooks should expose common forms of gender discrimination in society and promote the rights of girls and women and the right to gender equality.

What textbooks do not teach matters as much as what they do teach. They should include stories (true or fictional) related to pro-social interpersonal behaviors, conflict resolution, and respect for diversity, with questions and guidance for class discussion and personal reflection to help students identify with positive role models. They should also include illustrations as a stimulus activity for class discussion or personal reflection.

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### 3

## Educating young people towards sustainable development and a more inclusive, global society?

### Trends in textbooks in Arab states relative to global trends, 1950–2011

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#### ABSTRACT

This brief examines the extent to which various themes around education for sustainable development (taken here to include the SDG Target 4.7 themes) are emphasized in secondary social science textbooks over time with a focus on comparing trends in the Arab world to other regions. We pay particular attention to how countries in the Arab world incorporate themes around inclusion, diversity, human rights, gender equity, and global citizenship, given that the region has been affected by insecurity and conflict in recent decades, and faces environmental challenges. Utilizing a dataset of over 500 textbooks from 78 countries, spanning 1950–2011, we find that aspects of sustainable development have been increasingly incorporated in textbooks worldwide. Although textbooks from the Arab states have slightly lower rates of emphasis on many areas of global citizenship and sustainable development, we find that these countries do not lag far behind the rest of the world. Overall, our findings suggest that there is still much to be done to promote global citizenship and sustainable development in textbooks and curricula in the Arab region and globally.

#### KEYWORDS

textbooks, cross-national analysis, Arab states, inclusion, global citizenship, human rights, gender equity

#### Introduction

This paper examines whether and how the knowledge and skills needed to promote peaceful and sustainable development, as outlined in SDG Target 4.7, have been incorporated in textbooks over time, with a particular focus on the Arab region. Specifically, we compare how discussions of the environment, human rights, gender equality, global citizenship, cultural diversity, and promotion of peace in textbooks in the Arab region compare with global trends.

Education in the Arab world is of interest to us since more than 60 percent of the region's population is under the age of 30. This demographic reality translates into 200 million people of the next generation who have the potential to be agents of change for more sustainable societies. Preparing young Arabs to become change agents is a process that needs to begin early in life. Education plays a critical role, as it can promote and instill students with knowledge, attitudes, and skills that support the building of sustainable societies.

Given that textbooks reflect curricular intentions and education policies, findings and implications from this analysis have direct relevance for policymakers and practitioners working towards building an education system aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Moreover, a global indicator for Target 4.7 is the extent to which global citizenship education (GCED) and education for sustainable development (ESD), including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in national education policies, curricula, teacher education, and student assessments (United Nations, 2018). Hence, studies of textbooks can provide an indication of the extent to which GCED and ESD are incorporated into curricula.



Because this paper focuses on textbook content, our analysis does not show how knowledge and skills pertaining to sustainable development are taught or learned in the classroom. Nonetheless, examination of textbooks is important. They not only convey knowledge and are assumed to be authoritative sources of information for students and teachers; they also reflect changing cultural norms, societal values, and political identities (Lässig and Pohl, 2009; Pingel, 2010).

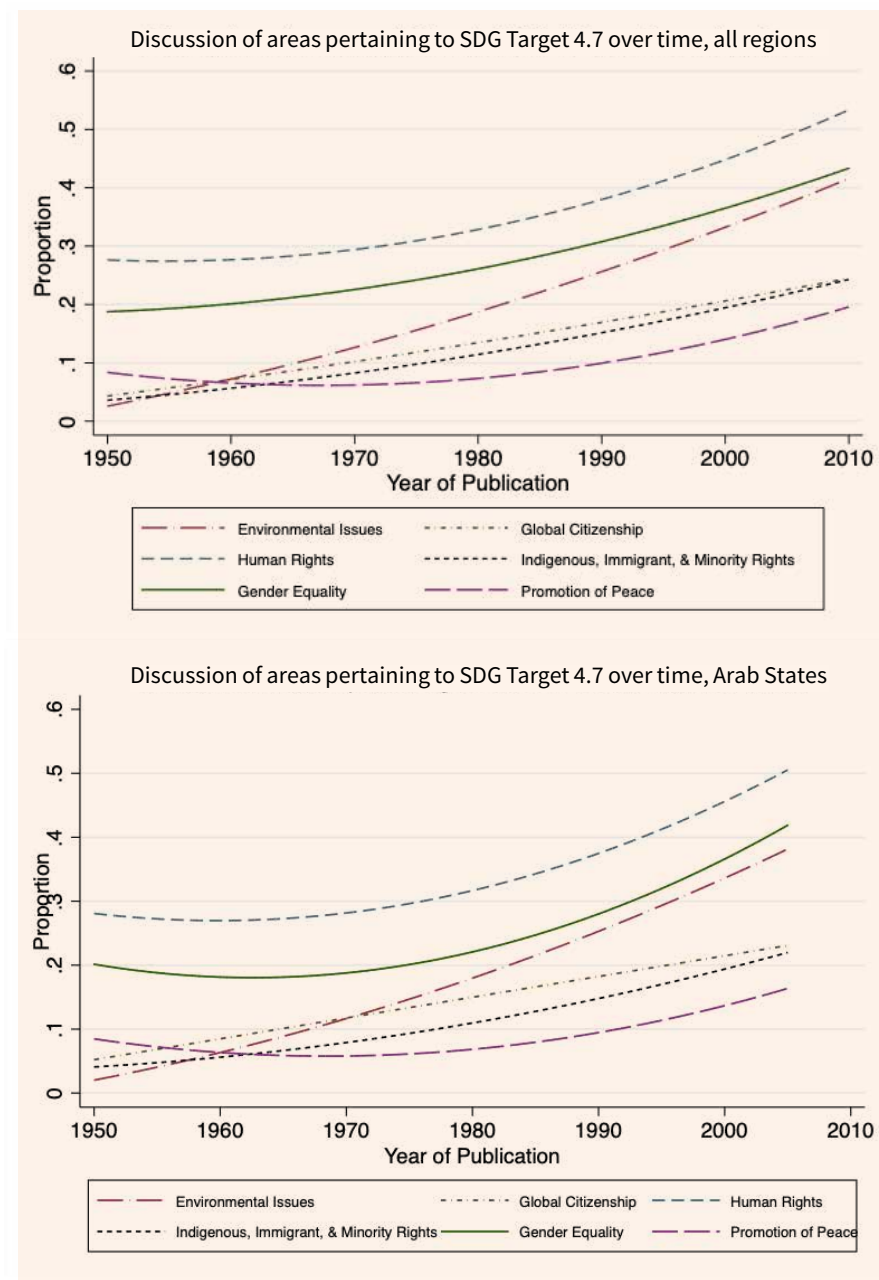
## Data and methods

This paper draws on a cross-national dataset of over 600 secondary school textbooks in history, civics and citizenship education, social studies and geography from 78 countries, spanning 1950 to 2011. The majority of textbooks in the sample come from an extensive collection housed at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Germany. Additional textbooks were collected from Stanford University's library and from those of participating researchers. Textbooks were analyzed using a standardized coding protocol, where all coders were trained in order to ensure inter-coder reliability (see Meyer et al., 2010, Bromley et al., 2011, or Bromley, 2014 for more details).

The analysis observes worldwide trends of textbook discussion of the areas specifically cited in Target 4.7—including the environment, global citizenship, human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity, and promotion of peace—and compares trends with those in the Arab states.

## Overall trends in Target 4.7 areas over time

Figure 1 below shows textbook discussion of Target 4.7 topics in textbooks over time, comparing worldwide trends to those in Arab states. The figure suggests that the proportion of textbooks incorporating Target 4.7 areas in the Arab world is not very different from the worldwide average. Textbooks across the globe have increasingly included issues and content pertaining



**Figure 1:** Discussions of various topics pertaining to SDG 4.7

to what is now called SDG Target 4.7. Among the Target 4.7 areas, issues of human rights and gender equality have been most incorporated whereas minority, indigenous, and immigrant rights (diversity) and promotion of peace have been discussed least (see also Bromley, 2014).

## Environment

Figure 1 shows that textbooks across all regions, including the Arab world, have increasingly emphasized environmental issues. The proportion of textbooks that discuss environmental protection or damage and discuss environmental challenges doubled from the 1970s to the 2000s. The proportion of textbooks discussing environmental issues in the Arab world does not differ from global averages, suggesting that countries in the Arab world discuss environmental issues in their social science curriculum as much as their counterparts.

For example, a grade 7 textbook in the United Arab Emirates (figure 2) not only teaches students about environmental damage and the need to protect the environment but also discusses how



**Figure 2:** An Emirati social studies textbook teaches students about global environmental challenges and encourages them to be responsible stewards of the environment.

they can be responsible stewards of the environment through their actions, including simple behaviors such as not polluting the environment through careless disposal of trash.

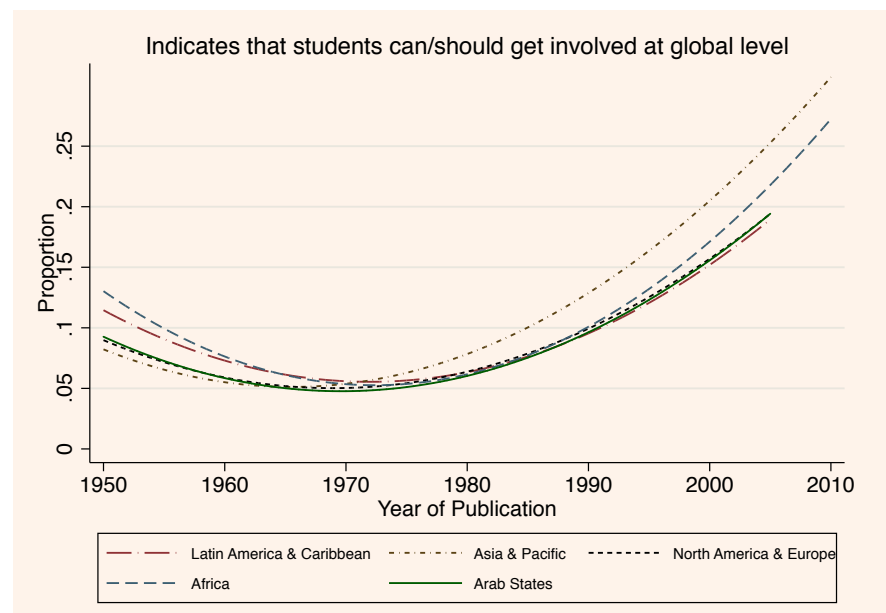
## Global Citizenship

Global citizenship education (GCED) is critical to achieving Target 4.7. Not only is global citizenship explicitly articulated under Target 4.7, but it is also closely tied with education for sustainable development, as GCED aims to ‘empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure and sustainable societies’ (UNESCO, 2014). As reflected in figure 1 above, countries across all regions have been increasingly incorporating content pertaining to global citizenship in their social science curricula. This is unsurprising given that countries have likely been increasingly incorporating content to prepare their young for an interconnected, globalized world. However, the proportion of textbooks that mentions global citizenship worldwide remains relatively low at below 25%. In other words, these figures suggest that approximately three out of four textbooks worldwide, including those in the Arab world, make no mention of global citizenship themes as such.

Furthermore, Buckner and Russell (2013) found that approximately 60% of countries’ secondary school textbooks had almost no mention at all of events outside their own respective countries. This suggests that despite progress having been made to include content pertaining to global citizenship, there is still room to include material that enables students to take a global perspective as agents living in an interconnected world. This is especially important for countries such as Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE and Egypt among others, which explicitly articulate the desire to improve their economic competitiveness and achieve sustainable development in their national visions and strategic plans.

Global citizenship education aims to inculcate students with a sense of belonging to a transnational, global community and empower learners to be responsible global citizens. Beyond simply mentioning the concept of global citizenship, some books emphasize a behavioral dimension to promote active engagement in the world. When we observe the number of textbooks that suggest ways for students to become involved globally (figure 3), we find that textbooks from the Arab world, along with those in Latin America and the Caribbean, are somewhat less likely to indicate and suggest ways that students can be involved at a regional and local level compared to textbooks in Asia and the Pacific (at under 20% compared to over 25% for textbooks in Asia and the Pacific, by the 2000s).

Nonetheless, textbooks in the Arab states, like those in other parts of the world, have increasingly incorporated elements to encourage students to get involved at the regional and global level.



**Figure 3:** Textbooks mentioning ways students can be involved and take action at regional and/or global level (by region)



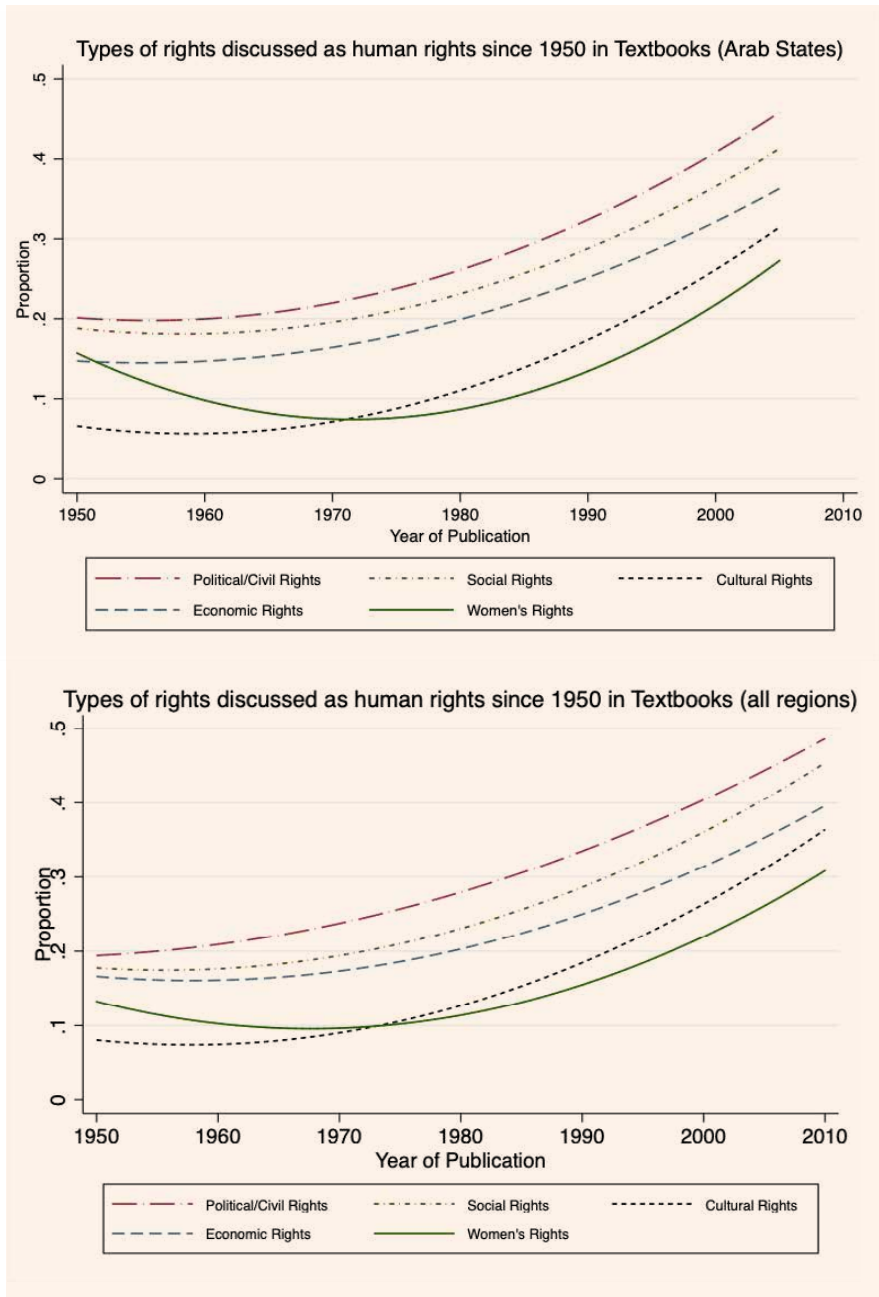
**Figure 4:** Emirati social studies textbook displaying pictures of children picking up trash to contribute to environmental sustainability

An Emirati textbook (figure 4) discusses how students can contribute to environmental sustainability and displays pictures of children picking up trash in their community. Although examples of young people taking action are at the local level, the issues they address are also regional and global.

## Human rights

A key component of global citizenship education is the understanding of human rights. Human rights education promotes values, beliefs, and attitudes that not only enable students to understand that they are members of their respective local communities and a global community but also encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others (Tibbitts, 2002; Meyer et al., 2010; Bajaj, 2011; United Nations, 2012). Therefore, human rights education is critical to enable young people not only to live together with others respectfully and peacefully but also assume active roles, as global citizens, to ensure that the rights of others are also upheld in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and sustainable societies.





**Figure 5:** Types of rights discussed as human rights in textbooks

The blue, dashed lines in figure 1 above ('human rights' label) plot the explicit mentions of human rights in textbooks since 1950. While the figure shows that human rights have been increasingly mentioned in textbooks in the latter half of the 20th century, the strongest growth took place from the 1990s into the 2000s, globally and in Arab states as well.

In order to understand what kinds of rights these textbooks cover, we observe the extent to which different types of rights are discussed in textbooks over time. As reflected in figure 5, we observe worldwide trends (left) compared to trends for Arab states.

We find little difference in trends between the world average and the Arab states. Coverage of political/civil rights, social rights, economic rights, and cultural rights have all increased steadily since 1950. Discussion of women's rights



**Figure 6:** Fourth-grade Emirati social studies textbook discussing civic life of women

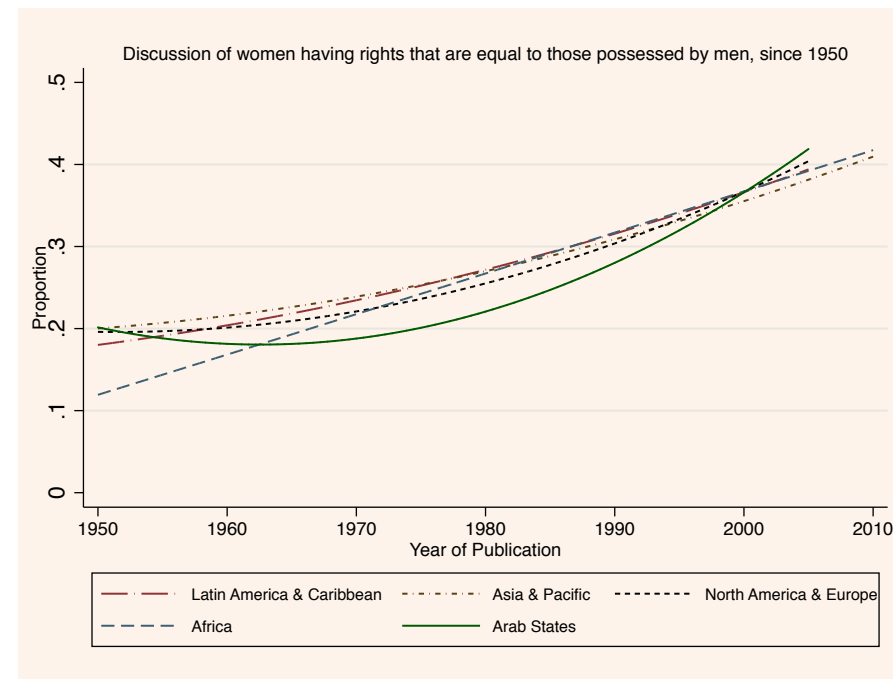
decreased between the 1950s and 1970s but began to increase from the 1980s. We also find that political and civil rights are most frequently discussed in textbooks, followed by social and economic rights. Cultural rights and women's rights are discussed the least in textbooks in the Arab world.

Although the focus of our brief is on secondary school social studies textbooks, we find that students are exposed to various types of human rights in earlier years. A fourth-grade textbook provides examples of civic life for women in the United Arab Emirates in addition to letting students know about the Women's Union (figure 6). The Women's Union in the UAE seeks to promote the status and position of women and advocate on women's behalf to increase their participation in all aspects of life. Additionally, this textbook includes examples of women participating in civic and political life of Emirati society.

## Gender equality

Given that gender equality is promoted by the SDGs, it is important to observe how textbooks describe issues pertaining to women in society. Nakagawa and Wotipka (2016) studied how discussion of women and their rights has expanded worldwide and found a steady increase in the discussion of women and their rights in textbooks. Jimenez et al. (2017) also found that depictions of discrimination against women increased between 2000 and 2011. However, other studies have found that textbooks have disseminated gender bias, prejudice, and discrimination, especially for women of color (Blumberg, 2015; Bhog & Ghose, 2014). Certainly, textbook content can be inconsistent, and contain both depictions of rights and evidence of bias.

When we examine discussion in textbooks of women having equal rights to men (figure 7), we find that, on average, there has been a steady worldwide increase over time, with approximately 40% of textbooks globally discussing this issue by the 2000s, compared to only 20% in the 1950s. The only region where there



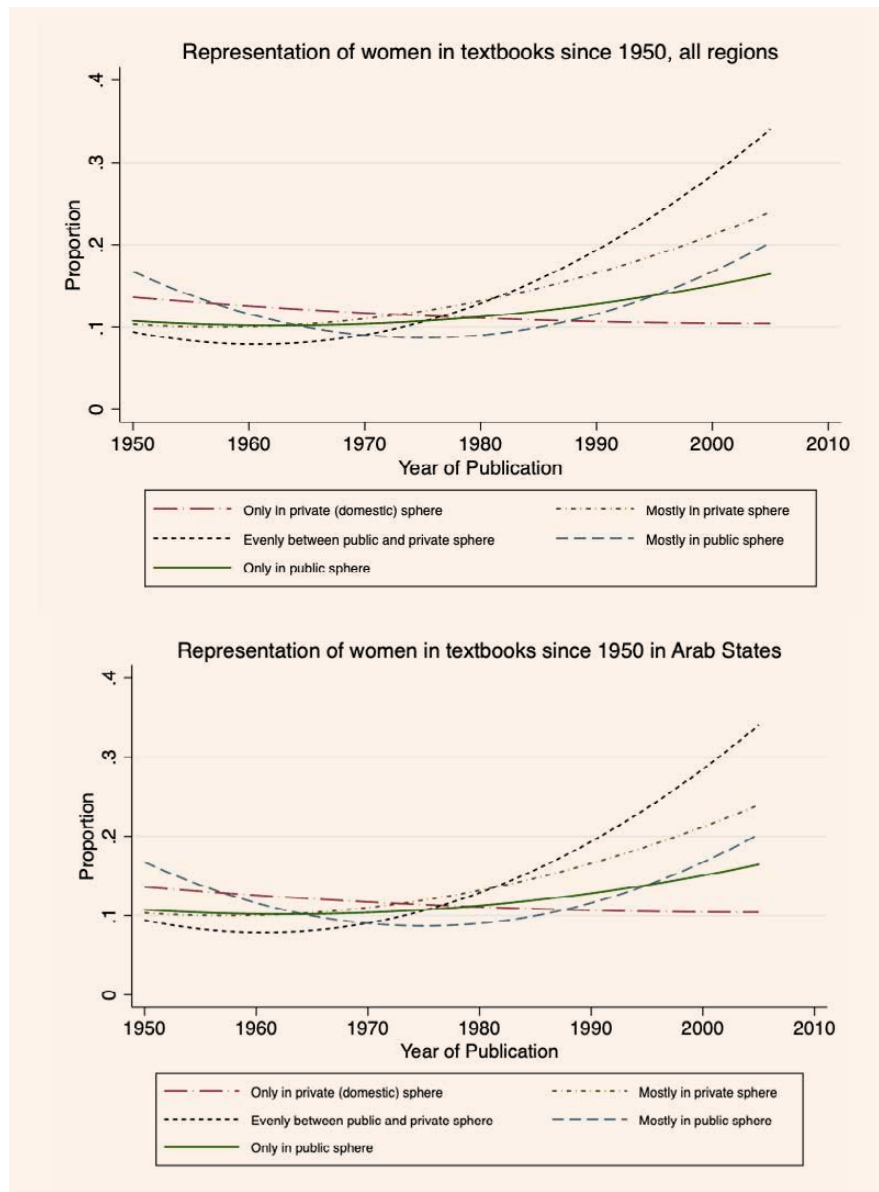
**Figure 7:** Discussion of women having rights equal to men, by region

appears to be a relatively sharp increase (in the 1990s) in discussion of this issue is the Arab world: discussion of women having equal rights to men doubled between the 1980s and the 2000s, at which point the proportion of textbooks discussing this issue surpassed that in other regions.

Discussion of women's rights relative to men's rights in textbooks provides insights into how various countries conceptualize and portray gender equality in terms of rights. However, this does not provide a holistic picture of gender equality, as it is not enough to recognize that men and women have equal rights. How women are portrayed in society and the kinds of roles they are expected and assumed to take are also important indicators for gender equality.

Given our findings above and our regional focus on Arab states, we examine how women are represented in textbooks from Arab countries since 1950 (figure 8). We find that there is a slight decline





**Figure 8:** Representation of women in textbooks

in the proportion of textbook representations that show women participating only in the private (domestic) sphere (red dash-dot line). And in the current era, the highest rate of representation of women in society is when they are shown equally in the public and private spheres (short, black dashed line), followed by women mostly being in the private sphere. By the 2000s, less than 20% of textbooks from the Arab world portray women as being mostly in the public sphere or only in the public sphere. These patterns are similar to worldwide trends (figure 8), although Arab states have a slightly higher proportion of textbooks portraying women mostly in the private sphere and a smaller proportion of women portrayed as being in the public sphere.

Figure 9 shows a 7th-grade Syrian textbook from 2006, portraying women entering the workplace and being active members of the workforce. We cannot tell the extent to which this view of women being in the public space is shared by family members and whether such behavior is actually encouraged in young women by families and communities. Nonetheless, it appears that textbooks portray women as participants in the public sphere through labor market participation. Such continued portrayal of women in the workforce, in addition to other public domains of society such as politics, would contribute to gender equality and realization of the SDGs.



**Figure 9:** 7th-grade Syrian textbook portraying women as part of the workforce

## Cultural diversity

Cultural background and heritage fundamentally shape people's own identity, and their perceptions of others. Safeguarding and promoting diverse cultures can pave the way for human-centered, inclusive, and equitable development policies that can contribute to realizing other goals such as SDG 11 of building safe and inclusive cities. Embracing and appreciating cultural diversity, however, begins with being exposed to, and learning about, various groups, cultures, languages, and traditions. Figure 1 shows that textbooks across the world and also in the Arab world have increasingly included discussions of the rights of migrants, refugees, minorities, and indigenous people over time, with little variation from the global average.

A 9th-grade Palestinian social studies textbook from 2017, for example, incorporates content that builds knowledge and skills about other religions and cultural practices so that students can engage in intercultural communications (figure 10). This shows how textbooks are increasingly being revised to instill learners with knowledge and skills to be participants in an interconnected world.

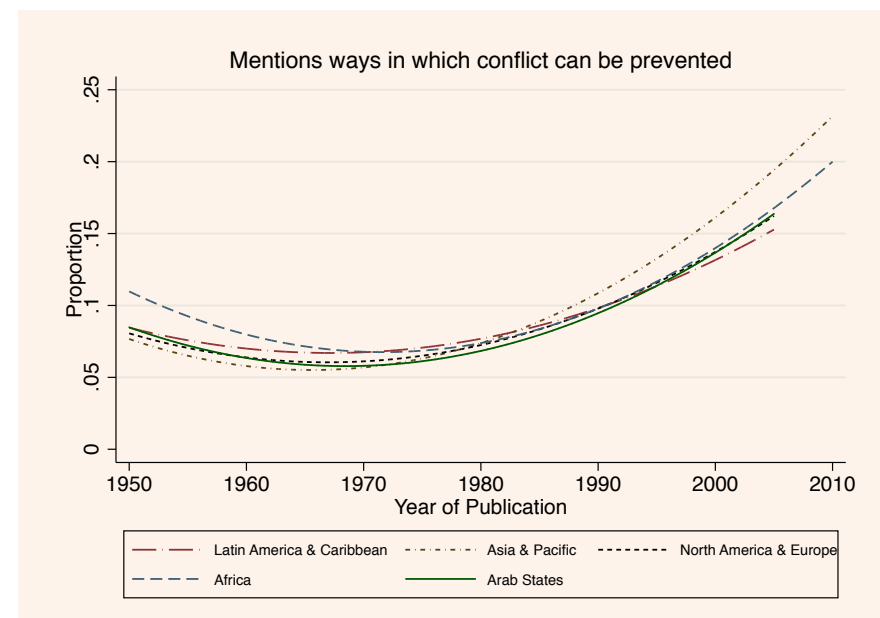


**Figure 10:** Palestinian textbook incorporating aspects of intercultural communications

## Promoting peace

On the one hand, social science textbooks can highlight cultural, social and ethnic diversity, and promote inclusion, mutual respect and tolerance towards peace. On the other hand, textbooks can contribute to conflict and violence by promoting narrow nationalism, political and religious bias, and propaganda through inaccurate and imbalanced content (Greaney, 2006). If education, especially sustainable development education, is to contribute to building peaceful and inclusive societies, textbooks should provide avenues for students to discuss conflict prevention and reconciliation.

Figure 11 shows trends in the proportion of books that mention ways in which conflict can be prevented, since 1950. We find an increase in the proportion of textbooks discussing ways to prevent conflict, especially since the 1980s. The proportion is fairly even across world regions, except for the Asia and Pacific region, which



**Figure 11:** Textbook mentions of ways in which conflict can be prevented

appears to discuss conflict prevention more than other regions. Nonetheless, the overall proportion of textbooks that mention conflict prevention is quite low, hovering between 15% and 20% well into the 2000s.

## Reflections

Textbooks, globally, have increasingly incorporated discussions of the environment, global citizenship, human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity, and promotion of peace. These trends are similar for the Arab states. We find that Arab states are on par with global averages in incorporating knowledge and skills that pertain to Target 4.7 in textbooks throughout the latter half of the 20th and into the early 21st century. However, levels of incorporation are relatively low globally, and specifically in the Arab world. Less than 30% of textbooks in our sample mention global citizenship or discuss issues pertaining to cultural diversity, tolerance, and promotion of peace. There is still much work to be done to place greater emphasis on global citizenship and sustainable development education in textbooks. In addition, classroom implementation of textbook content may vary dramatically worldwide; research on student learning is an important complement to examining curricular content.

Moreover, although textbooks have increasingly discussed ways in which conflict could be prevented, textbooks and curricula still play a role in exacerbating social tensions. The presence of intolerant or inflammatory discourse in textbooks is not limited to one region (e.g. Canadian textbooks sometimes contain anti-American sentiment). But perpetuating intolerance through education may be particularly problematic when there is ongoing conflict across religious, ethnic, and tribal lines. Textbooks in Palestine often present history and the current situation from a unilateral perspective that provides negative descriptions of the other and offers little information about the religious, cultural, and social life of the other (Groiss, 2003). In parallel, Israeli

textbooks commonly depict Palestinians and Arabs as terrorists, disempowered refugees, or primitive farmers (Peled-Elhanan, 2012). Such portrayals of the other provide challenges to realizing goals of building peaceful, tolerant communities as articulated in Target 4.7. A major limitation of our work is that we systematically coded books only for the presence of SDG-related themes, and not for the presence of anti-global, nationalist, intolerant or aggressive content. Future research along these lines will be important, especially given the global trend away from democracy and towards populism and nationalism.

Improving textbooks and underlying curricula to promote sustainable development and global citizenship involves many challenges. Governments may lack the necessary resources to revise or create textbooks and instructional materials in line with their commitments to Target 4.7. Moreover, in countries with long histories of conflict, tension and/or marginalization, it may be even more difficult to incorporate content emphasizing a culture of peace and non-violence, a shift towards reconciliation and an appreciation of cultural diversity.

Substantive progress towards the SDGs by 2030 requires countries to consider revising textbooks and relevant curricula to incorporate discussion of environmental sustainability, human rights, gender equality, peace and non-violence, and global citizenship. Textbooks remain central to classroom teaching and learning in most countries worldwide. Guidelines may be pertinent in helping countries to incorporate values underlying Target 4.7 into curricula. Moreover, the development of specific indicators to understand the extent to which global citizenship and sustainable development education are incorporated into national curricula worldwide is recommended to ensure that curricula worldwide are oriented to achieving the SDGs and to working towards a more peaceful society for the future.

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## 4

# Rethinking schooling for the 21st century: The state of Education for Peace, Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in Asia

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### ABSTRACT

As its contribution to the meaningful implementation of SDG Target 4.7, UNESCO MGIEP conducted a study to analyze how far the ideals of Target 4.7 are embodied in policies and curricula across 22 Asian countries. This paper reports on some of the findings and implications of this investigation, which was published in 2017 as *Rethinking Schooling for the 21st Century: The State of Education for Peace, Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in Asia*.

### KEYWORDS

Education for Sustainable Development, ESD, Global Citizenship Education, GCED, Asia, curriculum, education policy

## UNESCO MGIEP's commitment to the SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a shared global ambition and intergovernmental commitment to meet a range of targets by 2030. UNESCO is committed to realizing the SDGs through improving the quality of education worldwide. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) is UNESCO's first Category 1 education-related Institute in the Asia-Pacific region and the only Institute devoted to education for peace and sustainable development, as

enshrined in SDG Target 4.7. While other targets under SDG 4 focus on expanding educational opportunities and equipping learners with skills for employment, Target 4.7 rearticulates a humanistic agenda for education and underscores the international consensus around promoting transformative education to advance wellbeing for all (UN, 2015).

In considering its contribution to Target 4.7, UNESCO MGIEP has called for integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) in education systems. UNESCO MGIEP is currently conducting a literature review to provide a firm foundation for developing a conceptual framework for re-envisioning education that is based on insights from neuroscience and cognitive psychology. It is hoped that this framework will help highlight what is fundamental to human existence, and what must be more explicitly addressed in formal education systems to transform how we relate to each other and the planet we all share.<sup>1</sup> Prior to focusing on SEL, UNESCO MGIEP conducted a study to analyze how far the ideals of Target 4.7 are embodied in policies and curricula across 22 Asian countries to establish benchmarks against which future progress can be assessed. The findings and implications of this investigation were published in *Rethinking Schooling for the 21st Century*:

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1 In fall 2019, UNESCO MGIEP is launching a new process called 'Global Education Assessment' (working title), a massive, interdisciplinary literature review of education systems, which will mobilize over 200 scholars. Inspired by the [Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#) and other scientific environmental assessments, the overall goal of the proposed Global Education Assessment (GEA) is to pool expertise on education from a range of stakeholders and undertake a scientifically robust and evidence-based assessment that can inform education policy-making at all levels. It is not to be policy-prescriptive but to provide policy-relevant information and recommendations to improve education systems and the way we organize learning in formal and non-formal settings. The GEA serves as a scientific assessment component of the Futures of Education process to be launched by UNESCO Paris in 2019, which provides a follow-up to UNESCO's seminal work from more than two decades ago, *Learning the Treasure Within*, also known as the 1996 Delors Report. The first GEA report is expected to be launched at the 41st UNESCO General Conference in fall 2021, together with the Future of Education report.



## Policy and curriculum review across 22 Asian countries: methods for monitoring Target 4.7

The UN's defined global indicator for Target 4.7 is the 'extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment.'<sup>2</sup> The Rethinking Schooling report expanded on a project conducted by UNESCO MGIEP in partnership with the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok) in 2016 and 2017, which reviewed the state of incorporating Target 4.7 concepts in national education policies and officially-mandated curricula in 22 Asian countries.

**Table 1:** Countries covered by the study

East Asia	Southeast Asia	South Asia	Central Asia
China	Cambodia	Afghanistan	Kazakhstan
Japan	Indonesia	Bangladesh	Kyrgyzstan
Republic of Korea	Lao PDR	Bhutan	Mongolia
	Malaysia	India	Uzbekistan
	Philippines	Islamic Republic of Iran	
	Thailand	Nepal	
	Vietnam	Pakistan	
		Sri Lanka	

The project involved more than 60 researchers from the region, including peer reviewers. Focusing on primary and lower secondary education, it examined key education policy and curricular documents in each country, including national

<sup>2</sup> All SDG indicators can be found at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>

curriculum frameworks and 4th and 8th grade subject curricula. The materials—172 documents in 18 languages—were analyzed using a common coding scheme adapted from previous UNESCO studies (UNESCO, 2016a; IBE-UNESCO & APCEIU, 2016). While these previous studies had focused on so-called 'carrier subjects' of 4.7-related concepts such as civic and citizenship education and history, the current study also looked at 'core subjects' (mathematics, science, social studies, and language) in the official curriculum. This decision was taken because the latter subjects constitute a significant proportion of instructional hours, have mandatory and examinable status, and play a consequential role in forming the enduring dispositions of children and adolescents. The coding exercise produced a rich dataset of 19,197 coded excerpts. The next section presents the study's key findings, including intriguing regional trends, based on the coding results, the 22 country-level background reports, and an extensive review of literature on Asian schooling.

## Key findings

The results of the content analysis of 172 documents showed the prevalence or relative weight of different concepts embedded in Target 4.7 (e.g. human rights, gender equality, global citizenship) in education policies and curricula in Asia. Across all 22 countries and among more than 80 sub-categories included in the coding scheme, 'nation as privileged referent of identity' was found to be the most prevalent concept, with the normalized weighting score of 85 (out of 100).<sup>3</sup> In sharp contrast, 'humanity as a privileged

<sup>3</sup> Given the variability in the number of documents and excerpts coded for each country, there was a need to normalize the data for cross-country comparison. Each country-specific sub-category weightage was calculated by dividing the number of excerpts coded for that category by the total number of excerpts coded for all documents for a particular country. The normalized weightage score for each concept for each country was calculated by assigning graded points to five levels of weightage (very high [more than 5 per cent] = 4; high →

referent of identity’ received a score of 31. The list below highlights the most prevalent concepts across 22 countries.

**Table 2:** The most prevalent concepts in education policy and curriculum documents across 22 countries

Concept	Normalized weighting score (out of 100)
1 nation as privileged referent of identity	85
2 critical thinking	82
3 culture and heritage	81
4 problem solving	79
5 human resource development	78
6 creative thinking	77
7 empathy	77
8 collaboration	72

The results suggest that competencies such as critical thinking, empathy, and collaboration—which are associated with Target 4.7—are already integrated into education policy and curricula. These competencies, however, are often not valued as attributes of ‘global citizens’ but as attributes necessary for advancing national economic growth. As elaborated below, the study showed that the purpose of education is often conceived narrowly, in economic and instrumentalist terms, rather

[1-5 per cent] = 3; moderate [0.5-1 per cent] = 2; low [less than 0.5 per cent] = 1; absence = 0). The Total Normalized Weighting Score for each concept was then calculated by summing up the normalized weightage score for each concept for each country and then normalizing this number by the total possible points for all 22 countries (very high weightage across all 22 countries = 4 x 22 = 88) and then multiplying this number by 100, so that the final normalizing factor = 100/88). The Total Normalized Weighting Score will then range from 0 (total absence of the concept in policy and curricular documents analyzed across all 22 countries) to 100 (the concept receiving ‘very high prevalence or weightage’ in all 22 countries).

than in a manner that ensures sustainable, flourishing societies attuned to the holistic well-being of their citizens and future generations. Instrumentalism was strongly evident both in countries that have recently opened up economically and in those that have already achieved ‘developed’ status. The coded data showed an overwhelming focus on education’s role in human resource development across the 22 countries, while references to concepts such as climate change, gender equity, and peace-building were sparse (with normalized weighting scores of 30, 15 and 12, respectively).

The coded data also corroborated the observation that schooling commonly prioritizes uncritical, state-centered patriotism over all other aims (see Vickers and Kumar, 2015). Curricula in many Asian countries endorse strong ethno-nationalist identities, often reducing minorities or migrants to second-class status. The explicit, positive embrace of regional or transnational identities in Asian curricula is strikingly absent. Furthermore, there was almost no emphasis on nurturing autonomous, critical and engaged citizens who use their voice in determining their own collective future. For example, ‘activism’ was absent in 15 countries, and ‘civil liberties’ did not feature in the policy and curricular documents of 9 of the 22 countries studied. While there was considerable emphasis on preparing children for competitive participation in the global economy, most documents were quiet on the role of education in empowering young people to engage with and in the world critically and responsibly.

In addition to these challenges of instrumentalism and nationalism, the competitive ethos of education—both among countries and individual students—poses a major challenge to meaningful implementation of Target 4.7. The spread of examination-preparatory ‘shadow education’ has fueled competition, with serious implications for equity and the quality of public education (see Bray and Lynkins, 2012; Bray et al., 2015). In many societies, differentiated school experiences among the ‘elite’ and the ‘masses,’ along with endemic ‘credentialism’

(excessive reliance on academic credentials as the measure of a person's ability), threaten to undermine solidarity and a sense of shared humanity.

## Challenges and limitations

The use of the common coding scheme posed challenges inherent to content analysis as a methodology for cross-country comparison. Despite applying a structured approach to addressing inter-observer error, there were limitations in the design of the coding scheme due to the ambiguity of the concepts encompassed in Target 4.7 (for example, different notions of 'sustainable development' and 'global citizenship' are discussed in Chapter 1 of the report [UNESCO MGIEP, 2017a]), as well as in the coding methods employed. These issues complemented concerns over coder variability and coding validity. There were also limitations in the dataset. To complete coding within the project timeframe, it was decided to code subject curricula for only the 4th and 8th grades. This sampling decision may have skewed the coding results since a topic reported as 'missing' in a country's policy or curricular documents may in fact be addressed in other grades. The validity of the findings would have been strengthened if documents from all grade levels in primary and secondary education had been coded. This would also have enabled analysis of the different emphasis that particular concepts receive in different grades and levels.

Most importantly, the coded data alone provide only a partial picture of the state of education in each country. This is because policy and curricular documents frequently perform symbolic functions—conveying official aspirations or deflecting public criticism, rather than reflecting actual realities in the classroom. The analyses require further grounding in the historical, economic, and geopolitical context as well as in theoretical understanding of education policy and curriculum. At one level, the study sought to develop benchmarks against which future progress can be assessed. On another level, it showed that key concepts associated

with Target 4.7 could be deployed in ways that are not aligned with pursuit of the target. To give an illustrative example, 'peace' was given instrumental utility—rather than an intrinsic core value—in a 4th grade social studies textbook from Pakistan, when presented as a source of respect from other countries and as a means to attract foreign direct investment (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017a, p.156). This raises concerns about what can be concluded from monitoring approaches that are based on (i) administrative self-reporting in relation to international standard-setting instruments and (ii) tracking the 'presence' or 'absence' of key terms in official documents.

## Lessons learned and ways forward

If sustainable development is to be pursued through schooling, we must address the intertwined, fundamental challenges around promoting peace, sustainability, and global citizenship through education. These challenges are not simply the often-cited obstacles, which range from lack of awareness, collaboration, and resources to the difficulties of scaling 'good practices.' They encompass more fundamental and complex barriers to meaningful implementation of Target 4.7 and include the challenges of: (i) instrumentalism and ethics; (ii) nationalism and identities; and (iii) competitiveness and regimentation.

Both the instrumental utility and intrinsic value of education are important, but addressing the former should not blind us to the significance of the latter. A vision of education as a tool for success in the 'global knowledge economy' must not be allowed to distract from an emphasis on the crucial role of schooling in promoting equity, valuing diversity, and fostering active, participatory citizenship. Similarly, in seeking to challenge and transcend a narrowly nationalistic outlook, superficial or symbolic insertion into curricula of concepts associated with Target 4.7 will achieve nothing at best and, at worst, may subvert meaningful action. Designing curricula conducive to achieving Target 4.7 requires

going beyond technical adjustments at the periphery of the existing education system: a far-reaching reassessment of the nature and core purposes of schooling is needed for sustainable development to become a reality. Policymakers are encouraged to uphold Target 4.7 as the key to implementing both SDG 4 and all other 16 SDGs.

While 'sustainable development' and 'global citizenship' are often presented as add-ons designed to gear up schooling for the 21st century, they in fact challenge us to fundamentally rethink and redefine the purposes of education. These notions, if taken seriously, require us to make a radical departure from how education is conceptualized and organized today. Capturing this transformative aspiration of SDG 4.7 is a daunting yet pressing task. Policymakers urgently need to make promoting peace, sustainability, and a consciousness of shared humanity central to their vision for educational development, including much more focus on improving inputs, such as curriculum development, teacher training, and teaching materials (for the imperative of improving the quality of textbooks, see UNESCO, 2016b; UNESCO MGIEP, 2017b), rather than on simply monitoring outputs. Policymakers should be aware that claims of economic growth resulting from the success of schooling in fostering economically relevant skills, as measured by test scores, simply lack a solid grounding in the statistical evidence (Wolf, 2002; Komatsu and Rappleye, 2017; Klees et al., 2012). In order for us to re-envision schooling to advance wellbeing for all, it is critically important that Target 4.7 takes center stage—not just because implementation of SDG 4 on education depends on it, but because successful implementation of all the other 16 SDGs, and the larger UN sustainable development agenda, is not possible without it.

## Disclaimer

The ideas and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO or UNESCO MGIEP and do not commit the Organization.

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## 5

# How Japan interprets Education for Sustainable Development and social and emotional learning

SUGATA SUMIDA

### ABSTRACT

How a country incorporates a global concept varies according to its history and culture. This brief discusses how Japan sought to promote the idea of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), how it interpreted ESD and, further, how it can contextualize the concept of social and emotional learning (SEL) to its own culture. It shows that when Japan proposed the idea of ESD to the international community, it wanted to send a strong environmental message. For the concept of sustainable development, Japan had an image that linked with the former Edo era. Regarding SEL, Japan incorporated much of what the USA offers in its own SEL courses, within the broad framework of morality. To teach morality, Japan has now included moral education as a course in the curriculum as well as an ethical framework to guide social attitudes and behaviors across the life of the school.

### KEYWORDS

Japan, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), social and emotional learning (SEL), moral education, cultural context

## Introduction

While global concepts generally operate within a general definition, each country interprets and contextualizes concepts in its own way, usually linked with its own history and culture. Thus, interpretations differ. In this brief, I describe my observations on

how ESD and SEL are incorporated in Japan. Since it was Japan that originally proposed the idea of ESD to the international community, I look at the intention of the ESD proposal and also the interpretation of sustainable development. For SEL, acknowledging it as a growing global concept that has been systematized in the USA, I discuss how it can be contextualized in Japanese culture.

## The intention of the ESD proposal by Japan

ESD became a global concept in 2002 when the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) was adopted as the UN Decade campaign. It aimed to 'integrate the principles, values, and practices about sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning,' with three pillars of activities: economy, society and the environment.

However, when Japan proposed the DESD in 2002, it seemed to promote it as having a strong element of environmental education. The idea was proposed jointly by the Japanese delegation and the Japanese consortium expert group called the Japan Forum for Johannesburg (JFJ). The delegation was co-led by the Foreign Minister and Environment Minister, and the members of JFJ were mostly from environmental NGOs. At first, at the third preparatory meeting, they proposed the idea as a Decade of Education for Environment (DEE). This was criticized for its narrow scope and was thus changed to the DESD—including wider aspects of development—and was re-submitted at the fourth preparatory meeting. The change was made within three months, between the third and fourth meetings.

Meanwhile, the Japanese government had always been eager to provide international leadership in the environment sector. The government considered that it had ample knowledge about the environment sector through experiences tackling severe pollution issues that occurred after the rapid economic growth of the 1960s. In response to those issues, the government had legislated an Environment Education Policy and included environmental

education in the school curriculum. At the international level, the government also hosted several international environmental conferences such as the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1984 and the 3rd Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP3) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto in 1997. At the grassroots level, many environment NGOs were established and local governments and teacher unions started activities on environmental education. At the press conference before the Summit, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that ‘we recovered from the pollution that ruined our beautiful land during the 1960s and 1970s. ... We, a member of human society, are obligated to share our experiences and lessons.’ He also mentioned (using the metaphor of a card game) that ‘the environment sector is a key card in diplomatic relations for Japan, and we have to use the card strategically.’

Japan had been active throughout the implementation of the Decade campaign from 2005 to 2015 by being the largest donor to the program; it is assumed that the proposer’s intention remains strong at the global level and in Japan.

## **Interpretation of ESD in Japan**

When Japan proposed the ESD idea, it seems that it began from a unique national image about sustainable development. In Japan, the concept of sustainable development was deeply linked to the former Edo era, between 1603 and 1868, under the rule of the Tokugawa government. The Tokugawa adopted a policy of isolation and banned all diplomatic and trade relations with foreign countries. During this period, people lived only with products made in Japan: they had to produce, use, and dispose of all products within the country. For this reason, it was called a self-sufficient system. Life was based on the sustainable and efficient use of energy. People lived with natural energy only, in its various forms. The oil for lighting at night was made from oilseed rape, and the paper was made from mulberry trees. The source of heat

was firewood and charcoal and parts of thickets that had grown in previous years. The sources of power were either workforce, animal power, or water power. The workforce and animal power drew on plant energy, and the water power was sourced from rainfall; rainwater was previously evaporated by solar energy (Ishikawa 1993). Human faeces and raw garbage were used as manure for cultivating rice and were also treated as merchandise and exchanged for money and vegetables (Yoshida, 2010).

In terms of lifestyle, Edo people lived with minimum income and minimum information about communities beyond their own (Nakamura 2009). Their houses were made from local wood and grass, reed and straw, which suited the Japanese climate and also are all recyclable biomass. The houses were built very close to each other and the community had strong local cooperation. Although the population of the country was already over 30 million people, there were few outbreaks of infectious diseases. For over 200 years, in this era of self-sufficiency, the Japanese people sustained a large population and productive economy.

Given this history, the Japanese government often refers to the Edo era as a sustainable society or specifically to a ‘primitive recycling society’ and recommends following their lifestyle. Scholars also call the era a ‘recycled ecological society’ and explain the vision of a sustainable society, a sustainable future, and sustainable development.

## **Contextualization of Social and Emotional Learning in Japan**

The previous section described how Japan developed a unique approach in promoting ESD and also a distinctive interpretation of ESD. We would also expect Japan to create a unique perspective and framework in relation to SEL. In the Japanese context, social and emotional competencies can be captured in the broad framework of morality. Morality is a basis of developing personal character personality and cultivating national citizens, and is realized as

‘competences to think about the essence of things, the attitude to face reality faithfully, and rich emotions and sensibility which are the foundation of academic ability and healthy body’ (MEXT, 2018). The Japanese notion of morality is taught in the moral education class at primary and secondary schools, with a curriculum consisting of 22 values grouped into four perspectives that are based on relationships between people:

**Table 1: Moral values**

<p><b>A</b> Values related to oneself</p>	<p>Judgment about good and bad, autonomy, freedom and responsibility Honesty, good faith Discipline, moderation Growth of one’s personality Having hope and courage, making an effort and having strong will Quest for truth</p>
<p><b>B</b> Values related to relationship with others</p>	<p>Kindness, compassion Appreciation Courtesy Friendship, trust Mutual understanding, tolerance</p>
<p><b>C</b> Values related to relationship with group and society</p>	<p>Respect for rule Justice, fairness, social justice Hard work, public-mindedness Love of family love, fulfillment of family life Better school life, fulfillment of living in a group Respect for tradition and culture, Love country and home International understanding, international friendship</p>
<p><b>D</b> Values related to relationship with life, nature, and the sublime</p>	<p>The nobility of life The preservation of nature Feeling moved, feeling awe The joy of living better</p>

*Source: Commentary on the Courses of Study for Middle Schools, translated by author*

The first perspective includes values related to oneself, and includes judgment about good and bad, honesty, discipline, growth of personality, having hope and courage, and the quest for truth. The second includes values related to relationships with other people, and includes kindness, appreciation, courtesy, friendship, and mutual understanding. The third includes values related to relationships with groups and society and includes respect for rule, justice, hard work, love of family, better school life, respect for tradition and culture, and international understanding. The fourth includes values related to the relationship with life, nature and the sublime, and including the nobility of life, preservation of nature, the feeling of being moved, and the joy of living better.

Compared with a Western SEL framework, two values are particularly unique to Japan. One is courtesy, the skill of ‘understanding the significance of courtesy and behaving appropriately according to the occasion and demand.’ It is considered as a behavior ritual that maintains social life, order and custom, which has fed into Japanese culture. The specific skills include language, attitude and behavior: students are expected to make a greeting and bow, and use the appropriate language according to the TPO (time, place and occasion). Language is particularly unique, as the Japanese language has different forms of speaking such as the polite form and the honorific form that is specifically used for talking with elders.

The second distinctive value is the competency of family love and fulfillment of family life. The curriculum explains that this competency is to ‘respect parents and grandparents, and live a fulfilling family life with an awareness of being a member of the family.’ It may be related to the trend of the small and isolated family unit in Japan, or the nuclear family. Many families leave their parents and live in a single household in a different city or place. Children in the nuclear family sometimes fail to develop family bonds, and thus have difficulty in building good relationships with other people. In this context, special attention on family love is needed for the Japanese SEL framework.

Moral education has been officially taught in the Japanese school system since 1958, as a special time/class on the timetable. Schools are free to conduct the class or not, and the content varies according to the teacher and school. Therefore, the implementation of moral education across geographical areas and schools is quite uneven. Moral values are also supposed to be acquired throughout school-life activities, including activities that teachers require of students in order to enable them to acquire social and emotional competencies, such as cleaning the classroom and serving lunch for classmates. Most schools have small animals such as rabbits, birds, plants and flowers in their schoolyards, which students are expected to take care of. Through these activities, they learn not only how to clean or take care of animals, but also acquire the competencies of cooperation, equity, and responsibility.

In recent years, however, the approach of moral education has been revised as bullying issues have increased in prevalence. Since 2018, moral education has become a compulsory subject and all primary and secondary schools are now mandated to conduct a moral education class. This change is intended to ensure that all school children take moral education and acquire moral values at schools. It also includes using government-approved textbooks that contain topics about bullying and the SDGs. Furthermore, the new textbooks are designed to promote students to think and discuss by themselves, and include problem-solving and experience-based practice.

## Reflection

Japan's incorporation of global concepts such as ESD and SEL exemplifies the need to adapt these concepts to the national context. Japan's intention for the ESD proposal was focused on the environmental message, and its interpretation of ESD has been effectively linked with the Edo era. Likewise, many elements of SEL had already been incorporated in moral education classes and school activities, while others can fairly easily be added to

the concept of moral education. Countries with shared cultural elements or historical backgrounds may interpret global concepts in a similar way, but each needs to incorporate positive elements, drawing on its own culture to address contemporary challenges. It is important to bear in mind how the understanding and implementation of a global concept can vary greatly according to national and cultural context.

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## 6

# How are Target 4.7 themes and related issues addressed in non-formal and youth and adult education from a lifelong learning perspective?

ULRIKE HANEMANN

### ABSTRACT

This brief examines some trends of how SDG Target 4.7 themes and related issues are addressed in non-formal and adult education, from a lifelong learning perspective. Due to a lack of robust evidence, conclusions can be drawn only on the basis of a few examples. Nevertheless, Target 4.7 themes are far from new to the field of adult literacy and education. There are numerous examples of youth and adult education programs, particularly from civil society, that have effectively included these themes in their curricula and learning materials for a long time. Moreover, much adult learning around Target 4.7 themes takes place in the context of social movements, outside curriculum-based, non-formal adult education programs. Many of these programs and initiatives target disadvantaged populations and work with a vision of social transformation. Lifelong learning, in particular youth and adult learning and education, will become increasingly urgent to effectively address global sustainability challenges in the future.

### KEYWORDS

lifelong learning, youth and adult learning and education, adult literacy, non-formal education

## Introduction

This brief focuses on Target 4.7 themes and related issues in non-formal youth and adult education from a lifelong learning perspective. It seeks to address aspects of the following questions:

- In countries where lifelong learning opportunities are fairly well established, how much demand is there for programs that focus on Target 4.7 themes? Is there any evidence that the demand for or supply of such programs has increased, such as classes on sustainability or climate change issues?
- Given that civil society organizations are more prevalent as providers in this sub-sector (non-formal adult education), is there any evidence that the policies or approaches of these CSOs/NGOs have shifted to themes related to Target 4.7?
- Have new curricula been prepared, which embed these themes for youth and adults?
- In programs that focus on themes related to Target 4.7, are the facilitators or educators prepared or trained in any special way?

## What do we mean by non-formal youth and adult education from a lifelong learning perspective?

More than any other education target, 4.7 touches on the humanistic purposes of education, and their reflection in policies, curricular content and teacher preparation. The target also acknowledges the important role of culture and the (inter-)cultural dimensions of education for peace, social cohesion and sustainable development. Lifelong learning, as the guiding principle of SDG 4, well embodies this humanistic purpose of Target 4.7.

UNESCO defines the concept of lifelong learning as follows: 'In essence, lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and elderly, girls and boys, women and men) in all life-wide contexts (family, school, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal



and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands. Education systems which promote lifelong learning adopt a holistic and sector-wide approach involving all sub-sectors and levels to ensure the provision of learning opportunities for all individuals' (UNESCO, 2016:30, footnote 5).

While the concept of lifelong learning encompasses all levels of education, all learning modalities for all age groups and in all learning spaces, this paper focuses in particular on literacy, basic education and non-formal education of youth and adult learners in out-of-school learning contexts. Whereas different terms are used for adult learning and education around the world (e.g. alternative education, adult and community learning, etc.), with the adoption of the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE, UIL 2016a), the following definition has been agreed upon: 'Adult learning and education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work' (UIL, 2016a:6).

Non-formal education 'is institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or complement to formal education within the process of lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided in order to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters to people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway structure' (UIS, 2011:11).

Conceptualizing non-formal youth and adult education from a lifelong learning perspective involves (a) understanding youth and adult education as a component of a holistic education and learning system; (b) embedding youth and adult education into other development activities; and (c) privileging integrated approaches to adult learning (such as intergenerational and family learning, literacy and skills development embedded in income-generating activities, etc.).

Target 4.7 is closely aligned with the lifelong learning

principle, as it does not specify the education levels, modalities or age groups to which its themes are limited. However, the proposed global (4.7.1) and thematic (4.7.2–4.7.5) indicators for this target focus mainly on children and adolescents in (formal) school education (UIS/GAML, 2017). None of the proposed thematic indicators explicitly captures youth and adult learners in non-formal education.

### **Has the demand for and supply of non-formal adult education programs focusing on Target 4.7 increased?**

The data available on the demand for adult education is related to (a) the number of youth and adults (aged 15+) who have not completed primary and secondary education, and—in those cases where (cross-country) test-based surveys have been implemented (e.g. IALS, PIAAC, LAMP, etc.)—are without the established minimum level of literacy and numeracy competencies; and (b) the participation in adult education programs. While the first indicator reflects the potential demand for youth and adult education, the latter reflects the real demand. However, this kind of data is not available for most countries. Where they are available, they do not refer to specific contents and themes (e.g. Target 4.7). Furthermore, many informal and non-formal learning activities of youth and adults on 4.7 themes take place without being recorded and are not visible in related statistics and reports. In short, it is hard to identify robust evidence on trends with regard to the demand for non-formal adult education programs that focus on Target 4.7 themes.

While the 3rd Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 3, UIL, 2016b) illustrates how adult learning and education can contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—in the areas of health and well-being, employment and the labour market, and social and civic community life—there seems to be no evidence on how Target 4.7 themes such as global citizenship and sustainable development

are included in the development of lifelong-learning systems, curricular materials, and teacher training activities.

The 6th Report on the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms provides the basis for global indicator 4.7.1 (UNESCO, 2018). Eighty-six percent of countries (67 countries) responding to the survey reported that the Guiding Principles of the Recommendation are reflected in programs outside the school system (which can be interpreted as non-formal youth and adult education programs); 71% of countries include the Guiding Principles in non-formal and adult education programs, and 44–46% do so in media-based and informal learning. The number of countries resorting to non-formal education for this purpose is highest in Africa (92%), followed by Europe and North America (80%) and Arab states (71%). Arab states compose the region with the highest rate of countries adopting adult education at 86%, followed by Africa (85%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (73%). The report concludes that there is much room for progress (ibid.).

### **Is there any evidence that the policies or approaches of CSOs/NGOs have shifted to themes related to target 4.7?**

Given the lack of evidence that CSOs/NGOs have given increased attention to Target 4.7 themes since 2015, we can pose some questions and make some assumptions. For example, do donors and funding organizations/institutions encourage CSOs/NGOs to address or include Target 4.7 themes? Which related criteria are specified by bilateral and international donors regarding grant funds for adult education programs? Do the reports that CSOs/NGOs submit to their funders reflect an increased presence of Target 4.7 themes in their adult education programs? Do their current curricula, learning materials and teacher training programs include new themes related to Target 4.7?

While we can assume that the inclusion of the gender equality principle has been more systematically encouraged by funders in recent years, this seems to be less the case with regard to environmental and civic/citizenship-related themes. Furthermore, gender-related themes in adult literacy and education are visible mainly in programs focused on girls and women.

In post-conflict contexts, peace and non-violence are Target 4.7 themes that have made their way into adult education curricula and learning materials. However, this was also the case before the adoption of the SDGs<sup>1</sup>. The appreciation of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are principles that seem to be increasingly applied in curricula and learning materials for indigenous, migrant and refugee youth and adult education programs (e.g. in Asia and the Pacific, Europe & North America and Latin America). However, this is usually limited to adult learners from linguistic and ethnic minorities or migrants. It is rather absent in the curricula and materials for the mainstream adult population, or supporting a folkloristic and museology view instead of a genuine intercultural dialogue and learning<sup>2</sup>.

### **Have new curricula been prepared on Target 4.7 themes?**

Very slowly, curricula seem to be changing to aim to make learners aware of environmental sustainability, climate change adaptation and mitigation. They also seem to integrate more visibly themes

- 1 I was engaged in the development of learning materials for young and adult women in post-conflict Kosovo (2001–2003) and Afghanistan (2002–2004): both curricula addressed issues of peace and non-violence, emphasizing conflict resolution and negotiation skills development.
- 2 The latter is referring to a way of dealing with indigenous knowledge, language and culture in textbooks that reduces this to a valuable heritage of the past that needs to be preserved. However, it does not promote a real intercultural dialogue at eye level where indigenous and non-indigenous members of a society recognize each other's culture in their everyday lives and seek cross-fertilizations.

related to human rights, gender equality, critical and active citizenship, and the development of a culture of peace, non-violence and solidarity. For example, the new general education curriculum for youth and adults in Chile (2018)<sup>3</sup>, which is still in the process of approval, has formulated several core competencies that are related to human rights, citizenship, environmental conservation and reflect quite well the spirit of Target 4.7. It has a strong pedagogical emphasis on the development of citizens who take a reflective and critical view on the society in which they live and increase their citizenship participation.

Another example is the curriculum for youth and adult primary education of the Ministry of Education of the Buenos Aires Province in Argentina (2017)<sup>4</sup>. The profile of the graduates foresees, among others, the development of his/her life project, comprehension of his/her rights and obligations as a citizen, analysis, understanding and intervention in his/her social, cultural and natural environment, and the recognition, appreciation and respect of cultural diversity. The curricular proposal adopts a modular approach with a strong emphasis on local development and the 'learning community' idea. This idea refers to an 'organized human community' that is engaged in a project.

Each module starts from a problem situation around which a field of contents is built and which is expected to be conducive to the development of defined skills and competencies (*capacidades*). The (12) 'problematizing contexts' include (a) dichotomy between development and care of nature; (b) asymmetric gender relationships and its impact on the construction of identities; (c) socio-cultural diversity and inequality; (d) cultural appropriation

3 Ministerio de Educación, Unidad de Currículum y Evaluación: Bases curriculares para la formación general de educación de personas jóvenes y adultas, enero 2018 (unpublished draft)

4 Diseño curricular para el nivel primario de la modalidad EPJA (<https://educacionadultos.com.ar/wp-content/archivos/2017/07/ANEXO-RS-45-IF-2017-01212905-GDEBA-CGCYEDGCYE.pdf>)

and intercultural tensions; and (e) the challenge of building the communal organization as a space of citizenship participation and the management of collective demands, among others. These problematizing contexts are worked across subjects (i.e. language & communication, mathematics, natural and social sciences, ICT, etc.) in integrated ways (ibid.).

The new Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) in South Sudan<sup>5</sup> covers eight years of primary education in four years. In the subject overview of the curriculum framework, we can find evidence of Target 4.7 themes: the three cross-cutting issues comprise peace education, life skills and environment and sustainability.

However, many curricula for (non-)formal youth and adult primary and secondary education are close ('equivalent') to the official (subject-based) school curricula since they strive for recognized certificates. They are competency-based with a strong focus on the development of literacy, language, numeracy and ICT skills, capabilities or competencies. In other words, there is some emphasis on measurable outcomes (i.e. skills) rather than value-based education, attitudinal change and creative and critical thinking. It would be necessary to analyze the related textbooks in order to assess to what extent Target 4.7 themes are included.

## Are capacities being developed for the integration of Target 4.7 into teacher training?

As the development of capacities for teacher training is a prerequisite for improved quality and innovation, any forward-looking reform to adequately address Target 4.7 has to be carried out in conjunction with the capacity development of all those involved. This seems obvious: without competent trainers of the adult education personnel and facilitators, it is difficult to properly address Target 4.7 themes and intentions in youth and adult

5 Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP): Subject Overview (2015) <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BBXDBaRpU9epJSex166ED5UQu0Ye8rMT/view>

literacy and learning programs. But knowing that adult education is chronically underfunded in the vast majority of the countries, one can hardly expect much progress in this field. There are, however, some examples that indicate movement in a Target 4.7 direction.

The non-governmental DVV international<sup>6</sup> and the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) jointly developed the Curriculum globALE (DVV International/ DIE, 2015), a cross-cultural global curriculum framework for the training of adult educators<sup>7</sup>, which reflects the SDGs. By providing a common reference framework it aims at advancing the professionalization of adult education on an international scale and supporting adult education providers in the design and implementation of train-the-trainer programs. The Curriculum globALE is based on three main pillars: (a) existing train-the-trainer programs from the context of the project work of DVV International; (b) existing national qualifications systems and standards for adult educators; and (c) transnational competency standards for adult educators which have been drawn up within the framework of European projects. It explicitly follows a human rights-based approach and is built on four general principles, namely: competency-orientation, action-orientation, participant-orientation and the sustainability of learning.

While the main contents of the thematic modules are focused around planning, organization and evaluation as well as teaching and learning of adult education, the intentions of Target 4.7 are reflected in the Curriculum globALE insofar as it emphasizes the need to address diversity, context, and relationships, among others. Most importantly, it aims at the following globally-valid, cross-cutting issues/topics/principles: (1) gender-sensitive approach, (2)

6 The DVV represents more than 920 Adult Education Centres (VHS), the largest providers of continuing education in Germany, while DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the DVV, cooperates with more than 200 partner organisations in over 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. It has been committed to supporting lifelong learning and creating and strengthening sustainable youth and adult education structures worldwide for more than 45 years.

7 Available in 11 languages.

sustainable development and climate change, and (3) sustainable development, peace and democracy.

On the basis of its experience working in Africa, Asia and Latin America, DVV International has developed an intercultural-didactic additional qualification for integration work with refugees at German Adult Education Centres (VHS) in the shape of Curriculum interculturALE (DVV International 2018). This is a tailor-made intercultural training course for instructors and volunteer learning guides who work with refugees in low-threshold German language courses. Topics include diversity<sup>8</sup> and cultural dialogue, active citizenship and civic education, and intercultural learning. Awareness-raising, critical thinking, and transformative action are further emphasized in the learning objectives.

Facing a relatively large number of asylum applicants and refugees in Germany,<sup>9</sup> adult education institutions have reported a lack of specifically-qualified staff who have both language and intercultural competences and empathy for those particular groups of learners of German as a second language. Therefore, DVV International was commissioned to produce this training curriculum (interculturALE) building on German and international expertise in the field of intercultural-didactical and political-educational contents, and on experience in the provision of educational opportunities to refugees. Unfortunately, no information is publicly available for either of these curricula—globALE and interculturALE—about their adaptation to and implementation in specific contexts.

Training adult educators in intercultural education has also been taken up in other European countries including the Nordic countries. Broadening minds and changing perceptions is pretty much in focus in those training activities, together with actively engaging with immigrant communities in the process. Some

8 Diversity in the context of courses for refugees is related to multiple reasons such as learners' different original backgrounds, different age groups, and equally important, different learning abilities and individual educational biographies.

9 Particularly from Muslim and/or Arabic countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Pakistan and Somalia.



countries provide short training activities for adult education personnel and facilitators on human rights and gender issues, mainly organized by national CSOs/NGOs and funded by international organizations. However, training activities for facilitators or educators usually focus on methodological issues and the use of course material, which may (or may not) embed Target 4.7 themes.

### **Target 4.7 themes have a longstanding tradition in non-formal youth and adult education**

Despite this lack of robust evidence for increased demand for topics such as human rights, gender equality, peace, cultural diversity, citizenship and sustainable development in adult education programs, Target 4.7 themes are far from new to the field of adult literacy and education. In fact, many providers of youth and adult education programs, particularly from civil society, have long included these themes in their curricula, learning materials and teacher training activities. Often, they are reflected in the overall program goals and transversal objectives. This is due to the fact that these programs mainly target vulnerable and disadvantaged population groups who have been excluded from educational (and other) opportunities. Therefore, these youth and adult education programs often work with a vision of social transformation. They seek to combine different dimensions of sustainable development including social equality, economic empowerment and environmental sustainability. In the case of youth and adult literacy programs, most of the learners are (young) women. Therefore, the issue of gender equality moves forcefully to the center of these programs.

Emancipatory and transformative approaches to adult literacy and learning require a particular emphasis on Target 4.7 themes in their curricula and learning materials. Raising awareness (conscientization) and encouraging learners to critically analyze, understand and transform their realities through generative words and themes is the purpose of the popular education (*educación popular*) movement in Latin America, which has its counterparts in

other world regions. Advocates of the ‘critical pedagogy’ movement (e.g. Paulo Freire) stress the political dimension of education and aim at critical consciousness, emancipation, liberation, social justice and political action. Themes such as human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and cultural diversity have long been at the center of such emancipatory adult literacy and education programs.

Empowerment<sup>10</sup> approaches to adult learning are not only applied by civil society organizations. Governmental adult education programs have also used such social transformation approaches. For example, in the 1980s, a literacy campaign in Ecuador adopted human rights as the thematic axis of learning content.

Many adult education programs are implemented in multicultural and multilingual contexts, and often use intercultural and bi-/multilingual approaches. A component of economic empowerment is often the key motivating factor, ‘hooking’ adult learners into such education programs. Since most of the potential participants of youth and adult education programs live in poverty, and their participation in these programs is voluntary, it is essential to ensure its relevance to learners by including social and economic empowerment dimensions in program designs.

For example, the Functional Literacy Programme of the Argan Cooperative<sup>11</sup>, run by the Moroccan Association Ibn Albaytr, shows how the varied purposes of Target 4.7 can be combined in the same program. It aims to promote a balanced relationship between people and nature. The argan tree serves as a buffer against the Sahara desert but is also a source of oil used in cooking, the cosmetics industry and traditional medicine. The program is

10 In general terms, empowerment can be seen as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. In the context of adult education, empowerment has been related to the ability to participate in one’s social environment and affect the political system. This ability comprises four dimensions, namely the cognitive, economic, political and psychological dimensions (Stromquist 2009).

11 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/functional-literacy-programme-women-argan>



delivered in Amazigh, a Berber language, and combines teaching the practical skills of managing cooperatives with awareness-raising about the importance of preserving the argan forest and information about new family laws (i.e. gender equality).

While we can observe that many adult literacy and education programs have incorporated environmental topics into their curriculum, only a few have made environmental sustainability their core concern. An example is the environmental education work of the Namib Desert Environmental Trust (NaDEET)<sup>12</sup>, which has set up an environmental education centre on the NamibRand Nature Reserve in southern Namibia to work with children and adults in local communities. Participants are offered hands-on experiential learning and have the opportunity to reflect on their real-life experiences in relation to climate change. Based on their 'We practice what we teach' approach to environmental education, NaDEET has recently also established an Urban Sustainability Centre in Swakopmund, which is a model house. Inside, visitors explore issues affecting the average Namibian household in practising a sustainable lifestyle. In the open plan kitchen/living room, visitors can discover how this 'family' is practising energy and water efficiency, using alternative resources and managing household waste. Through educator-led programs and self-guided activities, the NaDEET Urban Sustainability Centre aims to challenge Namibians' assumptions about the impact of their lifestyle choices and to offer ideas for finding suitable, everyday solutions to environmental problems. Using an intergenerational approach to learning, this program appears to reach out not only to national adults but also to tourists.

There seems to be an increase of educational initiatives that aim to mitigate the impact of natural disasters that are often a consequence of global warming. For example, the Indonesian program Promoting Innovative Literacy Education in Coping with Natural Disasters<sup>13</sup>, in central Java, has a special thematic focus on enhancing resilience

12 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/nadeet-environmental-literacy-projects-namibia> and <http://www.nadeet.org>

13 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/literacy-21st-century-promoting-innovative>

against natural disasters. The program helps communities to prepare for natural disasters and assist families in the recovery process after such disasters have occurred. Most of the training initiatives aimed at disaster risk management in the educational system target teachers in the formal education system. Rather than risk prevention, it focuses on risk reduction through formal education, science and awareness in schools and communities.

In Asia and Africa, community-based education programs geared towards sustainable rural development are quite common. The Nepalese Community Learning Centres Programme<sup>14</sup> of the governmental Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC) is an example. In addition to literacy, it provides livelihood skills training and support to establish income-generating projects, and promote health and civic education, and knowledge of environmental management and conservation. The Community-Based Forestry Management Programme<sup>15</sup> in the Gambia is another example of a program that combines economic and environmental dimensions by supporting the empowerment of local communities to become environmentally conscious entrepreneurs making sustainable use of natural resources. This program is implemented by the governmental Forestry Department in partnership with local NGOs.

The empowerment of marginalized communities is often at the heart of programs run by NGOs such as the Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED)<sup>16</sup> in Senegal, which focus on developing basic literacy skills, leadership and organizational capacities and on providing information on citizenship and civil society so that people can make informed choices and pursue their own goals through increased access to education and information.

14 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/community-learning-centres-nepal>

15 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/community-based-forestry-management-programme>

16 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/associates-research-education-development-ared>

## **Much adult learning around Target 4.7 themes takes place outside curriculum-based, non-formal adult education programs**

Learning for transformative action works best when it is by means of concrete experience and critical reflection on that experience. In other words, reflective learners learn through taking action. This kind of self-reflective and experiential learning frequently takes place outside curriculum-based, non-formal adult education programs, even outside the education system itself. It is typically organized by CSOs, social, political, ecological and cultural movements, or community-based/neighborhood initiatives around projects that address Target 4.7 themes such as sustainable agriculture, food security and sustainable food production and consumption. Related experiences with leadership and adult learning in 'global food systems transformation' include the revitalization of indigenous food systems in Canada, Uganda, and the USA; the development of 'food competence' through a multisensory experience of group gardening in the Edible Garden Project in Vancouver, Canada; and wild food networks in Canada, which act as catalysts for transformative learning (Etmanski 2017).

Others see learning for transformative action—in this case, agroecology as a key building block for food sovereignty—as an integral part of the process of building a social movement (Anderson, Maughan & Pimbert 2018). The European Agroecology Knowledge Exchange Network (EAKEN) is linked to the global network of La Via Campesina and builds on the strong experiences and traditions of popular education in Latin American peasant movements. This example shows how collective learning that links agroecology practices with the political project of food sovereignty can strengthen social movements and lead to a broader transformation towards a more just and sustainable food system.

## **Conclusion**

To effectively address global sustainability challenges in the future, lifelong learning—in particular, youth and adult education—will become increasingly urgent and take on new meaning in the field of education. Target 4.7 has a key role to play in the broader context of achieving the SDGs. The urgency for transformative action suggests that we cannot rely only on (and wait for) a future generation with different lifestyles, behaviors, attitudes and mindsets towards sustainability. Action for sustainability is required now, by the youth and adult generation of today. As important role models for the younger generation, they are responsible for intergenerational learning that takes place in the family, community and other contexts. In other words, Target 4.7 cannot afford to leave aside youth and adult learning and education.

Target 4.7 themes have a long tradition in non-formal youth and adult education, and investment in adult education continues to be low (on average 1% of national education budgets), meaning that a deeper shift in terms of increased provision of programs focusing on Target 4.7 themes is very unlikely. We can rather anticipate a steady continuity of adult education programs with embedded Target 4.7 themes. In any case, available evidence is too little to provide conclusive statements on the initially posed questions. This is particularly true for adult education programs provided by CSOs/NGOs or private organizations, which are many and diverse, often operating only at local level and at small scale, and with low capacity to systematically collect comparable data.

Many adult education programs around the world seem to successfully combine Target 4.7 themes with other purposes. Such purposes can be to acquire literacy, numeracy and language competencies, to obtain a recognized secondary school certificate, or to develop skills that help to set up a small business and earn an income. Those purposes often address different goals of the SDGs (e.g. ensure healthy lives and promote well-being; achieve food security; ensure sanitation; or promote decent work), are relevant

to different groups of learners and are successful in (re-)engaging youth and adults in lifelong learning. Learning from experiences of diverse initiatives and movements working towards global citizenship, social transformation, and sustainable development (Target 4.7 themes and intentions) from outside the education sector can enrich and modernize non-formal youth and adult education programs. Furthermore, collaborating with them and creating synergies can increase their impact.

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## SECTION TWO

Contextualizing social  
and emotional learning

## Section Two overview: Contextualizing social and emotional learning

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### Introduction

Social and emotional learning (SEL)<sup>1</sup> is a core content element of the 4.7 themes: for example, in the ‘content and learning objectives’ put forward by UNESCO for global citizenship education (GCED) and education for sustainable development (ESD) (UNESCO, 2015, 2017). On the other hand, SEL is also an integral part of the pedagogy needed for effective learning (as discussed in Section Six). Finally, emotional engagement with Target 4.7 themes is necessary to sustain commitment into adulthood, when opportunities for broader action and impact emerge.

The constituent elements of SEL can be traced back over many decades to discussions of both *why* and *how* students learn. However, in recent decades, the specific concept of SEL has been a topic of intense interest among educators and academics, particularly those based in the USA. Among these, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been one of the strongest, recent advocates both for the direct benefits of SEL in helping young people address life challenges and for the support that SEL provides to academic learning. Also in the USA, the Aspen Institute’s National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development brought together the extensive research findings on these issues (Aspen Institute, 2019), with background papers covering child

1 This overview uses the term ‘social and emotional learning’. Other papers in this volume refer to social-emotional learning or socio-emotional learning. The three forms are, for the editors of this volume, equivalent.

development (Jones and Kahn, 2017; Immordino-Yang et al., 2018) and the evidence base for a positive impact of SEL on academic learning, school completion, career and workplace performance, wellbeing, reduced risky behaviors, and economic benefit (Aspen Institute, 2018). The special Spring 2017 issue on SEL of the Princeton-Brookings journal, *The Future of Children*, provides an accessible collection of papers by leading researchers. The World Bank’s ‘Taking stock of programs to develop socioemotional skills: A systematic review of program evidence’ (Puerta et al., 2016) reviews SEL-related programs and evidence on lifetime benefits, as does J-PAL (2013). The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018) reviews how people learn at different ages and in different contexts and cultures, including cognitive, social, emotional and motivational aspects of learning.

The present overview does not attempt to replicate these reviews, most of which draw mainly on research and examples in high income countries. Nor does it constitute a systematic review of the literature on SEL focused on LMICs. Rather, we highlight here some of the recent pieces that we think will be of greatest relevance to those who share NISSEM’s interest in integrating 4.7 themes in textbooks in LMICs and post-conflict and fragile contexts in ways that can engage students in developmentally appropriate learning and lead to long-term commitments to effective action on these themes as adults.

The overview addresses the following critical issues:

- What is SEL?
- Developmental sequences
- The fuzzy boundaries of SEL’s ‘cognitive’ component, and the place of critical thinking
- The cultural specificity of SEL
- Linking SEL to identity and to conflict-resolution skills
- Development partnerships.



Schooling has long aimed at some aspect of SEL, under various titles such as ‘character education.’ Indeed, many variants of conceptual frameworks and programs are similar to SEL. Jones, Bailey, Brush, Nelson and Barnes (2016) cite the following as overlapping in terms of content (and other descriptors could be added):

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

Puerta et al. (2016) review seven of these concepts in the World Bank’s ‘Taking Stock of Programs to Develop Socioemotional Skills.’

From the viewpoint of NISSEM, a single definition of SEL is not vital. We expect different emphases (as well as terminologies) within SEL to emerge from different academic, policy or educational circles and hope to continue to collect more perspectives from non-US researchers and practitioners in the future. At this point, we simply note that some of the terms used below tend to focus on post-primary issues, such as career/work preparation, whereas NISSEM’s concerns cover pre-primary to secondary education and are mainly curricular but also extra-curricular.

The US-based Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, f. 1994) became the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning in 2001, as policymakers and funders became more interested in SEL as a contributor to academic learning outcomes. The CASEL model, widely influential beyond just the USA, includes five main components:

- self-awareness,
- self-management,
- social awareness,
- relationship skills and
- responsible decision-making.

CASEL’s examples of ‘responsible decision-making’ focus mostly on young people’s interactions with their immediate community and often on protecting young people from substance abuse and similar harms. The concept of responsible decision-making in the wider society—and the global context—is less emphasized, although responsible action in personal life can serve as a training ground for responsible citizenship, including Target 4.7 themes.

Jones’ (2018) model better links SEL and 4.7 themes, incorporating ‘skills/competencies’ (roughly the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of the CASEL model, substituting ‘cognitive’ for ‘responsible decision-making’) and ‘belief ecology’ (attitudes, habits of mind):

#### *Skills/competencies*

- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Social

#### *Belief ecology*

- Beliefs/knowledge of self and identity (eg self-efficacy, growth mindset, self-esteem, self-knowledge, purpose)
- Character/values (e.g. ethical, performance, intellectual and civic values)
- Personality (e.g. optimism, gratitude openness, enthusiasm/zest)

In contrast, OECD has drawn upon the long-standing ‘Big Five’ psychological traits—openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism—linked with subordinate categories that are based more on child development theory, as illustrated in the brief by the OECD.

Jones et al. (2016, p.8) categorized several SEL programs or frameworks in terms of their content: strong social elements in CASEL, strong emotional elements in the Big Five and strong cognitive content in the cited OECD framework, for example. Also, in the context of US schools, Bailey et al. (2019) have proposed a five-level SEL pyramid framework.

The World Bank’s first working paper on SEL was a collaboration with the International Rescue Committee (undated), focusing on contexts in crisis and instability. More recently the World Bank (2018) has published a SEL framework developed at country level in Spanish and English (see table 1). The teacher and student materials in this publication require facilitation skills and adequate timetabling, but may offer a framework and ideas for selecting content to incorporate in school subject curricula and textbook development at different levels of schooling.

## Developmental sequences

Developmental sequences for the cognitive, emotional and social components of SEL are of great interest to educators but are relatively underspecified for researchers (see also Esther Care’s brief for comments on progression). Jones (2018), for example, suggests the following sequence in developmental domains:

### 1 Emerge first and grow significantly throughout childhood and adolescence:

- Cognitive domain: working memory, attention control, response inhibition, cognitive flexibility
- Emotion domain: emotion knowledge and expression, emotion and behavior management
- Social domain: basic social engagement

### 2 Emerge next, building on earlier skills, increasingly used to support academic and social goals:

- Cognitive domain: planning, organizing and setting goals
- Emotion domain: empathy and perspective-taking
- Social domain: understanding social cues

### 3 Become more sophisticated over time:

- Social domain: conflict resolution, prosocial behavior and cooperation

This framework highlights the difference in usage between ‘cognitive’ (as part of SEL) and ‘academic’, whereby ‘academic’ essentially refers to the school or college subjects/content that students must navigate.

The importance of combining the social, emotional and cognitive in education for younger students is widely recognized. Early grade reading initiatives cited in Section Seven include efforts to integrate the development of reading accuracy and fluency with the emotional engagement of students, intended to lead to positive social and emotional learning and its application, including, in some instances, simpler versions of 4.7 themes. The neuroscience aspect of this is explored in the brief by Al Sager et al., examining the *We Love Reading* program.

Much of the research evidence cited in the studies above relates to early childhood brain development and early SEL interventions in pre-primary and primary education, reflecting recent research on early childhood as a critical period for brain development. In general, SEL packages have been easier to integrate into classrooms at these levels, leading to related research. Adolescence is another critical period when the brain goes through further rapid growth, and some have argued that appropriate SEL needs to be designed around adolescents’ developing concerns with peer status and agency.

The onset of puberty—which marks the beginning of adolescence—causes changes in brain structure and hormone activity that can make even minor social difficulties like peer rejection extremely painful and hard to deal with. Those biological changes also create a more intense thrill from risky behavior, especially when it may win peers’ admiration. Last, adolescents expect more autonomy and independence in personal choices such as whom to be friends with. In sum, adolescents are learning how to handle new demands in school and social life while learning to deal with new, intense emotions, and increasingly feeling like they should do so without adult guidance. SEL programs are one way to help them navigate these difficulties. (Yeager, 2017, p.74)

## The Step by Step Framework in short

Module	General Skills	Specific Skills
<b>WITH MYSELF</b> Understanding and managing emotions	<b>SELF-AWARENESS</b> Knowing, understanding and trusting ourselves	<b>Self-concept</b> What we think about ourselves
		<b>Self-efficacy</b> Trusting our ability to succeed in specific situations
		<b>Emotional awareness</b> Knowing what we are feeling and why
	<b>SELF-REGULATION</b> Governing our impulses and emotions	<b>Emotional regulation</b> Managing our emotions in harmony with our goals
		<b>Delayed gratification</b> Postponing an immediate reward for better outcomes later
		<b>Frustration tolerance</b> Facing difficulties without feeling overwhelmed by anger or disappointment
<b>WITH OTHERS</b> Forming and sustaining positive relationships	<b>SOCIAL AWARENESS</b> Understanding other people's feelings, needs and concerns	<b>Perspective taking</b> Understanding a given situation from multiple points of view
		<b>Empathy</b> Putting ourselves in another's place, walking in another's shoes
		<b>Prosocial behaviour</b> Voluntary actions intended to help or benefit others
	<b>POSITIVE COMMUNICATION</b> Interacting with kindness and respect for ourselves and others	<b>Active listening</b> Paying undivided attention to another person with genuine interest and respect
		<b>Assertiveness</b> Advocating for ourselves with confidence, honesty and respect
		<b>Conflict management</b> Dealing with conflict in a way that enhances learning and group outcomes
<b>WITH OUR CHALLENGES</b> Making the most out of life	<b>DETERMINATION</b> Pursuing goals with resolve and purpose	<b>Achievement motivation</b> Driving ourselves to succeed
		<b>Perseverance</b> Keeping up the effort to achieve our goals despite difficulty, delays and failure
		<b>Stress management</b> Taking charge so the pressures and tensions of our lives don't break us
	<b>RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING</b> Making constructive and respectful choices	<b>Creative thinking</b> Generating new ideas, solutions or courses of action in the face of challenge
		<b>Critical thinking</b> Questioning the assumptions underlying our habitual ways of thinking and acting
		<b>Responsibility</b> Fulfilling our commitments and being accountable for our words and actions

**AUTONOMY:** Governing ourselves while balancing our interests with those of others

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Working hard to make the world a better, more just place

**RESILIENCE:** Prevailing in the face of adversity

**Table 1:** The Step by Step Framework (World Bank, 2018)

Yeager recommends adolescence-appropriate approaches that provide opportunities for generating positive respect from adolescent peers based upon ‘agency’, namely, the opportunity to take impactful action. This ‘agency’ may hopefully support 4.7 themes presented in their courses of study, provided that the presentation is not what Yeager terms ‘condescending.’ He cites a teenage pregnancy prevention outreach program for high school students as being successful because...

... it began with the assumption that young people want to matter—they want to do something of consequence for the world around them, and they want to have a coherent life story. Adolescents were willing to learn social skills as long as doing so served the broader purpose of mattering. (p.77)

Although much of the above research relates to the USA, there is now growing interest in SEL in different cultures, both in stable settings and in times of crisis, although the evidence remains thin. In this overview, and in the papers in Sections Three and Eight (which discusses SEL measurement), NISSEM seeks to supplement the still meager evidence.

The attitudes and behaviors of adolescents vary between different cultures. Moreover, in many cultures, including in the West, much effective socialization of youth takes place in extracurricular settings, where often youth have a larger say in setting agendas and approaches. Therefore, LMIC textbook writers aiming to generate enthusiasm around SEL and 4.7 themes in lower or upper secondary levels should consider involving adolescents and youth in identifying potentially impactful content and approaches, especially for the upper levels of schooling. (Sinclair, 2018).

## **The fuzzy boundaries of SEL’s ‘cognitive’ component: where does critical thinking fit in?**

As noted above, the term ‘non-cognitive’ is often used as a synonym for SEL and similar terms. This is, strictly speaking, inaccurate,

as brain science has shown that cognitive, emotional and social aspects of brain circuitry are mutually interdependent:

... extensive research now makes clear that the brain networks supporting emotion, learning, and memory are intricately and fundamentally intertwined, even for experts in technical domains such as mathematics... Quite literally, it is neurobiologically impossible to think deeply about or remember information about which one has had no emotion because the healthy brain does not waste energy processing information that does not matter to the individual. Emotions help learners set goals during learning. They tell the individual experiencing them when to keep working and when to stop, when she is on the right path to solve a problem. (National Academies, 2018, p.29).

The ‘cognitive’ element of SEL does not exist on its own, as is also emphasized in the Aspen Institute documents cited earlier (Jones and Kahn, 2017), in the brief by Mary Helen Immordino-Yang (also see 2018), and in the Jones (2018) model cited above.

The task of linking school subjects and SEL more systemically is a continuing challenge, while the linking of subject disciplines with study of real-world issues relevant to Target 4.7 themes is even more complex. Where a ‘project’ approach is possible, a reforestation project might involve geography, biology, climatology, sociology/anthropology, local history, politics and economics; drawing on earlier years’ learning of the cognitive ‘SEL’ skills discussed above (e.g. task focus and attention) as well as features of the academic disciplines, and the social and emotional more broadly in their application to societal issues (cooperation, negotiation/conflict resolution, etc). In terms of textbooks, the ‘carrier’ school subjects<sup>2</sup> are likely to overshadow cross-disciplinary approaches, e.g. reforestation may be cast in spatial terms and protecting land from erosion under geography or ecological and climate change terms if considered as science.

Meanwhile the Bloom’s taxonomy (1956) suggests ‘higher order

2 The term ‘carrier subject’ refers here to core school subjects into which given 4.7 or SEL messages may be inserted.

thinking’ is needed to identify key issues and find solutions to the societal and global themes of SDG Target 4.7. Among higher order skills, critical thinking plays a particularly important role in the choices of everyday living. Emily Lau’s literature review (2011) notes that:

Critical thinking entails ... dispositions, which can be seen as attitudes, or habits of mind, includ[ing] open- and fair-mindedness, inquisitiveness, flexibility, a propensity to seek reason, a desire to be well-informed and a respect for and willingness to entertain diverse viewpoints. There appear to be both general and domain-specific aspects of critical thinking ... Transfer of critical thinking skills to new contexts is unlikely to occur unless students are specifically taught to transfer by sensitizing them to deep problem structures and are given adequate opportunities to rehearse critical thinking skills in a variety of domains. (pp.41–42)

Critical thinking is important for 4.7 themes, for example in designing feasible reforestation schemes or in working through the fallacies underlying negative stereotyping of various human groups. Likewise, the life skills framework developed by WHO (2003) and others in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic has three categories: cognitive—which includes critical thinking—plus interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Young people have to critically analyze the choices facing them in order to assess the objective risks and benefits of a given attractive behavior, before using social and emotional skills to make a personal decision on what to do.

Critical thinking is often cited as a major missing component in basic education in LMIC and post-conflict settings. Integrating 4.7 themes into curricula offers opportunities to introduce such critical thinking. A large study in Uganda, on teaching large primary school classes about critical thinking on the use of medicines (Nsangi et al., 2017), is hopefully the forerunner of more research in similar contexts.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, from the viewpoint of a culture of peace, or of respect for diversity and rejection of negative stereotypes, critical

3 See also <https://www.informedhealthchoices.org/>

thinking is vital. For example, critical analysis can be brought to bear on arguments for engaging in armed conflict based on traditional prejudices or to resolve inequalities or perceived slights, by highlighting the disproportional death, destruction, displacement and poverty that will result. In our view, therefore, SEL must include or be partnered with critical thinking, as part of ‘responsible decision-making’ at all levels from personal to local, national and global.

## The cultural specificity of SEL

A crucial question is whether the categories in any given SEL framework are applicable mainly to the originating culture (often the USA) and how differently children’s social and emotional skills may be valued and develop in different societies. The [USA] National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (2018) cites a study that compared parental expectations in the United States and Vanuatu: whereas the USA parents tended to consider deviation from a model as showing creativity, the parents in Vanuatu tended to equate precise imitation with intelligence. Regarding social and moral development, the researchers note that cultural groups differ in their conceptualization of the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘others,’ and the notion that culture shapes cognitive learning.

In her brief, Sugata Sumida notes that:

Compared with a ‘Western’ SEL framework, two values are particularly unique to Japan. One is courtesy, the skill of ‘understanding the significance of courtesy and behaving appropriately according to the occasion and demand.’ It is considered as a behavior ritual that maintains social life, order and custom, which has fed into Japanese culture... The second distinctive value is the competency of family love and fulfillment of family life. The curriculum explains that this competency is to ‘respect parents and grandparents, and live a fulfilling family life with an awareness of being a member of the family.’



Observations in some sub-Saharan African countries likewise show that the most frequently mentioned elements of SEL do not map directly onto the CASEL categories. In his brief, Matthew Jukes notes that the families he interviewed in Mtwara, Tanzania, frequently mentioned social responsibility concerns such as obedience, respect, being attentive and disciplined. Regarding social relationships, his respondents stressed the importance of children being trustworthy and truthful. The brief from Jisun Jeong likewise found that in Ghana,

... both educators and caregivers in Fanteakwa put significantly stronger emphasis on the social and emotional competencies and skills that seemed essential in maintaining the collectivist, interdependent culture of the community. Competencies and skills under the social-awareness/responsibility domain—such as, respectful, disciplined, obedient, attentive/good listener, and giving back to the community—and the relationship skills domain—sociable/friendly, expressive, cooperative, and participatory—were stressed more than competencies and skills under the self-management and self-awareness domains. ... [I]t was mostly educators who mentioned individual-level competencies and skills, such as self-motivation, leadership skills, emotional stability, creativity, and self-confidence also as important for children to be successful in school.

This raises an important issue: the complex social and emotional skills required by family-centered agricultural and commercial economies may be different from those demanded by larger-scale and globalized economies. Thus, wide-ranging consultations within a country are needed both to address the needs of different populations, as well as different age and generational groups, and to take note of the different futures that may be anticipated. The SDGs, for example, require more gender equality or respect for diversity than most national cultures have historically manifested. In-country re-contextualization of women's or minority rights must take into account local culture and conditions and will not look the same in textbooks in East Asia, South Asia, Africa or

South America. NISSEM argues that space and time for discussion and dialog (and a small budget) will likely be needed to generate culturally and contextually meaningful and motivational content as preparation for enhanced inclusion of selected SEL and 4.7 themes in textbooks and other educational materials.

Briefs from Elizabeth Randolph and colleagues, in studies of SEL in Malawi and Uganda, stress the importance of community links, school climate and culture. The Journeys project that they describe shows the possibilities for SEL development under supportive conditions. The brief by Rachel Snape likewise shows the possibilities under supportive conditions, in the setting of Cambridge, England. The editors requested Rachel to prepare this brief to illustrate the impact of a headteacher who is a champion for SEL and who actively pursues SEL development through many networks. In particular, we asked how explicitly her school leavers were aware of SEL concepts, a theme that is emphasized later in this volume. As an example, she cites one primary school leaver: 'At our school we do not judge, we read between the lines and do not go on appearances. We don't judge a book by its cover. People are tall, small, speak Russian or other languages and we know we are all equal.'

## **Identity formation and conflict-resolution skills as key elements of SEL**

For many contributors to this volume, strengthening social cohesion and advancing a culture of peace as well as gender equality are core objectives for education in the 21st century. In this regard, two aspects of SEL merit special attention here: avoiding narrow conceptions of identity that may reproduce or cause new dysfunction and division, and promoting conflict resolution as a SEL skill.

As will be seen in Section Five, national textbooks aim to establish a sense of national identity but may also lead to social exclusion. In the past, the role of textbooks in generating a patriotic

willingness to fight other nations when called to do so was often taken for granted. Nowadays, there is much discussion about negative stereotyping of groups within one's own country as a contributing factor to political division or civil conflict (see, for example, James Williams' edited volumes cited in Section Four). Adolescence is seen as a time when finding one's own identity comes to the fore (Erikson, 1968)—although *individual* identity is perhaps a stronger concept in 'Western' society and *group* identities feature more strongly in many non-Western societies. Textbooks can perhaps contribute to a wider concept of identity encompassing many aspects of one's life, as noted in the interview with Mary Helen Immordino-Yang and in the brief by Katherine Blanchard and colleagues. The scope for lessening narrow stereotyping of 'in groups' and 'out groups' is an ongoing issue in the preparation of teaching and learning materials.

Conflict resolution skills are included in several of the SEL schemas shown above. However, curriculum and textbook writers are often reluctant to explicitly introduce the process of negotiation and reaching win-win solutions. Instead, reference is made to 'problem-solving'—with its sense that doing mathematics 'problems' will help—or to 'communication' and 'cooperation', when indeed these can serve the purposes of war equally as well as the goal of peace. Educators often simply do not know where to find exemplary school materials that incorporate the steps of negotiation and conflict resolution and therefore focus on other things than conflict. Indeed, most schools ignore national obligations for instruction in the Geneva Conventions, which, for those interested in reducing warfare and ameliorating its attendant harms, may be quite compelling (Ashton & Sinclair, 2012). Some OECD countries seem to assume they will never face war on their soil again, but they still may provide peacekeepers to zones of insecurity or war and thus may need this expertise. At the personal level, gender equality and prevention of bullying also need the skills of assertiveness, negotiation and finding win-win solutions.

Sara Clark-Habibi's brief discusses the various ways that SEL programs may or may not respond to the specific needs of post-conflict contexts. She cites models based on a 'transformative SEL' approach that specifically addresses racial and economic inequities, aimed at peacebuilding, justice and reconciliation. She also notes the risks inherent in over-contextualization: not just that the model may lose its robustness ('programme dilution and confusion', as she puts it) but that it becomes fragmented among communities. Her brief shows that different approaches to SEL have reinforced contradictory messages about self and others, identity and community, relationships, responsibility and peacebuilding among the young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Looking at development partnerships

In the first two decades of the 21st century, governments, development partners and international agencies have begun to look more closely at the reasons for poor academic outcomes and the apparently very low return on investment in education in low- and middle-income countries. *Learning to realize education's promise* (2018) was the first World Development Report to relate poor educational outcomes to SEL:

Education should equip students with the skills they need to lead healthy, productive, meaningful lives... Students everywhere must learn how to interpret many types of written passages...how numbers work...higher-order reasoning and creativity that builds on these foundational skills. And they need the socioemotional skills—such as perseverance and the ability to work on teams—that help them acquire and apply the foundational and other skills.

The inclusion of SEL in this statement—along with academic skills in literacy and numeracy and higher order skills—reflects a holistic approach in which socioemotional skills *support* academic or cognitive skills, both in their *acquisition* and their *implementation*.

The recent USAID policy document on education assistance suggests:

Social and emotional skills should be an integrated part of curricula from pre-primary through primary and beyond to enable students to apply the concepts directly to specific technical subjects of sectors... increasing their ability to study, their resilience, and their contribution to societal development as responsible citizens (USAID, 2018, p.33).

The INEE webpage on SEL provides resources including two papers on this aspect of education response (INEE, 2016, 2018), as does the ECCN website (eccnetwork.net). Recent workshops convened by the Salzburg Global Seminar have led to the decision to establish a SEL Alliance (Salzburg Global Seminar, 2018, 2019).

What can be done to effectively define and promote SEL in ways that support Target 4.7 themes and values, therefore, remains a work in progress. The recent research highlighted in this section and in other briefs in this volume—and the variety of organizations supporting it—demonstrates the degree to which provision of SEL in LMICs and post-conflict settings, and the dedication to using evidence to improve it, is gaining attention and perhaps also some momentum.

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# Contextualizing the goals of social and emotional learning curricula and materials

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## ABSTRACT

Programs to promote social and emotional learning (SEL) risk making assumptions about the global relevance of core competences. Because scholarship is lacking about SEL in many parts of the world, new approaches are needed to contextualize the goals of SEL programs in a realistic time frame. Previous work in anthropology and developmental psychology can help us predict which competences are likely to be valued, given the sociodemographic characteristics of a society. In rural environments where subsistence agriculture is common, for example, communities are likely to value social responsibility, respect, and obedience. Attention should look beyond the needs of the here and now, however, to speculate what competences today's children will require in the future. Looking at the current variation of competences within a society—for example, the values that teachers, but not parents, place on confidence and curiosity—can help identify immediate pathways for developing new competences. In all of these considerations, the goals of an SEL program must be negotiated with the communities themselves in order to ensure relevance, effectiveness, and acceptance. The hope is that such considerations can help prevent global homogenization of SEL programs, instead ensuring that they genuinely meet the needs of the communities they aim to serve.

## KEYWORDS

adaptation, contextualization, social and emotional competencies, culture, Africa, Tanzania

## 1 Introduction

Interest in promoting social and emotional competences through education, in and out of schools, is on the rise. The interest is driven by the recognition that these competences are important for effective learning in schools and also for life beyond formal school, as recognized in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.7—‘to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.’

As a result, many education systems are developing or adapting curricula and materials to promote social and emotional learning (SEL). Such education curricula and materials inevitably borrow and adapt from other countries, contexts, and education systems. With SEL, both the borrowing and the adapting are likely to be more extensive than with other curriculum topics. Borrowing is common because this is a new and growing field, such that demand for materials may outstrip supply. At the same time, the extent of adaptation needed for these materials is likely to be great because, arguably, SEL varies a great deal by context. The goals of SEL programs reflect the values of a society. They also reflect the adaptive competences in a given context, those that lead to a successful life in that particular environment. They reflect the ways in which teachers and children behave—the way they teach, learn, and interact. All of these dimensions of SEL are constituents of and vary with culture.

Most attempts to develop SEL materials, curricula, and assessments begin with commonly used frameworks derived from evidence gathered in Western, educated, industrialized societies. In fact, the Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL, 2019) Laboratory at Harvard University recently found that SEL frameworks used in international contexts covered competences very similar to those used in the USA (Brush et al.,

2019). However, all good practitioners—even when using Western frameworks as their starting point for work in other contexts—recognize the importance of adaptation. The form that adaptation takes, typically, is to consider one particular competence—for example, impulse control—and evaluate the ways in which that competence is demonstrated in the new context.

This approach to adaptation is sensible but it fails to ask the bigger question. Is impulse control a *valued* competence in the local context? Is impulse control a *beneficial* competence in the context? Can we even talk of impulse control as a construct in the new context? Is it something that is consistent over time, measurable, and predictive of adaptive functioning? These are difficult questions. And the body of research evidence to help us address them is small. It is perhaps understandable that most education planners and researchers approach these types of SEL questions by assuming commonalities across cultures as their default position.

Ideally, education curricula would be based on extensive empirical and theoretical work in each context involving, where necessary, a new culturally valid framework. However, this approach is unrealistically time-consuming. Bear in mind that decades of careful research in the USA and elsewhere have allowed concepts such as executive function and emotional regulation to be identified as key dimensions of social and emotional learning. This level of investigation cannot be replicated in a few weeks of piloting in a brand-new context. This, then, is the challenge being addressed here: How do we adapt existing SEL frameworks for use in new contexts in a way that fundamentally challenges the assumptions of existing frameworks and yet is possible with a feasible amount of research and piloting?

This article offers a few suggestions based on recent empirical work in sub-Saharan Africa. The article considers the use of theory in adapting and contextualizing SEL goals (section 2); how SEL competences may differ from one context to another (section 3); how to anticipate the SEL competences that children will require in their future or when moving to another context (section 4); and the

importance of community participation in defining SEL goals (section 5).

## 2 The use of theory

Although many contexts in the world have not yet participated in detailed research on SEL, evidence and theory can help us make sensible predictions about how SEL frameworks may differ from one context to another. Much of this work comes from anthropology and from cultural and developmental psychology.

Although each context is unique, useful generalizations can be made about the factors that shape human development. The similarities between contexts arise from the fact that there are only so many ways in which human beings can thrive and make a living—for example, many societies on all continents make their living from subsistence agriculture. Although each of these societies is unique, with its own customs and practices, they also have a lot in common. For example, if I own a small farm that provides most of my food, it will make sense for me to have a large family with many children who can help me on the farm. If my children grow up on such a farm, they will accumulate many years of experience in working cooperatively with their near agetates. Such experiences develop the values of cooperation and conformity. Their best adaptive behavior will be to conform to the group and not to compete with their peers. The children will also spend a lot of time following the direction of their elders, and will learn to value respect and obedience.

Furthermore, my farm and others like it, will typically be clustered in villages of a certain size and population density. As a result, most of the interactions my family has will be with a relatively small number of people whom we know well. We will place great value on our commitment to the community and place a high cost on breaking social ties. Such factors further reinforce the values of demonstrating cooperation and respect, saving face, and avoiding embarrassment. People in our villages will learn implicitly

that such values are the best ways of living to be successful, but over time they also become the values that many people will explicitly endorse and teach their children. To the extent that farm work lends itself to gendered roles (i.e., farming is more likely to be carried out by women when the soil is shallow and requires a hoe, but it is more likely to be carried out by men when the soil is deep and a plow can be used; Alesina et al., 2013), gender roles are more likely to be ascribed, rather than chosen, in the society in general.

The above description outlines how one economic mode of production—subsistence farming—leads to an environment that shapes human development and values. Anthropology research (Lancy, 2014) suggests that there is sufficient commonality among different types of childhoods to place most of them into a few categories. One category is the childhood of the subsistence farmer, which we have already outlined. A contrasting category is the childhood of the educated, industrialized urban society. This type of childhood differs from that of the subsistence farmers in that families are smaller, children are given more praise and support, children ask more questions, there is a greater emphasis on curiosity and individual expression, and there is more emphasis on the self. The contrast between these two types of societies is what guides the rest of the article. (We might also subdivide rural communities into pastoralists and herders, and urban communities into wealthy and poor, which is beyond the scope of this brief.)

The contrast, however, is not static. It is also applicable within countries and over time. Evidence from a number of societies (Greenfield, 2016) has demonstrated the shift from collectivism to individualism over time. My own research (Jukes, Zuilkowski, & Grigorenko, 2018) also has contrasted urban and rural areas within the same country. In the Gambia, we followed a cohort of children who had grown up in villages, some of whom had spent short periods of time working in the capital city. We found that those who had moved to the city, even for just a few months, had higher cognitive abilities but were rated by their original communities as less socially responsible—less cooperative, kind, and respectful—

compared to their village mates whom they had left behind. In other words, even though some aspects of cultural change are dynamic (changes in individual values may occur within months), culture can also be persistent (some social norms are still evident even after communities have changed their way of life or have migrated to a different context (Alesina et al., 2013; Jukes, Gabrieli et al., 2018). Thus, if I transition to some other occupation and am no longer a subsistence farmer, I may retain the values associated with that way of life.

How do these theoretical frameworks help us to identify the social and emotional competences that are important in a new context? First, they help us to predict—based on the sociodemographic factors of a new context—the social and emotional competences to include in education materials. We should not assume these predictions are always accurate, but they can help narrow the focus of research efforts in a new context. This issue is considered in section 3. Second, they help us to understand the direction in which a given society or community may be heading in terms of the social and emotional competences that they value. This direction of change is considered in section 4.

### 3 Competences

As discussed in the introduction, contextualization of SEL goals is not simply a process of operationalizing existing constructs in a new context. Such an effort also should challenge the definition of those constructs and the value placed on them. We need to take a step back and ask whether the competence is meaningful, valued and important in the new context.

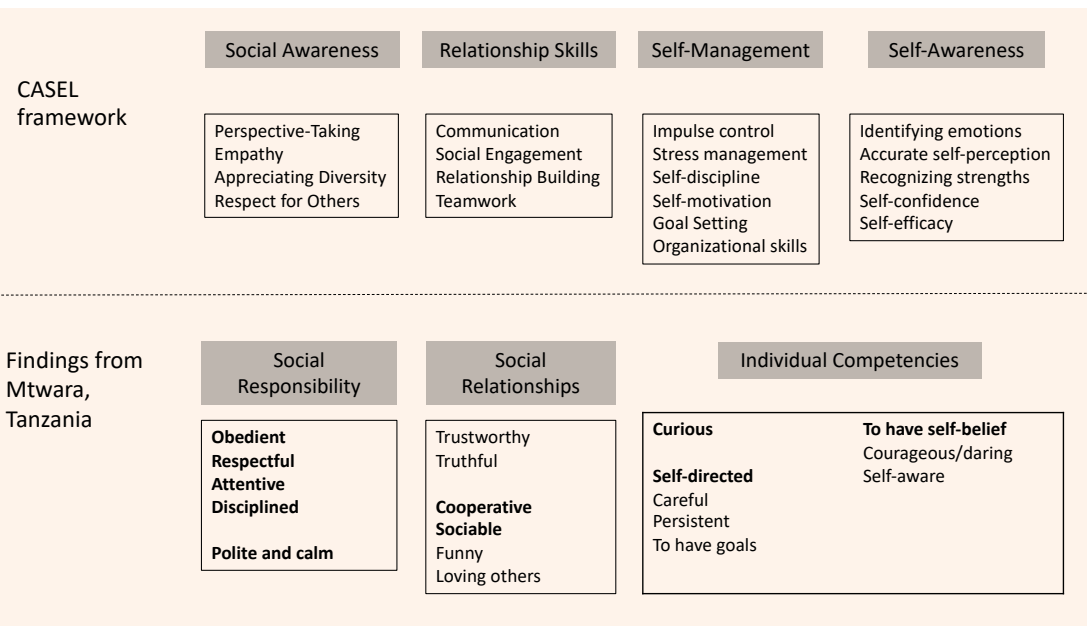
We undertook this process in a study in rural areas of Mtwara, Tanzania (Jukes, Gabrieli et al., 2018). We asked parents and teachers what competences they would like their children and students to develop in order to be successful in life and in school. Figure 1 shows the responses from Mtwara (bottom half) and how they relate to the widely-used Collaborative for Academic, Social,

and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competency framework (CASEL, 2017; top half). The most apparent difference is that five of the ten most frequently mentioned and important competences (in bold text) related to social responsibility in Mtwara. By comparison, the CASEL framework places little emphasis on competences like respect and obedience. Another difference is that fewer individual competences were mentioned in Mtwara, compared to the CASEL framework. Those competences that were mentioned (curiosity, self-belief, and being self-directed) were more likely to come from teachers than from parents. (See section 5 for more on the differences between teachers' and parents' responses.) Clearly,

an SEL curriculum based on the CASEL framework would only partially include competences valued by local communities in rural Mtwara.

It is also likely that many constructs that have superficial similarity across cultures may be subtly or profoundly different. For example, respondents in Mtwara valued the 'discipline' of children. This construct refers to children's willingness to fit in and follow orders and is quite different from the 'self-discipline' of meeting deadlines and managing one's workload that is mentioned in the CASEL framework. Similarly, teachers in many contexts value a child's 'confidence' in speaking up in class. In some contexts, issues of self-perception and self-esteem may lead to a reluctance to speak up, whereas in other contexts, the reluctance may stem from perceived social roles—it is not a child's role to speak up in front of an adult. Where existing domains—such as self-esteem—are reconceptualized in a new context, there are implications for their adoption and use in SEL curricula. The evidence base and materials developed around the concept of self-esteem may have to be rebuilt in the new context.

The differences in valued competences in figure 1 highlight the importance of soliciting the views of respondents in contextualizing SEL goals. But we cannot rely on residents in a new context to provide all the answers to questions of contextual adaptation. Our experience in Mtwara was that most ordinary adults found it challenging to reflect in depth on all but the most commonly valued competences. We expect that many other important competences never came to mind during the qualitative interviews. For example, no respondent mentioned 'emotional regulation' or even 'controlling temper' as a key competence. However, analyses of adults' ratings of pupils showed that several closely associated behaviors (losing one's temper, becoming frustrated with a difficult task) were related to emotional regulation. This finding suggests that emotional regulation is a valid and useful construct in the Tanzanian context, even if these respondents did not suggest it.



**Figure 1.** The relationship between findings from Mtwara, Tanzania, and the CASEL (2017) framework of social and emotional competences.

Source: Jukes, Gabrieli et al. (2018), p.181. 2018 *Global Education Review*. This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). **Bold text** indicates competences mentioned frequently or rated as important. Note that the CASEL domain of responsible decision-making did not map clearly to findings from Mtwara and is excluded from the diagram.



Similarly, an understanding of cultural differences in self-regulation has come from experimental research, rather than from interviews with caregivers. One study compared the delayed gratification of Cameroonian and German preschoolers in the ‘marshmallow’ task (Lamm et al., 2018). In this task, children were given a desirable and familiar sweet snack and told they could have an additional snack if they resisted eating the first before the experimenter returned. The German children found this task challenging and were frequently restless while waiting. The Cameroonian children found it easier to wait and were still and calm (many fell asleep) while waiting. The authors argued that the lack of control in the task was at odds with German children’s perception of themselves as free and self-determined individuals. For the Cameroonian children, however, following the instruction of an adult fit with their perceived role of being responsible to a community to which they were hierarchically interrelated. We can conclude that delayed gratification is likely important to most societies, but that it is achieved through different, culturally conditioned mechanisms.

It should be clear from the above discussion that we cannot simply replace existing frameworks with the perceptions of individuals in a new context. In the above example, the sample was insufficient to make generalizations about the perception of SEL in Tanzania as a whole. Also, not all of the constructs generated through this process will be valid, measurable and teachable. However, a combination of developmental science, existing frameworks and theory and evidence about their applicability in a new context can help us move closer towards a conceptualization of SEL that is relevant to participant communities.

Overall, we can see that cultures differ both in the ways in which competences are valued and important and in the ways in which similar competences operate. The discussion so far has focused on present, observable differences in societies. The following section considers how children are prepared to face a life beyond the here and now.

## 4 Beyond the here and now

One of the challenges of education was accurately summarized by Julian Huxley, the first Director-General of UNESCO. He said that ‘education should be adapted to the local environment of time and place, and yet give the opportunity of transcending that environment’ (Huxley, 1931, p.304).

Much of the discussion in the previous two sections was related to the first half of Huxley’s statement—adapting curricula and materials to the local environment, meeting children where they are in their own culture, and understanding the values and adaptive competences in their world. However, an emphasis on cultural relevance risks promoting cultural stasis. In an effort to be mindful of the local culture, we may find ourselves working to preserve it and resisting change. This cultural preservation works against the aim articulated in the second half of the above quote—the requirement to transcend the environment.

But, transcending their environment to go where? The implication is that children need to be prepared for a future that is different from their present. But who gets to say what that future will look like? The answer to that question is rarely ‘the rural villagers of the world.’ Typically, an external agenda such as ‘21st-century skills’ will be imposed from outside. Whether this agenda comes from a foreign agency or from institutions in the capital city of the host country, it is likely to be guided by the values of educated urbanites rather than by rural communities. Imposing such views risks the same cultural imperialism that we were trying to avoid in the preceding discussion about contextualizing current SEL frameworks. But does that matter? One could argue that the world’s children will grow up to operate in the same globalized world, competing in the same interconnected markets using the same technology, and thus will require the same skills.

I argue there are at least two reasons why the direction of future cultural change needs to be contextually relevant. First, even in a globalized world, different cultures make different kinds of



contributions to the same activities and industries. For example, Geert Hofstede's influential cross-national work on cultures and organizations initially concluded that individualistic cultures with a tolerance for risk were those that performed well economically (Hofstede, 1991). The economic rise of East Asian countries challenged this view, however. For example, South Korea was rated as neither individualistic nor risk-taking and yet had a remarkable rate of economic growth from the 1960s to the 1980s. Later analyses suggested that South Korean culture had other singular traits that contributed to its success—a long-term orientation and a tendency to exercise restraint rather than to indulge. Therefore, interaction in a globalized world does not imply homogeneity. There is not just one set of cultural values that leads to economic growth.

Second, even where the goal is the same, different cultures may choose, or require, different routes to get to the same endpoint. If the vision of an education curriculum is that rural children should grow up to have different competences from their parents, the change may occur through gradual cultural evolution along a particular path rather than from an education curriculum that simply replaces one set of values with another.

Given these competing considerations, what approaches can help a community identify the competences and values it would like for its children in the future and the immediate changes required to move toward that goal? Progress on this question can be made by observing the cultural change that is already evident within society. As noted above, differences commonly exist between urban and rural communities and between communities with and without a history of widespread formal education. One way in which this variation manifests is the difference between teachers and parents in rural areas, or in the difference between the culture of home and school. Our study in Mtwara, Tanzania (see section 3) found differences between parents and teachers in the qualities they saw as important for children's education. Parents most valued respect, obedience, discipline, and attentive listening, whereas teachers were more

likely to value self-belief, confidence, and curiosity. In a follow-up study in three regions of Tanzania, teachers—particularly in rural areas—said that confidence and curiosity were important for children participating in classroom activities important for learning, such as volunteering to answer questions or carrying out exercises.

On the basis of these findings, it would be reasonable to propose developing confidence and curiosity as a goal for SEL programs. These competences are consistent with educational theories about classroom participation and, crucially, were valued by teachers working within this community rather than being imposed by external agents. They also manifested in local children who had experienced city life, perhaps a proxy for some of the demands of life in the twenty-first century.

## 5 Voice and agency

The above discussion argues for the teaching of social and emotional competences—confidence and curiosity—that are valued by teachers but not by parents. That said, it could be problematic to promote competences that are not the top priority of parents. To avoid such problems, it is important to give voice and agency to a range of actors in the participant communities in the design of SEL programs and materials.

Negotiating program goals with communities is important for at least two reasons. First, this brief began by arguing the importance of avoiding the imposition of values on the community by external actors. The considerations in sections 2–4 above can make the goals of SEL programs more relevant to the communities they serve. However, if the goals and programs are devised by external actors, communities may still end up with programs that are based on someone else's (mistaken) idea of what they need. In particular, we want to avoid inappropriate cultural sensitivity resulting in a two-tiered education system—one for the urban wealthy and the other for the rural poor.

Second, a program whose goals are negotiated among groups with differing views may be more effective and achieve wider acceptance, though the issues are not straightforward. For example, a program in Ghana (Wolf et al., 2019) found that involving parents in their children's preschool *reduced* the schools' effectiveness, because parents did not support the teaching methods used in the program. In the example from Mtwara, Tanzania, teachers emphasized confidence and curiosity, whereas parents emphasized respect and obedience. These two sets of goals could be at odds with each other: It is possible that a program designed to improve confidence and curiosity may also undermine respect and obedience. For example, a child who is 'seen and not heard' cannot be one who is asking many questions. However, when we asked parents in Tanzania about this issue directly, they told us that the ideal child would be both obedient and curious. Involving both parents and teachers in the design of the program may be one way to achieve the ends desired by all parties.

A similar collaborative approach to program design may have benefits in other areas. For example, SDG Target 4.7 aims to promote gender equality. Where parents and education programs differ in the value they place on this goal, it will be important for negotiation and collaborative design to take place. Target 4.7 also emphasizes an appreciation of cultural diversity. This appreciation may be required when values differ among participants and designers of an SEL program. The process of collaboration in design may help to foster an appreciation of cultural diversity among program architects, which may in turn be reflected in the materials and the program itself.

## 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this article outlines an approach to contextualizing the goals of SEL programs in new contexts. In an ideal world, scholarship on SEL would reach every corner of the globe and contextualized models of SEL would exist for every population.

In the real world, we need approaches to help us contextualize SEL goals more quickly. This article offers a few ideas. For example, we can make predictions about SEL competences that are valued based on the sociodemographic features of the participant population. Cultures that are shaped by the prevalence of subsistence agriculture are more likely to value competences that are adaptive in a society of hierarchical, interrelated individuals. Emphasis on social responsibility, respect, obedience, and self-regulation fits easily with children's understanding of their role in such a community.

Predictions from such theoretical perspectives should be validated through interviews with community members about the competences they value. However, a focus on the current culture of a community may risk ignoring the ways in which they would like to change. Even in a globalized world, communities may desire distinctive competences for the children that they send out into the world; or they may require different paths to reach similar goals. In addition to asking the community about the competences children will need in the future, planners can garner clues to the likely acceptable paths of development by looking at variations within a society at present—particularly comparing urban and rural environments within a country. The final goals of an SEL program must be informed by, and negotiated with, the community. This type of consultation avoids the risk of external agents imposing unwanted programs. Negotiated positions can make programs more effective and can ensure wider acceptance of goals—such as gender equality—about which a variety of views exist among parents, teachers, and program architects.

An important consideration is that education programs and textbooks may be prepared for use across the nation, which may comprise multiple ethnic and religious groups. The type of case studies described here can help guide national policy. In terms of local education projects—for example, for production and use of early grade reading materials—dialogue with parents and teachers in the given locality will provide invaluable insights

for urban-educated nationals and foreign consultants supporting this work.

Overall, it is concerning that little attention is paid to the cultural-diversity aspects of social and emotional competences. Rushing to roll out programs to achieve ambitious global goals, while lacking insights into the profound ways in which societies differ, risks harmful homogenization of SEL programs. My hope is that this article provides some high-level guidelines to help design more relevant and more effective programs to promote social and emotional competences.

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## The central role of school culture and climate in fostering social and emotional learning: Evidence from Malawi and Uganda

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### ABSTRACT

The central role that the school and classroom environment or ‘school climate’ plays in social and emotional learning (SEL) is well documented, albeit mostly from US-based studies. RTI International sought to understand how schools in Malawi and Uganda organized themselves to provide positive and supportive places for children to learn and to develop socially and emotionally. The narratives captured in this study help explain how teacher behaviors and school culture serve to nurture social and emotional (SE) skills. Teachers, students, parents, and school management committee (SMC) members discussed the importance of teacher encouragement, friendliness and approachability, appreciation, understanding of and listening to student viewpoints, and modeling of cooperative teacher–teacher interactions to support SEL. School qualities identified as important for SEL included cooperation, student clubs and sports, a violence-free environment, freedom of expression, and commitment to equality. The findings yield insights into what schools can do to develop a culture of SEL, in and outside the classroom.

### KEYWORDS

social and emotional learning, school climate, primary school, child development

### Background and rationale

Before the presentation on background, the authors offer a note on terminology: school culture and school climate are not interchangeable terms. School culture has to do with the underpinning values and norms of the school, spoken or unspoken, which drive the ways that school personnel, managers, and students approach their responsibilities and the ways that they interact with each other. School climate refers to how the behaviors and relationships of individuals in the school and community translate into the ‘feel’ of being in the school, or the characterization of life at school (Kane et al., 2016).

The central role of school climate in the well-being and social and emotional development of students as well as learning outcomes is well documented, albeit mostly from US-based studies (Berg et al., 2017; Garibaldi et al., 2017; Thapa et al., 2012). Findings from these studies have identified certain key ‘learning conditions’ that foster social and emotional learning (SEL). Among them are positive, supporting, and trusting relationships; emotional, physical, and social safety; responsiveness to diversity; connectedness; and compelling instruction (Berg et al., 2017; Garibaldi et al., 2015).

By comparison, few studies have examined how school climate promotes and interacts with SEL in middle- and low-income countries. Recent studies from conflict-affected countries have produced evidence that a safe and engaging classroom, in which students feel cared for and supported, is important for instilling a sense of safety, predictability, and connectedness to school, and can positively impact both social and academic development (Diaz Varela et al., 2013).

RTI International sought to understand how primary schools in Malawi and Uganda organized themselves to provide positive and

supportive places for children to learn and develop socially and emotionally, in the absence of externally funded SEL programs. The information from this study was intended to inform modifications to other education systems' curriculum, pedagogy, and materials to foster SEL as an integral part of school life. In addition, the findings can guide school-level change for supporting students' well-being and SEL and for enhancing the collective leadership of the school to achieve these goals. Such improvements can shift the norm toward a positive and supportive school culture and climate that foster SEL inside and outside the classroom.

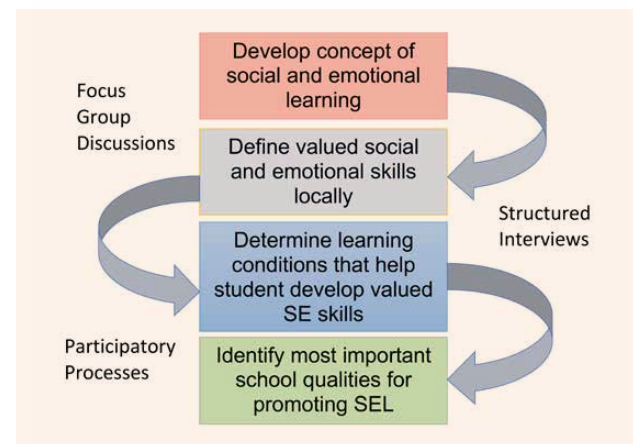
## Methods

The study applied qualitative methods for investigating three research questions:

- What social and emotional (SE) skills are important for students to develop in primary schools?
- What teacher behaviors and school characteristics help students develop SE skills?
- What are the underpinning school values that enable a culture of SEL?

We identified three schools in Malawi and three schools in Uganda that demonstrated exceptionally high scores (above the 95th percentile) on measures of school safety and child protection, school climate, gender responsiveness, and inclusion. In Malawi, schools were selected based on data from the National Assessment of Safety and Inclusion in Schools (NASIS), an instrument that was developed and administered under the USAID Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity (MERIT). In Uganda, schools were selected based on their scores on a baseline survey on school climate, gender attitudes, and school-related gender-based violence completed under USAID's Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity. Once the schools were identified based on these assessments, local education officials were contacted to

provide a 'blind' description of the school culture and climate. This feedback served to validate the school selection. Both Muslim and Christian families were represented in all of the six schools. Four of the six schools were in remote, rural areas while two (one in each country, Malawi and Uganda) were in peri-urban areas. The four rural schools were particularly low-resourced, with insufficient classrooms, limited furniture and incomplete material resources.



**Figure 1:** Data collection methods

Data were collected predominantly through focus group discussions with four separate groups of participants: all teachers in the school, 12 students from Grade 5 and Grade 6 (10-12 years of age), 12 parents, and all available SMC members participated. For the focus groups, the approach for each category of participants was systematic (see figure 1). The facilitator began by guiding a dialogue that allowed the participants to establish for themselves a conceptual framework for social and emotional development. Once all the group members understood the idea of SE skill development, the research team facilitated discussions about what SE skills children need to develop in order to become happy, successful and good citizens in adulthood. This topic was followed by discussions about teacher attributes and behaviors and school characteristics that nurture the development of



the valued SE skills. The group discussions ended by having participants work in small groups to identify the underpinning school values that serve to build attachment and sustained commitment to students' well-being and SEL.

Interactive games (such as developing a mind map) and brainstorming activities were also used to allow the participants to generate ideas independently and to detect relational patterns across topics. Small-group discussions allowed participants to explore ideas together, enriching the data further. Finally, individual interviews were used to seek clarification or to deepen the research team's understanding of specific comments.

## Data analysis

Group discussions and individual interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated from Chichewa or Luganda into English by professional transcriptionists in Malawi and Uganda. Data analysis was an iterative process, beginning with a manual review of transcribed data files and notes from each of the six schools, open coding, and narrative analysis to understand the interconnectedness of central themes. All of these steps were supported by software designed for analyzing qualitative data.

## Findings

In most of the discussions, participants offered narratives or 'stories' about the relationships among different SE skills and the teacher and school qualities that promote SEL. The findings presented in this section are based on an analysis of these narratives, highlighting the nature and relevance of the interconnections among different SE skills and the school conditions that foster their development.

## Locally valued social and emotional skills

The majority of SE skills that were referenced in response to the question, 'What social skills help children become happy, successful adults and good citizens?' were centered around positive inter-personal relations, which were characterized by pro-social behavior, empathy and compassion, love and kindness. In all the discussions about SE skills, participants tended to tell stories about how different SE skills interacted in a given context and how the development of one skill or behavior led to the development of others. Participant narratives around certain themes related to student SE skill development shed light on this process.

Agency: 'The capacity to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear.'  
(Klugman et al., 2014, p. 1)

Prosocial behavior was a prominent theme that demonstrates this point. Sharing and caring for others, providing for children in need, seeking assistance for the sick or injured, sharing the burdens of others, and helping friends solve problems were examples of prosocial behavior discussed. The narratives around this theme demonstrated the value of prosocial behavior in nurturing students' development of a wide range of SE skills. The stories went something like this: Caring for each other helps students develop relationships; positive relationships, in turn, help students develop emotional skills such as empathy and compassion, which are expressed through, for example, a caring gesture of giving or perhaps sharing an emotional burden. Thus, caring helps students develop friends, which gives rise to other important emotional skills (e.g., empathy), and this, in turn, leads to the development of prosocial behavior—and the cycle begins again, perhaps supporting development of a different SE skill. For example, by assisting a friend, students learn to work together in solving problems. Such cooperative problem-solving builds agency (see text box), which is reinforced when the students decide to seek additional assistance

(e.g., from an adult) and are successful in getting the help they need. Through this experience, students learn how to develop trusting relationships with peers and adults and how to become trustworthy themselves, both of which were frequently mentioned and valued interpersonal skills. Thus, modeling and encouraging prosocial behavior in the school serves to nurture a wide range of SE skills and naturally promotes a culture of SEL, inside and outside the classroom.

Teachers, students, and parents talked about the importance of ‘self-belief’ and ‘knowing who you are’ as the basis for controlling moods, overcoming challenges, navigating daily life, and responding to different life situations appropriately. These stories demonstrate the importance of developing agency as an element of social growth, even though direct reference to the word ‘agency’ was not made. This is how they described it:

- When the parent is forcing the child to go to the farm instead of school, sometimes the child might choose to go to school; his choice is on school and not on going to the farm and he may help on the farm later. (Parent)
- It is important to try to do something to get what you want. (Student)
- You need to know what you want to be in the future and by knowing it you will be able to work hard in education in order to achieve what you want to be in life. (Teacher)

Parents focused on student attributes related to love and kindness, such as calm and humble dispositions, peaceful communications, and being loving and respectful. Teachers also discussed respect in the context of peaceful interaction. Teachers associated respect with understanding the views and moods of others, and explained that it was through understanding of differences that students develop the ability to peacefully resolve disagreements.

‘A loving teacher who appreciates their students builds attention and listening, helps students complete their assignments, and [increases] concentration, which helps students understand and do well.’ (Teacher)

Certain cognitive skills were also referenced as being important to SEL. Similar to prosocial behavior, participant discussions demonstrated how cognitive skills can support and are supported by a variety of SE skills. For example, participants discussed the importance of ‘thinking before doing’ as a strategy for controlling mood. Teachers felt that understanding other viewpoints helps students develop the ability to think and respond flexibly and appropriately to different social situations. Similarly, teachers noted that interpersonal cooperation helps students think through the steps for solving problems. Teachers described the relationships among love and appreciation, certain cognitive skills, and school performance (see text box).

This undercurrent of love, kindness, and respect flowed through the school values and appeared to motivate the behaviors of school staff, students, and parents in all of the schools visited. When asked about the teacher qualities that helped students develop SE skills, the participant groups—especially students—focused on loving and caring teacher dispositions and behaviors.

## Teacher qualities that support SEL

Figure 2 shows the overall landscape of teacher qualities that participants felt were important in helping students develop SE skills. The teacher qualities presented in this graph are the topics that the students, teachers, SMC members and parents talked about during the focus group discussions and structured interviews.

Students talked about how much their teachers loved them—‘just like family.’ The student discussions about teachers were always about love: encouragement is love; friendliness is love; no beating is love; and teaching morals is love.

I always get encouraged by my teachers because they always advise me not to be absent from school and this makes me to be encouraged in the process and that is the point when I know that the teacher really loved me. (Student)

In all six schools, students talked about how happy they were that their teachers taught well and were hardworking. One student articulated this perfectly: 'I am happy because we have good teaching of all subjects and I am able to understand well.' In this type of environment, students come to school because they want to learn and appreciate having a teacher who is effective. Students notice when their teachers work hard to make sure students understand the subject matter.

Teachers also talked about encouragement and instruction, but the teachers' comments were more about how they used encouragement and classroom instruction to 'teach' SE skills. Teachers, they said, used encouragement to guide their students in forming good peer groups, solving problems together, expressing

Studying the child: 'By studying the child, you develop an understanding about the child's talents in order to nurture these talents and give children hope. You learn about the child's personal attributes so that you can help a shy child, for example, learn to express themselves. You visit the home to learn about any challenges the family is facing so you can "share their burden" and help the student navigate through difficult times.' (Teacher)

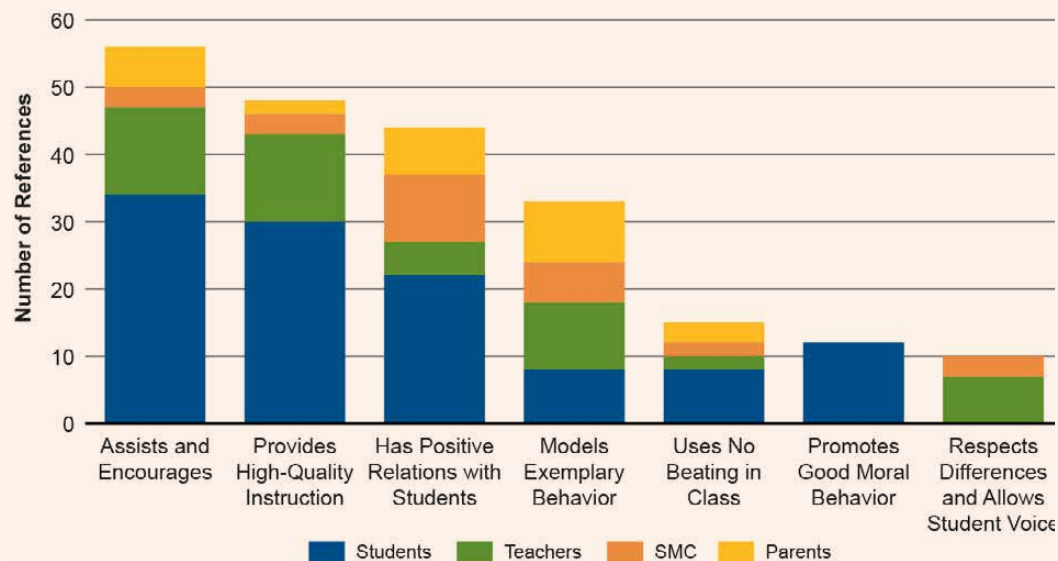
themselves openly, recognizing right from wrong, making healthy choices in what they say and do, and 'having hope.' Thus, through encouragement, teachers directly supported SEL and gave students a chance to practice their emerging SE skills.

Rather than emphasizing the quality of subject-matter instruction, as the students had done, teachers talked about approaches to instruction that directly fostered SEL. For example, a common theme emerging from the teachers was the importance of conducting 'child studies' (see text box).

Teachers talked about being friendly, approachable and appreciative in the classroom and noted that these teacher attributes help children to listen, concentrate, and understand what is being taught. Actively engaging all students in the classroom was a way that teachers said they helped children learn to express their ideas, which was important for building a sense of self and interpersonal relations.

## School characteristics that support SEL

Participants identified school characteristics that promote SEL, but teachers talked about or framed these characteristics in terms of value statements or school norms, meaning 'what we do' or 'how it is' in this school. For example, participants might say, 'In this school, we make sure everyone has a uniform or exercise book so that all children will feel equal.' Or 'There is cooperation and unity at this school, and this leads to higher performance.' Such normative expectations are important because such defining attributes of the school culture are likely to translate into positive teacher and student social behaviors,



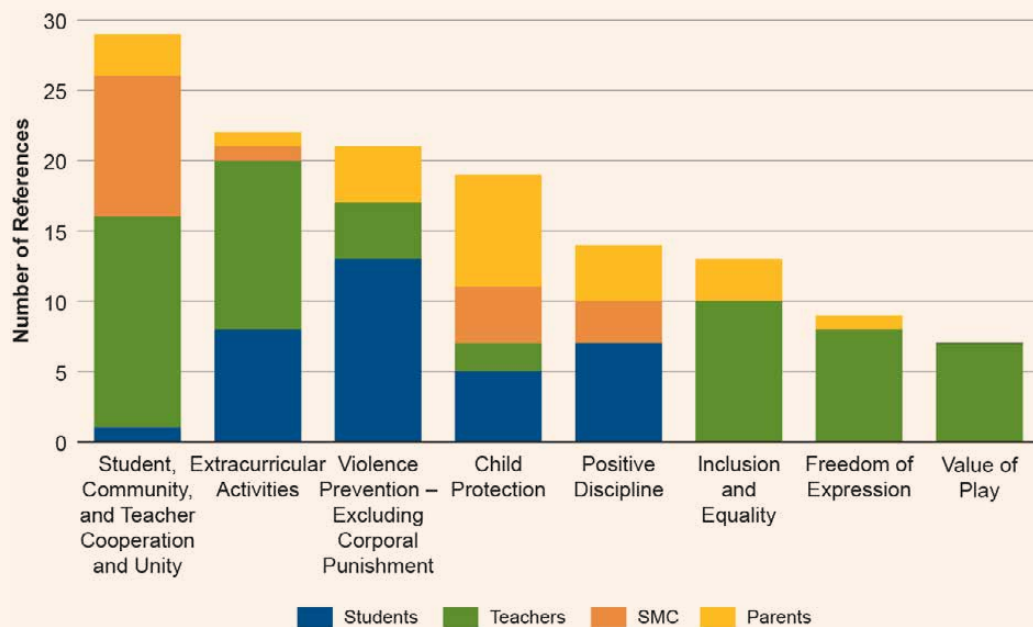
**Figure 2:** Teacher qualities that support SEL: Input from focus groups

which in turn reinforce and help to maintain a school culture that supports SEL.

Listening to the discussions about school values quickly revealed the importance of the school culture in fostering a sense of belonging or attachment to the school—for students, teachers, and also parents. This sense of belonging and unity was discussed by participants in all six schools.

The eight school characteristics that participants identified as important for SEL are presented in Figure 3.

Combining the data for Malawi and Uganda, cooperation was referenced more than any other school quality. In fact, one teacher volunteered the following: ‘Cooperation is the umbrella to all social and emotional learning.’ In these six schools, cooperation was an inclusive concept. Participants stressed the importance of teachers, parents, students, and SMC members being present for



**Figure 3:** School characteristics that support positive SEL in Malawi and Uganda

solving school or community issues, guiding and assisting students through challenges, ensuring the safety of students, or organizing to help more vulnerable students. Modeling cooperation in solving disagreements with their peer teachers was mentioned as the best way to directly teach students to handle their own disagreements.

Extracurricular activities, particularly student clubs and sports, were seen as avenues for building a sense of self, humility, interpersonal cooperation, and problem-solving skills.

Many of the school characteristics discussed ensured the physical, social, and emotional safety of children. For example, protecting children from environmental hazards, such as crossing rivers during rainy season; keeping the school grounds clean, to prevent disease; protecting children from sexual predators; and enforcing a no-tolerance policy for corporal punishment or bullying were examples of the many ways that schools ensured the physical safety of their students.

Teachers, students, parents, and SMC members talked about the use of ‘guidance and counseling’ to teach moral behavior and address student disciplinary issues in a positive way. Teachers and SMC members were very proud of their successes in using this positive approach to discipline; in one school, the shift toward such positive disciplinary methods was credited for improving students’ performance.

Equal treatment of all students was an underlying school value that, according to teachers and parents, nurtured students’ ability to understand and respect differences between children and to be responsive to the needs of others. Teachers spoke about the value of freedom of expression as a way to help some children become less reluctant to share their thoughts, and to enhance the expressive talents of others. Teachers took pride in encouraging all students to ‘toss around ideas’ with each other.

Although equal treatment and freedom of expression were seen as important in their own right, these school values help children feel socially and emotionally safe. That is, for students to develop



and practice SE skills, they need to feel safe to express an opinion that may be different from the norm, to make mistakes in class, and to communicate and work through their emotions as they navigate their world every day, deal with challenges, and bounce back from negative experiences.

## Conclusions and implications

The findings from this study remind us of the incredible potential that all schools have for providing school cultures and climates that maximize students' positive social and emotional development as well as their academic success. The results also help us understand what SE skills teachers, students, parents, and SMC members value, and how certain school qualities and teacher behaviors directly foster SEL. This is not to say that direct, child-centered SEL programming and instruction should be disregarded; on the contrary. Durlak et al. (2011) and others (e.g., Taylor et al., 2017) have shown that school-based SEL instruction, whether in the classroom or during an extracurricular activity, positively impacts students' SEL.

The results from this study, however, demonstrate that in order to maximize students' in-school opportunities to develop and practice valued SE skills, we must be sure to deliberately and collectively establish the school and classroom conditions that support a culture of SEL. In so doing, we leverage the interdependency of the school climate and SEL to maximize the students' positive social and emotional growth. The interrelationship between the school climate and SEL is nicely described in the following quotation from Berg and colleagues (2017, p.4):

SEL cannot flourish in a school independent of positive and supportive school and classroom climates, just as systematic efforts to build student and adult social and emotional competencies contribute to nurturing classroom and school climates.

The recommendations below are meant to guide education managers, teachers, students and community members in ways to

work together and establish classroom and school conditions that best nurture SEL.

- 1 **Host a 'learning journey'** with all education actors (including students) *in a school* to begin a dialogue about valued SE skills; aspects of the school, classroom, and materials that can support these skills; and **how to go about putting these practices in place.**
- 2 **Facilitate a group institutional self-evaluation** about how *the school can* promote a culture of SEL. For example, a school or district could develop a rubric of learning conditions favorable to SEL, based on local and international knowledge. The rubric might encompass school values including but not limited to the following: cooperation; positive relationships; availability of inclusive student clubs and school sports; equal treatment of all students; zero tolerance of any form of violence, including bullying, corporal punishment, and sexual harassment and assault; honoring of differences; and freedom of expression. **The school or district could then use the self-evaluation findings to inspire the needed institutional change, and work together to build a culture of SEL, in and outside the classroom.**
- 3 **Embed practical suggestions for teachers in textbooks and teacher guides**, including examples of *student activities* and classroom scenarios, which enhance teaching practices in order to better foster students' development of SE skills. From this study, we have learned the following aspects of teaching that serve to build SE skills: offering encouragement, interacting positively with students, being approachable, enabling and respecting diverse student voices, responding appreciatively to inaccurate student answers and not using corporal punishment, serving as a role model for solving disagreements, ensuring peaceful communication, and exemplifying prosocial behaviors. Intuitively, most educators would agree that such teacher behaviors are important for promoting student wellbeing and



positive social and emotional development, but they are rarely integrated into teaching and learning materials. Enhancing existing textbooks and teacher guides with practical suggestions and examples of how teachers can support students' SEL will not only support students' development of important SE skills but also serve to strengthen teachers' own social and emotional competencies.

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## Researching cultural nuances and values for a contextually and culturally relevant social and emotional learning in Ghana: Methodological and conceptual challenges

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### ABSTRACT

Conducting research on cultural values and dispositions of a specific context in the global South is crucial to designing contextually and culturally relevant social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. Yet, the methodological challenges in collecting high quality responses from local research participants on SEL and the conceptual challenges in categorizing locally driven competencies and skills have not been widely analyzed. Drawing on the experience of researching locally valued social and emotional competencies and skills for young children in Fanteakwa District in Ghana, I discuss the following sub-themes in this article: (1) conceptual and methodological challenges in developing the research; (2) methodological challenges in conducting data collection; and (3) conceptual and methodological challenges in data analysis.

### KEYWORDS

social and emotional learning, qualitative research, methodological challenges, culturally relevant education, sociocultural context, cultural values, contextualization

## Introduction

There is a growing interest in and need for designing and implementing a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programming and measurement that is culturally and contextually relevant in the global South<sup>1</sup>. A recent experimental evaluation of International Rescue Committee (IRC)'s targeted SEL interventions, *Brain games* and *Mindfulness*, in Niger by TIES/NYU found little or no impact on children's social emotional outcomes and called for context-appropriate and culturally sensitive SEL programs (TIES/NYU, 2019). It is laudable that international humanitarian and development organizations consider contextualization of their education programming relevant for learners in specific contexts more seriously. However, little is known about the cultural nuances and local relevance of SEL programming in the global South.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the methodological challenges in collecting high quality responses from local participants on cultural dispositions relevant to SEL and the conceptual challenges in analyzing competencies and skills recognized as important by local participants in the global South have not been extensively discussed.

Thus, this brief reflects on some of the methodological and conceptual challenges in understanding cultural nuances and values of communities as an outside researcher, drawing on the experience of researching locally valued social and emotional competencies and skills for young children in Fanteakwa District

- 1 While the "Global North/Global South" classification still has limitations of the over-simplification and introduces a binary notion of the world, this paper uses the terminology as an alternative to other terms, such as "developed/developing world," "center/periphery," and "developed economies/economies in transition/developing economies," which automatically assumes superiority/inferiority or a linear progression of the development (McFarlane, 2006; Hollington et al, 2015). In addition, it is also worth noting that the Global South is not a homogeneous construct.
- 2 Two recent studies have been conducted in Tanzania (Jukes et al, 2018) and another in Ghana (Jeong, 2019)

in Ghana. That research, which was conducted in Eastern Region of Ghana in 2018 at the project site of an international non-governmental organization (hereinafter, the INGO), aimed to understand social, emotional, and behavioral competencies and skills that were considered valuable by local educators and caregivers for children to acquire in order to succeed in school and life. The study utilized a sequential mixed-methods research design, where priority is given to qualitative research methods while the quantitative data collected through the survey was used to triangulate and complement the findings from the qualitative research methods (Klassen et al., 2012). Methods of the data collection included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Likert-scale surveys with 61 teachers and 40 caregivers, and interviews with ten education administrators.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, while the findings of the research are not the focus of this paper, I describe a few here as a background. The research found that both educators and caregivers in Fantekwa put significantly stronger emphasis on the social and emotional competencies and skills that seemed essential in maintaining the collectivist, interdependent culture of the community. Competencies and skills under the social-awareness/responsibility domain, such as, *respectful, disciplined, obedient, attentive/good listener, and giving back to the community*, and relationship skills domain, *sociable/friendly, expressive, cooperative, and participatory* were stressed more than competencies and skills under the self-management and self-awareness domains. While caregivers did

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3 Specifically, the study focused on exploring the following four research questions: (1) What are locally defined and valued social, emotional, and behavioral competencies and skills for children in Fantekwa, Ghana?; (2) Which of the social, emotional, and behavioral competencies and skills are valued and emphasized for schooling and academic success?; (3) Which of the social, emotional, and behavioral competencies and skills are emphasized for life?; (4) How are these locally defined social, emotional, behavioral competencies and skills aligned with and/or different from the existing SEL frameworks developed by researchers in the global North (e.g. CASEL)?

not significantly differentiate social, emotional, and behavioral competencies essential for young children to succeed in school and in life, it was mostly only educators who mentioned individual-level competencies and skills, such as, *self-motivation, leadership skills, emotional stability, creativity, and self-confidence* also as important for children to be successful in school

In the following sections I explain the conceptual and methodological challenges in understanding cultural nuances and values of communities as an outside researcher at each of the different stages of research: in developing the research, in conducting data collection, and in data analysis.<sup>4</sup> The article concludes with some general reflections based on my experience.

## Conceptual and methodological challenges in developing the research

There were two large challenges at the development stage of the research: (1) operationalizing abstract and complex concept of SEL into interview questions in the protocols; and (2) translating the caregiver FGD protocol into two local languages.

First, I had to operationalize the research questions into interview and FGD questions in an accurate manner so that the questions could be understood by the local respondents without losing the meaning of them for purposes of the research. From a cultural and practical perspective, based on my previous engagement with schools and communities in Fantekwa District and through discussions with staff members of the INGO, I was already aware that teachers preferred learning and discussing detailed examples and experiences in their classrooms rather than abstract concepts. In addition, I had to be cognizant of the caregivers' relatively lower level of formal education: an evaluation study of the INGO in 2018 found that approximately 40 percent of

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4 No doubt there were various methodological challenges during the research, but for purposes of this paper, I have focused on introducing only those that are relevant to the focus of the paper.

caregivers had not received a formal education at all or had dropped out of primary education.

Thus, I tried to formulate simple questions rather than adopt complex terminological definitions for interviews and FGDs and to limit the length of the protocols. For instance, despite the fact that the term *competency* is often defined as a higher order, aggregated concept compared to *skill* (OECD, 2005), I decided to use both terms together as *skills and competencies* in order to draw understanding from a broad range of local participants. I also decided not to use the same terminology, *competencies and skills*, to caregivers, but to use *qualities and skills* instead, because I understood from the local researchers that *competency* may be too complex a word to be understood by the caregivers who most likely had no background in education, unlike the teachers. Also, I distinguished ‘social’ skills and competencies and ‘emotional’ skills and competencies instead of asking about both ‘social and emotional’ skills and competencies in order to focus on each concept and distinguish between the two.

In order to verify that the draft protocols I was developing would be contextually and linguistically valid in Fanteakwa, at an early stage I held a contextual review workshop on the initial draft protocols with local research partners to understand the relevant concepts in the context of Ghana.<sup>5</sup> During this review workshop, we were able to share a common understanding of the concepts and questions, to prioritize must-have items and to revise questions using more contextually-appropriate vocabularies. The process served as a pre-piloting of the protocols and minimized potential changes and revisions of the protocols after the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

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5 Other methods that I used to increase the accuracy of the protocols were: (i) obtain methodological inputs from a qualitative method faculty at George Washington University, and (ii) compare my research to other similar research design and interview questions, in particular the SEL research in Tanzania (Jukes et al., 2018) and earlier efforts in global mental health discipline (Betancourt et al., 2009; Kostelny & Wessells, 2008).

Another significant methodological challenge in this cross-cultural research was the translation of the caregiver FGD protocol from English to the two local languages, Twi and Dangme, in a manner that would establish conceptual equivalence of key terminologies in the protocols. Not being fluent in Twi and Dangme, finding high quality translators was crucial in resolving the challenge. From a recommended pool of translators with track records with the INGO, we were able to identify two qualified translators for each language. Each of these translators was competent in both English and their respective local language and had significant experience in the education field.

In the translation process too, we went through additional steps to confirm that translations were as accurate as possible (Geisinger, 1994; Van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004). For both languages, we asked the two translators to independently translate the English caregiver FGD protocols and then reconciled any differences between the two translations by asking INGO staff members who spoke Twi or Dangme to review such discrepancies together with the translators in a workshop format meeting and to agree on one translated protocol per language. During the translation review meeting, some terminological definitions, such as ‘quality’ and ‘skills’, which were agreed during the earlier contextual review workshop, served as criteria that all could refer to.

## Methodological challenges in conducting data collection

There were three main methodological challenges during data collection: (1) administering the protocols in a locally appropriate and engaging way to generate high quality response from both educators and caregivers; (2) differences between administering teacher FGDs and caregiver FGDs; and (3) contextual and practical factors that might have affected the local response.

First of all, it was challenging to get detailed and high-quality responses from both teachers and caregivers even after the

painstaking process of formulating simple protocols. For example, in the pilot FGDs, when we asked what social and emotional competencies and skills the teachers and caregivers would like their students and children to develop, we initially received more abstract answers such as ‘social skills’ and ‘good behaviors.’ We discussed this in the daily debriefing meetings with the local research team. Local research partners mentioned that it was easier for educators and caregivers to think of associated competencies and skills when they were able to envision specific examples of children. Therefore, we re-organized the order in which questions were asked to foster such thought process: we asked the question to define successful students/children in the local context first, before asking the social and emotional competencies and skills that they perceived as important. For teachers, we asked them to think about the most successful students in their class, and for caregivers, to think of their own children and to identify qualities and skills that they hoped their children could develop. Thus, the daily debriefing meetings with the whole team served as a crucial forum in discussing which of the probing questions and in which order were effective in discussing details with local participants.

Secondly, different challenges were identified between teachers and caregivers when conducting FGDs. With regards to teachers, at a pilot FGD, we got the impression that some were providing us with socially desirable responses, or, as one of my local research partners described it, ‘textbook answers’—they were simply reiterating skills and competencies emphasized in the curriculum. For example, we were getting responses such as ‘psychomotor skills’ from kindergarten teachers and ‘creativity’ from early grade teachers who taught a subject called creative art. I later understood through the daily debriefing that this might have been because of the word *competency*. Because the vocabulary is rarely used in daily life, only in curriculum, teachers named competencies that they teach and not necessarily what they consider important. As a result, we decided not to use *competencies and skills*, but instead decided to use *soft skills and qualities* to describe our questions in teacher FGDs.

In the meantime, with caregivers, FGDs were conducted in either Twi or Dangme; therefore, we had to rely heavily on the local researchers for both data collection and analysis. A daily debriefing meeting with two local research partners and two interpreters was therefore critical in general, but even more so in verifying and expanding the hand-written notes from caregiver FGDs. Also, because social and emotional competencies and skills are abstract concepts, we were especially careful not to lose different linguistic connotations and subtleties due to translations<sup>6</sup>.

Lastly, contextual and practical factors related to FGDs may have affected local participants’ perspectives. We found both teachers and caregivers initially focused on discussing academic skills, particularly reading skills, when responding to questions about success in schools. Such prioritization may have been a result of their prior exposure to the INGO’s early grade reading project in the area. To tackle the issue, we added the probe for researchers to ‘encourage participants to think beyond content/academic skills, and redirect to social and emotional competencies and skills’, if participants were focused only on academic skills.

Some other practical factors also influenced group dynamics. Based on my previous experience with FGDs for the INGO’s evaluation studies in Fanteakwa, I was aware that caregivers preferred to speak in same-sex groups and in smaller numbers. Thus, we divided the female and male caregiver FGDs and I also tried to maintain the number of participants for each FGD fewer than seven (the average turned out to be around five to six). This proved to be a successful strategy. Specifically, some caregivers noted that the small group size ‘allowed them to speak freely about their thoughts.’ One factor that should also be taken into account is the local industry and how it affects availability of respondents, particularly caregivers. While I planned to conduct an equal

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6 I would also note that while teachers were generally more used to having conversations around topics on education, caregivers struggled to continue such conversations to describe competencies and skills, which we had to be cognizant of in furthering our research.



number of FGDs between teachers and caregivers and between males and females, several FGDs with caregivers, especially male caregivers, were canceled because the data collection overlapped with the farming season.

## Conceptual challenges in data analysis

At the data analysis stage<sup>7</sup>, there were two major challenges: (1) rearranging and merging initial codes; and (2) determining whether there was a need to distinguish values from skills and competencies.

The first challenge I faced during data analysis was during the second cycle of coding, when we were rearranging and merging initial codes. Because I created initial codes as close as possible to the local participants' actual response, it took me more time than anticipated to determine which of the initial codes had to be merged, rearranged, or removed. For example, I had 'expressive/speaking skills' as a part of the relationship skills competency, while behavior examples overlapped significantly with 'bold/self-assertive' skill. While the two skills could have been merged because both were defined in the context of not feeling shy, I decided to leave them separate because, based on my understanding from speaking to the local team of how these terms

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7 By way of background, I applied the following process in data analysis: At the first cycle of coding, I applied the Open Coding approach, first categorizing competencies and skills at social/interpersonal level and at individual level. I created codes as close as possible to what local participants said during the FGDs and interviews (Saldaña, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). I then used the Axial Coding approach for the second cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2013). Field notes from the data collection and analytic memos from the coding and analysis were mainly used in the second cycle of coding and analysis stage in categorizing codes and finding patterns from the data. The use of both inductive and deductive approaches to the coding was intentional because the fourth research question specifically investigated locally valued social, emotional and behavioral competencies and skills, with the framework developed in the global North. Therefore, CASEL's SEL framework was used when coding and analyzing the data as a guiding framework to compare and contrast.

were described in the communities, 'expressive/speaking skills' often implied asking or answering *questions* without feeling shy while 'bold/self-assertive' focused on the behavior of not feeling shy itself.

Another challenge was deciding whether there was a need to distinguish values from skills and competencies, as competency is defined as a higher order concept that entails agency and the decision of learners to act upon it (UNESCO IBE, 2016). In the responses to the FGDs and interview questions, many of the essential qualities and skills frequently mentioned by teachers and caregivers included specific cultural values and dispositions, such as *respectful*, *disciplined*, and *obedient*. Local caregivers and educators most frequently mentioned children being respectful as the most important skill from my research. While *respectful* is also emphasized in CASEL's framework and SEL programs in the global North, definitions and examples provided in Fanteakwa were quite different in that *respectful* was often interchangeably used with *obedient* in the household and community context, and with *disciplined* in the schooling contexts. Educators and caregivers' perspectives converged considerably in that the children need to defer to adults and authorities. Understanding the underlying cultural aspect, I had to now further determine whether they should be categorized as *competencies and skills* that entail children's agency or as *cultural values* which are emphasized by adults of the communities. I decided not to distinguish *values* from *competencies and skills* in my analysis because the purpose of the research was to represent the local participants' perspectives as closely as possible. I focused on the fact that local participants did not differentiate these concepts overall<sup>8</sup>.

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8 However, when audiences of the research become more specific, for example, curriculum writers and education policymakers, I believe it may be beneficial to distinguish competencies and skills that are promoted and strengthened in the schooling context and values that are learned and embodied in families and communities.

## Reflections – closing thoughts

As can be seen from the above analysis, there are several conceptual and methodological issues to consider in designing research, data collection and data analysis when researching cultural values and dispositions of a specific context in the global South. As an outside researcher studying cultural values and nuances of the local participants, invaluable insight and feedback provided by the local research partners and interpreters was crucial throughout the process. At the research design stage, the local input offered valuable information in formulating interview/FGD questions and in translating the protocols accurately into local languages. During the data collection and analysis, the local feedback on cultural interpretations influenced the decision-making of administering the protocols in a contextually relevant way and enhanced trustworthiness in categorizing the locally-driven codes. Thus, the local researchers and interpreters' insights and roles were invaluable as they were the ones that actively and honestly conveyed the perspectives and voices of local participants adequately to me, the outsider.

However, I do not think that such active and honest participation by partners in the field are a given in any partnership—it must be fostered by establishing a 'respectful, reciprocal, genuine relationship' with local research partners (Smith, 2012, p.125). From the very beginning, being cognizant of the importance my partners would attach to the outcome of my research (although not quite fully aware of how it would play out throughout the course of the research) and certain other related criticisms<sup>9</sup>, I invested in fostering the respectful, reciprocal, and genuine relationship with the local research team in the following ways. First, I took sufficient time to establish a shared understanding and need of the qualitative inquiry-driven research, studying cultural values and nuances of

<sup>9</sup> I sympathize with criticisms of international development projects typically using a 'data extraction' model, in which data is collected in the global South and analyzed in the global North, without proper recognition of field staff as 'intellectual partners' (Camfield, 2014, p.6).

communities in Fanteakwa District relevant for SEL. Second, we clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of the local research team and me. I emphasized the local researchers and interpreters' central role in representing the local perspectives because of their linguistic and cultural capacities, from research design, data collection, and data analysis. Thirdly, we tried to have daily debriefing meetings as a whole team, if not in subgroups, during data collection to consciously reflect on the research process and to discuss any potential issues arising within the research team or with local research participants during the data collection.

Taking this thought process one step further, and especially when researching cultural values and dispositions to designing culturally and contextually relevant SEL, we may wish to consider whether there are certain Western assumptions that we adopt without knowing it. In this sense, seeing whether we can 'place African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior' as Asante (1987, p.6) suggests may provide us with some insight.

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## Adolescent social and emotional learning in contexts of conflict, fragility and peacebuilding

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### ABSTRACT

Social and emotional learning (SEL) plays an important role in the healthy development of young people in every society, not least in countries made fragile by violent conflict. With many countries currently destabilized by and emerging from conditions of conflict, questions remain about how to best frame and approach SEL so that the social and emotional needs not only of individuals, but also of communities and the society at large are met. Using data from 2012 to 2015, this study examines how SEL for adolescents is approached in one post-conflict society, Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). Combining content analysis of 500 topics included in SEL syllabi from three ethnically distinct regions with teacher interviews and student focus groups, the study reveals how BiH schools frame SEL according to localized psychosocial and ethno-political priorities, inadvertently reinforcing contradictory messages about self and others, relationships, community, decision-making and peacebuilding. The case highlights risks associated with decentralized approaches to SEL within politically sensitive contexts where learning may be instrumentalized to reinforce social divisions. For SEL to contribute to both individual and collective wellbeing, country-level frameworks that are holistic, inclusive, conflict-sensitive and critical are needed.

### KEYWORDS

adolescents, conflict, social-emotional learning, curriculum, peacebuilding

### Introduction

While social and emotional learning (SEL) plays an important role in the healthy development of young people in every society, it is especially important in countries made fragile by violent conflict. With many countries currently destabilized by and emerging from conditions of conflict, questions about how to best frame and approach SEL so that the social and emotional needs not only of individuals, but also communities and the society at large, are met, are of critical importance.

CASEL (2017) defines social and emotional learning as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions'. Cefai, Bartolo, Cavioni, & Downes (2018) provide a more elaborate definition, suggesting that the aim is to equip children and adolescents with competences that '... enhance their ability to understand themselves and others, to express and regulate their emotions, to develop healthy and caring relationships, to empathize and collaborate with others, to resolve conflict constructively, to enable them to make good, responsible and ethical decisions, and to overcome difficulties in social and academic tasks... More broadly, [SEL] contributes to harmonious relationships, to social cohesion and inclusion in communities, to positive attitudes towards individual and cultural diversity, and to equity and social justice (p. 8). Meanwhile, the OECD focuses on the healthy development of young people within the context and challenges of a global society, identifying 'the big 5' skills (emotion regulation, collaboration, open-mindedness, engaging with others, and task performance) 'required by citizens to lead productive

lives, make informed decisions and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges'.<sup>1</sup>

While these conceptualizations of SEL are broad in scope, they do not adequately account for specific developmental needs, priorities and challenges that can affect young people in contexts emerging from recent experiences of armed conflict and mass violence, and still marked by political, social and economic fragility.<sup>1</sup>

### **Transformative SEL**

Context plays a critical role in the elaboration of SEL frameworks and practice. In the USA, CASEL experts (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Borowski, 2018) recently identified a significant gap between traditional SEL approaches and the particular developmental challenges and needs of young people in contexts marked by systemic violence and inequity. In response, they have argued for a different 'transformative SEL' approach in 'historically underserved' (particularly African-American) communities which renders 'explicit issues such as power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, social justice, empowerment, and self-determination in the field of SEL' (p.3). Among the distinguishing features of this approach, transformative SEL connotes a process whereby 'students and teachers build strong, respectful relationships founded on an appreciation of similarities and differences, learn to critically examine root causes of inequity, and develop collaborative solutions to community and societal problems' (p.3). The authors then use 'an equity lens' to elaborate CASEL's five key SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These 'equity elaborations' foreground a 'critical examination of the root causes of racial and economic inequities' that is needed in order to foster the desired

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1 It may be argued that contexts of war differ from contexts of extreme poverty, and that therefore questions about the intersection of SEL and sustainable development in these two contexts differ. However, poverty and violence are closely related in all contexts, differing only in their order of appearance and the forms of violence that predominate.

critical self-awareness and social awareness in young people (p.13). In addition to these curricular and pedagogical shifts, they propose that a transformative SEL approach further necessitates critical self-awareness among teachers and adapted approaches to SEL assessment.

A similar argument will be made in this paper, calling for a transformative, peacebuilding SEL approach in communities affected by violent conflict, including war-affected contexts such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and in countries hosting large populations of refugees such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, as well as in countries in the global South where social division, poverty, poor governance and violence intersect. SEL requires special consideration in these contexts where the social fabric has been damaged by abuses of power, by the politicization of social identities, by widespread aggression, by violence-induced displacement, deprivation and loss, and by the resulting intergenerational effects of individual and societal psychosocial ill-health. I will argue that in such contexts, SEL competences need to be elaborated through a conflict-sensitive lens oriented towards peacebuilding, justice and reconciliation. These 'peacebuilding elaborations' would foreground an examination of the root causes of intergroup prejudice and discrimination, of the psychological, social and structural causes and effects of mass violence, and support the development of values and skills needed for overcoming cultures of denial in order to share responsibility for the multigenerational work of intra- and inter-community healing, justice and development.

The present paper takes up the challenge of SEL in fragile and conflict-affected contexts by examining SEL provision in secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). For over 20 years, following its devastating 1992–95 war, BiH has been actively engaged in processes of social reconstruction, interethnic peacebuilding and reconciliation, in which SEL has been regarded as an important component. The BiH context is thus an interesting site for learning about the needs and challenges of SEL in fragile



and conflict-affected environments. In the present research, I was particularly interested in the following questions:

- What are the social and emotional learning needs of adolescents growing up in (post)conflict and violence-affected contexts?
- How was the SEL agenda in post-war BiH shaped by local, national and international stakeholders and interests?
- What effect did these factors have on educational practice and students' developmental outcomes?

To answer these questions, I analysed educational laws and the SEL syllabi of six secondary schools in three ethnically distinct regions of BiH (Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka). I complemented this analysis with policy interviews, teacher interviews and student focus groups undertaken during the 2012–15 period.<sup>2</sup> Combining data sources in this way offered unique insights into the strengths and limitations of SEL in this country. Before presenting the findings of the study, I will first provide a brief introduction to the social, emotional and political landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## BiH's social, emotional and political landscape

Formerly a state within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was known as a prosperous, educated and tolerant society. However, when the Communist regime collapsed and territorial conflicts erupted in 1992 between the country's Serb, Croat and Bosniak leaders, the country was devastated by 48 months of ethnopolitical warfare. Inflammatory politics, shifting battle lines, sieges, campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocide resulted in more than 100,000 people (mostly civilians) being killed, 2 million refugees fleeing the country and another 1 million being internally displaced. Cities and villages were devastated by heavy and indiscriminate bombing. Schools were converted by militias into detention and torture centres, while children received improvised instruction in apartment

<sup>2</sup> This research was supported with funding from the Gates Cambridge Trust.

stairwells and basements. All members of society—young, old, military, civilian, adults, children and youth—were affected by the insecurity, fear, destruction, death and inhumanity of the conflict. As the war ended, refugees and IDPs began to return to a country whose infrastructure and economy had been set back decades, and whose outlook, political-demographic order and collective state of social and psychological health had radically changed. In 2010, Sarajlic wrote that post-war BiH remains in a state of perpetual conflict between 'forces of integration and disintegration', based on the 'competing visions' of 'fragmentarians' (principally Serb and Croat political parties) and 'unitarians' (principally Bosniak political parties). Many observers would agree that this is still the case, with important implications for education generally and for social and emotional learning in particular.

## Post-war education stakeholders and objectives

The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended BiH's war, changed the structure of education. A previously centralized education authority was devolved to ethnically aligned regional authorities representing the new sub-national political divisions created by wartime campaigns of ethnic cleansing.<sup>3</sup> The Peace Agreement also gave an important role to the international community, in particular the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which became extensively involved in education reform processes aimed at supporting BiH's transition to peace, democracy and eventual membership of the European Union.

The 2002 *Education Reform Strategy*, guided by the OSCE Mission to BiH, set as the country's 'overriding objective' the 'depoliticization' of BiH's post-war education system and its

<sup>3</sup> Post-war BiH has now has 13 regional Ministries of Education and 9 regional Pedagogical Institutes. Ministries of Education establish education policies. The 'Pedagogical Institutes' (PIs) implement these policies, leading curriculum development, monitoring school performance, and providing continued professional development training and mentorship to the country's corps of professional primary and secondary school teachers.

signatories committed to five ‘pledges’ intended to ensure the delivery of quality, modern, and inclusive education. First among these, and with implications for SEL, was ‘the establishment of integrated multicultural schools free from political, religious, cultural and other bias and discrimination.’ But it was the reform strategy’s definition of ‘quality’ education that set the parameters for SEL within BiH’s newly democratic society:

Quality education is important for the individual, for the community and for the country: It brings confidence and personal growth, as well as the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that are critical for a young person to become a good and successful citizen. It produces an aware and engaged citizenry, an enhanced potential for prosperity, and a society that is fair and just. As BiH strives to become a modern European state, quality education is essential to prosperity and progress (p.8).

In 2003, the reform strategy was reinforced by the *Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BIH*, steered in its development by the OHR. The Framework Law established nine years of compulsory education and set out the requirements for the Common Core Curriculum (CCC) which have, in recent years, been elaborated in the form of common learning standards and outcomes by the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education (APOSO). Adoption of the CCC was intended to promote greater educational harmony between diverse ethnic regions by ensuring that 70% of the 18 subjects taught across primary and secondary years be common to all schools, regardless of ethnicity. However, in practice, the remaining 30% of ‘flexible’ curricular content was applied to the most controversial ‘national’ (i.e. ethnically significant) subjects of history, geography, language, and religion—topics of instruction that remain among the key sources of division in the country today.

### **A social, emotional and political wishlist**

SEL was not distinctly referred to or defined in the Framework Law. Rather, it was implied in the broad EU-aligned objectives assigned

to schooling, which included the ‘optimum intellectual, physical, moral and social development of individuals’, the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the values of an inclusive and democratic society (Article 2). The Law also specified ‘general goals of education’ that echo to some degree the SEL competences identified by Cefai et al. (2018). These included ‘understanding of self, others and the world we live in’, ‘ensuring of optimum development for each person’, ‘promoting respect for human rights and basic freedoms, democracy and rule of law’, ‘developing proper cultural identity, language and tradition’, ‘learning about and respecting diversity and fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all the people, nations and communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and worldwide’, ‘ensuring of equal opportunities... regardless of sex, race, ethnic affiliation, social status, religion, psychophysical and other personal features’, ‘life-long learning’, ‘economic development’ and ‘inclusion into the European integration process.’ In the next section I examine how and to what extent these internationally brokered post-conflict SEL ideals were translated into educational practice.

Already, however, one can observe that dealing with the past and addressing the social and emotional impacts of the war on individuals, families and communities, are not explicitly mentioned or prioritized in these educational objectives. Indeed, no mention of the war or its social and psychosocial effects on generations of children, young people, their parents, teachers or the school system (apart from the need to protect the educational rights of returnees) is made in any of the education reform documents. It is almost as though the war never happened.

Yet twenty years after the war, a school pedagogue in Sarajevo observed:

Unfortunately, post-traumatic stress disorder is still present among people...I am still working with a large number of people who are suffering from that. They just haven’t expressed that in a correct way throughout years...and now they have become chronic problems. People experience pain and a lot of fear. Sometimes when parents

come here, I can recognize these problems as they talk about things that happened to them during the war...Students of the new generations are more than aware of these things. If they aren't being taught about it at school or haven't been told by their parents, it is reported in the media, sometimes too much...

While the current students are of the 'post-war' generations, the effects of the past continue to mark their social identities and relations profoundly. The focus group remarks of a Croat student from Mostar are representative:

When we were in Spain we met some other kids from Banja Luka or from or from Sarajevo. ... In another country, we are like brothers.. But when we come to Bosnia, then we start to fight... People, teenagers our age we still have some anger against each other but we didn't even fight in war. We weren't even born... it's something that we aren't born with. It's just our surroundings who tell us and we try to be like them. It is a shame, because none of us did really shoot at each other.

Other students talked about persistent challenges with their war-affected parents, social pressures to carry forward identity struggles resulting from the war, the inability to influence the direction of their society, and the dismay and frustration created by widespread poverty and corruption not only in politics and the labor market, but in the education system itself. Meanwhile, teachers voiced other concerns about BiH youth today, including the prevalence of 'violent and unacceptable behaviour', 'conflicts', 'a poorly developed sense of responsibility', the tendency only to think about their own rights, not 'the rights of others' or their own 'responsibility', a lack of 'inner motivation' to learn and strive, as well as a lack of critical thinking, creativity and courage. Where these concerns fit (and do not fit) into SEL curriculum will now be explored further.

## Education, 'upbringing' and social and emotional learning in BiH

Amidst a range of post-war reforms, the traditional purpose of schooling in BiH remained intact: BiH schools are mandated

by education law to provide both 'education' (*obrazovanja*) and 'upbringing' (*odgoj*)<sup>4</sup> to young people. This 'upbringing' aspect of schooling is the domain of social and emotional learning in BiH, and all school staff are responsible to this mandate. However, no nationwide program or strategy for SEL was devised. SEL is not taught as a core content area, nor is it evaluated.

Nonetheless, SEL has a 'home' in the fragmented BiH education system, which is the homeroom class (*časovi odjeljska zajednica*): a once-weekly general education period with the students' registry teacher. Homeroom classes are held for students in all years and in all schools across BiH. In lower primary, the homeroom teacher is the 'parent' for a group of students throughout the first four years of schooling, teaching all subjects. In middle and high schools, the homeroom teacher is one of several who provide subject teaching while retaining responsibility for the socialization or 'upbringing' of students. The homeroom is a place for discussion and reflection and tends to be the catch-all for SEL topics including personal development, health, prevention programs and life skills.

As a professor of educational psychology at the University of Banja Luka explained:

The main goal of these classes is to work on socialization, on parts of the child's life that are related to health, mental health, moral education and one's values system.

And as the pedagogue<sup>5</sup> at a Sarajevo technical school explained:

We give workshops where students get the chance to learn about themselves, to learn about their own problems and about

4 Also translated as 'character education.'

5 In BiH, every school has a specially trained pedagogue who, together with the school director (headteacher) and school secretary, forms the core managerial team which takes overall responsibility for developing the quality of communication, coordination and provision within the institution and community of the school. The pedagogue (usually female) performs multiple roles: she operates as a curriculum and teaching advisor to the teacher corps, an in-house trainer, and counsellor or mediator for the teacher and student body in times of difficulty or conflict. In many parts of BiH, the school pedagogue establishes the syllabus for the homeroom class.

the problems of other people, about their needs and the needs of other people.

The homeroom period is a moment in the week for students to discuss issues related to their developing identity, social relations, life skills and personal ethics. Typically, schools allocate one hour per week or 36 hours per year to homeroom classes.

The importance of the homeroom class is especially clear when considering that 75% of in-school adolescents in BiH attend TVET (technical and vocational) institutions, rather than gymnasias. As explained by the pedagogue at a technical school in Sarajevo:

We in technical high schools don't have many social science subjects, so the only time we can talk about these things is in homeroom class meetings; things that might be missed out at home because families might be incomplete, poor, or for some other reasons. The school should be the place where these situations can be fixed.

The homeroom approach reflects traditions that were already in place in the pre-war Yugoslavian school system and it remains an established feature in post-war schools of all ethnic communities. However, after the 1990s, the focus of homeroom content shifted in response to social, emotional and political concerns brought on by the war, as well as the influence of American and European SEL inputs and the international community's post-war democratization agenda.

### Organization of SEL content

SEL instruction in BiH homeroom classes is organized on the basis of poorly defined lists of topics chosen by the regional education authority or by the school pedagogue.<sup>6</sup> Whereas core curriculum subjects have received considerable reform attention, with international actors pushing for EU-aligned learning outcomes, harmonized standards, improved textbooks and teacher training,

6 The Republika Srpska Ministry of Education defines the homeroom syllabi centrally. The cantonal Ministries of Education throughout Federation BiH make some recommendations, but leave this task to the pedagogues of each individual school.

SEL has been marginal to the reform and harmonization agenda. Teachers are provided with few standardized SEL materials or resources providing guidance on how topics should be framed, what content covered, what messages communicated, what learning attained, or what pedagogical approaches and activities to employ. NGOs and international organizations have sometimes supplied support materials on particular themes,<sup>7</sup> but these have not been obligatory and have never been integrated into all schools across the country.

Pedagogical Institutes occasionally develop and share guidelines, but more often it is the individual school pedagogues, trained in pastoral psychology and learning theories, who are designated to advise teachers on how to approach a given SEL topic. In many cases, teachers assemble SEL materials themselves. Ultimately, as homeroom instruction is not examined, teachers have wide latitude in this respect and even within the same school may approach the suggested topics in widely different ways. To a great extent, teachers use their own judgement to draw from available and online sources, teaching the topic as they feel appropriate.

In terms of teacher preparation and professional development on SEL topics, interviews with teachers and school pedagogues revealed that most of this was outsourced to international agencies and non-governmental organizations in the early post-war period. Even today, very little training is provided by ministries of education and pedagogical faculties on SEL topics. As such, SEL training remains rather *ad hoc*, influenced from time to time by international inputs that may or may not correspond to locally identified SEL needs.<sup>8</sup>

7 It was reported, for example, that during and immediately following the war, some schools received training and resources on psychosocial wellbeing and trauma psychology from the World Health Organisation and Médecins Sans Frontières, and that the organization Civitas provided lesson materials on democracy education and human rights.

8 Such as a campaign by UNICEF—focused on reducing violence in schools—which engaged teachers in professional development seminars but which some local educators felt was irrelevant to the BiH school context.



While the schools in this study demonstrated a common understanding of the broad purposes of homeroom SEL, it was found that their use of the homeroom differed in function with local experiences of the war and local ethnopolitical agendas. As will be demonstrated in the next section, significant variations were identified not only between ethnic communities but within them as well, based on the unique historical-geopolitical position of the school. On the one hand, the flexibility in this approach to SEL provision is in certain respects ideal as it enables local actors to determine contextually relevant SEL content. On the other hand, this local selection of content is invariably mediated by political agendas that, if unchecked, can feed ongoing conflict dynamics in the country. In the case of BiH, it would appear that the decentralized SEL strategy represents a missed opportunity to provide young first- and second-generation survivors of war with the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills that they need to navigate choices and challenges invariably affected by the legacies of mass violence, as well as ongoing social and political conflict.

## Content analysis of SEL in three regions

For this case study, homeroom syllabi were gathered in 2014 from gymnasias and technical-vocational secondary schools in three ethnically distinct regions (Bosniak-majority Sarajevo, Bosniak-Croat Mostar, and Serb-majority Republika Srpska) for analysis.<sup>9</sup> Each syllabus proposed 25–30 discussion topics per year group.<sup>10</sup> Some schools used a thematic framework; others assembled a list of random topics from which teachers ‘pick and mix’ as they wish.

9 The syllabi for Republika Srpska (RS) schools was at that time ‘under review’. The current revised edition was significantly reorganized but beyond the scope of the present study.

10 This would mean that each topic is allocated one hour of classroom coverage. Where schools propose more topics, teachers would have the option to omit those that they deem are less important or too complicated to cover in the available time.

An examination of the prescribed topics offers insight into what the education authorities of different ethnic regions regarded as post-war socialization priorities.

Content analysis of the 500 topics included in these syllabi, together with teacher interviews and student focus groups, revealed that while each of the syllabi addressed a selection of traditional SEL themes related to emotional awareness and regulation, health and risk prevention, self-development and relationships, social norms and manners, study skills and career preparation, decision-making, collaboration and problem-solving, there was wide variation across ethnic regions in BiH, and no common framework for progression through the learning themes. Internationally furnished content on societal and global themes such as democracy, human rights, environmental responsibility, and gender equity were also unevenly represented.

Most importantly, topics dealing with the legacies of the war including the causes of violence and its prevention, trauma recovery, local war histories and heroes, cultural, religious and political traditions and social identities, the challenge of pluralism and intergroup relations, current societal challenges, and skills for intercommunity problem-solving, peacebuilding and reconciliation varied greatly from one locality and ethnic community to another, for example:

- Both Serb and Bosniak schools addressed war-related topics, but from different perspectives. The Serb homeroom curriculum emphasized war preparedness (‘limiting devastation’) and introduced students to ‘the perspective of fighters’, while the Bosniak schools emphasized survival under siege (‘first aid for blast injuries’, ‘how to stop bleeding’), trauma recovery (‘trauma and how to heal it’), and war memory (‘forgetting and remembering’ and ‘the people who defended this city’). Meanwhile, Croat homeroom classes omitted issues related to war but included a topic on ‘how to treat people who are mourning’.



- Conflicting social-political identity commemorations were also included in homeroom syllabi. The BiH State Independence Day (March 1) was celebrated in the Bosniak schools, while the Serb schools officially boycott this day, celebrating instead the Republika Srpska's self-declared Independence Day on 9 January.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Croat schools avoided state celebrations, focusing rather on 'cultural and historical monuments in our town'.
- Most of the schools addressed issues of conflict and violence, introducing some form of non-violent conflict resolution, while only half of the syllabi included topics on peace, diversity, tolerance and human rights. Noticeably, none of these topics was covered in Serb schools and very few in the Croat technical school. Overall, the Bosniak schools covered the widest range of peacebuilding topics, following by the elite Croat gymnasium. However, while positive communication skills were included in the Serb and Bosniak schools, they were not included in the Croat schools.
- Democracy and critical thinking were emphasized in the three Bosniak schools. Democracy was also covered in the Serb curriculum, but as a procedural topic without emphasis on critical thinking. Indeed, interviews with contacts at the Ministry of Education in Banja Luka specifically mentioned that critical thinking among teachers and students was 'not welcome' in the RS school system.
- Bosniak schools confronted topics on 'How do events in the world affect our community?', 'Current issues' and 'Politics in our country' (which would have necessitated a discussion of interethnic relations), while nothing comparable was included in Serb or Croat syllabi.
- Bosniak schools promoted multiculturalism ('BiH: a multicultural and multiethnic society', 'overcoming differences

11 While the BiH state public holiday is official in Croat communities as well, it is generally not celebrated. See Dzidic (2013).

in cultures', 'love towards all people'), while Croat and Serb schools avoided normative pluralism, including rather one topic on 'similarities and differences between people'.

- Bosniak schools, and to a lesser extent the Croat gymnasium, addressed various topics on moral development, values and spirituality, psychological and social maturity, self-education and helping others, all of particular importance in conditions of adversity, while these topics were virtually absent from the syllabi of Serb schools and the Croat technical school.

None of the homeroom class syllabi distinguished between the topics to be addressed and the competences, values or behaviours to be acquired. No overarching framework such as that proposed by CASEL, whether borrowed or domestically created, was referred to in the education policies or homeroom documentation. As an expert in Banja Luka remarked:

If you ask someone from the Ministry or Pedagogical Institute: 'How do you imagine a child who has finished primary school or how do you imagine a youth who has finished secondary school?' I do not think that they will have any image, any picture of that person and what knowledge, what skills, what values that person should have.

That such a systematic approach had not been adopted is a clear limitation of SEL provision in BiH. Not only are the learning outcomes of SEL not clear, but there is consequently a lack of progression over the years of schooling as well. This may be beginning to shift now as the country has begun to adopt a competency-based approach to curriculum planning. However, interviews with teachers and focus groups with students indicated that in lieu of a clear framework, it was often the personal and political values of the teacher that significantly shaped which value-orientations are privileged in class. Students did not necessarily agree with the teacher's value stance (whether chauvinistic or peace-oriented) and in some cases actively resisted them. Particularly on sensitive topics, like the society's past and present social divisions, students in several focus groups contrasted

what is 'taught' with what is 'truth.' It was also found that the values promoted through SEL lessons could be influenced by the religious worldview of the school community. For example, the religious worldview of a Bosniak Muslim school that survived the Sarajevo siege gave a particular shape to the kinds of emotions, values and coping skills that the school included in its SEL approach. The school's prayer valued resignation, detachment, courage, stoicism and forgiveness, which are not reflected in CASEL's or the OECD's SEL competence frameworks.

### Tensions between the universal and the specific

Cefai *et al* (2018) recognize that

... the diversity challenge in [SEL] is complex because socio-emotional issues are linked to beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours that are very closely related to cultural systems. It has been pointed out, for instance, that many current [SEL] programmes are based on the dominant Western individualistic culture that may not be shared by other, more collectivist cultures... The challenge is to find a balance between, on the one hand, curriculum integrity to ensure effectiveness, while, on the other hand, adapting it to the local social, cultural and linguistic context to ensure it is developmentally and culturally sensitive. For instance, over-adaptation to local needs and circumstances may lead to programme dilution and confusion (pp.64–65).

But in conflict-affected contexts, the challenge can take on a distinctly political character. Indeed, an EU technical assistance report on BiH Education Reform (2008–15), highlighted particular

... challenges concerning the promotion of internationalization and globalization in [BiH] education, whilst preserving the traditional and cultural values of peoples and citizens,... [including] values that are favourable for the development of a feeling of togetherness; acceptance of and respect for differences; solidarity and responsibility for sustainable development; encouraging a work-ethic amongst the citizenry and developing democratic society as a whole (p.16).

In the context of post-war *realpolitik*, education authorities and local school communities have tended to privilege particular ethnic

traditions and nation-building discourses over others. Students in all communities reported on the prevalence of ethnically biased discourses at school.

The foregoing analysis reveals that SEL content in the BiH post-conflict setting became very much place-based. Even when drawing on international resources, SEL provision was shaped in significant ways by the given school authority's ethnic (and sometimes religious) orientation and the community's local, violence-affected and politically inflected SEL needs. In some important ways, these different approaches to SEL have reinforced contradictory messages about self and others, identity and community, relationships, responsibility and peacebuilding among BiH young people.

Correlating these findings with youth focus groups, it became evident that this approach to SEL was not responding adequately to the needs of adolescents to deal with the (often politicized) social and emotional challenges of their society.

### Discussion and implications

A number of policy- and practice-relevant reflections emerge from the BiH experience of SEL provision that merit attention when planning SEL provision in other conflict-affected contexts. Briefly:

- Social and emotional learning needs can vary considerably from one community to another within a single country, based on local experiences of social conflict, violence and trauma.
- SEL tends thus to be place-based, either by design or by interpretation, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected regions where issues of identity, territory, history, culture and politics are deeply intertwined. If locally designed, as in the case of BiH, SEL content is likely to reflect local political worldviews as well as local cultural and social-emotional needs. Arguments in favor of this approach note that in this way, SEL can be adapted to local needs for violence recovery, identity development, community problem solving. However, there is a risk that SEL will also be instrumentalized as a means to reinforce the

socialization of particular values and social identities. As such, localized forms of SEL may feed conflict dynamics.

- SEL in conflict-affected contexts, as in all education, is not neutral. It is subject to social and political agendas in the same way that other human science subjects like history, religion and culture are. A conflict-sensitive approach to SEL is thus needed, as are 'peacebuilding elaborations' on core SEL values and skills. A 'conflict-sensitive' approach recognizes the importance of asking, Who is excluded? and What is excluded? from SEL provision, and How might this reinforce conflict dynamics? Asking these questions in the BiH context suggested that students in certain types of schools, content on 'other' ethnicities, and specific peacebuilding skills necessary to address historical wounds and contemporary social challenges, were poorly addressed in SEL syllabi.
- Indeed, SEL provision can be affected by social class dynamics. In BiH, SEL received greater attention and resources at gymnasias (university-track secondary schools that offer science and social science curricula) than in TVET (technical and vocational) schools, which tend to serve students with lower socioeconomic status. Attention should be given to the quality of SEL provision across populations and institutional types.
- Unfortunately, in the BiH case, SEL education was not accorded strategic reform attention by either national or international actors in the post-war period. Ad hoc approaches were taken, missing opportunities for country-wide coherence and more strategic support to young people's violence recovery and peacebuilding competence needs, including a clear progression through key topics and skills over the years of schooling.
- Finally, strategic thought also needs to be given to the lens through which SEL is interpreted in context. What is most appropriate in a conflict-affected setting? An individualistic lens (focussed on 'me' and 'my experience'), a collectivistic lens (focussed on 'my community' possibly to the exclusion of other communities), or a peacebuilding lens (focussed on 'all of us' in

our diversity and 'our shared roles' in resolving individual and societal challenges)?

Based on the findings of this research, I would agree with Cefai et al (2018) who propose that

... while other related areas—such as citizenship, health education, and prevention of violence and bullying—overlap with some of the goals of SEL, ... [it] should have its own distinct place within curricula (p.11).

They recommend that social and emotional learning be adopted as a mandatory core curriculum area, to be taught as both key content and embedded transversal themes. Even 'the mission statements and objectives of schools should include a whole-school approach to social and emotional education.' Furthermore, 'school policies should be clear on how they intend to promote and implement SEE policy at instructional, contextual and organisational levels' (p.13). To ensure successful curricular integration, they argue for adequate 'teacher education programmes to ensure the development of teachers' own social and emotional competences' (p.12). However, it is recognized that

...these recommendations are more likely to work if they are accompanied by parallel interventions to break down barriers and create structures and systems which promote mental health and wellbeing, equal opportunities, and social justice (p.13).

It is also advisable that, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, special efforts should be made to ensure that

... different cultural perspectives, experiences and behaviours are incorporated into universal SEE programmes at the design stage... Curriculum developers can also intentionally consider the needs of diverse groups... (such as) by ensuring that at least one of the stories and activities in each of the resilience skills topics specifically addresses adversities more common among diverse groups, particularly issues related to bullying, prejudice, discrimination, isolation, lack of friends, language barriers, difficulties in accessing learning, exclusion, or culture mismatch. ...[Indeed,] quality

adaptation entails a rigorous evaluation of a context's particular needs, while preserving the curriculum's integrity. Some countries, regions, communities and schools, may need to focus more attention on particular competences, behaviours, and issues than others (Cefai et al, 2018: pp.64–65, p.66).

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, a particular emphasis is needed on violence recovery and prevention, critical perspectives on identity formation and on identity mobilization in political, ideological and economic conflicts. For SEL to contribute to peacebuilding, it must be framed by the recognition of shared humanity with historical enemies, and emphasis must be placed on the importance of truth, justice and reconciliation, based on accountability and responsibility for past harms (sometimes on all sides). This depends on acquiring openness to and skills of multi-perspectivity and empathy, as well as inclusive, non-violent modes of problem-solving. Values and skills that enable intercommunity reconciliation, such as recognition of shared humanity, deep listening, moral courage, accountability and responsibility, solidarity and common cause, inclusion and justice, are arguably the most difficult to learn and the most needed in the wake of mass intercommunity violence. Such an approach would necessitate shifts in the intended SEL learning outcomes, curricular content and pedagogical approach. Teacher preparation and assessment would likewise need to be adapted accordingly.

## Conclusion

Social and emotional learning frameworks should be adapted to meet the particular needs of communities emerging from a recent history of violent intergroup conflict. In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this was made possible by providing locally defined SEL content through 'homeroom classes.' However, the case also highlights the limitations of a homeroom approach to SEL within an ethno-politically fragmented country. Without a common framework or resources, there is a lack of

intercommunity coherence to SEL provision that does not serve the country's peacebuilding and reconciliation needs. The case thus demonstrates how SEL is mediated and changed by the social-political contexts in which it is delivered and draws our attention to risks that can arise from localized approaches in conflict-affected contexts. For SEL to contribute not only to individual wellbeing but also collective wellbeing, a coherent, contextually appropriate and conflict-sensitive nationwide strategy must be adopted.

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## The Journeys approach to building a safe, inclusive and positive school and fostering social and emotional learning

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### ABSTRACT

Certain conditions of the school and classroom environment—such as encouraging and appreciative classrooms, physical and emotional safety and responsiveness to diversity, among others—positively support students’ social and emotional learning (SEL). Therefore, SEL programming that provides both instruction to students and also serves to establish the school and classroom conditions that support SEL are recommended—that is, blended approaches. With funding from USAID/Uganda under the Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity, RTI International, in partnership with the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), developed a blended approach to SEL programming, which is the Journeys approach. The Journeys approach involves co-curricular activities that serve to directly strengthen students’ social and emotional (SE) skills. At the same time, it inspires and guides school staff and community members in establishing the learning conditions that foster SEL. The Journeys activities for students, school staff and community members apply a variety of awareness-building social technologies—such as guided

reflection, dialogue, interactive games, and art and drama—to enable independent thinking about the nature and obstacles to a positive school climate and how to establish classrooms and out-of-classroom environments that foster SEL.

### KEYWORDS

social and emotional learning, school climate, primary school, child development

### Background

The findings from Malawi and Uganda (Randolph et al.) earlier in this section underscore the potential that schools hold in supporting social and emotional learning (SEL), especially when care is taken to establish certain classroom and school conditions that promote students’ positive social and emotional development. These include teacher behaviors and qualities such as friendliness and approachability, appreciation and encouragement of students in the classroom and demonstrating models of cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. It could be said that teachers with strong SE skills themselves are in a good position to nurture the SEL of their students. Positive school climates—where children feel safe from physical or emotional harm, where they can speak freely with other children and adults and feel accepted, understood and connected to the school in spite of any special vulnerabilities or cultural or ethnic differences—are also important in fostering a culture of social and emotional learning within and outside the classroom. Most of us would agree that these teacher and school characteristics, if made into a prominent part of the school culture, would serve to enhance students’ academic as well as social and emotional development.

Though the value of the above school characteristics could hardly be disputed, there is often little attention given to these non-academic aspects of education, especially in low- to middle-income countries. When students fall behind in basic academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics, funding streams and

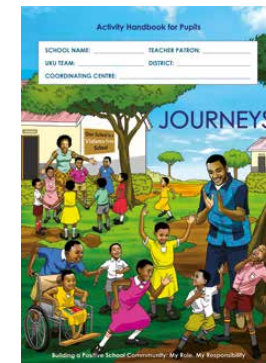
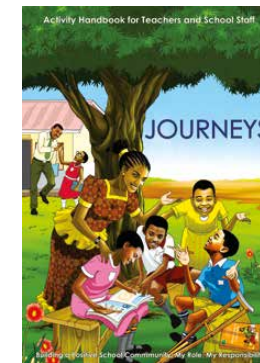
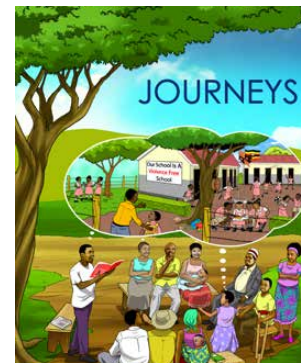


programming are understandably directed toward improving instruction and instructional support in order to improve learning outcomes. Yet, both school climate and social and emotional learning have been shown to mediate learning outcomes (Thapa et al., 2013; Durlak et al., 2011). Where there is a positive and inclusive learning environment in and outside the classroom, SEL flourishes and the SE skills of staff and students reinforce and contribute further to building and sustaining this positive learning environment. On the other hand, when the school culture and climate is such that students don't feel cared about or safe and aren't encouraged in the classroom nor allowed to have a voice, there is little context to learn and practice SE skills. School climate and SEL are mutually reinforcing. Research has shown that SEL programming that serves to build a positive school climate supported by systematic SEL instruction has the potential to positively impact the learning outcomes of all students as well as help students develop the SE skills they need to become happy, successful adults and fulfill their dreams for the future (Osher & Berg, 2017). Thus, blended programming is needed, which provides child-centered approaches to SEL instruction as well as inputs to help schools establish the learning conditions that reinforce and nurture these SE skills (Jones & Bouffard, 2012)

This paper provides an example of a blended approach, the Journeys Program, which was developed by RTI International in partnership with the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) under the USAID-funded Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (hereafter, this activity will be referred to as the Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity or the Activity).

## Introduction to the Journeys program

The Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity places the school culture and climate at the center of sustainable change, both in supporting the MoES to achieve systemwide improvements in the reading curriculum and pedagogy but also in fostering students'



social and emotional learning and eliminating school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). These are interconnected and the basis of the theory of change for the Activity, namely:

If life at school is characterized by a safe, positive and supportive school climate that nurtures social and emotional learning and has effective instruction, then students enjoy learning and participate in class without fear of humiliation or punishment, remain in school throughout the primary cycle and succeed in their school work.

Journeys is an integrated co-curricular program consisting of three components: Journeys for Pupils, Journeys for School Staff, and Journeys for Community Members. Trained teacher patrons directly support students' development of SE skills through child-centered activities that take place during weekly peer groups called Uganda Kids Unite or 'UKU teams' in which all grade 3-7 students participate. In addition, teacher patrons in the UKU teams engage students, and trained facilitators engage staff and community members in reflection and discussions about the nature and impact of a positive school and provide guidance about how to work together to contribute to making their school a positive place for learning, a place where SEL can flourish.

The Journeys program has three overall objectives:

- 1 Establish a school and classroom climate that is:
  - Welcoming, warm and supportive;
  - Safe: physically, emotionally, socially, and academically;
  - Inclusive, with equal opportunities for all students;
  - Nurturing of students' positive social and emotional development.
- 2 Strengthen students' SE skills, confidence, and agency
- 3 Eliminate school-related gender-based violence

The three Journeys handbooks can be seen at the following links.

[Journeys for Pupils](#)

[Journeys for Teachers and School Staff](#)

[Journeys for Community Members](#)

## Technical approach and content

The technical approach involves the application of awareness-building social technologies such as guided reflection, dialog, interactive games, art and drama and action research to inspire staff, community members, and students to work individually and together to establish a positive school climate, which is free from violence and where SEL flourishes. Snapshots of a few of these are provided below.

Thematic content is introduced through these activities within a safe context for participants to interact with the content, discuss ideas and make meaning for themselves. For example, content might be introduced through a story scenario in which participants read, reflect on, discuss or—in some situations—solve a social problem. Another example is that of role-playing or drama, which helps participants see a social situation from perspectives other than their own. Both of these examples demonstrate the value of the strategic application of a variety of social tools/technologies for introducing content and providing a social context from which ideas can be understood and interacted with in a personal and meaningful way.



**Figure 1:** Integrated thematic content of the Journeys Program

To ensure a safe space for sharing ideas and opinions, the facilitation 'ground rules' call for deep listening and making sure all voices and differences of opinion are heard without judgement.

The thematic content encompasses four broad areas as shown in the diagram.

The first thematic content focuses on building a positive and supportive school climate. Participants reflect, imagine, and discuss a vision of a positive and supportive school and what constitutes this. From these visioning experiences, staff, students and community members discuss how different aspects of the school support students' wellbeing and how to establish these positive learning conditions. One of these conditions, for example, is about building positive and trusting interpersonal relationships, including relations between and among students, teachers, staff and parents—in the classroom and on the school grounds.

The second thematic content area is safety, which includes physical, psychological, social and academic safety. Safety in all of these dimensions is an essential ingredient of a positive school climate. A variety of SE skills is developed through content that addresses school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). The Journeys program engages school staff, students and parents in open discussions about different forms of violence that occur in

schools and traveling to and from school, such as bullying, harsh punishment and sexual harassment, which can bring physical or psychological harm to students. Staff activities are designed to build understanding about how SRGBV impedes student school performance and their and social and emotional development. Teacher SEL activities help teachers learn about and practice being more approachable and appreciative and applying positive discipline in the classroom. When students feel they can talk more freely with their teachers they are freer to solve problems related to their safety in the classroom or school grounds. When students feel encouraged and appreciated for trying, they are academically safe and free to learn from their mistakes. These teaching practices ensure SEL is a part of every classroom.

The student program focuses on building SE skills that are needed for students to navigate their world every day and avoid, challenge and report incidents of violence that they witness or experience personally. The activities strengthen students' ability to: interpret others' emotions and dispositions; recognize and avoid dangerous people, locations, or social situations; build trusting relations with adults; and strengthen a student's sense of being safe as well as their confidence and agency that he/she needs in order to seek assistance from these trusted adults in the event that they witness or personally experience violence perpetrated against a peer or themselves.

A third area of content and another positive dimension of school climate promoted by the Journeys activities is that of equality and inclusion. In this aspect of the program, we strive to foster an environment where all staff and students, regardless of sex, age, family wealth, are encouraged and engaged equally, feel connected to their school and have a sense of belonging and wellbeing. Very often the institutions of school and community echo societal structures and norms, even when these norms bring harm to certain staff and students such as girls and women, staff and students living in poverty, children with disabilities and children from minority ethnic groups. These discriminating norms lead to

unequal treatment of both staff and students, serve to normalize certain forms of violence against children in schools, impede the expression of positive SE skills of the staff and deter children's positive social and emotional and even academic development. These norms and the inequalities and violence they produce are reinforced and maintained by the hierarchical power structures of society that perpetuate exploitation and abuse of lesser-valued individuals: for example, girls and women versus boys and men; younger versus older children; persons living in poverty or who are otherwise vulnerable versus those with more wealth. The authority vested in teachers can either serve to maintain inequality or can be leveraged to build their leadership for equal and fair treatment of all staff and students. In order to address this challenge, Journeys activities support personal and group reflection and discussion about the societal norms and hierarchical power relations in the school, community and home and the implications for teaching and learning and for student wellbeing and social and emotional learning. In the student program, students talk openly about individual differences and the challenges of being a girl or boy, an orphan, or being in a minority. These activities help build empathy, compassion and pro-social behavior. This in turn supports students' abilities to develop positive relations that are characterized by caring, sharing and cooperative problem solving.

The fourth thematic content area is that of nurturing students' social and emotional learning through dedicated student programming. The student program provides child-centered activities that build SE skills and agency and also provide a safe place for students to practice these skills. The skills fostered within the UKU student group activities focus on building a variety of SE skills that involve inter-personal relations, emotional processes and regulation, and cognitive processes. Students are supported in building a sense of self and agency to make and follow through with healthy choices related to friendship formation, avoiding persons or locations that are unsafe, and developing and seeking assistance from trusted adults. They are given opportunities to

work together in solving social problems and are engaged in role-playing and other interactive activities to practice perspective-taking, develop empathy and compassion and learn to appreciate differences of opinion.

Thus, the Journeys program overall is a blended approach to SEL programming: an investment in students' positive social and emotional growth and development that enhances school performance and students' successful transition into adulthood. Students receive direct instruction in SEL and at the same time school staff and community members learn how to build a positive and welcoming school climate where there are ample opportunities for students to consolidate their emerging SE skills. In this school climate, students develop new friendships, communicate their ideas with peers and adults, nurture their sense of empathy and compassion by taking pro-social actions to help others, consult with others to make decisions and solve problems, and navigate their world evaluating different social situations and behaving accordingly. Students learn to avoid, challenge and seek assistance when they witness or experience bullying, harsh punishment or sexual harassment and at the same time staff and community members as well as students learn about the root causes of violence against children and how to prevent this.

## Collective action to establish a positive school-community climate for learning

Essentially the Journeys approach involves establishing a 'new norm', which is a school climate that is an encouraging, supportive, safe, and inclusive place for children to grow academically, socially and emotionally. Norm-changing requires changes both in the hearts and minds of individuals, but this is not sufficient in and of itself. (Bichierri, 2012). The social field must also shift, and this happens only when there is collective action for social change and social sanctions to reinforce and maintain the desired changes, which in this case is a shift toward a more positive learning



Figure 2: Action research model, adapted from Scharmer, 2016

environment that is equally positive for all children. To this end, the Journeys approach instructs all participants on how to come together to decide on a group action for improving the school climate and go on a journey to learn about the situation they want to improve, and to collectively put into place the desired changes. We draw from the Presencing Institute's (Scharmer, 2016; [www.presencing.org](http://www.presencing.org)) Theory U model of action research and during the Journeys activities, we teach and mentor school staff, community members and students to apply this model to guide group projects to make their schools a happier and safer place to learn.

## Facilitators and facilitation guidelines

All teachers in participating schools are trained to serve as a Teacher Patron of one of the school's UKU student groups, in which all grade 3–7 pupils participate. Thus, depending on enrollments, a school could have anywhere from 4 to 10 UKU groups. The UKU student group is the setting in which the pupils are engaged



directly in activities that nurture their development of the SE skills and most directly support their SEL. The Journeys for Pupils handbook is the guide for Teacher Patrons to use in leading their UKU teams and consists of weekly fifty-minute activities that are scheduled on the school timetable.

Group activities for school staff and community members are facilitated by teachers and community leaders who are selected to be the School Change Agents and Community Change Agents, respectively. These change agents receive a week-long training by a national training team made up primarily of government officials; they facilitate the school and community activities according to the schedule of activities in the Journeys for School Staff handbook and the Journeys for Community Members handbook.

Participatory instructional approaches are particularly relevant for fostering SEL by naturally engaging students in opportunities to practice interpersonal skills, connect to self, and learn important decision-making skills through collaboration with peers (Berg et al., 2017). All aspects of the Journeys approach embrace participatory learning through interactive games, dialogue, and cooperative art activities. Our approach also includes activities to foster individual self-reflection through guided reflection activities, journaling and visioning activities. For example, in one activity, teachers and community members are guided in a reflection activity (i.e., by a series of verbal statements and questions from the facilitator or teacher patron), in which the participants close their eyes and envision the time when they were in primary school. The participants join in pairs or small groups to discuss their memories together and share the feelings they experienced such as joy, fear, sadness, or dreams they were having about the future. Teacher reflections about their own experience as primary school students help build their empathy for what students are facing today and inspires individual action to make the school a happier and safer place for learning. Student activities also involve reflection, but rather

### Teacher comments

- ‘First of all, before these Journeys activities, I had high tempers that I could beat my children over slight mistakes. After going through various trainings, I have developed a lot of skills; for example, self-awareness, friendship formation and self-esteem.’
- ‘Because of these [Journeys] activities, I have created a good relationship with my learners, and they are now able to tell their problems to me.’
- ‘[Journeys] has reduced the gap between learners and me since learners share freely their experiences.’
- ‘I have discovered that learners themselves have solutions for their problems.’
- ‘It [Journeys] has enabled me to find out individual differences among learners and also different ways of catering for such learners.’

### Student comments

- ‘I have gained power to face every problem with my friends.’
- ‘It taught me that everyone must be loved, and everyone is important in our school. It has helped me to be united with other people, like those who are lame and blind.’
- ‘Since the UKU programme started I learnt to believe in myself that I can get good grades and help the needy.’
- ‘I learnt that isolating people is bad.’
- ‘I stopped bullying my friends.’
- ‘Since UKU began, it helped me to make good decisions and the game which helped me is called “Why I want to be a cow.”’
- ‘UKU has helped me to talk to many people comfortably.’

than looking into the past, students are guided in looking to the future and visioning their dreams for the future. This is also followed by personal sharing and open discussion, which helps to build self-awareness, friendships and helps students realize the importance of their own choices in seeking a future they dream about.



## Evidence of good practice

Though findings from an ongoing longitudinal impact study will not be available until September 2019, comments from participants during the first year of the program suggest that teachers and students experienced many of the intended benefits. For example, teachers have attributed to Journeys improvements in their own social and emotional skills, including: the ability to build positive relations with students; patience; understanding individual student differences and different needs of students; and seeing capacities of students they have not recognized before, such as the ability to solve their own problems.

Students' discussing the benefits of the Journeys SEL program/student UKU teams focused on five social learning areas: caring for all pupils, including the disabled; why it is important to stop bullying and leaving people out of their groups; how to face and solve problems together with friends; to love and share with one another; self-belief.

## Summary

Thus, the Journeys program overall is indeed a blended program, an investment in students' positive social and emotional growth and development, which enhances school performance and their successful transition into adulthood. Students receive direct instruction in SEL and at the same time school staff and community members learn how to build a positive and welcoming school climate where there are ample opportunities for students to consolidate their emerging SE skills; for example, develop new friendships, communicate their ideas with peers and adults, nurture their sense of empathy and compassion by taking pro-social actions to help others, consult with others to make decisions and solve problems, and navigate their world evaluating different social situations and behaving accordingly. Students learn to avoid, challenge and seek assistance when they witness or experience

bullying, harsh punishment or sexual harassment and at the same time staff and community members as well as students learn about the root causes of violence against children and how to prevent this.

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## Connecting with the education eco-system for societal transformation

### #ONLYCONNECT – RAE SNAPE

Headteacher of the Spinney Primary School, England;  
National Leader of Education – The Kite Teaching School Alliance

#### ABSTRACT

As a faculty of educators at the Spinney school we connect with the education eco-system to identify pedagogic approaches to integrate into our curriculum, which ensure our pupils do well academically as well as socially. Education at our school is designed around pro-social qualities—which cultivate the attitudes of a good friend, good neighbor or good citizen—and qualities of the mind, which enable students to meet difficulty and uncertainty with confidence, capability and enthusiasm.

#### KEYWORDS

identity, curriculum, values, creativity, communication, collaboration, compassion, citizenship, pedagogies, skills, knowledge, character, mindfulness, changemaking

### Introduction to our school

I have been the headteacher of the Spinney Primary School, a small, one-grade-per-year primary school in Cambridge, England since 2007. The 210 children are organized into seven classes of 30 children in each, with ages ranging from 4 to 11 years old. Approximately 50% of the children in the school speak English as an additional language and there are as many as 36 home languages.

This brief will illustrate how social and emotional learning and SDG Target 4.7 themes are addressed in our school, in a situation

where we have the advantages of good resources, and opportunities to network and innovate. Many schools in the world are less fortunate than ours, but I hope that some of the ideas will be helpful to educators in different settings.

The Spinney School had its last formal external inspection in 2008 by OfSTED (the national Office for Standards in Education). The Inspector found our school to be ‘outstanding’ for leadership, academic outcomes, teaching and learning, curriculum and behavior. One of the notable things that the inspector wrote was that the Spinney was ‘forward thinking and outward reaching.’ This is an axiom that has served us well and has ensured that since that time, we have not stood still as a community but instead have ‘kept our foot on the gas’, continuing to make connections and partnerships to ensure that our curriculum stays fresh and relevant to the educational context of our times, a decade on from that ‘outstanding’ judgement.

Early on in my leadership journey I had the wonderful opportunity to attend a conference and to listen to John West-Burnham.<sup>1</sup> A standout moment for me was when he talked about how he recognized that our identity as teachers is shaped by our experiences. He explained that due to the peripatetic nature of his own parents’ work, which meant he had to keep changing schools as a young child, he had grown into an adult who was quite happy and accepting of change. This resonated with me in an instant. My father was a geologist and my mother a teacher. Some of my earliest experiences of school were of attending various schools in African countries and learning to get on quickly with new classmates, learning to speak the local language and making connections quickly because after a year or two, we might have to move on.

As children living abroad and restricted to only a couple of books (a children’s illustrated Bible and *Tales of Greece and Rome*), a small car and a cuddly toy each, my two sisters and I used whatever we found in the desert and our own imaginations to create games to

1 An independent teacher, writer and consultant in leadership development.

amuse ourselves. We also learned to socialize with other children and to make our way together through a combination of Western and local languages, as a community of itinerant children of international workers of a global mining company.

If John West-Burnham is right, as I am sure he is, my approach as a teacher and as a school leader has been shaped by those formative years. I would go so far as to say that my style of leadership and the things that I care about and introduce into the curriculum are also shaped by those experiences of connecting with others and trying to find a common language and a shared sense of purpose.

## Our curriculum

Our school is subject to the requirements of the National Curriculum applicable to government schools in England and Wales (although each school is free to design its own program of studies and lesson content). At the time of writing, OfSTED is about to launch a new Inspection Framework that will focus more on the Quality of Education and in particular on the curriculum. The curriculum as we describe it is everything that surrounds the child. It is the sum of the child's entire experience within school as well as the curriculum that the child receives out of school. This is why securing positive partnerships with parents as the child's first teachers is vital.

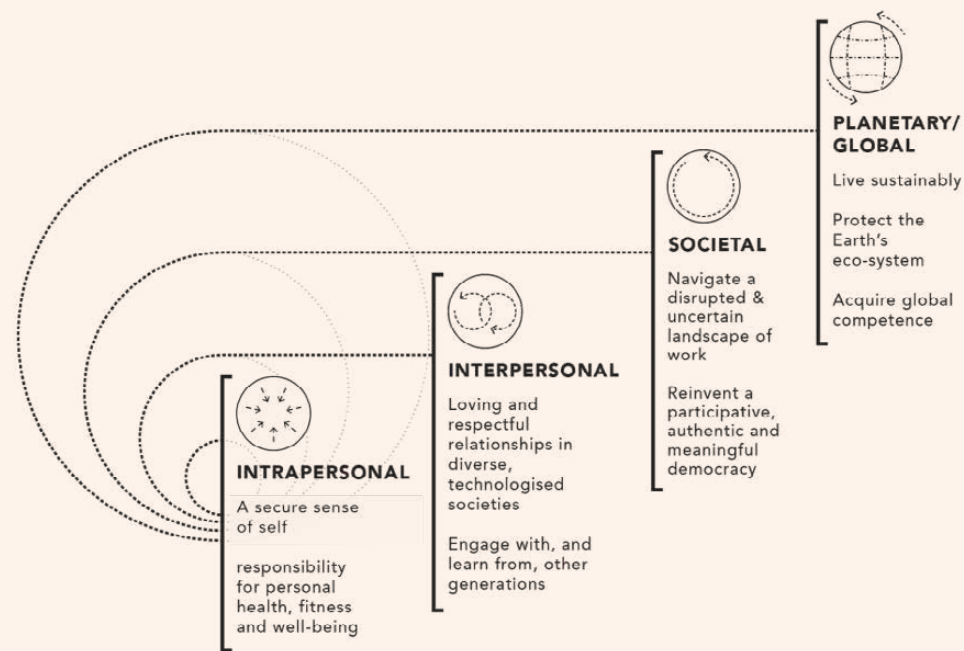
As a values-based organization, the Spinney school has been inspired by the work of Neil Hawkes and has identified seven values that inform the daily and long-term strategic work of the school. These are: child-centeredness, teamwork and community, excellence, learning, improvement, responsibility and optimism.

We are committed to ensuring that our curriculum provides our children with the necessary skills, attitudes and attributes so that they will be successful today as well as being well prepared for the emerging societal changes of the fourth industrial revolution, which will be a fundamental shift in the way we live, work, travel, and relate to one another. Advances in digital, physical and

biological technologies will have a huge impact on societies and the planet and will force us rethink how countries should develop, how organizations create value, and even what it means to be human.

In curating our curriculum to be sustainable, we have reflected on our curriculum purpose and intent. We have synthesised it as: 'We want our children to be happy today, fulfilled in the future and able to make their world an even better place.'

As a school leader, I am keen to make connections both via social media platforms and in real life to local and global education thought leaders and practitioners who can positively influence our thinking and pedagogy at the Spinney. My personal and professional mantra is #OnlyConnect. Various books and models have helped us to shape and articulate our curriculum intention, including a model described by Valerie Hannon in her book *Thrive, Schools Reinvented for The Real Challenges We Face*:



**Figure 1:** From Valerie Hannon, *Thrive: Schools Reinvented for the Real Challenges We Face* (Innovation Unit Press, 2017)

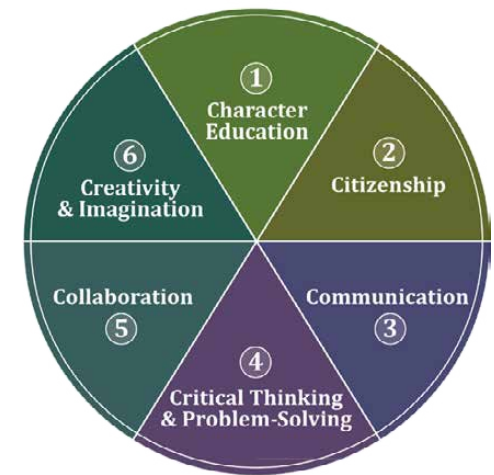
When we examine what it means to thrive, we see that thriving must happen at four interdependent levels, none of which can be ignored:

- Intrapersonal
- Interpersonal: our relationships
- Societal: place, communities, economies
- Global: our place in the planet

At the Spinney, we describe ourselves as #Pragmaticians. We *train for the test and we teach for life*. During their time in public primary schools in England, children are required to take five different statutory national assessments: a baseline assessment when they are five years old, phonics screening check when they are six, tests in reading, writing and maths when they are seven, a multiplication check when they are eight and examinations in reading, writing, grammar and maths at the end of primary school when they are eleven. Children in England are amongst the most tested in Europe and the testing regime is often described as ‘high stakes’: the results are used to compare schools, ranking them one against the other, both nationally and with neighboring schools in the same community. Since our children will go on to take even more examinations at secondary school, we are pragmatic in our approach, ensuring that children have the necessary study skills to ace the tests! These study skills include good memorization, resilience and a growth mindset. However, we are also determined to balance this commitment to academic excellence with a curriculum that is ‘future proof’ and which develops in our young people the pro-social skills and positive dispositions to ensure they are fulfilled in all areas of their life as articulated in the OECD’s Learning Compass 2030 and the eleven indicators of well-being: housing, income, jobs, community, education, environment, civic engagement, health, life satisfaction, safety, and work-life balance.

Another model that helps us articulate our pedagogy is Michael Fullan’s 6 Cs, from his book *Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World*.

**Figure 2:** From Michael Fullan, ‘Great to Excellent: Launching the Next Stage of Ontario’s Education Agenda’ (n.d.)



In order that our families can support their child’s learning, we send an electronic copy of the class timetable to the parents, which sets out the objectives of the lessons—mathematics, English, sports, history, art. Underneath the timetable we list the transferable skills that will be covered through the thoughtful curation of the curriculum. These include imagination, creativity, communication, collaboration, compassion, local and global citizenship, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Wherever possible at the Spinney we look for pedagogies, programs and partnerships that will secure this win-win in our curriculum: high standards in academic outcomes plus the development of our young people as ethical, thoughtful and compassionate citizens.

‘The aim of education is to enable students to understand the world around them and the talents within them so that they can become fulfilled individuals and active, compassionate citizens.’

SIR KEN ROBINSON

In recent months there has been a policy drive from the Department for Education (the Ministry of Education for England and Wales) for schools to develop pupils’ character as well as support their emotional, social and mental well-being. This is something that



we have been doing for some time, articulating our offer as three interconnected circles of skills, knowledge and character, with relationships at the heart. The Spinney is a Relational School working with the Relational Schools Foundation which aims to build relational capital and improve society by strengthening the quality of relationships.<sup>2</sup>

## Educational resources

We use a wide range of educational resources, including science and mathematics equipment as well as artefacts and books for history, all stored in carefully labelled boxes in the team room, which doubles up as the staff room, meeting room and a space for the children to work in. Other resources include a well-stocked library of classic and contemporary story books, and non-fiction reference books. There is a bank of musical instruments for the children, with enough ukuleles for everyone! We buy into a number of web-based resources to support teachers, including on-line whole school programmes for teaching music, one for Modern Foreign Languages (French) for digital programming and coding, and others for teaching phonics and reading.

## Participating in networks of innovation

Over time, we have connected with the wider education eco-system, learning with and from others, in the UK and across the globe. This includes introducing a range of research-informed pedagogies, programs and innovations and working with a number of individuals and partner organizations.

Examples of our approach include Dialogic Literary Gatherings (also known as DLGs) which we first learned about through a partnership with Professor Ramón Flecha of Barcelona University and working on an Erasmus Project ‘Successful Education Actions for Inclusion and Social Cohesion.’ This project comprises

<sup>2</sup> Dr Robert Loe is the Director of the Relational Schools Foundation.

six successful education actions (SEAS) that not only promote and strengthen community and coexistence but have also been shown to improve academic outcomes. We have integrated most of the six SEAS into our curriculum, including Dialogic Literary Gatherings for children, Dialogic Pedagogic Gatherings for teachers, Educational Participation of the community, Family Education, Dialogic model for prevention and conflict resolution, and Interactive Groups as part of the Spinney Big Count. For Dialogic Literary Gatherings (or DLGs, as the children call them) the children read a classic abridged text such as *Don Quixote*, *The Odyssey* or *Great Expectations* at home, either by themselves or with support from family members. Having read an agreed number of pages, the children sit together in a circle once a week to discuss ideas in the text with the teacher moderating the discussion to ensure there is space for all voices to be heard. Solidarity, cooperation, democracy, active listening, turn-taking, and respecting opinions are just some of the features of this activity. DLGs not only improve academic outcomes but also develop pro-social skills and improve classroom cohesion, as children share their ideas and bring their own perspectives into the dialogic classroom community. Dialogic Pedagogic Gatherings for teachers have also been a highly effective but low-cost activity. Teachers have their own reading too! Educators agree to read a piece of research or read about a particular educational theory. It was agreed to read a piece of research or a chapter of a pedagogic book such as Paolo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and then come together in a non-hierarchical circle. Headteacher, teachers, volunteers, and teaching assistants discuss the text and relate it to their own thinking, including discussing how the research might apply to their own classroom and teaching. As with the children’s gatherings, the dialogic interaction is moderated to allow time for equitable participation and sharing of ideas. In a similar way to the children’s own experiences, DPGs not only develop teachers’ subject knowledge, but also strengthen relationships within the faculty as a community of professional practice.



Another win–win approach is The Mind Up Program, created by the actor Goldie Hawn<sup>3</sup>. In addition to high quality, in-depth professional training and induction into the programme, Mind Up includes three teacher’s books to guide educators through the programme which combines basic neuroscience, positive psychology as well as mindfulness techniques.

The Spinney has also created its own project to improve academic outcomes as well as the children’s personal, social, emotional development. We call it The Big Count. All the children are grouped into 16 house families of (about 15 children in each family), and work in mixed aged groups (4–11) to collectively solve a set of mathematical problems. As part of the activity, the older children model mathematical problem-solving at the same time as demonstrating leadership and showing younger children how to work collaboratively in these interactive groups.

A program that raises standards as well as develops transferable skills and resilient attitudes to learning is *Maths No Problem!* based on the Singapore approach. This series is highly effective not only at developing the children’s mathematical skills and knowledge, but throughout each of the grade-level textbooks and associated workbooks there is the additional emphasis on transferrable learning such as problem-solving and practical activities that require children to work collaboratively. For this set of textbooks to have the desired impact on children’s outcomes, high quality teacher training to develop teachers’ subject knowledge is essential.

The Spinney is an Ashoka Changemaker School. There are about 300 Ashoka Changemaker schools across the world, which have come out of the global Ashoka network of social entrepreneurs started by Bill Drayton. The network was started about forty years ago and Bill Drayton was the originator of the term ‘social entrepreneur’. In 2015, the Spinney was designated

3 Goldie Hawn developed Mind Up in response to the tragic events of the 9/11 disaster in New York, putting her acting career on hold to formulate this powerful and transformative program.

as a Changemaker school, one of just 15 in the UK, due to our commitment to promoting empathy, creativity, collaboration, leadership and changemaking in our curriculum.

We have found these five virtues—empathy, creativity, collaboration, leadership and changemaking—useful when evaluating which pedagogy or program would fit best with our curriculum intentions. Another example of a rewarding partnership that improves academic outcomes as well as promoting co-existence is with Empathy Lab. As a changemaker organisation, we believe empathy is a core life skill and a revolutionary force for positive change when turned into social action. Empathy Lab is the first UK organisation to directly aim to build children’s empathy by encouraging young people to read high quality, wide-ranging literature and stories. The strategy builds on evidence that immersion in quality literatures is an effective way to build our empathetic understanding of others. Empathy Lab’s mission is Read Books, Build Empathy, Change the World. It recognizes that reading for empathy is not enough; we need to turn empathy into action by creating projects that have a positive impact.

A recent whole school example of turning empathy into action was our empathy for the Earth Day. The children read a wide range of books on environmental themes that included both fiction and non-fiction, and undertook research by watching film documentaries highlighting global Climate Injustice and the impact it is having on communities, the environment and our ecosystem. As a school, the children researched what could be done to combat the problem and designed a project to reduce single-use plastics throughout the school. Their aim was to raise their own families’ awareness, to learn and perform demonstration songs, to write a campaigning letter, and to have a day of action with placards, songs and speeches for invited VIP guests. The children’s actions also led to our Member of Parliament (MP) visiting the school to hear from the children directly. He even mentioned our Empathy for the Earth Day in a speech in Parliament.

In everything we do as a faculty of educators at the Spinney, we are making choices to ensure sustainability, interweaving the SDGs wherever we can. Our [website](#) says.

We encourage our pupils to be confident and articulate communicators, to think of themselves as global citizens with a developing awareness of broad social and ecological issues and to understand that they can be change makers with the power to make a positive difference in their school, community and world. Where appropriate our curriculum links to the United Nations' Sustainable goals including Education for Sustainable Development & Global Citizenship.

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 non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

We hope that by drawing on pedagogies, partnerships and programs from across the globe, we give our children a belief system that makes them confident in themselves as unique, precious individuals, with an ability to connect with others and a passion to be changemakers, able to make their world an even better place. At the Spinney school we say the curriculum is a gift that we offer the children to take into their future. It is a gift we will never see them fully open but we hope it will serve them well.

'Real education should educate us out of self into something finer, into a selflessness which links us to all humanity.'

NANCY ASTOR, the first female member of parliament in the UK

## Our children at age 11

Talking to our oldest children who are heading off to secondary school in September, it is lovely to hear their words and to get an impression of the impact the school values and curriculum have had on them.

'At our school we do not judge, we read between the lines and do not go on appearances. We don't judge a book by its cover. People are tall, small, speak Russian or other languages and we know we are all equal.'

'One of the good things about our school is it is Ok to be who you are and it's important just to be yourself.'

'At the Spinney, boys and the girls hang out and play together, when we went up to the secondary school for the jump up transition day, the girls and boys from other schools were separate. We went to the Isle of Wight at the start of the year and we just learned to get along. Boys and girls being together is much better, I mean, what if a child is non-binary.'

'Some of the things we have learned is to have a positive attitude, we have learned how to enjoy our learning. To be positive when we are learning and we have learned lots of things. We have learned science, maths, baking, making things. I think when people visit our school they must think what are those children doing? They are having fun! But we are learning!'

'We also do big projects, like Empathy for The Earth Day. That was great, with the speeches and the banners and the singing. The MP came and listened to us. We are inspirational changemakers.'

'As well as English and maths and those things, we have learned how to have good communication skills. Apart from a few kerfuffles we all basically just get along, and when we go to our next school I think that the Spinney children will all have friends. We have learned how important it is to be kind and we know how to make friends with new people.'

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- Schools as Learning Communities in Europe – Resources [HERE](#)
- MindUp- Empowering Children Through Mindful Practice Based in Neuroscience Relational Schools Foundation ([www.relationalschools.org](http://www.relationalschools.org))
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- [Empathy Lab](#) Read Stories, Build Empathy, Make a Better World

## SECTION THREE

The heart, the mind  
and the development  
of agency

## Integrating neuroscientific and educational research: How an interdisciplinary and holistic science of human development can inform the SEL agenda and classroom practice

ANDY SMART and MARGARET SINCLAIR  
interview MARY HELEN IMMORDINO-YANG

### ABSTRACT

Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, Ed.D, is a neuroscientist, human development psychologist and former schoolteacher. At the forefront of innovative research, she studies the biological processes that connect the interests of the SEL community—social interaction and emotional meaning-making—to the learning achievement targets desired by educational policymakers. In an interview with the editors of this volume, Mary Helen explains how neuroscientific evidence is contributing to the understanding of the development of sociality, emotion, culture, and identity in children and adolescents. Brain science has established that social, emotional, and academic development are inter-dependent. However, Mary Helen points out the limitations of such science; for instance, it cannot help to determine the aims of formal schooling, or choices about what content is worth learning, how and when. Mary Helen argues that the educational enterprise must not only integrate research on human development from a range of physical and social sciences but also build on the experience of educators: a broad, inter-disciplinary perspective is needed to inform educational practice in support of culturally relevant objectives.

### KEYWORDS

brain science, neuroscientific and educational research, human development, social and emotional learning, cultural influence on cognitive processes, domains of knowledge, cross-cultural research

Note: The following is an abridged and edited transcript of a longer interview.

ANDY: Educational researchers have long been attracted to the field of neuroscience and its potential to uncover the mysteries of cognition and cognitive processes. And our specialized SEL community is also increasingly drawing on neuroscience findings in order to strengthen our understanding of the social and emotional domains of human development.

In your opinion, how and to what degree can this scientific research inform our practice?

MARY HELEN: In a way, this is like asking whether biochemistry can inform our understanding of medicine. Well, sure, but does this mean that your pediatrician needs to be a biochemist? Well, no. However, pediatricians should be able to incorporate the research findings from a specialized area of medicine when determining diagnoses or considering drug interactions.

The study of neuroscience—and certain kinds of neuroscience in particular—can contribute to our understanding of human development and how human development is reliant on experience. But to think that any science can tell you what to do is naïve. Scientific evidence can only help you make predictions about what will happen if you do X or Y, or help you understand why things are happening as they are. Practitioners must then decide on the basis of the science, how best to accomplish their goals.

For this reason, I believe that the core evidence base for education comes from an inter-disciplinary scientific study of human development. Various sources—including the study of educational ethics, for example—feed into this broad and inter-



disciplinary science ‘in the middle’, and we should interpret those sources of evidence from an integrated perspective. From this core, people can use what is learned about the dynamics of human development to think about what is needed and what is happening in their own context, and then people can add iterative evidence to this core from inside their own context. The science informs the interpretation and the hidden models, but it does not tell you what to do.

**ANDY:** Margaret and I had discovered your research independently, excited by the implications of neuroscience research for SEL practice but not wanting to overstate its relevance. ‘It is not a solution’, we said, ‘...It is a way of thinking.’

**MARY HELEN:** I agree. It is not a solution; it is a way of thinking. It is a broader understanding of what education is actually for, that serves as a jumping-off point for the conceptual work of figuring out what to do.

The scientists are never going to be able to tell the educators what to do. Instead, the educators need to be theoreticians with a lot of practical experience in their own right, building evidence-based practice in their own context that reflects the broader dynamics and mechanisms of human development as they are being revealed by this science.

When you are a teacher, you need to be able to do the opposite: you need to be able to take knowledge from many domains and interrelate them to be able to support a whole person. This is what my friend David Daniel has called the ‘Frankenstein problem’: how do you sew together all of these different neuro-mechanisms—for phonological decoding and mathematical thinking and sociality, and much else besides—and put it all together within a person? Or within a group of people who are working together to accomplish something?

The aim of education is always decided by society. How do you best accomplish the aim that you decided that you want to accomplish and that you value? There is a strong role for scientific evidence there. But the science cannot tell us what

we should value or what we should focus on. That is a matter of cultural values and of subjective desires. It requires thinking about what society actually needs and what kind of people we want to produce. And once you understand that, you can think, ‘Well, what would that mean, given the way we understand the nature of human development? What would that mean for the kind of experiences that we want to design for people so that we encourage them to develop in this pathway, which we value as a society?’

**ANDY:** In the field of neuroscience, SEL practitioners—including teachers in normal classrooms—are most often looking at the research on memory.

**MARY HELEN:** That’s what I mean when I say that scientists are often concerned with a very narrow construct. Memory is a piece of the educational enterprise. It is a piece of what happens. It is a piece of what is important when you are in school. But the neuroscientists working on memory almost never have an understanding of how memory fits within the bigger context of developing a whole person. What should people remember? And what do you use the memories for?

This research on information retrieval processes or practice effects would focus educators on schooling as a venue for producing memory in students. But that is not actually a big piece of what education is meant to accomplish. If you think about education as engaging in systematically growing human beings into citizens, the factual memories that you are able to call up is only a tiny piece of that. How you decide what information is worth remembering, how people learn to utilize that information to actually solve problems, how they contextualize and interrelate the information and make sense out of it... those are the much harder questions to answer.

In the neuroscience that I do, I am trying to pull all of that together into this more holistic perspective about how people make meaning. Memory, affect, cognition, inhibition, disinhibition, regulation—all of these pieces are interrelating

dynamically in patterns that produce a person who comes to think in a particular way. And part of how you think are the pieces you remember, that you conjure, construct into a narrative, and interpret.

Memory is a perfect example of a mechanism that is very well documented, but that you don't know how to use as an educator unless you have a very clear goal of what you are trying to achieve in your students. If you know clearly what facts you want them to know that need to be retrieved in another context, then this research is relevant to educators.

ANDY: Does this relate to the different ways of thinking about the term 'learning'?

MARY HELEN: Yes. 'Learning' is used in many different ways in many different contexts. And in Western education in particular, we have had too much of a focus on 'learning' meaning 'outcomes', in terms of factual recall of information or skills. And that is a piece, but that does not really capture what the piece is for: why do you need to have learned this? Well, because it helps you to become a better thinker in the world. That is the piece that is very difficult to define, and the piece that we have to engage with in a real way and a rigorous way if we want to improve education using the science. But that science—of building a broad model of the human being 'in the middle'—is not really developed yet.

MARGARET: This also relates to the idea of 'identity', because that 'whole person' is going to have an identity with the characteristics that we want, to some extent.

MARY HELEN: Part of identity is a set of skills, a body of knowledge, a way of comporting yourself, a set of habits of mind for affiliating in particular ways and for valuing particular kinds of things and for noticing implications. It is the knowledge base that you have, the kinds of experiences that you have had, the ways in which you have interpreted those experiences, and the way you build skills and utilize those skills to do things. For

example, becoming a mathematician is an identity-building process when it is done in a way that sticks with a person and changes who they are and how they think, which is what high-quality education ought to strive to do.

In education, the content of identity is a very amorphous and context-specific notion to define. In low-income and conflict-affected countries, educators need to stop and think about what kind of identity is wanted that will be beneficial to the society over time. Although scientifically informed, this is a value-driven and subjective conversation.

ANDY: And this is the conversation that we have with policymakers and practitioners. Human beings have the same cognitive mechanisms and structures, but we are all sitting in different cultures that heavily affect learning processes. We have to think about the extent to which an educational approach is universal and how it must be contextualized to be successful in different countries.

MARY HELEN: Culture is a human construct that is being built and rebuilt and invented by the people within it all the time. Humans' cognitive mechanisms and structures—even basic ones like vision—are impacted by cultural experiences. For vision, for example, cultural ways of valuing 'teach' people what to notice when they look at scenes, and hence even the construction of visual perception—what and how one sees—is cultural.

I imagine that there are cultural effects on all the kinds of learning experiences among all the human beings in the world. While we haven't documented what they all are yet, the research that demonstrates that certain patterns of thinking do exist that are influenced by culture is already giving a new window into engaging with young people and designing educational opportunities.

ANDY: So how can the scientific research help to design these educational experiences?

MARY HELEN: Members of any cultural context construct their own notion of what a citizen looks like in that society. Science can tell you, ‘If you do this, you are likely to get this kind of effect. So, is that what you want to do?’ Or science can tell you, ‘If you aim for this, the best way to do it might be this way. And if you do it the other way, you are likely to subvert your own goal. So, is that what you want to do?’

This is where the science is absolutely integral, but the active expertise of the educator is extremely important. It is not just the amount of exposure to ideas but the degree and quality of learner engagement that will result in the outcomes that are valued by a society and constitute the aims of the educational enterprise in a given context.

ANDY: Low-income and post-conflict countries are concerned with core curriculum because they are cash-strapped. The authorities are not interested in ‘add-ons’ that focus on emotional development.

MARY HELEN: My work and that of my colleagues—inter-disciplinary development of the whole person—is relevant for people designing the curricula that are likely to be valued in that context.

This is not an ‘add-on’. The science can say, ‘This is the most effective way to engage in the kinds of thought patterns that you value, because the science shows us that they are likely to produce a particular kind of learner.’ If you want to design a curriculum that will facilitate young people’s understanding of science, what we are showing is that ‘understanding’ is broader than being able to regurgitate facts. It is an evidence-based way of engaging with the world.

ANDY: Is the effect of culture and emotion more significant as students get older and become more conscious of their own identity?

MARY HELEN: I don’t think it is more significant. The role shifts at different developmental ages. Culture is already shaping

the behavior of infants by the time they are three days old, for example in their crying patterns and how long they cry. And infants are born recognizing the tastes of the food their mother ate while carrying them. Culture is there from very early and it is learned. It is not that you have a basic human being and culture pushes the development one way or the other. The culture is actually triggering the development, shaping and organizing from the get-go the way in which these mechanisms and propensities start to turn on, as well as the way in which they are organized with one another.

There is no such thing as the ‘blank slate’ human being. Our genes are literally triggered, and our development is organized, by our social experience. From the beginning, engaging with others shapes the way we learn and make meaning. And that will look different, depending on the development stage of the person.

MARGARET: David Yeager’s work showed that adolescents want the social respect of their peers and a sense of agency in society. How would you compare his research on adolescents in Texas with your own observations of adolescents in Kenya?

MARY HELEN: Adolescence is a universal phenomenon: there are some characteristic sensitivities and development mechanisms that are organized, turned on, and learned in adolescence across different cultures. For instance, adolescents around the world, and even adolescent mice, show shifts in sleep patterns. Adolescent humans show a shift to a higher social sensitivity to peers.

But what that will look like? And what is valued? What kind of person you want to promote yourself as will look very different across cultures. Culture shapes how adolescent changes manifest themselves—what these changes manifest as in behavior, values and beliefs.

ANDY: The high-level officials who determine national education priorities are primarily focused on academic achievement. The abundant scientific evidence that the so-called ‘non-cognitive’ competencies support and contribute to cognitive processes would be very much of interest to these senior officials. However, those of us concerned with social and emotional learning advocate for attention to these developmental areas within ministries of education as desired outcomes in their own right, rather than just as the means to higher test scores.

MARY HELEN: I see this as a basic misunderstanding of what it means to be social. What I argue—drawing on psychological, anthropological, and even biological perspectives—is that the very nature of human biology is social. Rogoff (2003) and Tomasello (1999) write that our very biological development is turned on by socially mediated information. What this means is that our most ‘cognitive’ thinking—as understood within the framework of these national authorities whom you mention—is inherently culturally organized and social from its origins.

There is no such thing as non-social thought: your values are derived from and situated in the cultural and temporal context in which you live. Even if you are alone or socially isolated, and even if you are expressing disagreement with those values, this is still in relation to others in that context or a reaction to what is there. You are inventing within a world that already exists.

SEL can be defined as the skills for interacting with other people and for managing yourself: this is a domain of sociality that deserves specific attention in education. These social and emotional skills first contribute to academic skills as a pre-requisite: you have to be able to operate in that environment and to learn to deal with trauma in order to even start to engage in a school context. But that is not enough.

The other domain of sociality, which we know much less about, is harder to understand but it is also extremely important. The nature of scholarly learning is inherently socially organized and inherently emotion-inducing. For instance, when a physicist

figures something out and has that ‘Oh! This is right!’ moment... that little ‘oh!’ is an emotional reaction. But it comes out of engaging with the possibilities that are very domain-specific, requiring a deep understanding of physics to have that ‘aha!’ emotional experience.

How do we design educational environments that promote that social and emotional experiencing of ideas? Of domains of knowledge? Of skills that we think of as scholarly and academic? In that piece of the human development puzzle, the subjective awareness of the power of ideas or procedures and ways of thinking, that is the essence of scholarship.

Effective education reflects a social, emotional, cultural, and cognitively and socially framed way of thinking all at once. And that is the piece that people miss. In building a science of education, what are the dynamics of the processing in the moment that promote different ways of learning? ‘Learning’ writ large: not remembering facts, but changing who you are. And how do those experiences influence human development?

Given the new scientific evidence that we have, one of the questions for research in the next few years pertains to the relationship between learning and human development: how do particular kinds of learning impact the way in which a person develops?

MARGARET: The numerous research studies that you have published already are immediately useful to the SEL community in many respects, but I will only mention one here. Your methodological rigor allows us to approach the donors who fund education in low-income and conflict-affected countries with hardscience proof that SEL approaches and aims are integral to human development and learning. As Andy said, many of us are trying to persuade high-level institutional representatives of the importance of dedicated attention to SEL in curricula. While an emerging body of literature has supported our experiences as practitioners, your research documenting the enhanced emotional and neurological responses to

inspirational narratives has provided a biological basis for greater use of narratives as a SEL tool in classrooms and textbooks. Tell us, how did you develop the ‘inspirational stories’ that you used for such research?

MARY HELEN: When our team conducted the cross-cultural studies in China, for example, we had developed a set of criteria particular to the context and our research aims, and then we collected possible contributions from sources in the country. We looked at a wide range of news sources, for example. We had a team of students digging into all manner of materials, documentaries, news, archives, museum archives, and all kinds of live testimonies from people. Then we carefully compiled and revised some of these stories, and then tested those compilations through a pilot study. I had converted these stories into vignettes that would elicit only the emotions we were interested in. So, I composed narratives from these true events and experiences, then we made little documentary films that would illustrate them. We let the participants know about the protagonists in the story through a specific formula that we used to do that. I had constructed a particular narrative format, including the same kinds of information using the same structure for each story. Then we piloted these narratives with the populations we were going to be studying. We asked the participants to tell us what they thought about the stories—to react to the emotions that they thought were incorporated in the vignettes and the degree to which other emotions were present, and many other such questions—until we finally identified a set of narratives that accomplished what we wanted, given the current demographics of our sample and given the kinds of emotions we were studying in the experiment.

MARGARET: Have you done any follow-up with the sample population who were moved or inspired, to determine, for example, how long the emotional response lasts?

MARY HELEN: In the studies on teenagers, we did ask similar questions two years after the initial research as well as five years later, so we have been following the adolescents longitudinally. When the participants returned after two years, we asked them to look at the stories again, and they first have to tell us which of the vignettes they remember. So, we do follow up to determine how they felt about the stories two years later.

We have interesting findings about the style in which a young person interacts with these stories. In the first wave of data, at age 14–16, we were able to predict the degree to which participants were likely to remember the story at these later points: year 2 and year 5. This likelihood is moderated by several biological variables: for example, their eye blink rate when they are reacting to the story predicts the likelihood that they will remember it, which is a measure of striatal dopamine. Another variable we measured was the participants’ style of ‘talk’ about the story. For instance, had they engaged directly in empathic meaning-making—feeling bad or happy for the protagonist, interacting with that person’s personal story, offering suggestions—or had they moved beyond thinking about the protagonist or that particular story to a broader lesson or a more abstract way of interpreting, in terms of values or truisms about the world as it is or as it could be? Those kinds of ‘talk’ predict later memory, and especially so if they had a high blink rate when they were sharing their reactions.

I don’t think I am inventing new ideas as a researcher: I am integrating a new era of scientific evidence into the thinking of education researchers that have come before me. I am trying to enrich our understanding of the mechanisms that underlie some of these processes, so that we support most effectively—and in different cultural contexts—the kind of development that we desire for young people.



## For further reading

The ideas discussed in this interview are summarized in an [accessible research brief](#) (Immordino-Yang, M.H., Darling-Hammond, L. & Krone, C., 2018), which describes the centrality of social experiences to learning and suggests how educational opportunities may support the biological processes of brain development at different ages. The brief also discusses how these processes may be supported through educational opportunities.

The [Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development](#) in the United States provides the full citations for scholarly publications by Mary Helen and her colleagues on many topics of interest to the SEL community.

The following research centers and researchers were also mentioned in this interview:

Adolescent Development Research Group at the University of Texas, Austin. <https://labs.la.utexas.edu/adrg/>. D. Yeager is the director.

Center for the Developing Adolescent <http://developingadolescent.org/>. R. Dahl is also the director of the Institute of Human Development at the University of California, Berkeley <http://ihd.berkeley.edu/>.

Project Zero at the University of Harvard. <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/>.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

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### NOTE

The editors would like to thank Dr. Zuki Karpinska for skillful editing of the transcript of this interview.

## Cognitive development mechanisms underlying socioemotional learning

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### ABSTRACT

The term executive functions (EFs) refers to related processes that are relevant to planning, decision-making, and regulating behavior and emotions. EFs show developmental change from infancy through adolescence. EFs partially underlie many of the processes that regulate socioemotional learning and subsequent achievement. Here we discuss the brain and cognitive developmental bases of EFs and their connection to socioemotional learning in early childhood. We use the We Love Reading program as an example of how programming can incorporate elements that may naturally support EF development in early childhood.

### KEYWORDS

socioemotional learning, social cognition, cognitive development, executive functions, children, early childhood development, reading, neuroscience

## Socioemotional learning and executive functions

Socioemotional learning is a term used to reflect behaving appropriately across contexts and layers of one's social ecology. A recent paper by West, Buckley, Krachman, and Bookman (2018) argues that there are at least four high-level constructs that together define socioemotional learning: self-efficacy, growth mindset, self-management, and social awareness. Socioemotional learning, then, reflects flexibly managing one's emotions and thoughts (self-management), showing appropriate empathy for others (social awareness), and working within a positive motivational framework to achieve short- and long-term goals (self-efficacy and growth mindset). As such, socioemotional learning development in early childhood involves promoting competencies in a number of developmentally appropriate cognitive processes. Among others, these include inhibition of impulsive behaviors, awareness and regulation of feelings, accurate perception of the perspectives of others, correct identification of problems and development of positive and informed goals and solutions to problems (Zins, Elias, Greenberg, & Weissberg, 2000). These skills are thought to promote self-regulation in children, which has been shown to be a predictor of resilience and future academic achievement (Blair, 2002). Within the science of cognitive development, a number of processes supporting socioemotional learning fall under the umbrella of executive functions. Executive functions (EFs) are a group of related developing processes that are relevant to planning, decision-making, and regulating one's behavior and emotions (Diamond, 2013). The ability to inhibit impulses, shift attention from one task to another, plan, initiate tasks, and utilize working memory are all components of EFs. These skills undergo important development during early childhood and into adolescence (Diamond, Kirkham & Amso, 2002; Davidson, Amso, Anderson, & Diamond, 2006; Amso, Haas, McShane, & Badre, 2014).

Executive functions can be identified as either 'hot' or 'cool'. The hot and cool designations reflect exerting control over emotion-neutral cognition (cool) versus exerting control in emotionally taxing situations (hot) (Zelazo & Carlson, 2012). Cool executive functions generally refer to the goal-directed, future-oriented skills involved in planning, inhibition, flexibility, and working memory that are manifested under relatively 'decontextualized, non-emotional, and analytical testing conditions' (Hongwanishkul et al., 2005; Miyake et al., 2000). Hot executive functions are goal-directed processes elicited in contexts that 'prompt emotion, motivation, and a tension between immediate gratification and long-term rewards' (Hongwanishkul et al., 2005).

While one might be tempted to sort socioemotional learning under the hot executive functions category, it is more likely that the broad umbrella of socioemotional learning development encompasses both hot and cool executive functions. Indeed, the region of the brain primarily implicated in EFs is called the prefrontal cortex (PFC). The PFC is a highly interconnected neural system that sends and receives information from almost every other part of the developing brain, allowing it to both be enriched by cognitive experiences and to shape other developing learning and memory systems (Amso & Scerif, 2015). The more variable the context in which a child has to implement the same rule-guided behavior, the more efficiently the PFC learns to flexibly adapt, learn, and control behavior and emotion when confronted with entirely novel contexts (Amso, Salhi, & Badre, 2018; Werchan & Amso, 2017). Moreover, children's application and integration of EF skills has shown to serve as a mediator in socioemotional competence and helps foster the development of self-regulatory and social-emotional skills (McClelland, Cameron, Wanless, & Murray, 2007).

Beyond the regulation of behavior and emotion, the PFC and EFs have been implicated in the efficiency of social cognitive processes, including empathy and theory of mind. Empathy is defined as a response to and sharing of another's emotional state and includes both the regulation of emotion and the capacity

to take and understand the perspective of others (Decety, 2010). Theory of mind refers to one's ability to infer and understand the mental state of others, such as their beliefs, intentions, and desires, given the knowledge that one has available (Wellman, 2004). While these are complicated skills that deserve their own consideration in shaping socioemotional learning, many theoretical frameworks link these developing skills to EFs. Findings from Wellman et al. (2009) suggest a critical role for the prefrontal cortex in both the development and engagement of theory of mind. In addition, research suggests that success on tasks that assess EFs predicts success on tasks related to theory of mind, as both emerge at around the same time in children's development (Diamond, 2006). Research on preschoolers found that those with more advanced EF skills are better able to hold multiple perspectives in mind at once and are more efficient in switching between those perspectives (Diamond, 2006). The cognitive mechanisms underlying empathy, particularly perspective-taking processes, are rooted in the stable relationship between theory of mind and executive functions (Decety, 2010). Research is continuing to work towards understanding the directionality of these developing skills and their relationship to one another.

## Shaping the development of EFs

The research literature has considered the variables that shape the development of EFs. A variety of positive and negative early life experiences have been found to shape EFs and, thereby, academic achievement outcomes (e.g., Lawson & Farah, 2017). Stressful life events, experienced through poverty, violence, or trauma have been shown to have a negative impact on EFs (Amso & Lynn, 2017) and socioemotional regulation and competence (Thompson, 2014). For instance, children who experience inconsistent or disrupted caregiving have been shown to have higher levels of cortisol than children without these caregiving disruptions (Tarullo & Gunnar, 2006). Cortisol levels are a biomarker of stress. This effect is also

evident in children with prenatal substance exposure and domestic violence exposure, and these effects have a cumulative and lasting impact on a child's cognitive architecture and future behavioral outcomes (Lester et al., 2010). In particular, stress in children's home environments, or stress experienced by caregivers, has recently been shown to impact developing EFs (Farah, 2018).

In contrast, cognitive enrichment opportunities that offer children practice in implementing flexible behavior in different contexts are a boon to EFs development (Amso, Salhi, & Badre, 2018). Parental engagement and caregiving are also key to supporting children in managing emotions and developing strong self-regulatory skills. For example, Sameroff & Fiese (2000) showed that the transactional or reciprocal nature of secure attachments in parent-child relationships plays a critical role in considering child socioemotional behaviors in context. Attachment quality has been shown to play a key role in being able to delay gratification in Western children (Jacobsen, Huss, Fendrich, Kruesi, & Ziegenhain, 1998). In Cameroonian Nso families, culture-specific maternal socialization goals supported better delay of gratification (Lamm et al., 2017). This is the ability to resist immediate gratification for a later, more valued, outcome and is a critical component of children's socioemotional competence (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989). Research has suggested that the ability to delay gratification is linked with inhibitory control, a component of EF, and that this distinct form of self-control is linked to children's socioemotional development, particularly 'the ability to resist temptation and to regulate frustration and stress' (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989; Sethi et al., 2000).

It is therefore not surprising that a great many studies have attempted to train EFs (Karbach & Unger, 2014). Training protocols might be applied in normative development or in populations that suffer from neurodevelopmental differences as in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Most research-based EF training protocols have involved computer-based training programs and regimens. In general, these have been

fairly successful in supporting what is called narrow transfer (Diamond & Lee, 2011). Narrow transfer refers to performance improvement for EFs and tasks closely related to the training regimen, but effects do not generalize broadly to other EFs (Willoughby, Magnus, Vernon-Feagans & Blair, 2017).

These data would suggest that intensive and repetitive training protocols may be missing the mark on supporting EF developmental process, and in turn its impact on socioemotional learning (Amso & Scerif, 2015). The PFC is highly interconnected with sensory, midbrain learning and motivation, and motor systems. Programming that naturally integrates EFs into rich and variable activities may thus play a stronger role in supporting EF development. Diamond and Lee (2011) argued that the development of EFs may depend on activities that support self-control and being able to flexibly switch behavior with changing task demands. These activities might include mindfulness, martial arts, sports, and social pretend play and interaction. The ultimate goal is to support the development of executive functions and promote self-regulatory capabilities, regardless of the activity itself. Moreover, EFs might benefit from more natural, semi-structured programs that include adult and parental engagement. The positive influence of caregivers has been shown to buffer the stress response in children; moreover, it allows children the opportunity to structure rules and interactions in ways that support interactive planning, rule-following, and mental manipulation of ideas, objects, words, or movements (Diamond & Lee, 2011).

## **We Love Reading as an example program**

Here we deconstruct the We Love Reading program (WLR) using the constructs introduced in the previously reviewed literature. WLR is a Jordanian-based program that has spread to over 42 countries. It is primarily designed to engage children in reading for pleasure and involves training local ambassadors to hold routine read-aloud sessions for children aged 2-10 years old in public spaces of their

neighborhoods. The read-aloud method involves animated, lively readings, encourages children to listen attentively and engage with the story but not to participate in an academic discussion of the book. The books are always in the native language of the child and use illustrations to support understanding. After the read-aloud sessions, WLR provides children with the opportunity to take the books home to read with parents, making use of what is called a 'living library.'

This simple, sustainable program meets many of the demands of developing EFs, and in doing so, supports the constructs that define socioemotional learning. First, one of the stated goals of the WLR program is to empower the child to be an agent of change in their home environment (self-efficacy). Children bring the books home and engage their parents in reading. Research has shown that intrinsic motivation, control, agency, and self-efficacy over one's environment are important for executive functions (Pessoa, 2009; Shenhav, Botvinick, Matthew, & Cohen, 2013). These variables also capacitate children to overcome stressful events and motivate children to become more resilient in the face of adversity (Conger & Conger, 2002; Masten, 2014). Moreover, WLR engages the community and parents with the child, offering various sources of social scaffolding known to be powerful motivators in early childhood resilience (growth mindset) and particularly so in collectivist cultures (Serbin & Karp, 2004; Opperman, 2016).

Second, the read-aloud method supports extended focus during a pleasurable experience, supporting the type of delay-of-gratification skills (self-management) needed to control behavior to obtain a valuable reward—in this case, waiting to finish a story with the group in order to borrow and take it home. Third, reading stories and the vocabulary growth associated with this activity are a type of cognitive enrichment opportunity that has multiple values for cognitive development. Complexity of language and turn-taking have both been shown to mediate the relationship between early language abilities and EFs (Brito & Noble, 2014; Romeo et al., 2018).

Romeo et al. (2018) found that these effects are largely driven by the number of conversational turns between the caregiver and child, rather than the number of adult words spoken to the child. That is, engaging with the child in the context of reading, rather than the reading process itself, seems to be the variable driving positive change in the processes that underlie learning and achievement. Ultimately, reading in this form is an enrichment opportunity that allows turn-taking, verbal interaction with caregivers, practice with object forms (the written word), opportunities for imaginative play, creative thought, and learning others' perspective (social awareness).

All of these components of reading are important for supporting the development of EFs. A preliminary study investigated the WLR read-aloud method on EFs development and reading attitudes in a group of 6–8-year-old Jordanian children. (Dajani, Al Sager, Placido, & Amso, in press). We found that the WLR read-aloud sessions drove spontaneous change in the number of books in the home and the number of children in the sample that consider reading a hobby. In addition, there was a significant effect of the change in reading attitudes and practices on executive functions development. Specifically, we found that keeping two rules in working memory, and flexibly switching between these rules, improved over the course of the 6 months that children participated in the program. These data suggest immense value of the WLR program on developing EFs and further demonstrate how reading, as one example, can be used as a medium to motivate and encourage young children to realize that they have the ability to think independently.

A particular feature of WLR is its scalability, for example through transfer to interested agencies or organizations (see Dajani in this volume). The fundamental nature of EFs development, through motivation around reading and social interaction between children and their caregivers, suggests that similar benefits may be obtained when other entities add the WLR activity as a supplementary module to their primary activities.



## Summary

In sum, socioemotional learning involves developmentally-appropriate experiences that allow children to practice behavioral and emotional control in various natural contexts. Programs that are age- and culture-appropriate, that require children to engage in challenging but attainable activities (Diamond & Lee, 2011), that target their mental manipulation and working memory skills through creativity and imagination, and that allow them to be agents of positive change in their social environments may support executive functions and socioemotional learning. The ‘read aloud’ approach has been used informally for as long as children’s stories have been written. For the development of the EFs and holistic social and emotional learning, this process has great promise, both on its own and as an integral component of literacy efforts.

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## SECTION FOUR

Identity, inclusion  
and social cohesion

## Section Four overview: Identity, inclusion and social cohesion

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In our view, schools have at least three primary tasks: to help young people develop a positive sense of self-efficacy and wellbeing; to help them acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes for livelihood and decent work; and to give them a sense of belonging, positive agency and contribution within the larger communities of which they are a part. Ideally, these communities include the family and those in the immediate surroundings and also extend beyond the family and local to the national and regional and, hopefully, to wider humanity.

Individual identity is of course a starting point, and a positive personal identity is necessary for identification with wider humanity. Children begin learning from birth, and bring considerable prior knowledge to school, in terms of both identity formation and cognitive development. Early learning plays a formative role, in positive ways, i.e. with home language providing the foundation for later language development, and negatively, e.g. in stereotypes of 'out groups'. Schooling can help children to develop identities as learners with a sense of individual and social agency. This comes from providing children with opportunities to express themselves creatively, emotionally and socially and to be recognized for their own contributions. The most important experience of identity for students is likely to be in the recognition of their value by the teacher as well as by their peers (the latter aspect becoming much more pronounced in adolescence). Education is also social. Children build complex social and cultural identities from birth, but these identities can be broadened, or narrowed, by experiences, interpersonal interactions, and learning activities at school. As noted below, school can be

helpful or otherwise in supporting the positive qualities and values summarized in SDG Target 4.7.

Gender, linguistic, ethnicity, (dis)ability and other possible aspects of identity assume different salience in different contexts. In this overview, we focus primarily on individual identity in relation to others, at individual, group, national, and global levels. We do not explicitly discuss inclusion in the sense originating from disability studies, though we recognize its critical importance. First, we look at the issue of national and ethnic/religious identity, as represented (or not) in national textbooks. Can the representation of society emphasize the positive role of all members in the larger collective? Can the distortions of negative stereotyping, and bias through omission, be removed? We next consider the special problems of conflict-affected settings and post-conflict curriculum policies that are conflict-sensitive and aim to support peacebuilding. Finally, we consider how education can support young people in building positive, multi-faceted identities, supportive of personal wellbeing, a sense of agency and the common good.

### Moving from narrow and exclusive identities to identification with humanity and the planet

The challenge is great. In a social psychology experiment, researchers put volunteers into an MRI scanner and showed them pictures of a large syringe needle being plunged into someone's hand. The 'pain matrix' in their brain lit up. Then, one of the following labels was placed next to each hand and the syringe was reapplied: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Scientologist, or atheist. This time the empathic mirroring of the pain matrix showed up only for the hand of the volunteer's own group. Organized into two teams, the empathic 'pain matrix' lit up for members of the volunteer's own team (Vaughn et al., 2018). There is evidently a deep biological basis for identities forming around in groups and out groups, but there is also hope that one can broaden



the concept of the ‘in group’, ideally from a narrow group to all humanity. The briefs in this section address the question of how to broaden the group to be more inclusive of all.

Benedict Anderson (1991) famously advanced the idea of ‘imagined communities,’ whereby individuals come to feel a shared identity and destiny with many others they have never met and likely never will. Anderson wrote about schooling in the context of developing nationalism, where people gathered around a national collective identity. Indeed, mass formal schooling developed alongside the emergence of nation-states as the dominant unit of collective identity. One of the main functions of mass schooling was to develop citizens of the nation-state, to socialize young people into the norms and values, national stories, institutions and ideals of the nation. Public schools taught children to love their country, to identify with their countrymen and women, and to be willing to sacrifice life and limb on account of and for people they did not know.

Yet cultivating passionate *in group* identification too often comes at the cost of disengaging from or disparaging *out groups*. A cohesive *in group* identity is often developed by distinguishing, diminishing or dehumanizing the *out group*. Out groups have often been outside the geographic bounds of the nation, notably rivals or enemies of the nation-state. But in many contexts the drive to create a cohesive *in group* identity also leads, even within a country, to the creation of out groups, notably in terms of ethnicity, language and religious affiliation or other identity groups. The process of nation building often involves imposition of a dominant language, culture, and values on existing diversity. The homogenization of distinctiveness frequently involved in developing a national identity is likely to sow seeds of later marginalization and conflict. Most conflicts in recent years have taken place within rather than across national boundaries. Thus, alongside the impulse for inclusion and belonging is the almost reflexive human impulse to exclude. This poses a challenge to educators—from their concerns with bullying and exclusion of children from informal childhood

groups to their aim to support national cohesion, peace and prosperity as well as global comity.

Enmity and warfare between nations continue to plague our species and world. Inflammatory rhetoric may persist or be renewed, in negative manifestations of ‘nationalism’. The recent resurgence of nationalism in a number of countries throughout the world is a case in point. In contrast, the goal of ‘patriotism’, cited sometimes in contemporary education policies, can be a step forward, through tackling divisions within the nation, bringing different groups together to promote a feeling of belonging and unity without recourse to external enemies, a kind of positive and inclusive nationalism. As a UK journalist famously remarked:

The difference between patriotism and nationalism is that the patriot is proud of his country for what it does, and the nationalist is proud of his country no matter what it does; the first attitude creates a feeling of responsibility, but the second a feeling of blind arrogance that leads to war.<sup>1</sup>

This section of the Global Briefs seeks to explore these issues of identity, inclusion, exclusion and social cohesion. We take the value-laden position that close, even passionate identification with family, community, ethnic or religious group, or nation need not exclude the development of broader and more complex identities. Increasingly, individuals experience hybrid or multifaceted identities, sometimes as a result of ‘mixed’ marriage and life in diverse urban communities, where individuals with distinctive identities from different walks of life encounter each other, negotiating mutual recognition and a collective existence. Recognition of multi-dimensional identities may lead to appreciation of communities with other identities, of all seven billion humans on the planet, and of other species. We need to learn to identify with ‘humanity’ (Slim, 2019). We hope to articulate some of the ways in which schools and instructional materials can help to socialize children into ever larger communities, from the

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1 Harris, S. (1953). Purely Personal Prejudices: Strictly Personal.

family and known community, beyond ethnicity, nation, region and religion, to include, in some sense of shared destiny at least, the human and the wider natural world.

We should first note that schooling conveys intended as well as unintended lessons in at least three ways. Schools convey lessons through what they teach—the intended curriculum and taught classes, as well as the ‘unintended curriculum’. But schooling also teaches through *how* it is offered—to all equally, to some preferentially, to others not at all. Where schooling is segregated, for example, children learn important ‘lessons’ about exclusion, even if the curriculum says nothing. More subtle forms of inequitable provision create unwritten but profoundly felt lessons in exclusion.

Likewise, schooling teaches by the social function it serves—as an avenue of mobility, to reproduce existing social relations, or to transform them. Children raised in a society where education reinforces existing inequalities are likely to learn powerful lessons about their ‘place’ in the collective. The transformative role of education is discussed in the brief by Novelli et al., which notes the ‘4 Rs’ challenge of group recognition, representation and reconciliation, as well as redistribution of resources to reduce inequality of access and quality.

The balances between individual development, group distinctiveness, and national identity are important and surely somewhat context specific. The brief on Botswana by Bethany Mulimbi depicts a positive scenario where government has had the will and the means to bring about widespread access of minority groups to schooling as well as to enact a curriculum policy for national unity. A deliberate assimilationist policy was adopted, of educating these groups according to majority Tswana culture—in an effort to avoid the fragmentation and conflict seen in neighboring countries. Policymakers in Botswana now face the dilemma of whether to preserve this system which has enabled peace or move towards stronger recognition of minority cultures. Hopefully the challenge can be met in a way that enables

all students to feel part of an enriched national culture as well as members of nationally-valued ethnic groups. In its post-genocide textbooks, Rwanda attempts to foster a new, unified Rwandan identity (see the briefs by S. Garnett Russell and Danielle Falk, and by John Rutayisire).

Several of the Global Briefs editors have worked on these issues. James Williams edited a series of books on the role of textbooks, mostly national history textbooks, in (re)constructing collective memory—in promoting nationalism in countries where the legitimacy of the state was questioned, in fostering national identity in multicultural societies and in the understanding and use of education in conflict (see Williams, 2014; Williams & Bokhorst-Heng, 2016; and Bellino & Williams, 2017). Aaron Benavot edited a special issue of the *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* (see Benavot, 2011) on textbooks and the quality of education. Rather than remaining static, the history textbooks examined were found to shift, over time, as governments worked to advance their goals, whether to shore up allegiance to the government in response to national challenges, or to promote national identities more inclusive of multiple identity groups. The shifting offers opportunities for promotion of larger identities. While some countries sought to tighten a monolithic national identity centered on a single dominant group—by erasing or minimizing images and portrayal of other groups, or by framing them solely in a dominant group narrative—others actively worked to portray diverse groups in society, in images and words, sometimes featuring the voices of the previously excluded. In virtually all cases, textbooks sought to help create a positive and cohesive national identity, whether inclusive or exclusive (see also Carretero et. al, 2012).

Particularly challenging was the teaching of ‘difficult’ or ‘contested’ history, in which collective or state-sanctioned violence between identity groups within society remains in active collective memory, serving as a barrier to developing a single, cohesive national identity (Gross & Terra, 2018). Clearly, omission of

minority narratives as well as negative stereotyping of minorities has long been present in national textbooks, by intent or through unconscious bias. In the 21st century, however, it becomes harder not to align textbooks with the requirements of individual self-respect, social cohesion or the internationally-endorsed group of 4.7 themes. Still, moves to use textbooks to foster cohesive and inclusive identities across increasingly diverse groups offer hope for the promotion of larger identities. 'Identity work' was seen most prominently in national history textbooks at the secondary level, but also in other subjects, such as early grade readers.

Do we have other examples of moves to create wider political identities through educational materials? As one example, the curricula in East African schools aim for this through focus first on the local neighborhood and nation, then the Africa region and then the global. In India, Poonam Batra writes of a textbook project that rejected the tradition of civics textbooks as 'government propaganda', and developed a new approach that aimed at 'educating children about their role as citizens in understanding reality as well as intervening actively to make a difference in the quality of their lives'—the citizen as 'a proactive agent who seeks to understand complex phenomena and his/her position in society'.

There is a lack of evaluations of the outcomes of such approaches and of the kinds of effects we are discussing. Indeed, the field needs to move beyond analysis of the content of textbooks, to discover what they actually mean to students as they move from schooling to adult life (Bertram and Wasserman, 2015, conclude with this point)—looking into the effects of bias or positive framing of identity, the ways in which textbook content is taught, and the ways students make sense of curriculum and instruction in the contexts of the everyday informal learning among family, community, and peers. Qualitative studies with students and ex-students could shed light on these questions, and are a critical area for research. Common-sense research through focus group discussions with school leavers and youth should be within the reach of master's and doctoral students in any country.

## Conflict and post-conflict situations

Issues of identity are particularly fraught in conflict and post-conflict situations. Teaching about conflict within recent memory is challenging in the best of times, even more so in the context of national trauma such as genocide, as in Rwanda, the country that is the focus of briefs by Rutayisire and Russell and Falk. In Rwanda, education has been given a central role in fostering reconciliation and peace. Firm guidelines have been given by the Rwandan government, promoting a unified concept of Rwandan identity, and universal values of human rights, citizenship and gender equality. Russell and Falk note that 'tensions, contradictions and opportunities' have arisen from this charge. The enactment of these values in the classroom is complicated by the presence of the past in and just beyond memory, a constrained public discourse related to the genocide, limited experience and training on the part of teachers in teaching such subjects, and the need for greater teacher support. Russell and Falk also cite the practical challenge that teachers face of addressing complex social issues in a very crowded timetable.

The pedagogy of teaching difficult history is further developed in the brief by Murphy, Pettis and Wray, who discuss the strategy developed by Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) to help teachers engage students in the historiography of difficult and somewhat distant pasts leading up to the difficult and nearer present. Teachers engage students in studying racism, religious intolerance, and prejudice, often drawing on the case of the Holocaust then applying to the students' own societies. Rather than exhorting students along the lines of 'Never again,' teachers are supported in helping students understand the situations facing ordinary citizens in the time leading up to the Holocaust. Citizens' behavior is understood in terms of resistance, inaction or bystander, and upstanding. The distance in time and space of the Holocaust and other FHAO case materials allows students and teachers to practice

their historical, analytic and empathic skills, even as the lessons pose questions about students' and teachers' present civic choices and lives. In Murphy, Pettis and Wray's words, the role of teachers is critical, as facilitators and as learners themselves:

... we also engage educators as adult citizens, people who are themselves learners, who are navigating the legacies of their pasts and the implications of their identities, as well as contemporary social divisions and challenges.

The pedagogy is one of engagement: '... we don't treat history as if it happens to people. We help students understand that people *make* history happen .... We want them to develop their own civic and ethical muscles...' Teachers are guided through carefully tested training to raise questions about their own identities, pasts and current situations and through those questions to help students develop their own questions and ethical responses.

The issue of education for social cohesion was taken up by the World Bank following the civil conflicts of the 1990s, including through various seminars leading to the important publication, *Promoting Social Cohesion through Education: Case Studies and Tools for Using Textbooks and Curricula* (Roberts-Schweitzer et al., 2006). One case study noted that in Sri Lanka, the majority Sinhalese narrative dominated the curriculum, with textbooks translated from Sinhalese language into Tamil. Communication was weak: Ministry of Education officials reported that some criticisms they heard from Tamil educators could easily have been dealt with, had the problem been known to them earlier (Greaney, 2006). Greaney noted the importance in such a situation of having a textbook guidance or review committee which would include key groups, for example Tamil and Sinhalese educators. If the various stakeholders could agree on a set of final texts, there would be no need for an external agency such as the World Bank to interfere with content (the so-called 'sovereignty issue'). But the government or donor could insist on a due *process* of mutual consultation and agreement between responsible national educators from each significant population group, with equitable gender balance, before

approving funding. In concluding the Roberts-Schweitzer et al. volume, Socknat includes this idea among potential guidelines for national reviews of education and social cohesion. An extract from the checklist put forward by Socknat is annexed to this overview, showing that the issues discussed here are not new, and that there can and should be national and donor will to tackle them.

The topic of 'preventing violent extremism' (PVE), which has come to the fore in recent years, is not addressed as such in this volume due to lack of space, and because much focus of PVE has been on 'Western' countries (Davies, 2018). The UNESCO (2017) guide suggests ways to sensitively approach the topic of extremism in schools where this is considered a priority. We will nevertheless mention in passing two papers that fit with the discussion here. One refers to the situational aspects of what is considered 'sacred'—that for which one is prepared to sacrifice one's life—and explores neural correlates (Pretus et. al, 2018). Another analyzes the process of recruitment to a violent radical group in terms of social identity theory, noting the susceptibility of those whose knowledge of religion is too weak to enable them to resist fallacious arguments in favor of extremism, or whose judgement is unable to resist the lure of affiliation to such a group (Al Raffie, 2016). The research reported in the brief by Mercy Corps and their earlier studies show the complexity of these issues, in conflict-affected settings.

The importance of strengthening critical thinking is sometimes neglected in discussions of SEL, but it is crucial in overcoming negative stereotypes. Critical thinking can help students accommodate multiple perspectives regarding historical events and critically analyze extremist (or exclusive nationalist) arguments, or simplistic solutions to social problems in general (see Stradling, 2003). Our ideal of education for social cohesion and personal wellbeing in often difficult times should include strengthening and giving more explicit treatment to critical thinking skills, as a tool of protection and, hopefully, prevention.



## Conflict-sensitive education policies and education for peacebuilding

The call for ‘conflict-sensitivity’ in educational policy (as well as other domains) responded to the recognition that education has ‘two faces in ethnic conflict’ (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; see also INEE’s work on conflict-sensitivity). Bush and Saltarelli articulated the notion that education can act as a driver of conflict through inequitable access for minority groups and, especially relevant here, by promoting narrow stereotypes of ethnic identity; alternatively, education can serve as a healing force across ethnic divides. The idea of ‘conflict-sensitive’ education policy, planning and curriculum followed in order to provide policy makers and agencies ways to ‘do no harm’ in their educational interventions (Sigsgaard, 2012; INEE, 2013). The concepts of ‘education for social cohesion,’ ‘education for resilience,’ and ‘education for peacebuilding’ came into use by policymakers concerned with these issues (IIEP, 2015). UNICEF received funding for a ‘Peacebuilding, education and advocacy’ program covering four years of conflict analyses on drivers of conflict, and education initiatives supportive of peacebuilding, in 14 conflict-affected states.<sup>2</sup> There is a close relation in the education sector between ‘conflict-sensitivity’ and ‘peacebuilding’: a curriculum review, for example, can both remove conflict-provoking elements and insert elements intended to help students develop inclusive identities and skills for peace, thereby enhancing societal resilience and more inclusive cohesiveness. Conflict-sensitivity was built into guidance from GPE (2016: 23) on the preparation of transitional education plans: ‘...if the context analysis reveals that education is in some way contributing to conflict, strategies for overcoming these contributing factors should also be considered.’

Many of the authors represented in the present volume have worked towards these goals. Briefs in Sections Six and Seven

<sup>2</sup> For collected resources from this program see <https://inee.org/collections/learning-peace>.

outline some of their experiences and lessons learned. For example, peace is one of the cross-cutting issues in the curriculum framework for South Sudan (see the brief by Vikki Pendry), although the implementation challenges are great. Jean Bernard focuses on the need for training and support for writers attempting to reach students’ hearts and minds through supplementary readers. She draws on recent experience of story development for ‘conflict and disaster risk management’ education in Uganda. Early grade readers for Afghan students integrate age-appropriate elements of SEL, laying a foundation for a less divided nation (Susan Ayari-Hirsch et al). The brief from Mercy Corps shows that skill-building for leadership skills and conflict resolution combined with community service had a positive impact in their work with secondary school students in Somaliland.

## Building a positive sense of identity

All societies now face the challenge of inclusion, of avoiding fragmentation based on historical divisions or the arrival of people from other countries, including migrants and refugees. As far as possible, curricula must recognize the special contributions and perspectives of diverse groups. Target 4.7 ideals are a challenge everywhere. One response is to encourage young people to see other humans as ‘more similar than different’ in basic respects. Indeed, some research suggests that a focus on the positive actions and relationships among individuals and different identity groups has a measurably positive effect on inter-group empathy (Ligouri, 2019). By contrast, repeated emphasis on human rights abuses for example tended to reduce cross-group empathy. In social studies textbooks, it is not difficult to put forward the concept of the range of identities that a person may have—some immutable (or nearly so) and some a matter of (greater or lesser) choice. A social studies textbook may give examples of our multifaceted identities and ask students to examine their own, suggesting that they can develop positive additive identities (see below), including local, national



and global and much else besides, e.g. trumpeter, goalkeeper, woman, preacher, farmer, parent, housekeeper or whatever. And they can note that the balance between these will change over time. In settings where history and geography are taught separately, with no broad 'social studies' subject, reflections on identity or inclusive representations can still be included in language studies. Studies of historical matters can aim at least to show that there can be multiple perspectives regarding particular events or situations.

A broad approach to the developing sense of identity in the child is put forward by Mary Helen Immordino-Yang in her interview:

Part of identity is a set of skills, a set of knowledge, a way of comporting yourself, a set of habits of mind for affiliating in particular ways and for valuing particular kinds of things. It is the knowledge base that you have, the kinds of experiences that you have had, the ways in which you have interpreted those experiences, and the way you build skills and utilize those skills to do things. For example, becoming a mathematician is an identity-building process when it is done in a way that sticks with a person and changes who they are and how they think, which is what high-quality education ought to strive to do.

In education, the content of identity is a very amorphous and context-specific notion to define. In low-income and conflict-affected countries, educators need to stop and think about what kind of identity is wanted that will be beneficial to the society over time. Although scientifically informed, this is a value-driven and subjective conversation.

Blanchard, Gibson, and O'Donnell take on the issue of identity in this broader way. Within the Smithsonian Science for Global Goals program, they note, learners begin by exploring personal identity and then relating it to SDG-inspired socio-scientific issues. Students prepare identity maps covering elements from family structure to future aspirations. They are asked to reflect on their own identity, and then to share that identity with their peers, noting similarities, differences, and common themes. Once learners have developed their identity map, the focus turns to the SDG-related socio-scientific issue at hand, including through research on

particular sustainable development issues and how those issues relate to themselves. Drawing on the resources of the Smithsonian Institution in the US, the authors use an inquiry-based pedagogical approach that seeks, ultimately, to help learners to address such problems and in the process 'see themselves as active members of local and global communities,' in taking positive action to understand and improve the natural and human environment. It is important to explore ways to approximate this journey in low-resource settings, including through the use of textbooks that provide relevant information and structured pedagogy supporting discussion in pairs and the whole class. These types of learning activities generally require teachers trained to create and execute lessons beyond the pedagogy of many traditional textbooks. Pedagogically well designed textbooks can help teachers develop these skills; the task is an important one, yet challenging, especially perhaps in LMICs.

The Childhood Education International approach described in the same brief likewise begins with students' unique identities and builds appreciation for the identities and perspectives of others, moving on to explore local, national and global identities and nurturing a sense of local and global belonging that encourages active engagement. Students acquire a number of relevant skills important in realizing social and national cohesion at the global level: the ability to understand different perspectives, appreciate complexity, assess equity and connect to diverse others, analyze and balance the needs and opinions of various other groups and individuals.

Regarding the important question of the more collective sense of identity found in many cultures (as compared to modern 'Western' cultures), Heidi Gibson—author of one of the briefs—has suggested (in a personal communication) that:

it might be easier to help people who are used to consider their responsibilities to a group to think that the group might be broader (i.e. the global community). Whereas, in the US context, it is a definite challenge to change some mindsets from a focus on individual

achievement and goals to a broader focus on group responsibilities. I do think we should be promoting a multifaceted identity—casting identity as either/or is going to exclude a large number of people. Instead, as you say, I think an ‘additive positive’ approach to identity is the way forward.

This was in response to an anecdote by one of the co-editors, who was called by a master’s degree student from Myanmar. The student was concerned that as a Karen attending a university in her home Karen-speaking area (which had seen hostilities between the national government and a separatist movement) she had to take her university courses in the national Burmese language, as well as English. I advised her that her situation carried potential benefits—that she had more cultures in her life and a richer identity than others: additive positive identities, the notion that one identity need not exclude other.

## Promoting gender equality

Gender is a fundamental part of identity and, given its fundamental importance, could be placed as the first or final theme in this overview. There has been strong impetus behind reform in this area meaning the issues are well known, and space does not permit their coverage here. Hopefully, we can benefit from lessons learned in gender advocacy, and have success in building a strong constituency for 4.7 (which includes gender equality) and SEL.

Efforts are actively being made to quantify the often-pervasive gender bias in textbooks. Many policies and programs are actively pursuing the goal of enhanced positivity towards female as well as male identities. Can we learn from and build on these efforts to cover other aspects of inclusive identity, notably of marginalized groups (as well as those who are bullied)? Unconscious bias was revealed in the UNESCO study of mathematics textbooks in West and North Africa, with graphics that show more males than females, and with males in higher status roles (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2015). Similar bias has been found in many studies

in LMICs, encouraged perhaps by Anna Obura’s 1991 study on portrayal of women and girls in Kenyan textbooks. Gender bias is likewise found in teacher training (Durrani & Halai, 2018). Gender exclusion often intersects with other exclusions, e.g. minority rural children. A minority girl is likely face even greater exclusion than other females or minority males.

We may briefly commend the USAID (2015) guidance note on gender and inclusiveness in educational materials. Besides gender, the guide seeks to encourage the equitable depiction of different ethnic and religious groups found in the country, and of the differently abled, in graphics and in text, with equal status. The guide offers matrices for recording and quantifying these elements.

Textbook developers face the challenge of balancing the promotion of equity (‘inclusion’) with the need to reflect reality (‘authentic’). Social change is generally incremental, and schools cannot move too far from broader social norms. At the same time, schools need not follow too far behind current social norms and practices, in an over-abundance of controversy avoidance. These tasks are complicated in centralized education systems in multi ethnic contexts (see Section Five overview), and in education systems in nation-building mode (see Williams, 2014).

## Reflections

From different angles, the following briefs highlight the importance of textbooks in addition to classroom pedagogies for building more inclusive and enriched identities, inclusiveness and cohesion. Ideally, these pedagogies require access to a wide range of teaching and learning resources, as described in the brief from Rachel Snape, permitting, for example, the study of an historical event from multiple sources and perspectives. Pedagogies also require engaged instructors who can help young people make sense of their social and natural worlds, rid themselves of divisive stereotypes, and find an active role for themselves in their and our wider world. Ideally, we want to help students develop their skills

and identities as inquirers, as agents of history, and to explore their ethical stances regarding contemporary issues and social divisions, to accept that there is a multiplicity of perspectives on different issues, and to appreciate the rich and beautiful complexity of the world. These approaches are challenging even in privileged situations where highly trained teachers work with students in small classes and using resources from the internet. In more difficult situations, the textbook plays a critical role. Our efforts must therefore be to facilitate the development of textbooks that help meet this challenge as well as professional development to support the use of such textbooks in class.

The international community has rightly brought together a set of challenges under the heading of SDG Target 4.7. It is not realistic to expect ministries of education to set up separate programs for the full range of overlapping and sometimes sensitive societal goals that have been identified over recent decades. Thus, the issue of negative stereotypes and positive additive identity-building cannot be treated alone, but should feature as a key element among the selected 4.7/SEL themes. Political constraints kick in too, meaning that educators in a given country need to find a viable package that will work for them. 'Education for peace', for example, includes avoidance of stereotyping; it may be welcomed by refugees or by some people in post-conflict or divided societies, but a national education ministry cannot tell the population indefinitely that their country is at risk of civil conflict. 'Education for human rights' centers on human dignity and thus identity, and is possible in UNRWA schools; but 'human rights education' is a problematic concept for politicians in many countries, sometimes for good reasons (e.g. teachers cannot handle the topic and students get the wrong idea—that they have the 'right' to do foolish things, or individual rights are seen as in opposition to traditional norms of respect). Still, discussions of human rights may be embedded in citizenship, civics or peace educational materials. What is needed is to find and develop age-appropriate themes for positive identity concepts which will be motivational and practicable for

students and teachers in a particular country. These themes can be incorporated in core subjects, as part of textbooks, through careful planning, thereby motivating and pointing the way for students towards identifying with positive agency. As a starting point, learners may well focus on positive action towards the environment and towards those in need of help, as well as action that promotes inclusivity. They need to internalize an identity of positive values, aims and actions, critical and generous inquiry and inclusivity, to last them for life.

### Annex

#### Draft checklist for textbook review<sup>3</sup>

##### What to look for

- ✓ What is the present process for producing textbooks? Who currently commissions authors, publishes and distributes textbooks? How do these arrangements affect the diversity-sensitivity of the texts produced? Does the overall process—not only the content but also the commissioning, writing, production, and publishing—include diverse groups, authors, and vendors?
- ✓ Do current textbooks do justice to all groups in society? Do they provide adequate and balanced coverage of relevant ethnic, religious, and gender groups? Is the treatment in textbooks respectful of all groups? Are any population groups stereotyped in the textbooks? Do the textbooks overuse terminology familiar only to particular population groups? Do the textbooks use words or phrases that convey a particular group's perspective on history, culture, and national life?
- ✓ Are some diversity issues much more severe than others? For example, does the treatment in a textbook of one particular ethnic group seem especially contentious? Has there been

3 From Socknat, J. (2006). *Diversity-sensitive interventions in curriculum, textbooks, and pedagogical practices: Guidelines for international assistance agencies*, pp.139-154 in Roberts-Schweitzer et al.

a recent review of textbooks for treatment of any particular population group, such as a particular religion? If so, what representatives of the relevant population group were part of the review process?

- ✓ Do the textbooks fairly and accurately describe current and past relations with neighboring countries, without derogatory or inflammatory references? Do the textbook illustrations and artwork portray other groups in stereotypical or negative ways? Do they accurately portray the attire and behavior of neighboring groups? Do textbook maps accurately depict current or past national boundaries, especially in the context of current or past territorial disputes?
- ✓ Are there teachers' manuals for the various textbooks, and do they provide guidance on how to handle alternative perspectives on and interpretations of national history and culture?

What to do

- ✓ Support a review of the arrangements for the commissioning, authoring, publishing, and distributing textbooks to consider how more diversity-sensitive processes might be established.
- ✓ Look for champions and windows of opportunity. Can you detect a window of opportunity for a review of textbooks for diversity issues? Is there a logical champion for the idea of a review?
- ✓ Settle on the composition of the review panel. If it appears to be appropriate to proceed with a review, what panel composition seems most appropriate? National panelists only? International panelists only? A combination of national and international panelists?
  - Who should be included as members of the review committee?

- How will representation of the relevant population groups in the review process be determined? (Choices are not mutually exclusive.)
- What is the process for obtaining feedback from relevant population groups?
- ✓ If the country has a history of conflict with one or more neighbors, ask whether a joint review of the countries' textbooks to detect derogatory or inflammatory material might be timely or feasible.' (pp.149-154)

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## Teaching about citizenship, human rights and gender in post-conflict contexts: The case of Rwanda

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### ABSTRACT

Global attention has turned towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building skills and knowledge around global citizenship, human rights, and gender, as specified in SDG Target 4.7. While empirical studies have documented the rise in the incorporation of these global themes into curricula and textbooks, less attention has been paid to how these concepts are incorporated into materials and taught in the classroom in post-conflict contexts. We draw on an analysis of textbooks and interviews with secondary school teachers and students conducted in post-genocide Rwanda to investigate some of the main trends and challenges in teaching and learning about these issues in the Rwandan context. Our findings highlight the tensions, contradictions and opportunities that emerge through situating education as a central mechanism for fostering sustainable peace and reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict. While the Rwandan government has incorporated global norms around human rights, citizenship, and gender equality in its educational policy and curricula, teachers and students enact these norms in various complementary and contrasting ways. In order for education to support meaningful reconciliation and support Target 4.7 themes, it is imperative for global and state actors to work for and with teachers to support them in their efforts to build the skills, knowledge and empathy of their students in post-conflict contexts.

### KEYWORDS

post-conflict, Rwanda, citizenship, human rights, gender, teachers, textbooks

### Introduction

The global focus on achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 has resulted in more attention being given to issues related to citizenship, human rights and gender equality. SDG Target 4.7 emphasizes the importance of education for instilling skills and knowledge around sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, and global citizenship (UN General Assembly, 2015). Similarly, at the global level, empirical studies have documented the inclusion of content around these themes in educational materials, including curricula and textbooks. For example, studies analyzing textbooks from around the world have found increasing incorporation of global citizenship (Buckner and Russell 2013), human rights (Meyer, Bromley, and Ramírez, 2010; Russell and Suárez, 2017), women's rights and gender-based violence (Nakagawa and Wotipka, 2016; Russell, Lerch, and Wotipka, 2018), and sustainable development and the environment (Bromley, Meyer, and Ramirez, 2011; Jimenez, Lerch, and Bromley, 2017). However, related studies also find that there is less mention of rights in conflict-affected contexts (Russell and Tiplic, 2014) and more emphasis on the nation in textbooks from post-conflict countries (Lerch, Russell, and Ramirez, 2017). Perhaps most significantly, there is compelling evidence that teaching and learning of the aforementioned topics in the classroom often looks different in action than it does in curricular intent or policy (Russell, 2019).

In this brief, we present data from post-genocide Rwanda in order to explore the extent to which global themes around citizenship, human rights and gender equality are incorporated into current education materials (e.g. policy documents, curricula, and textbooks). We find that national education materials (from 2006 to 2016) in Rwanda include reference to global ideas around

citizenship, human rights and gender equality; however, challenges remain in how these global ideas are taught and learned in the classroom. While the Rwandan government has incorporated global norms on citizenship, human rights and gender equality in its educational policy and curricula (as evidenced in the examples in this brief), teachers and students enact these norms in divergent ways, sometimes in contradiction with the intended purpose. Teachers, in particular, are tasked with navigating complex, sensitive narratives of the past and encouraging hope and unity for the future in a constrained classroom environment with limited support from the government.

In this paper, we present a brief overview of the relationship between education and conflict in Rwanda. We then provide examples of the inclusion of three global themes emphasized in Target 4.7 (e.g. citizenship, human rights and gender equality) in national educational materials with illustrative perspectives of secondary school teachers and students. We conclude with recommendations for scholars, practitioners and policymakers to better support teachers in their collective efforts to provide quality education for all children in support of Target 4.7 aims in divided societies.

## Education and conflict in Rwanda

Education is often seen as the neutral benefactor, ensuring equity and opportunity, though this may not always be the case (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Rarely does one think of textbooks, paper and pencils as instigating more conflict. However, education and conflict have a complex relationship, with each influencing the other, sometimes simultaneously (Bellino and Williams, 2017; King, 2014). In Rwanda, where education fueled the conflict, it may also promote reconciliation and sustainable development in its aftermath. Educational policy, textbooks and other learning resources during colonialism and the two Hutu Republics promoted ethnic hierarchies, division, and ultimately violence. For example, during colonialism, quota systems were introduced to privilege

Tutsi students in better-resourced schools; after colonialism, the Hutu Republic maintained the quota system but reversed the quotas to benefit Hutu students (McLean Hilker, 2011). History curricula during the two Hutu republics propagated colonial stereotypes, highlighting the mistreatment of Hutus by colonists and Tutsi, and further exacerbating ethnic tensions (Gasano, 2004; McLean Hilker, 2011; King 2014).

These tensions ultimately erupted in the 1994 genocide, during which schools themselves became sites of violence and human rights violations (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; King, 2014). From April to July 1994, more than 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were systematically and brutally killed by the *interahamwe*, the Hutu paramilitary organization, as well as by civilians (Prunier, 1997). The 1994 genocide decimated much of the educational system in Rwanda: approximately 75% teachers were killed or jailed for their participation in the genocide, and 70% of children witnessed extreme violence and death (McLean Hilker, 2011). In July 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) regained control of Kigali, Rwanda's capital, and ended the genocide. The new transitional government rebuilt the physical and social infrastructure and banned ethnicity as a form of official identity.

Twenty-five years have passed since the Rwandan genocide, and the state has situated education as a key mechanism for fostering a new civic identity, imbued with global citizenship norms and sustainable peace, encouraged through notions of human rights and gender equality. Over this time, it has also evolved in how it addresses the events of the past as evidenced in curricular reforms, most recently the 2015 competency-based curriculum, and legal frameworks such as the 2008 Genocide Ideology Law that restricts the discussion of ethnicity or division along ethnic lines. Yet, tensions remain in teaching and learning about citizenship, human rights and gender equality. The work of teachers to foster a new civic identity and teach about human rights, in particular, is complicated by silence around ethnicity, restricted space for discussing the past, and limited professional development support

to adapt to changes in language of instruction and curriculum (Russell, 2019). The following section presents select examples of the tensions and contradictions that arise for secondary school teachers and students in teaching and learning citizenship, human rights, and gender equality in post-genocide Rwanda.<sup>1</sup>

## **Tensions of teaching and learning citizenship, human rights and gender equality**

### **Citizenship**

During the colonial period and leading up to the genocide, citizenship was framed in terms of ethnic identity (of Tutsi or Hutu) and was linked to inequitable access to resources and rights (Buckley-Zistel 2006; Mamdani 2001). However, in the post-genocide era, the Rwandan government has eliminated ethnic identity and espoused a unified Rwandan civic identity. The post-genocide Rwandan citizen is first and foremost Rwandese, and national education materials invoke this new Rwandan citizen as central for the country's development and for building peace (Russell, 2019; Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2013).

Formal and nonformal education (e.g. community-based civic education programs) have become the main mechanism for encouraging this unified, de-ethnicized civic identity (Russell, 2018, 2019). In the school setting, teachers are seen as key actors in shaping students into responsible, Rwandan citizens (Rubangiza et al., 2016), particularly through history and citizenship education.<sup>2</sup> A history teacher at a private school in the Eastern Province

1 We draw on interview and classroom observation data conducted in Rwanda with teachers and students in 2010-2012 by the first author and analysis of Rwandan textbooks published between 2006 and 2016 (for more details, see Russell 2019).

2 Following the genocide, the government introduced political education or civics for the secondary level and social studies for the primary level. In 2015, the government introduced a new competency-based curriculum and political education is now called History and Citizenship; social studies is now Social and Religious education.

explained 'we would not talk about those tribes [ethnicities] now, because we know that here in Rwanda we are Banyarwanda, our name in Rwandese, there are no other groups of people, we are united' (Russell, 2019, p. 76). This notion of *Banyarwanda*, or 'Rwandaness', infuses civics and history curricula. For example, a grade 6 social studies book (2006) presents national symbols for unity, such as the new flag and coat of arms created in 2001, and encourages students to reflect on how these symbols promote national unity (Bamusananire et al 2006, p.112).

Similarly, a 2016 textbook for history and citizenship for the lower secondary level has a section on citizen duties and responsibilities that includes discussion of the 'promotion of peace, national unity and reconciliation,' as well as 'contribution to national development' (Sebazungu et al. 2016, p.136). Accompanying this emphasis on a unified, national Rwandan identity are the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship. These rights are framed within the global discourse on human rights (Russell, 2018, 2019), a central tenet of post-genocide education that is explored below.

Yet, teachers, who are tasked to foster a new, non-ethnic Rwandan civic identity, face significant challenges in their work. The promise of unity and the new Rwandan citizen, as indicated in these education policy and materials, is compromised through constrained discussion of the past and strategic, selective use of ethnicity. While the government officially espouses a non-ethnic unified Rwandan identity, the national curriculum also references ethnicity in the discussion of the genocide committed against the Tutsi (see Russell 2019). Despite the abundance of national education materials that espouse a unified, non-ethnic Rwandan citizen, restricted and strategic use of ethnicity in teaching about Rwandan history seriously limits teachers' ability to uphold the government's mission of creating unified Rwandan citizens. This is particularly true when teaching about the 1994 genocide, which at the time of the research was included in the political education curricula alongside civics education in upper secondary school.

To illustrate this point, a history teacher in a religious school in the Western province explained, ‘We also don’t understand why it is said that there aren’t ethnicities in Rwanda, but one says the genocide of the Tutsi. Recently there was a student who asked me this question: “Why is it said that one cannot say Hutu or Tutsi, whereas one can say the genocide of the Tutsi?” It was difficult to respond to this question, but I tried to tell him that the genocide was done against those that were called Tutsis, which is to say, that they were called this in the past, but not now because today there aren’t Tutsi or Hutu anymore’ (Russell, 2019, pp. 79).

### Human rights

Human rights provide a framework for teaching about the rights and responsibilities associated with Rwandan citizenship, in line with global norms. While mentions of human rights are included in national education materials, the Rwandan state emphasizes certain human rights over others (see Melvin 2014; Russell 2018, 2019). As indicated in the textbook excerpt (see figure 1), the curriculum privileges economic, social, and cultural rights (e.g. the right to food, water, shelter, clothing; the right to education; the right to healthcare, etc.) over more contested political and civil rights (e.g. the right to equality under the law, the right to vote, and the right to a trial, etc.) (Russell 2018). Tensions at the school and classroom level emerge with this selective use of human rights, mirroring larger issues and inter-ethnic tensions in society, reinforced by curricular silence. For example, Russell (2019) found that students responded affirmatively when asked if they felt they had freedom of speech in class yet, in one-on-one interviews, students recognized the significant limitations of this right in practice and some mentioned that they do not always have free speech. One boy in a private school outside Kigali explained the limits on freedom of expression: ‘There are school rules and government rules that we must follow. No, last year there were not any problems because there are limits to expression... there is a place that you cannot cross.’

Teachers also shared that they often avoided teaching about

human rights or stuck to prescriptive topics that did not allow students to ‘veer off course’ (Russell 2019, p.120). This was particularly true for discussions of human rights violations in Rwanda, which focused solely on grave abuses committed against the Tutsi during the genocide. Despite students’ recognition of the limitations of some of their rights, as evidenced in the quotation above, discussion of lack of certain rights remain absent from classroom discussions. Restrictions on freedom of speech impede much discussion of political and civil human rights violations despite the broad recognition of their occurrence.

Teachers also attributed the modest teaching of human rights to the limited time in the school schedule that is devoted to subjects where human rights is taught (e.g. political education/citizenship education, at the time of the interviews) as well as limited resources for these subjects (e.g. teacher guides). For example, at the time of research, only one period a week was allocated for teaching political education (civics), which is not sufficient to cover all the topics. In the new competency-based curriculum, three periods a week are allocated to teaching history and citizenship.

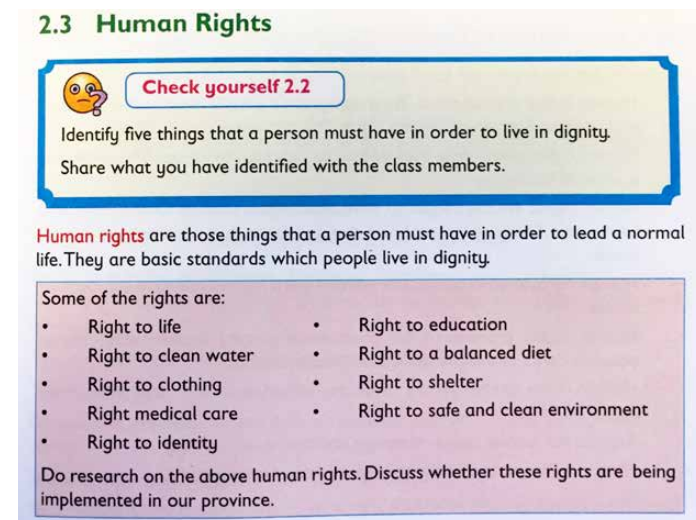


Figure 1: Primary 6 social studies book (2017)



## Gender equality

In addition to a focus on citizenship and human rights, the post-genocide educational materials emphasize gender equality for men and women, which is viewed as integral to the broader peace-building process and economic development of the country (Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Education, 2013; Russell, 2016). Gender equality is present across national policy documents, curricula, and textbooks and is framed both in terms of development and human rights terms (Russell, 2016). For example, one secondary textbook discusses the importance of promoting gender equality or ‘giving to men and women the same rights in the economic, political and social domains’ as necessary to ‘consolidate unity and reconciliation of Rwandans’ (National Curriculum Development Center, 2008, p.160). While gender equality is seen as indicative of progress both in upholding human rights and social development, students and teachers continue to view gender equality as linked to equal access and opportunities rather than questioning underlying inequalities and patriarchal structures (Russell, 2016).

Moreover, Russell (2019) found that in secondary school classrooms, girls were generally quieter than boys and less likely to speak or be called on by the teachers, who were generally men. One female political education (since 2015 known as citizenship education) teacher from a religious secondary school in the Western Province explained, ‘Yes, there is a difference. The girls don’t participate in large numbers during the lessons, but when we teach, the girls aren’t as hardworking as the boys, with the exception of a few.’ While outside of the scope of this report, this comment suggests that some teachers may hold traditional, gendered viewpoints that education is for boys and not girls, a perspective that would undoubtedly limit the realization of gender equality in the classroom. Teachers also recognized gender imbalance among the teaching staff, particularly at the secondary level, where only about 30% of teachers are women (UIS, 2019). The small number of female teachers to serve as role models for their

students further limits the realization of gender equality despite its promotion in the curriculum.

Finally, students recognized differences in terms of their peers when asked if there is a difference between boys and girls at their school. One male secondary school student explained: ‘You may find that gender is not equal because you might find 18 students in a class, but only four girls. When it is time for cleaning, our boys say that they cannot allow the girls to mop the classroom or the dining hall. The boys are the only ones who can do it. When you find that they are not doing the same jobs, you find that gender is not 100% equal.’

## Concluding thoughts and implications

The examples above illustrate the complex tensions of teaching and learning about citizenship, human rights and gender equality in post-genocide Rwanda, where global models of these topics pervade national educational materials yet some topics remain muted in the classroom. Concerning citizenship, teachers felt that the strategic and selective use of ethnicity served as a barrier to cultivating a unified, Rwandan citizen. Restrictions on freedom of speech also impeded their teaching of human rights, which was compounded by limited time for and resources on the subject. And full gender equality remains unrealized due to ingrained gender norms among students and teachers. Therefore, while national educational materials reference these global models central to the Target 4.7 (even prior to the SDGs), limited and inadequate support for teachers, both in terms of professional development and flexibility in the curriculum to address these topics, prevents meaningful and effective implementation of the curriculum. Whether teaching about human rights, gender equality or citizenship, teachers are expected to instill knowledge and values in their learners, yet they are not given adequate support to do so (for their own understanding and for their learners’ understanding). Including global models into national education materials is not sufficient for meaningful change; it is imperative that governments provide teachers with the resources and

confidence to teach these topics, such as professional development workshops on how to address sensitive or complex content in citizenship education.

Transition after violence is a long, sustained process, with education—policies, curricula, pedagogy—playing a central role. Teachers, in particular, are essential actors in the immediate aftermath of conflict as they may be the *only* resource available to students when schools have been destroyed and learning material is scarce or compromising (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). In this crucial role, teachers are tasked to support the cognitive, social and emotional development and wellbeing of students, often with minimal professional support or attention to their personal and psychosocial needs (Burns and Lawrie, 2015). Learning materials (e.g. curriculum, textbooks) may be compromised due to their role in inciting conflict, leaving teachers to navigate a fragile, fractured educational environment on their own (Novelli and Sayed, 2016). While the Machel Report (1996) recommends that teachers and teacher unions contribute to curricular design in the aftermath of ethnic conflicts, governments rarely include teachers meaningfully in educational policy reform. In Rwanda, while teachers are included in the development of new curricula, they are not always consulted on key policy changes, such as the change in the language of instruction (Russell, 2019; Williams, 2017). Moreover, the government and development partners should provide professional development for teachers to address sensitive issues around citizenship, human rights and gender equality.

The lack of support for teacher professional development and implementation, particularly around conflictual issues, is a critical gap considering the significant role teachers play in their students' learning and development. In our collective efforts to uphold the SDGs, particularly Target 4.7, it is imperative that scholars, practitioners and policymakers make efforts to better understand how students and teachers gain skills and knowledge around human rights, citizenship and gender equality, particularly in contexts of crisis and fragility.

We therefore provide select recommendations:

- Teachers should be provided with the requisite materials, support, and training to teach and discuss complex and contested issues. National governments, donors, and national and international organizations working to support governments should ensure that there is more support and professional development provided to teachers to implement new curricula. For example, conducting workshops on gender-sensitivity and gender-mainstreaming in the classroom would support teachers in how to not only teach about gender equality but align with these principles in practice. Continuous professional development is critical for teachers to effectively transfer new knowledge and skills into practice as well as to make and sustain positive changes in their teaching. Additionally, professional development for school leadership on new curricula is imperative to foster supportive environments for teachers to implement the new curricula and to ensure school-level change.
- When drawing on global themes around human rights and gender equality, there is a need to contextualize these global themes for the local context. The inclusion of teachers in the design and contextualization of educational policy and learning materials is paramount. Ministries of Education and international actors supporting education need to include teachers in every phase of the development of national education materials (e.g. policy documents, curricula, and textbooks) to ensure their relevance and effective implementation, and to provide sufficient time for generating contextualized and motivational content.
- National governments must prioritize the teaching and learning of these issues and topics not only by including them in their educational materials but also by building sufficient time into the national curriculum to adequately address these topics in the classroom.

- Finally, longitudinal, participatory research is needed to better understand how progressive, inclusive educational materials—such as those in Rwanda—are taught and learned in the classroom, with specific attention to the challenges, success, sustainability and long-term impact of such materials.

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## The citizen within: Supporting teachers to develop their own civic capacity and the development of young democratic citizens

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### ABSTRACT

This brief focuses on the work of Facing History and Ourselves (FH), an international educational NGO. We examine two case study countries, Northern Ireland and South Africa, where FH works in partnership with local NGOs, the Corrymeela Community and Shikaya. We illustrate how FH is used and adapted in light of the needs of these particular contexts, both societies with identity-based divisions that are confronting the legacies of mass violence. Our brief highlights the particular challenges that educators have faced and continue to face in navigating these issues and in supporting the development of citizens who have the knowledge, skills, behaviors and dispositions to support human rights, democracy, justice, peace and nonviolence. We discuss effective resources and methods that we have developed and adapted; the critical role of professional development; and the essential need to work with teachers not just as educators, but as adult citizens who are also developing their own civic capacity alongside grappling with the legacies of the violent past and division in the present.

### KEYWORDS

peace education, history education, the Holocaust, Civil Rights Movement, active citizenship, bystander, upstander, stereotyping, identity, curriculum, changemakers

'No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.'

KOFI ANNAN

Kofi Annan reminds us of the work of building and maintaining a democracy. It's work that must be continued from generation to generation. Democracy is not passed on through osmosis. The institutions and processes, norms and behaviors that keep our societies open, inclusive, free and peaceful have to be developed and nurtured. While education has been the most commonly recognized medium for developing citizens, our collective efforts within countries and across them, to support teachers and provide them with the resources and training they require to do this challenging work, have been uneven at best. And, for teachers in fragile democracies and societies emerging from mass violence or living with identity-based conflicts, the challenges are even greater. Many of these educators were shaped by the conflicts and the previous political dispensations. They are navigating new waters, adopting new norms and gaining new knowledge and dispositions as adult citizens as they try to teach a new generation. A student from South Africa captures these challenges well: 'I feel that sometimes democracy and all these ideas are greater in theory than in practice. After the revolution, anything freedom-related seems amazing and you don't feel any incentive to put in any hard work. The entire world after the revolution is a lot of hard work and effort.'

In 2019, teachers in stable, consolidated democracies are confronting some of the issues their peers in more fragile democracies have known. They are recognizing that rights and



protections are not guaranteed, that the rule of law cannot be taken for granted and that norms are often invisible until they are broken. In the midst of partisanship, social divisions and attacks on liberal democracy, they, too, need additional supports. This is an ideal time for us to reflect on how we achieve Target 4.7 and the opportunity it presents for us to articulate a vision for education, guided by recognizing the critical role that teachers play and how we can best support them.

## Facing History and Ourselves

Facing History's mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. Through rigorous historical analysis combined with the study of human behavior, Facing History's approach heightens students' understanding of racism, religious intolerance and prejudice; it increases students' ability to relate history to their own lives and promotes greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities in a democracy. We achieve these results by working with teachers as key changemakers. Randomized controlled trials attest to Facing History's effectiveness:

- Students gain critical thinking skills, empathy and tolerance, civic responsibility, and the belief they can make a difference in the world;
- Teachers are more confident and skilled at fostering students' academic, civic, and social and emotional learning (SEL);
- Classrooms and schools are more respectful, reflective, and participatory—necessary conditions for deep learning.<sup>1</sup>

How do we do this work? Facing History provides training to teachers of adolescents, both face to face and online. We introduce

1 For more information on our evaluation: <https://www.facinghistory.org/our-impact/evaluation-studies-and-research>

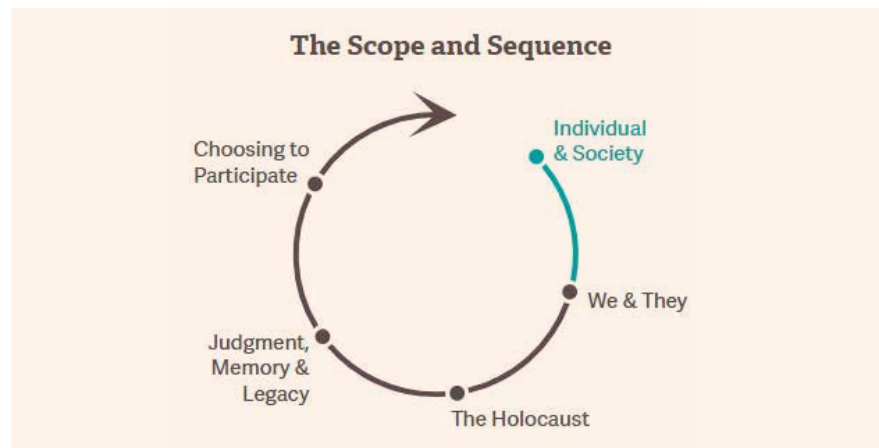
teachers to our content and methodology in interactive, student-centered ways, allowing them to experience what it's like to learn this way as well as to imagine how to teach Facing History. Importantly, we also engage educators as adult citizens: people who are themselves learners, who are navigating the legacies of their pasts and the implications of their identities, as well as contemporary social divisions and challenges. Facing History is not a cookie-cutter curriculum. While we work with particular case studies, we invite educators to adapt our content and choose resources and methods that work for them and their students.

Facing History's approach is guided by our sequence of study. In Facing History and Ourselves classrooms, secondary school students learn to think about individual and group decision-making and to exercise the faculty of making moral judgments. Drawing on the seminal work of developmental theorists, including Dewey, Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg, the pedagogy of Facing History and Ourselves speaks to the adolescent's newly discovered ideas of subjectivity, competing truths and differing perspectives, along with the growing capacity to think hypothetically and the inclination to find personal meaning in newly introduced phenomena. Facing History recognizes that adolescents are budding moral philosophers who come to their schooling already struggling with matters of obedience, loyalty, fairness, difference, and acceptance, rooted in their own identities and experience. They need to build the habits, skills and knowledge to help them find the connections to the past that will inspire their moral imaginations about their role in the future. By exploring a question in an historical case such as—why do some people willingly conform to the norms of a group even when those norms encourage wrongdoing, while others speak out and resist? Facing History and Ourselves offers students a framework and a vocabulary for thinking about how they can make a difference in the world they will inhabit.

The intellectual and pedagogic framework of Facing History and Ourselves is built upon a synthesis of history and ethics for

effective history education. Its core learning principles embrace intellectual rigor, ethical reflection, emotional engagement and civic agency. Its teaching parameters engage the methods of the humanities: enquiry, critical analysis, interpretation, empathetic connections and judgement. Facing History and Ourselves teachers employ a carefully structured methodology to provoke thinking about complex questions of citizenship and human behavior. Building upon the increasing ability to think hypothetically and imagine options, they stretch the historical imagination by urging delineation of what might have been done, choices that could have been made and alternative scenarios that could have come about.

A focal case study of Facing History and Ourselves is an in-depth analysis of the failure of democracy in Germany and the steps leading to the Holocaust—the most documented case of twentieth-century indifference, de-humanization, hatred, racism, antisemitism, and mass murder. It goes on to explore difficult questions of judgment, memory and legacy, and the necessity for responsible civic participation to prevent injustice and protect democracy in the present and future. The language and vocabulary that are taught throughout are tools for entry into the history—words like perpetrator, victim, defender, bystander, opportunist, rescuer, and upstander. Students learn that terms



**Figure 1:** The Scope and Sequence

like identity, membership, legacy, denial, responsibility, and judgment can help them understand complicated history, as well as connect the lessons of that history to the questions they face in their own worlds.

The diagram in figure 1 highlights the sequence of study with the historical case study of the Holocaust, in from *Holocaust and Human Behavior*.

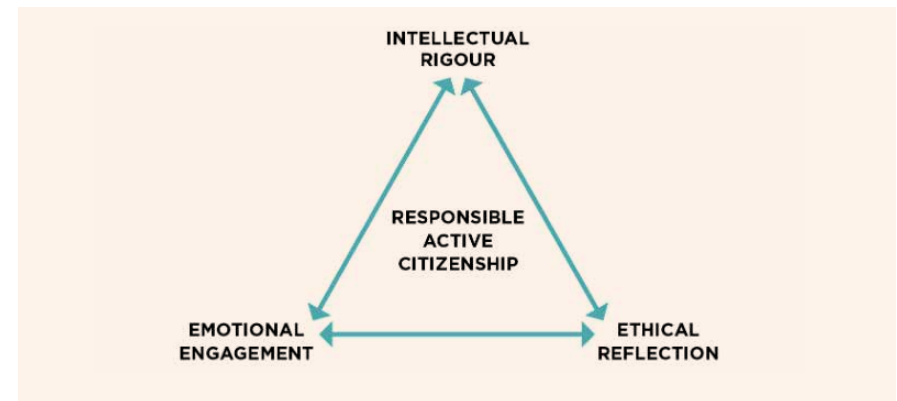
The first step, *The Individual and Society*, focuses on how both individual and national identities are formed and how these identities influence behavior and decision making. *We and They* focuses on the processes of national and collective identity that help people connect with one another but also contribute to misunderstanding, stereotyping, and conflict. Teachers and students learn that the way a nation defines itself affects the choices it makes, including the choice to exclude those who do not fit the nation's concept of itself. They see that membership can be a tool for both constructive and destructive purposes. *History and Human Behavior* allows students to explore issues of personal choice and ethical decision-making within the context of historical case studies and connecting to their lives today. The small steps that led to these difficult periods are highlighted so students can grasp the complexities of the past. After exploring the history, students confront these historical case studies of terrible atrocities through *Judgment, Memory, and Legacy*, in which they explore the meaning of concepts such as guilt, responsibility, and judgment—and what those concepts mean in our world today. They also discover that one way of taking responsibility for the past is to preserve its memory. They explore the importance of monuments and memorials as communal gestures of remembering, of acknowledging injustice, and of honoring individuals and groups who have suffered.

The learning journey ends with *Choosing to Participate* where, through contemporary stories, students see how history is made every day by ordinary people. Students begin to understand that they, too, have the power to change the course of history through

their own individual actions. They explore what it means to be a citizen in a democracy—to exercise one’s rights and responsibilities in the service of a more humane and compassionate world.

Facing History doesn’t treat historical events—neither good ones, nor horrific—as inevitable. We look at the events leading to them and at the decisions made by individuals, communities and representatives of institutions. For the case study of the Holocaust, for example, we begin with the Weimar Republic and explore the fragility of this democracy as well as the opportunities it represented. We spend time in the 1930s, exploring everyday people and their choices. This includes exploring inaction or bystander behavior. We know from scholars and from history that some people stand by because they don’t believe they can make a difference or because they don’t want to act, or are afraid to act, or because they think someone else will act. We also look at the other choices people make, those who resist, who stand up and speak out. Importantly, we don’t treat history as if it happens to people. We help students understand that people *make* history happen. Critically, we don’t want young people to take unnecessary risks. We want them to learn from upstanders, to explore the choices they make and the implications of those choices. We want them to develop their own civic and ethical muscles, to move from opinion to informed judgment as they engage with each other in conversation and consider the ways that they can engage as citizens of their communities, countries and of the world.

In a Facing History class, we want teachers and students to make connections to the ‘ourselves’ part of Facing History and Ourselves. These facilitated connections are not meant to be *direct* comparisons between past and present or between an actor in the past and oneself. We teach teachers to help young people make connections and distinctions, to identify patterns and echoes. The ‘ourselves’ part of Facing History and Ourselves is also about relevance, about not treating history as if it is hermetically sealed. It’s about helping young people to see themselves as agents of change so that they can apply the knowledge, skills and behaviors



**Figure 2:** The pedagogical triangle of historical understanding

they are developing to a wider society and to issues beyond their own. It’s about expanding their ‘universe of obligation’ and treating them with moral seriousness.

Facing History’s work is also guided by what we refer to as our pedagogical triangle.

To serve as a touchstone for curriculum planning, we have created the ‘Pedagogical Triangle of Historical Understanding.’ Facing History and Ourselves believes that historical understanding is strengthened when classroom materials are intellectually rigorous, engage students emotionally, and invite ethical reflection. Working together, these components foster students’ sense of civic agency: their belief that they can play a positive role in their peer groups, schools, communities, and the larger world, and their ability and willingness to ‘make history’ by acting on that belief. The arrows between the three points—intellectual rigor, emotional engagement and ethical reflection—are bidirectional, as these processes strengthen each other. At the center is the students’ civic agency, their belief that they can play a positive role in their peer groups, schools, communities, and the larger world.

In the following pages, Dylan Wray (South Africa) and Sean Pettis (Northern Ireland) describe Facing History and Ourselves in their own countries.

## South Africa

In 2003, the first group of South African teachers were trained and supported in bringing Facing History and Ourselves into their classrooms. As part of what was then called Facing the Past—Transforming our Future, we brought teachers of all races and ages together to begin a journey that still continues<sup>2</sup>. For five days these teachers explored the Facing History case study, *Holocaust and Human Behaviour*, and an apartheid case study modeled on Facing History.

These teachers, and the thousands who continue to attend similar Facing History seminars across South Africa, were guided by Facing History's scope and sequence as their students would later be in their classrooms. They began with issues of identity—as individuals in society and as members of groups, communities and nations. The first two days focused on exploring the case study of the Holocaust, including the choices that individuals and groups in Nazi Germany made to be resisters, perpetrators and bystanders. As in all Facing History seminars and workshops, teachers used the interactive, reflective and engaging methodologies that they would take into their classrooms. These ranged from journaling, paired discussions, silent conversations in writing, and gallery walks engaging with primary sources. The final three days transitioned to exploring apartheid, returning to the scope and sequence to guide the process and delving deeper into issues of identity, membership and belonging, the range of human behavior, judgement, memory and legacy, and civic participation today. Throughout the seminar, they were asked to make connections to who they are today, the country they live in and the world they are a part of.

2 For more on our work in South Africa, see Tibbitts, F., & Weldon. (2017). History curriculum and teacher training: Shaping a democratic future in post-apartheid South Africa? *Comparative Education*, 53(3), pp.442-461, and Wray, D. (2017). Facing the past-transforming our future: A professional development program for history teachers in South Africa. In C. Ramirez-Barat & R. Duthie (Eds.), *Transitional Justice and Education: Learning Peace* (pp.333-360). New York, NY: Social Science Research Council.

For many of the teachers present, this was the first time that they had sat together, black and white, women and men, old and young, and openly reflected on the past they had lived through as well as the past they continued to carry into their classrooms. This reflection and sharing within a supportive community of educators gave many the confidence (and tools) to teach these difficult histories—especially the complicated and painful history they had lived through. Many South African teachers either avoid teaching these historical case studies or teach them factually, superficially and quickly. Because these histories are complex and are laden with pain and guilt, many turn away from them. But for those teachers who have attended the Facing History introduction seminars, who sat together and were guided to deeper and wider understanding, they feel better equipped, more empowered and deeply motivated to use these histories to help their students understand their choices as members of communities and citizens in a complex and hopeful country.

### A student's reflection

In 2017 we met up with Dominique Dryding, a former student of one of the teachers who had attended this inaugural training. Dominique chose to study history throughout high school. At the school she attended, all of the history teachers were trained and supported in Facing History. By the time Dominique graduated, she had been taught a number of Facing History case studies covering the Holocaust, the United States Civil Rights movement, eugenics and, of course, apartheid South Africa. She had been immersed in Facing History.

Dominique remembered what those classes were like:

The teacher that I think stands out for me in terms of seeing me, and seeing how I fitted into the school environment, was my Facing History teacher. My teacher made the classroom a safe space by not being afraid to challenge the dominant narratives that were expressed.



I remember when we were discussing privilege. I think at the time Desmond Tutu was suggesting that white people pay a form of reparation for the past and this had come up as a discussion in class. Many of the girls were saying, 'My parents work hard for the money that they have' without, obviously, recognising the structural and historical advantages that have influenced the position in which they find themselves. And without recognising that these advantages have led to the degradation of everybody else who was living here before. In that class, in that discussion, you were able to actually say without sort of teetering on eggshells that, 'You need to look at the historical context from which this country stemmed. Are you saying that domestic workers who happen to be predominantly black in this country don't work hard? Hard work in South Africa does not necessarily equate to wealth gain or privilege gain.'

We were able to really push boundaries on issues that I don't think a lot of students had been confronted with before. And we were given a voice. There were only two of us of colour in the class of about fifteen or twenty students. I was able to verbalise what I was feeling without feeling judged, at least by her. She was able to give us an equal voice within that class.

The Facing History classroom gave Dominique and other students opportunities to develop their voices. Through carefully crafted teaching strategies, designed with the needs of adolescents in mind, students were drawn into a safe reflection and discussion. Journaling was an important tool in the process. At times, before engaging in particularly charged discussions, students would be asked to first reflect in their journals—to clarify thoughts, recognize emotions and raise questions. They would then be asked to pair up and share whatever they felt comfortable sharing from their reflections. Finally, the teacher would invite Dominique and her peers to share any insights with the rest of the class from their reflections and paired discussions. Through this Facing History teaching strategy, Think-Pair-Share, every student was given the opportunity to take part in the lesson—in writing and in safe, paired discussions. The classroom was not dominated by one or two brave, eager or loud voices. Students were encouraged to reflect, speak and hear. These are crucial components of Facing

History classrooms, where students are given time and tools to process their thinking, to reflect emotionally and ethically, and then to share these insights and learnings within their community. These social and emotional skills, as well as civic capacities, are essential to our fragile democracy where we remain divided. We are developing not just resilient citizens, able to reflect on their violent past and its legacies, but a resilient democracy, which is something we all have to create together and something we have to believe that we are able to create together, not in spite of our differences, but in light of them.

Today, Dominique is a Project Leader for the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's globally-recognized Afrobarometer Survey Research Project. She feels her choice of study and strong social justice inclination was 'most definitely influenced by that Facing History classroom.' Of course, the teaching strategies created the environment in which boundaries could be pushed and issues confronted in a safe environment. But Dominique chose a career of social justice because of what she also learnt in those lessons. The case studies of the Holocaust, eugenics, Civil Rights in the US and apartheid and the transition to democracy in South Africa, and the continued journey through the scope and sequence, allowed her to interrogate her place in society, her choices and how she would (and still does) choose to participate. Importantly, through these historical case studies, she also saw herself as an agent in the world. She saw how ideas—both good and bad—spread across national boundaries, and she learned the roles individuals and communities played in these processes.

Leah Nasson is the head of history at the school that Dominique attended. Leah and the teachers in her department have continued to bring Facing History to the students in their classrooms. Just like Dominique's history teacher, Leah creates a safe and challenging environment for the students in her class. It is in this environment that Leah is able to ensure that her students acquire the skills and knowledge of learning to live together, where they engage with the world outside their classroom and where each student has a voice:



I think that people are more honest when they're relaxed, and I try and create an environment where everyone feels like they have a voice. I like to think that people feel safe not to be judged in that environment, and I think that is the case because they all feel free to talk.

They ask questions and I like that. They ask questions of each other. I think the advantage of young people today is a double edged sword, really—that they are constantly exposed to the news because they're always on Facebook and Twitter. So they all know things before I do and they will have formed opinions and come into class and want to talk about them.

I tend to allow 5 to 10 minutes, depending on how much time, just for them to vent out their feelings about something. But we also have a very active current affairs society where a tenth of the school belongs to it, and every Thursday we come together and we talk about political issues, whether it's about South Africa or whether it's about worldwide. So in that environment again I try to create a space where everyone feels like their opinion is valued.

A refrain in this brief is the work of facing one's country's past and the potential that resides in a rich case study that provides historical and psychological distance. We found the power of such case studies as both mirrors and windows for our past in South Africa, from 2003 when we began our work up until today, as teachers and students continue to explore the past and its potent legacies. Part of how Leah and other Facing History teachers in South Africa create this safe and reflective classroom environment, is by entering the discussions and learning through distant case studies:

I think it need not be so clear in the sense that 'Today we are going to talk about race in South Africa.' I think you start with general issues. I think you start with things that aren't loaded and, actually to be honest, aren't local.

So, I would start with something far away—the Holocaust, US Civil Rights. You start with something that everyone in that classroom can have an opinion about. And it's a distant opinion. Because if

you start with something local, you start with something charged. It's already going to be like, 'Well, that person said that because ...' I think you start slowly like that. And when people feel that they have their opinion on whatever issue it is however distanced and detached they are from it, then you can start saying, 'Okay, well, let's look at these things at home. Let's look at where our responsibility lies. Do we even have any responsibility?'

Facing History and Ourselves continues to offer South African teachers like Leah the opportunity to very deliberately ensure that their students discover themselves—in relation to others, their communities, their country and the world. Through carefully crafted historical case studies, which raise issues of identity, prejudice and belonging and which explore human agency for good and evil, students are able to authentically understand what it means to value and uphold human rights and promote peace and non-violence.

## Northern Ireland

### Formation and early development

Facing History and Ourselves has also been active in Northern Ireland since 2003. The initial focus was on building relationships with key stakeholders across the education sector (state providers, universities, curriculum designers etc.) and in particular with those individuals who had responsibility for history and citizenship education. The initiative was timely in terms of the peace process. The implementation of the Belfast Agreement (1998) had begun to hit roadblocks. Concerns around the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and a wider lack of trust led to the Northern Ireland Assembly being suspended from 2002 to 2007. The development of a shared and democratic society was being frustrated and some of the initial euphoria that had grown from the peace agreement was dwindling. Despite this hiatus, by 2007 a new revised national curriculum for Northern Ireland was passed into law (HMSO, 2007). At the core of this curriculum was

a focus on SEL and an emphasis on themes linked to social and political reconciliation. However, turning these policy aspirations into a reality across a largely segregated school system and with a teaching population where many felt they lacked the skills and confidence to address the legacies of the conflict, presented a real challenge. The adult educators were products of the conflict; their own lived experience of active citizenship was limited. Northern Ireland was nominally a democratic society, but politics was often seen as something to be avoided, contained or ignored. Inspiring a new generation and building sustainable peace would mean learning to do something we had little experience of.<sup>3</sup>

Facing History concepts were prevalent in the revised curriculum and the opportunity was ripe to scale up activity and develop a stronger local presence. In 2010, Facing History began a partnership with the Corrymeela Community, a cross-community peace and reconciliation charity formed in 1965. Corrymeela has a long track record of working in schools, particularly around bringing young people together across religious and political divides though residential experiences at their center in Ballycastle, County Antrim. Thanks to a grant from the International Fund for Ireland, funding was available to train and support teachers (including pre-service teachers) as well as provide opportunities for young people to engage in cross-community residential programs. Critically, the partnership itself models a local and global dimension between two NGOs, enabling the particularities of the Northern Ireland conflict to be connected to universal themes, ideas and working practices.

### Modelling new ways of working

Our approach is underpinned by the idea that as adult educators—including project staff and facilitators—we must face up to the difficult past before we ask young people to do this. Almost all of

3 For more on our work in Northern Ireland, see Murphy, K., & Gallagher, T. (2009). Reconstruction after violence: How teachers and schools can deal with the legacy of the past. *Perspectives in Education*, 27(2), pp.158–168.

our workshops are held on a cross-community basis (those from perceived Unionist/British and Nationalist/Irish backgrounds), which is crucial for teachers to learn about the experiences of others in a diverse environment. As a new generation of teachers who were born after the ceasefires of 1994 enter the profession, narratives and perspectives can be shared across generations. The pedagogical concepts and practical ‘how to’ of teaching is important, but this comes after an emotional and cognitive engagement by the adult educator. Working in this way enables teachers to develop and practice the skills of having a conversation about contested issues across traditions. Through participating in Facing History training, educators become part of a global network of over 100,000 teachers, enabling even greater sharing and collegiality. This also facilitates *their* development as global citizens, as they engage with a wider range of issues and perspectives.

### Facing the past in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the past is alive in the present. The history of the ‘Troubles’ is close to citizens in terms both of time and of the physical space where events happened. As in South Africa, exploring more distant historical case studies such as the Holocaust and the US Civil Rights movement, where there has been injustice, prejudice and mass violence, becomes even more important. In this process, we develop skills of historical understanding, empathy, ethical judgement and civic action in a context that is less emotionally raw. It also allows global perspectives and experiences to enter the classroom. A consequence of conflict in Northern Ireland is that it has contributed towards what can often be an insular and parochial society. These case studies allow learners to see beyond the local. We ask learners to make connections to the past and present in our own society in a careful and considered way. For example, a study of Weimar Germany asks profound questions about how a democracy is developed, nurtured and protected. We might develop a graphic identity chart of Weimar Germany, encapsulating the factors that helped and hindered democracy in

that context. We then replicate the process for Northern Ireland in the present. We consider whether factors are particular to that time and place or are more universal, with relevance for us now. This idea of ‘connections’ is not a one-off event, but rather an ongoing process. It is our experience that it has enabled both teachers and young people to see local issues in new ways. In 2019, we invited two US Civil Rights activists to Northern Ireland to share their stories with teachers and young people. The ability of young people and educators to make these local and global connections was emphatic. As one young person said,

[the stories] were really powerful and they told a truth that we all need to hear and to remind us that we’re not the only countries where this happened—in so many different countries in so many different ways. I’m from South Africa and my parents lived through Apartheid, in the US they had their Civil Rights movement and here in Northern Ireland, so I thought it was really relevant and important.

Likewise, a teacher commented on the training they had received:

Yesterday was a real epiphany! I have never been so moved at a training event than I was at this one. The context, testimony and methodology we were given yesterday will allow me to extend my lessons on Human Rights.

### Identity and membership

Contested and competing identities are at the heart of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. The Facing History approach begins with an examination of identity through the individual and society. However, our exploration of identity is expansive, using local and global stories to develop a broad understanding of what influences us and how we understand both ourselves and others. This runs counter to the reductive nature of identity in Northern Ireland whereby people can be reduced (and reduce themselves) solely to a religious, political or national label. We don’t seek to shy away from those elements of identity or to negate them, but rather to explore the whole human being. Our focus on group membership and the concept of ‘we and they’ has a particular resonance in Northern

Ireland. Utilizing resources such as the film ‘Eye of the Storm’ (Jane Elliot’s ‘Brown Eyes, Blue Eyes’ experiment)<sup>4</sup> has deepened learners’ understanding of the process of ‘othering’ and introduced new language and vocabulary around prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. When working with groups of young people on a cross-community basis, the development of a shared vocabulary to understand these concepts has been particularly powerful and aided their ability to engage and communicate with each other.

Understanding the range of human responses in times of injustice has been one of the areas that we have developed most in a Northern Ireland context. In a Facing History course we consider the upstanders, people who acted against the prevailing injustice. Likewise, we consider those who were bystanders, people not actively engaged in acts of perpetration, but whose inaction created the space for violent acts to take place. We also focus on the victims and perpetrators of violence and seek to understand their experiences more deeply. Human behavior is, of course, complicated and people don’t fit neatly into these categories. We found that in an examination of the Holocaust or US Civil Rights we had an abundance of stories relating to upstanding and bystanding, but this was less so in Northern Ireland. Our hypothesis, informed by our work and a longitudinal study that the authors have been engaged in with Sarah Freedman (University of California, Berkeley), is also that there are connections between an inability and lack of confidence in talking about the past and a lack of efficacy in the present. In research interviews with young people, no one could name a local upstander, instead citing global examples. The implication of this is not only that the conflict seems intractable, but also history itself. It is difficult if not impossible to be an agent for positive change if one has no model from which to draw inspiration. It also presents a challenge to global education: for sure, we want young people to look outwards for inspiration, but the global needs to also be made tangible in a local context.

4 See <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/introduction-2/>

The conversation needs to be between the past and the present, the local and the global, and the emotional and the rational.

With this in mind, over several years we have developed two films with accompanying resources that have enabled us to use the lenses of upstanding and bystanding to deepen perspectives and provide a new entry point into Northern Ireland society (see [corrymeela.org/upstanding](http://corrymeela.org/upstanding) & [corrymeela.org/bystanding](http://corrymeela.org/bystanding)). This has been one of the most powerful experiences for both educators and young people. The stories have acted as a window into the nature of conflict here and a mirror into the types of everyday decision-making we have to make in the present. As one young person told us, 'As a young person, this film really opened my eyes and helped me realize how bad the troubles actually were. Often we aren't told the whole story and are protected from our past, even though the past is how we learn for the future.'

A teacher once reflected on her teaching of the Northern Ireland Troubles, stating that the young people weren't engaging with the same rigor as they had with their Holocaust unit. When she asked them why this was the case, one pupil replied 'because we knew who the goodies and the baddies were in the Holocaust.' What the young person was revealing was a lack of ability to make ethical judgements about how people had behaved in their own society. Peace in Northern Ireland is fragile, like a piece of fine porcelain. The temptation is to treat the past with the same delicate touch, presenting it in such fine balance that there is no room for ethical reflection. The reality is that if we want to create a different future, we must make different choices, which necessitates that we all dig deep.

## Conclusion

For Leah, and many of the thousands of teachers who use Facing History and Ourselves in South Africa, Northern Ireland and countries across the globe, their responsibility remains to ensure

that students leave their care with a realized sense of responsibility for others:

I think it's an important discussion to have—what is your link to the past? What is your public responsibility? What is your responsibility as a citizen, and what does it mean to be a citizen? I think it's also something you've got to kind of tease out. I think from a young age, at least a high school age, students should have some sense of social responsibility.

It is in this responsibility for others, those close by and those far away, that students of Facing History begin to think and act as citizens of their communities, countries and of the world. Through immersing deeply in histories that are not only their own, they are connected to global threads of the past. They are tied to histories of countries and people that reveal less of our uniqueness as South Africans and Northern Irish, and more of that which we hold in common through our behavior, choices and responsibility. In short, through our humanity. They learn about the threats and consequences of inaction and discrimination; they have opportunities to develop their just, ethical voices; and they gain a deeper understanding of the values of diversity, inclusion and principled civic action. And all of this starts with their teachers.

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## Understanding yourself as a foundation for exploring the world

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### ABSTRACT

Building the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, as called for in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), requires learners to develop a sense of themselves as unique individuals capable of effecting local and global change. This brief details approaches to learner identity development used by two organizations dedicated to fostering the skills, knowledge, and mindsets necessary to achieve SDG Target 4.7. These organizations—the Smithsonian Science Education Center and Childhood Education International—both focus on the importance of developing learner identities as changemakers to address Target 4.7 themes. By exploring personal, local, and global identities, young learners can see themselves both as part of collectives within their own local communities and as members of the global citizenry, prepared to collaborate to take action on issues that both affect them personally and have an impact on the future of the planet.

### KEYWORDS

identity, social-emotional learning, global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, inquiry-based science

### Introduction

Building the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, as called for in the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), requires learners to develop a sense of themselves as unique individuals capable of effecting local and global change. In particular, skills such as the ability to understand different perspectives, appreciate complexity, promote equity, connect to diverse others, and set and follow through on goals, are necessary for the education areas specified by SDG Target 4.7 (sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, peace, global citizenship, and cultural diversity). The nuanced topics of 4.7 all require learners to analyze and balance the needs and opinions of various groups and individuals. To care about and invest in these abstract, idealistic areas, learners need to see themselves as active members of local and global communities. Additionally, in order to take action on the goals outlined in Target 4.7, learners must develop a fundamental understanding of the complex scientific, environmental, and social dimensions that underlie each of the 17 goals.

These participatory local and global identities and high-level skills, such as thinking through complexity and finding sustainable balance, require learners to have foundational understandings about who they are and their relationships to the communities around them. Through understanding themselves as individuals and as members of local and global collectives, learners build important social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, such as self-efficacy, goal-setting, perspective-taking, relationship-building, and reflecting on ethical responsibility (CASEL, n.d.). Building competence in these skills is an essential part of enabling learners to engage fully with the complex ideas included in 4.7, and to take



action on the rest of the goals that make up the SDGs. Using the frameworks of global citizenship education (GCED) and education for sustainable development (ESD), learners are encouraged to examine global challenges from multiple viewpoints in order to better understand the issue (Brookings, UNESCO, & GEFI-YAG, 2017; Ohlmeier, 2015). Taking these global perspectives requires SEL abilities related to self-awareness and social awareness. Therefore, organizations intending to encourage the 4.7 skills and associated attitudes, values, and behaviors should strongly consider grounding GCED and ESD actions by helping learners understand their personal and social identities.

In this brief, we share approaches to learner identity development used by two organizations, the [Smithsonian Science Education Center](#) (SSEC) and [Childhood Education International](#) (CE International), both dedicated to fostering the skills, knowledge, and mindsets necessary to achieve Target 4.7. Although these organizations work in somewhat different ways, both are focused on the importance of developing learner identities as a means to address Target 4.7 themes.

The Smithsonian Science Education Center's [Smithsonian Science for Global Goals](#) project develops, disseminates, and trains educators and facilitators to use community research guides rooted in educating learners aged 8–17 to understand not only the science behind the SDGs, but also how to act on that scientific knowledge in a relevant manner. Through this process, students are primed to develop GCED and ESD mindsets and skills that are grounded in SEL understandings of self and community. By engaging with the program's scaffolded framework, learners create a foundation of scientific knowledge about global issues while unpacking the ways that the challenges outlined in the SDGs impact and shape them both as individuals and as members of their local and global communities. For example, one science club at a private school in rural Kenya has taken a module about mosquito-borne disease to first investigate the impacts of mosquito-borne disease on their lives and the lives of those in their local area, then to build

a scientific understanding of mosquito habitats, lifecycles, and disease transmission. Next, the students develop an action plan focused on educating the local population about how to mitigate the habitats and transmission of disease in their community. This community research and action approach allows learners to deeply analyze problems from a local social and scientific perspective, consider systemic impacts, and build local consensus to take sustainable actions on issues that not only impact the local community, but are global challenges as well.

Childhood Education International works directly with primary schools through their Global Schools First program, which guides school teams to reflect on their current practices related to GCED and consider steps for improvement across their school. The Global Schools First conceptualization of GCED for the primary level includes dimensions with strong explorations of identity such as: 'discovering ourselves and others', 'exploring our interconnected world', and 'embracing shared values.' This detailed appraisal of aspects of GCED prompts educators to consider how personal, local, and global identities are explored and supported at their school. For example, a school team considering the 'discovering ourselves and others' dimension might contemplate how the school celebrates the unique individuals that make up the school community, while simultaneously promoting appreciation for others. The non-prescriptive Global Schools First approach is locally responsive, encouraging schools to think through the most effective way to address the dimensions of GCED in their own context, while concurrently allowing Global Schools First schools to share practices with each other using a common framework.

The purpose of both of these educational programs is to support learners as they take the journey from understanding their personal identity to identifying as an active member of their local community (local identity), and ultimately to see themselves as global citizens belonging and contributing to a worldwide community (global identity). By centering this progression around social and scientific issues, problems, and challenges that exist

both at the local level and are recognized by the SDGs, students can develop skills, attitudes and concepts that are a part of Target 4.7, but also contribute to more tangible improvements in their own situations and local communities.

## Understanding personal identity

Scaffolding understanding, especially for primary-aged learners, needs to start by building and identifying an underlying sense of self. The self-awareness of learners is tied to the way they see themselves, both as individuals and as members of collectives (Hecht & Shin, 2015), and can vary by region, culture, and environment. Learners can use personal identity awareness to build ideas about why different individuals may have different identities and hold different opinions. This process is accessible in a local community or classroom setting, and often involves exploring diversity among peer groups and similarities and differences between communities. The process of understanding personal identity guides learners to accept themselves, accept who they are and where they are, build knowledge, and pull together the initial threads of identity as the foundation for emergent perspectives of local and global identities.

In the Smithsonian Science for Global Goals program, learners begin this process by exploring personal identity and then relating it to SDG-driven socio-scientific issues. Young learners are asked to create an identity map at the beginning of every community research module as a space where they can express how they see themselves in that moment. This is done at the beginning of every module, in part because the thematic focus of the module changes, and also because a learner's identity changes over time, especially as they are introduced to new and different ideas as they progress through the program. Identity maps can include everything from family structure to future aspirations and allow learners to independently reflect on their own identity in that moment. While some items on an identity map, such as religion, number of siblings,

and language spoken at home, will remain the same for long periods of time, other items may change over the years, like 'what your favorite color is', or 'what you want to be when you grow up'. One teacher conducting this exercise in Indonesia recently found that nearly every learner in her class wanted to be a YouTube star—the aspiration of the moment.

Once learners have developed their identity maps and shared these with their peers, noting similarities, differences and common themes, the focus turns to the SDG-related socio-scientific issue at hand. For example, when studying food, learners write down everything that they know about the topic and highlight what is important to them. This may include favorite foods, how your family gets, prepares, and stores food, what access to food exists in your local community, and how food makes you feel when you eat it. Through this process, learners develop a concrete sense of their personal identity and how it is inextricably linked to the topic of food. They then go on to connect this personal understanding of food to the global, socio-scientific issues of food and nutritional security, including dietary needs, sanitation and nutritional health (i.e., growing conditions, sanitary preparation of food, and nutrients derived from different sources) and food deserts—impoverished areas lacking ready access to fresh produce. Building on the foundational knowledge shared through identity maps and initial understandings of food, learners are prompted to assemble a collective identity map for their group or team. Building the sense that collectives are composed of individual identities lays the groundwork for future development and understanding of complex topics at a local level. It also creates a shared foundation for understanding a specific socio-scientific topic. By setting this foundation of identity at the beginning of the module and using this as a springboard for the understanding of a socio-scientific issue found in the SDGs, learners have an opportunity to think critically about their own identities and how they connect to a larger global topic.

Childhood Education International's 'Global Schools First' program approaches identity formation through a GCED dimension of 'discovering ourselves and others', which encourages schools to consider how they are helping learners understand what makes them unique as individuals and how they are building appreciation among learners for the identities and perspectives of others. Looking at this in practice, one Global Schools First school in Indonesia approaches this challenge through existing anti-bullying programs. This specific school welcomes students with physical and cognitive disabilities, as well as students who may come from difficult home situations. Helping students explore their own identities and appreciate identities of others within this context is a key part of the school's intention to build a culture of inclusion and kindness. The basis of this initiative is building respect for self and others. As part of the school's celebration of students' identities of learners are encouraged to develop individual talents that help make them unique through a wide variety of extracurricular activities and talent exhibitions.

In the classroom, natural variations of identities and preferences are explored to help students develop a sense of respect and appreciation for others. For example, differences in preferences like favorite foods are explored in class with an emphasis on the underlying commonality—everyone needs to eat food, but people have different preferences. Using this 'same but different' lens, children unpack their own individual experiences. This can include sharing similarities and differences in the words they use, the transport they use to get to school, their religions, etc. (Shore, 2018). Through these guided explorations, learners develop attitudes that understand variation as a natural part of human groups, rather than a reason for ostracization. Using this budding awareness of natural diversity developed inside the microcosm of peer relationships within the classroom and school, learners can build a strong foundation for understanding and respecting differences in perspectives and experiences within their local community, their nation, and their world.

In order to support learners to understand the SDGs as a set of interrelated global goals, and to be a part of the SDG process, they must first understand their own unique perspective. When learners understand their own point of view, they can begin to understand the experiences and conditions that contribute to that perspective. This allows them to reflect on it more critically and consider other points of view. In this way, learners can start to understand the perspectives of others, an essential skill that enables them to collaborate with peers and start to build consensus for taking action on global topics.

By helping learners to explore their own identities and sense of self through activities such as identity mapping and taking part in 'same but different' activities, learners can build and foster their own perspectives of self and personal agency. Such community or classroom-based experiences allow them to understand their own wants and needs and how those wants and needs fit into the larger collective of their local community, or human population. This learning trajectory includes learning to form groups with like or different others for positive purposes, and builds important SEL skills necessary for engagement with the Target 4.7 topics, as well as with other SDGs, especially those related to poverty, inequality, environmental degradation and peace.

## Connecting to local identity

Learner identities include both interconnected personal and social components (Lannegrand-Willems, Chevrier, Perchec, & Carrizales, 2018). As learners investigate their own personal sense of self, they also start to better understand themselves as members of collectives and reflect on how their personal identity is informed by their local culture and environment. Embracing this relationship, learners can then claim a place in local narratives and decision-making, improving learner empowerment and connection to community (Harada, 2016; Johnson, 2012; Smith, 2002). Ideally, learners come to view themselves as relevant, integral actors in

their own local spaces, including, but not limited to, their school, neighborhood, town, state/province, or national communities. Since the effect of learner actions on a local environment can often be both more immediate and more visible, local spaces provide an ideal laboratory to build learner identities as active community members and changemakers. For example, children picking up trash on their playground or raising food for others in a community garden can directly see the impact of their actions. This tangible proof can be an important part of a positive feedback loop that helps support future actions and build children's identities as efficacious community contributors. Alternatively, children could raise money to send to global charities that address littering or hunger on a global scale, but those actions are much more abstract, and students are distanced from the end results. Students acting locally can directly see results, encouraging future participation in their local communities, and the development of their local collective identity.

The Smithsonian Science for Global Goals program uses three inputs—cultural context, background knowledge, and learning dispositions—to build from learners' existing understandings of their own communities. Cultural context reflects the attitudes, values, and expectations of a learner's social, personal, educational, familial or regional group. Background knowledge includes relevant academic knowledge that a student has acquired, as well as community-based and indigenous knowledge such as origin stories, traditional understandings of land and resources, or home remedies. Learning dispositions—the ways in which learners experience and access knowledge—is the third input. This can include ease with specific pedagogical approaches such as rote memorization, reading for comprehension, or project-based learning. It also includes learning experiences coming from oral traditions, religious practices, or community elders. Based on how a learner has been conditioned to learn through their experiences and their individual personalities, some learning dispositions, or ways of building knowledge and skills, may be more comfortable or accessible. By acknowledging, honoring, and incorporating

these three input areas, learners can access the SDG topics through community research that is unique to their own situation. When learning about mosquito-borne diseases for instance, learners at a school for orphans and vulnerable children in Malawi investigate their own schoolyard for potential mosquito-breeding sites. This investigation draws on the learners' existing knowledge of the topography of these local spaces, where they may be aware of existing mosquito-breeding areas or places where they are often bitten by mosquitoes. Recognizing learners as experts in their own local spaces, Smithsonian Science for Global Goals is designed to help them expand upon existing local knowledge and, through socio-scientific investigations about the mosquitoes' preferred habitats, come to a deeper understanding of the intersection between the global topic of mosquito-borne diseases, and local practices and identities. Armed with this new knowledge, learners are well-suited to uncover locally relevant, community-approved sustainable actions to address these topics while supporting their identity as active local citizens.

Stressing local identities and then connecting them to global identities and issues is a key part of the Global Schools First GCED dimension 'exploring our interconnected world'. Consistent with the diversity of localities, there are multiple ways schools approach community involvement and identity. For example, at a Global Schools First school in the United States, there is a deep emphasis on inspiring learners to see themselves as leaders helping to build a better world. Leadership is stressed in a variety of ways within the school, and local community service is a critical part of the curriculum. By supporting the connection between identifying as a leader and taking local action, learners build a sense of themselves as local changemakers. As another example, at a Global Schools First school in India, learners are led to re-imagine local practices in a more sustainable and eco-friendly way. For instance, traditionally during the festival of *Raksha Bandan*, sisters tie *rakhi* (amulets) around a brother's wrist, symbolizing bonds of care and responsibility between siblings. However, at this school, learners

are also encouraged to tie *rakhi* around trees, symbolically investing themselves in the future well-being of the trees. Through this type of subtle adaptation of local practices, the school continues to embrace learners' cultural identity, while at the same time metaphorically tying that identity to notions of responsibility towards the planet.

Connecting self to community supports SEL skills such as social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Cavieres-Fernandez, 2014; Dusenbury & Weissberg, 2017). At the same time, celebrating existing knowledge and culture as part of their identity (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014) can help engage and inspire learners. Viewing a variety of local, and global identities as mutually supporting, rather than competing, can help set the stage for learners to fully embrace their membership in a global community without feeling disloyal to their local or national spaces.

## **Fostering a sense of global identity and belonging**

Social identities range from the hyper-local to the supranational and learners employ different strategies to pull these identities together in a coherent way (Lannegrund-Willems et al., 2018). When individuals are able to identify as global community members there are a number of important prosocial correlations, such as increased empathy, openness, and focus on care and justice (McFarland et al., 2019). Different social identities such as that of family member, membership in an ethnic group, religious identification, sub-national communities, national citizenship, and global citizenship can either be viewed as identities that are competitive to each other or mutually supportive. Helping learners to understand the ways in which these identities can be mutually supportive allows for increased local voice in global affairs, as well as increased engagement with the global impacts of local actions. This elevates learners another step beyond personal identity and local identity to global identity as sharers and stewards of one planet: the process of fostering a sense of the global connectedness of all human beings.

This process is evident through the ultimate outcome of Smithsonian Science for Global Goals, which, in addition to learning about and taking action on local-global issues, includes the development of 'sustainability mindsets.' Sustainability mindsets are comprised of the traits which all learners must develop and embrace to be actors for—and champions of—the SDGs. The four mindsets identified by the program—open-mindedness and reflection, empowerment and agency, equity and justice, and global-local interconnection—are the foundation upon which learners can develop a sense of 'local-through-to-global' identity, and see a direct line from their personal and local identity development to the work they can undertake as global actors, connected humans, and stewards of the planet (Gibson, 2019). This identity as a global actor who has agency to take on both local and global issues is crucially important for the realization of the SDGs, which are aimed at all humans in all countries, and require collective action and the development of specific perspectives as is identified in Target 4.7. Throughout the Smithsonian Science for Global Goals program, learners grow these sustainability mindsets through the following activities: building communication skills like perspective-taking through collective decision-making and arguing from evidence; learning to balance the relationship between the root cause of a specific problem, the globally-possible management options, and the locally appropriate solutions; and enacting, reflecting upon, and iteratively improving locally-implemented actions. Learners further this development by examining four perspectives—social, environmental, economic, and ethical—that researchers, scientists, and professionals use to view SDG topics. This information is introduced to them by scientists, researchers, and professionals working in the field around the globe, leading to the understanding that localized actions on a given issue are perhaps not all that different from global actions being taken on the same issue. Ultimately, this entire learning process helps



develop the skills and knowledge to understand how a learner's local actions connect to the collective global goal of addressing the socio-scientific issues embedded in the SDGs.

The Global Schools First program has a slightly different approach to fostering a sense of global engagement and belonging. School teams examine how the concept of 'embracing shared values' is incorporated into their school. This dimension focuses on values arising from global ethics—understanding principles of shared humanity such as compassion, respect, responsibility, honesty, and fairness. Schools encourage learners to build a sense of identification with these idealistic human traits, drawing links between the local social compact represented by things like student-determined classroom rules and the global social compact represented by things like international agreements and agencies. Just as classmates need to treat each other with compassion and respect, the same is true for countries. This understanding can be built both through virtual interactions and local activities. For example, a Global Schools First school in Ukraine has a wide set of virtual exchange activities, programs and relationships. These exchanges benefit both learners and staff by helping to build a three-dimensional sense of the identities of people in other places and their similarities with those learners. Peer-to-peer relationships and interactions of both learners and teachers can help build a concrete sense of a common humanity and values.

Another Global Schools First school, in Pakistan, has chosen to address these shared values using the concept of the SDGs as a framework. Understanding that these common goals represent a shared vision of an ethical world, learners are encouraged to explore concepts like responsibility towards the environment, gender equality, and peace. For example, using an activity called the 'World's Largest Art Gallery', learners created and shared art pieces expressing their views of these big global topics. Taking abstract ideas, like those represented by the SDGs, and helping learners conceptualize them in their own ways while stressing the fact that

people around the world are also working towards these goals, helps to reinforce the notion of globally shared values.

Learners are connecting their lived experiences to global topics and understanding how those intertwine. This gives learners tangible links between the personal, local, and global layers of their identities. The SDGs provide a vehicle for us to look at globally defined important topics within a readily observable local context. Ideally, education for the SDGs provides young learners with the knowledge and skills to be able to take action on globally significant issues in a way that is authentic and impactful for their local community through the lens of their personal and group identities. Their local action gains added significance through awareness of the global connections of a particular concern. This process connects learners to the global community through an integrally personal and peer-group approach that enables them to foster a true sense of themselves as global learners, participants, and action-takers. It contributes to the sense of a multifaceted identity, including embracing local and global identities.

## Conclusion

By exploring personal, local, and global identities, young learners can see themselves both as part of collectives within their own local communities and as members of the global citizenry. Schools use content delivered through inquiry-based science, SEL concepts, and environmental education along with tools such as community research, virtual interactions, and identity mapping to unpack the conceptual basis of these identities. To support learners on this journey, both the Smithsonian Science for Global Goals and Global Schools First programs highlight the necessity of understanding who you are and how you relate to the rest of the world. Pairing this understanding with the complex scientific, environmental and social issues embedded in the SDGs provides learners with both the content knowledge and the robust understanding of identity necessary to be both local and global participants. This brief

provides examples of specific programs which build the SEL skills that are foundational to understanding complex global issues while concurrently nurturing a sense of local and global belonging that encourages active engagement. In order to achieve what the SDGs have set out for educators and learners, especially in Target 4.7, this sense of global belonging fostered through SEL skills including self-awareness, social awareness, relationship-building and responsible decision-making are necessary for every citizen—and especially every young person to embrace and develop.

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## SECTION FIVE

Curriculum and context:  
constraints and possibilities  
for including SDG Target 4.7 themes  
and SEL in national textbooks

## Section Five overview: Curriculum and context: constraints and possibilities for including SDG Target 4.7 themes and SEL in national textbooks

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### Introduction

Many low and middle income countries (LMICs) face practical and political constraints in addressing the challenges of SDG Target 4.7 themes and associated social and emotional learning (SEL). In this overview, we begin by addressing some of the practical constraints that impact the 4.7 and SEL agenda before considering political issues that must also be taken into account. We then review some of the approaches that may help close the gap between high-level curriculum ideals as advanced by policymakers and patterns of actual implementation on the ground.

### Resource constraints

It is no secret that many LMICs are home to oversized classes, sometimes approaching or exceeding 100 students. In these same situations, under-trained or minimally qualified teachers may have experienced a poor quality education themselves, focused on rote learning for tests. The lack of classroom space—making it difficult for students to move around during lessons—and a lack of textbooks, writing materials and other educational materials constrains possible teaching practices. There may be no access to the internet and indeed electricity may be absent or intermittent (UNESCO, 2019). The basic technology in many LMIC settings is for the teacher to write on a blackboard and ask students to repeat their

answers together. The textbook often is the effective curriculum, although the students may not have their own copy.

Moreover, students may be studying in a language other than their mother tongue and lack fluency to ask or answer questions, let alone engage with higher levels of cognitive skills. Reading ability is often far below that assigned to the grade, meaning that the textbooks are too difficult for the students to use. Early grade students may have a single textbook to read from, and are required to know the words by heart and chant them together. Parents see the ultimate purpose of schooling as passing a high-stakes examination, which can bring an imagined prosperity or higher status to their children, and are therefore happy with the rote learning approach.

These conditions are widespread. Though official policies may favour ‘child-centered’ or ‘learner-centered’ education, in many countries this remains an uphill struggle (Schweisfurth, 2013). Much effort has been made to move education in LMICs towards the modern ‘Western’ model, but success has been limited (Westbrook et al., 2013; Bashir et al., 2018) except for schools catering to the elite. Teachers themselves often struggle with the substance of the lessons as well as language issues, which may affect both the teachers and the students (Bold et al., 2017; Clegg & Afitska, 2010). Rote learning, while valuable for developing certain skills and sometimes helpful for children who are not yet fluent in the language of instruction and are afraid of making mistakes, is not conducive to the development of deeper competencies—cognitive, social-emotional and behavioral—that are required for the themes brought together under the umbrella heading of SDG Target 4.7. This is even more so when teachers and students are learning in a second language. Code-switching to the mother tongue to reach students who are not fluent in the medium of instruction occurs only on an informal and ad hoc basis.

Language of instruction issues in fact constitute a major constraint to SEL and 4.7 in many countries. The essence of SEL and of the development of values and agency is the comprehension

of and emotional engagement *with* the lesson, followed by active discussion with peers and in the whole class. Where students are not studying in their mother tongue, this type of engagement is extremely challenging. Teacher guidance on how to address this *can* be built into textbooks, without which the presence of 4.7 themes in curriculum frameworks may sometimes be rendered meaningless.

The brief by Blanchard, Gibson and O'Donnell describes how approaches can be harnessed to support students in building a multifaceted and inclusive personal identity and sense of agency in support of 4.7 ideals. The brief by Alexandra Lewis shows an extreme example of how practical constraints can prevent the implementation of reformed curricula. Somaliland is not internationally recognized as a state, meaning that external assistance is limited and piecemeal. School teachers often work on an hourly basis, sometimes in several schools, and even tear out the pages of textbooks and examination papers that introduce unwanted innovative content. The best efforts to introduce content aligned to what we now call 4.7 goals thus often fail to reach the classroom. Where resources and security permit, however, there can be a positive impact, as noted in the summary from a Mercy Corps study on the impact of secondary education and civic engagement education on attitudes to political violence.

From the viewpoint of 4.7 themes and SEL, additional constraints are not adequately addressed. These are often specified as 'cross-curricular' or 'transversal' issues, but the textbook writers who are asked to make this cross-curricular approach work for 4.7/SEL may themselves lack knowledge and confidence in this new area. This is the more so because 4.7/SEL content needs to be context-specific. If a science lesson is to teach the carbon cycle, textbook writers can access the concept in international textbooks as well as other sources. But they may find it difficult to locate the country-specific information needed for contextualization and for generating ideas to make this content engaging to students and supportive of prosocial endeavors.

## Political constraints to embedding 4.7 themes and SEL in textbooks

'Unhealthy politics drives misalignments'

(*Learning to Realize Education's Promise*, World Bank, 2018, p.189)

Countries face political as well as resource challenges to strengthening 4.7 themes, particularly in post-conflict and fragile contexts. As evident from the discussions of Identity, Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Section Four, governments may deliberately adhere to textbook narratives that privilege those in power and underplay or exclude other groups in society. This may also happen semi-consciously and perhaps unawares. Examples of political constraints to education progress in general are cited in the 2018 World Development Report:

Too often, education interventions, whether big reforms or day-to-day implementation steps, are compromised because powerful individuals or groups can make others act in ways that serve private interests rather than the collective good. Powerful actors frequently benefit from the status quo and devise mechanisms to preserve it, regardless of the impact on system performance.

(World Bank, 2018, p. 189)

Even where there is interest at education ministry level to introduce SEL and 4.7 themes in support of personal wellbeing, sustainable development and responsible local, national and global citizenship, there are likely to be political groups and organizations who perceive some aspect of their interests to be under threat. The political dimension is particularly worrisome where there are sensitivities around past conflicts, often related to inequitable situations regarding ethnicity, gender, religion, region and language.

Research for UNICEF's recent program of 'Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy' was structured around the '4Rs' framework. In their brief, Mario Novelli, Alan Smith and Mieke Lopes Cardozo add a fourth 'R' (reconciliation) to those of Nancy Fraser regarding social justice. Their research has shown that barriers to implementation of education for peacebuilding in



14 conflict-affected states are often linked to minority groups suffering lack of recognition and of representation, constraints on redistribution of assets and lack of effort towards reconciliation. The authors note that these 'Rs' could indeed be in conflict themselves in real-life situations. In their example of the education sector in Myanmar, the possible *recognition* of minority languages and associated *redistribution* of resources to develop textbooks and train teachers using the respective minority languages, together with greater *representation* of the minorities in education governance might initially hinder the *reconciliation* process, including frustration of communities whose languages were not adopted as a language of instruction.

From Alexandra Lewis' brief on Somaliland, already cited above, we learn that new textbooks carefully designed to give representation to different stakeholders and avoid sensitive content regarding clan history and identity do not necessarily reach students in the classroom for various practical reasons. Another problem was that for some teachers the avoidance of clan focus in the forward-looking texts was itself a political problem. Teachers stated that:

[schools] are owned, sustained and maintained by the clan, and they are clan-dominated. So [a clan] might recommend strongly that the school teaches the history of that clan. If a clan has an influence on the school, they will have an influence on the identity of the students. Members of the diaspora might also come to the school and visit and tell them about the clan, or an elder can come in and talk about it, and the school can be linked to clan identity... the sensitivity of clan politics means that clannism is a topic generally shied away from in teacher training programmes.

In a contrasting example, Bethany Mulimbi describes a peaceful setting in Botswana, where the widespread acceptance of a policy of nation-building around the Tswana language and culture was accepted at the time of independence as a means of preserving peace in a country surrounded by conflict and division. Decision-makers still hesitate to move towards greater recognition within

curricula of the minority ethnicities in the country, perhaps on the basis of 'If it's not broken, don't fix it'. Discussion of the SDGs and 4.7 themes may help achieve a balanced recognition of diversity within a culture of peace.

Midway between the cases of Somaliland and Botswana, one might cite the teaching of SEL in Bosnia Herzegovina. The brief by Sara Clarke Habibi shows that the pre-conflict timetable allowance for 'home room' teaching of SEL was continued in each of the post-conflict segments of the country, but with different content selected by the teachers to fit with student needs and also with the political viewpoints of the particular area.

## **Pointers to including selected 4.7 content and SEL in textbooks?**

This volume primarily focuses on how textbooks and other educational materials can support 4.7 content and SEL. Close engagement with teachers, parents, civil society organizations and other stakeholders is suggested in order to devise a consensus over innovations in content and pedagogy.

While Section Six addresses several of the practical issues of textbook renewal, and Section Nine some issues of strategy, we may consider here some of the issues that often constitute barriers in the minds of policymakers: How can high level curriculum goals be best reflected in textbook content? How can the weekly school schedule be altered in order to set aside time for cross-cutting issues? How can these reforms be undertaken in contexts where the curriculum and textbooks are overloaded? Does international discussion of these issues constitute an invasion of 'sovereignty'? And how can examination boards help rather than hinder the incorporation of situationally relevant and impactful 4.7 themes and SEL?

## Gaps between curriculum, syllabus and textbook

The curriculum in LMICs typically means something quite different from that found in high-income countries, where waves of decentralization have provided local schools with greater legitimacy for contextualizing their syllabi within national frameworks, choosing alternative instructional materials and providing electives for students to choose from. This stands in stark contrast to the situation of highly centralized systems in many LMICs in which schools are expected to implement curricular intentions in full and with minimal deviation. Centralizing tendencies are both an advantage and a disadvantage in issues such as recognising diversity or promoting gender equality or environmental care, or in dealing with teacher education and professional development.

In such settings, curriculum documents may make all the needed commitments, but these are sometimes very diluted in subject syllabi; textbook writers may be at a loss as to how to proceed in an unfamiliar area of content and pedagogy. It is important for issues such as 4.7 themes and SEL that the national curriculum offers guidance on the approach to be taken in the textbooks. Practice shows that even where the overall curriculum vision is designed at a high level and incorporates such commitments, subject specialist writing teams may effectively ignore this and write texts as before, which may fail to reflect the high level vision. It is hoped that some of the thinking in this volume can be incorporated in future curricular frameworks as a guide to writers on how to move from high-level concepts to text that will engage and motivate students including in relation to their own context and present or future agency.

## Finding time for 4.7 themes and SEL

Where there is political will, time can be found. Thus, in New Delhi, a decision was taken that as of 2018 all students in grades 1 to 8 would have a standalone lesson on SEL, presented in contextualized

form as mindfulness and happiness education.<sup>1</sup> It is to be hoped that the initial apparent success of this plan will mean that it continues indefinitely. Teachers' initial observations indicate that this new curriculum element supports improved focus in conventional school subject lessons.

In addition to political will, there is often a lack of substantial time allocated in the timetable to discuss 4.7 themes and allow for student engagement. One such example is double-shifting in schools. Also, the tradition in LMICs is often that lessons are short, often 30-35 minutes, even in grade 1, which impedes pro-social and more interactive learning. Due to shortage of time, the introduction of a stand-alone subject such as life skills or peace education into the official school timetable may not have the desired effect, with this timetable slot being raided to give more time for 'core' subjects which feature in high stakes national examinations.

Hence the idea of using 'carrier subjects' or 'integration' or 'infusion', as the terminology may be, with the selected 4.7 themes and SEL being built into the core subjects themselves as cross-cutting issues or competencies. Broadly speaking, cooperation and collaboration around environmental and health themes can be built into science, mathematics and geography texts. SEL skills and 4.7 themes of respect for diversity and gender equality and conflict resolution can be built into social studies. And intrapersonal as well as interpersonal SEL and 4.7 themes can be built into language textbooks.

*However, this integration into carrier subjects is not easy. Time and space are needed for textbook writers to find relevant information aligned to the national context, covering topics selected as national priorities within 4.7 themes and SEL, and taking note of the diverse regions and cultural groups. In-depth efforts are needed to find ways to link the carrier subject's big ideas and concepts to relevant examples from within the country or region, showing the link to the prosocial action required of future citizens by Target*

1 <https://thelocalindian.com/awareness/delhi-government-happiness-curriculum/>

4.7: helping conserve water or prevent erosion by tree planting, for example, as implications of what is learned in science. For history, are there monuments or cultural traditions that need to be preserved or disposed of, and are young people helping? For literature, do stories and drama include young people facing contemporary dilemmas?

NISSEM stresses that (modest) resources and time are needed for generating such context-specific and cross-curricular materials, and preferably for piloting them in advance of incorporation in educational materials by textbook writers. Without this, it is doubtful if 4.7 themes and SEL can be integrated on a cross-cutting basis, in a way that can impact student identity and agency. The process would benefit by including *young people* themselves in the piloting stage, providing feedback and perhaps suggesting new content. This time and space allocation—finding resources for generation of innovative context-specific textbook content—represents a way to overcome another concern: that of national sovereignty.

As noted in Section Four, there are modalities through which global thinking and even financial support can amplify 4.7 themes such as respect for diversity or peacebuilding or less sensitive themes, through enabling and encouraging representative groups of informed *national* stakeholders from the different groups in society to guide and review the content of textbooks, to see that they support national and international commitments to children and to the process of peaceful and sustainable development.

### **Engaging examination and textbook writing staff together to support 4.7 and SEL content**

It is all too easy for curriculum and textbook reform to take place in isolation and for national examinations to continue unchanged, thereby frustrating the accomplishment of actual change in the classroom. Students, teachers and parents in many contexts are concerned with preparing for high stakes examinations.

Examiners have the opportunity to turn the tap on or off for attention to 4.7 themes and SEL. An examiner from the Uganda National Examinations Board told one of us how it responded to a perceived need—for students to be better equipped to write a letter to a government department or large enterprise. The Board hinted that this sort of question might be expected in English language examinations and teachers took the hint, she said. If an examination board adopts a policy whereby students' ability to give an example of a science, social science or language application of particular 4.7 themes or SEL in the local context, then students and teachers will take an interest. But this must be done in collaboration with textbook writers so that the latter provide exemplars and prepare the students to answer such questions. Examiners should be party to the ways in which cross-cutting issues are incorporated in textbooks and the objectives in terms of student learning. For a discussion of the need for coherence between curriculum and examinations, see Atuhurra and Kaffenberger (2019). The brief by Esther Care stresses the insights into learning progression and goals that can be provided by assessment specialists, meaning that a two-way relationship between writers and testers can contribute to solving some of the problems addressed here.

This is but one illustration of the theme of this overview, that the constraints on implementing commitments on Target 4.7 themes and SEL are immense, but that with innovative and collaborative processes, much can be done.

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## Textbook content as a symptom of deeper struggles: A ‘4Rs’ framework to analyze education in conflict-affected situations

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### ABSTRACT

Education content matters but cannot be understood in isolation from its historical, socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. In this text, we discuss the ‘4Rs’ framework that we have designed as an analytical tool that allows researchers, policy-developers and practitioners to grasp the interconnected dimensions that shape and drive education systems, practices and outcomes. The framework’s central normative position is that inequalities and injustice (including within the education system) are important for understanding the reasons for the outbreak of violent conflict (the drivers of conflict) and that addressing inequalities (including in education) is necessary to bring about sustainable peace and overcome the legacies of conflict. Drawing on examples from the case of Myanmar, we illustrate how when applying the framework to look at the peacebuilding potential and pitfalls of education content, the four dimensions of the framework are closely interconnected, and can work in support or in tension with each other. We see the 4Rs as a small contribution to the collective endeavor of building theoretically informed, but practically accessible tools to support better education policy and practice in conflict-affected contexts.

### KEYWORDS

sustainable peace, social justice, textbook content

## Content matters, but cannot be understood in isolation

‘Our heroes are their enemies and our enemies are their heroes’  
(Mon ethnic teacher in Myanmar, quoted in Maber et al, 2019: 132)

Educational content and textbooks are critical elements in processes of nation- and peace-building. For example, there is a legacy of control over textbooks by the military state for purposes of state building in the context of Myanmar (Salem-Gervais and Metro, 2012). Recent research highlights how in the segregated schooling system in Myanmar, teachers in both government schools and so-called (non-government-led) ethnic schools equally struggle with the partisan nature of their respective prescribed history curricula (for more details and background information on the context of Myanmar, please see Maber et al, 2019). History textbooks used in government schools are perceived to be ‘Burman-centric’ by ethnic minorities, while ‘ethnonationalist organizations that run schools aspire to teach children the history of their own ethnic group as opposed to the history of Burma as a whole’ (Metro, 2013: 150). As the quote above by a Mon ethnic teacher illustrates, historical narratives as presented in textbooks can work to establish a process of ‘othering’, which establishes a set of protagonist and antagonist actors in contemporary national discourse.

To develop a more complete understanding of what ‘history content’ means for processes of social cohesion in societies, we need to analyze the sector and broader socio-political and economic systems within which that educational practice is situated. Education content cannot be understood in isolation from its historical, socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. In other words, we need to take into consideration various layers of complexities of—in this case—Myanmar’s segregated education system, the existence of multiple (history) curricula and systems of teacher training, the historical context of military domination and



diverse oppositional movements in which the education landscape has been shaped and utilized and the current socio-political and economic panorama. In order to conduct such research, we developed the 4Rs framework as an attempt to design an analytical tool that allows researchers, policy-developers and practitioners alike to grasp the interconnected dimensions that shape and drive education sectors, its practices and societal outcomes.

## Why we developed the 4Rs framework

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition both of the importance of working in conflict-affected contexts and of the increasing evidence for the very particular effects of conflict on educational access and quality and vice versa—the importance of education in driving conflicts or building peaceful societies (Smith, 2005; Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008). This has also led to an interest in understanding the particularities of the educational challenges faced in conflict-affected contexts and to a growing recognition that policymakers, donors and practitioners working in the education sector in conflict-affected contexts are faced with huge and distinct challenges and priorities requiring new and innovative ways of funding, planning, governing and evaluating education policy interventions (Davies, 2009). As a result of this rising interest and growing field of education in emergencies (EiE), the literature on education and conflict has expanded greatly over the last decade (Bush and Saltarelli 2000, Smith and Vaux 2003, Davies 2004, Novelli, 2014). There is also interest in better understanding the relationship between education, conflict and peace and the way education systems might become more conflict-sensitive (Smith, 2010; Novelli & Smith, 2012). Linked to this is interest in political economy research in the sector and a mushrooming of political economy tools to facilitate policy development and planning (Novelli et al, 2014).

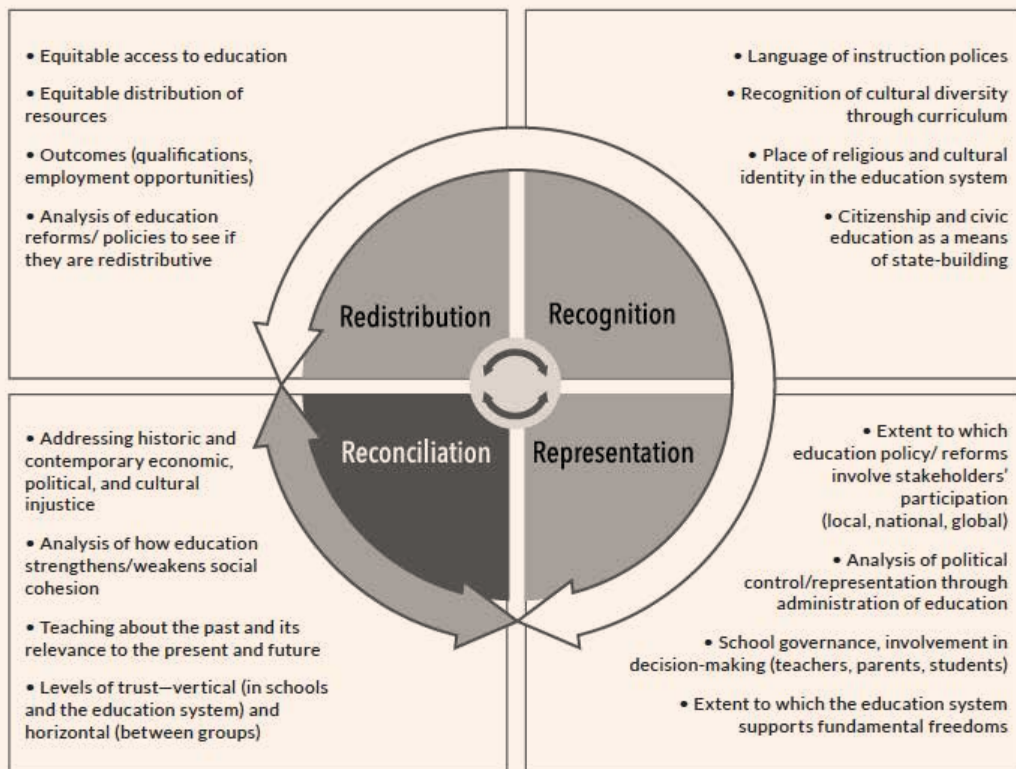
The 4Rs framework was developed with colleagues from the University of Sussex, University of Amsterdam and Ulster

University (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2017) and has been applied in research in various conflict-affected contexts (Pakistan, Rwanda, South Sudan, Kenya, Myanmar, Uganda, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and South Africa) to examine educational governance and policy in relation to education, conflict and peace. The framework's central normative position is that inequalities and injustice (including within the education system) are important for understanding the reasons for the outbreak of civil wars (the drivers of conflict) and that addressing inequalities (including in education) is necessary to bring about sustainable peace and overcome the legacies of conflict. By 'sustainable peace' we refer to a situation where both negative peace—or a cessation of violence—and positive peace—addressing the underpinning drivers of conflict—are addressed.

Building on Nancy Fraser's (2005) work, we position the potentially transformative role education can play as inherently connected to and embedded in processes of social justice and societal transformation. Fraser, a philosopher by training who brings (but is not limited to) a critical feminist perspective, asserts that a socially just society would entail 'parity of participation.' She argues further that, to ensure 'participation on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction' (73), one should adopt the economic solution of redistributing resources and opportunities and include sociocultural remedies for better recognition and political representation. When reflecting on inequalities, and inspired by Fraser's work, we had a strong sense that we needed to go beyond the economic dimension of societal injustices.

For this reason, we drew on a version of Fraser's theory of social justice, exploring educational inequalities more broadly in terms of *redistribution*, *recognition* and *representation* (Fraser 1995; 2005). In our understanding of these concepts they were linked respectively to economic inequalities related to the funding and management of education (*redistribution*); inequalities and injustices related to cultural representation and misrecognition (*recognition*); and finally, inequalities linked to participation and democratic deficits in the

governance and management of education (*representation*). These three 'Rs' helped us to explore different dimensions of educational inequalities (economic, cultural and political) as drivers of conflict in education. We then added a fourth R (*reconciliation*), which allowed us to explore not only the potential drivers of conflict, but also the legacies of conflict and how education might bring communities together through processes of healing and psycho-social interventions and transitional justice (truth, justice and reparations).



**Figure 1:** Sustainable Peacebuilding in Education: The 4Rs Analytical Framework

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 Source: Novelli, Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2017

We believe that there is a dialectical relationship between the drivers of conflict and the legacies of conflict, and that we need to reflect carefully on the balance between addressing inequalities and developing processes that build trust within and between communities affected by conflict. That is to say, a political discussion is needed to balance the needs of historically marginalized communities who demand reforms to redress inequalities and the need for policies to be inclusive of both victims and perpetrators who would need to live side by side and reconstruct new relationships out of the violence and pain of war. The 4Rs approach thus allowed us to develop a theoretically informed heuristic device to explore the multi-dimensional ways that education systems might (re)produce or reduce educational and societal inequalities, and in so doing undermine or promote sustainable peace and development in and through education.

As with much of the work in our field of inquiry, we sought to develop a tool that was policy-relevant but informed by ideals of promoting peace with social justice—which we continue to believe is the only way that long-term sustainable peace can be achieved in countries affected by conflict. We developed the 4Rs approach as a heuristic device to support the process of design, data collection and analysis in order to reflect on the dilemmas and contradictions inherent in supporting the positive role that education might play in conflict-affected contexts. Our aim is that this framework becomes a diagnostic tool that will spark a dialogue among key stakeholders and be adapted in ways relevant to different cultural, political, and economic contexts (see Figure 1).

While we view this analytical approach and its application as a constant work in progress, it already allows for a much sharper focus on the complex ways that inequalities within education, in their multiple and varied manifestations, might be linked to drivers of conflict. Furthermore, it allows us to go beyond the narrow 'access' and 'quality' debates prevalent in the field of education and international development—both from a human capital and

a rights-based perspective—and to reflect more holistically on the relationship of education systems to economic, social, cultural and political development processes and to the production of inequalities that fuel the grievances that often drive conflicts. Viewing education as being an integral part of a living ecosystem encourages an analysis that accounts for the spatio- and temporal specificities (in other words, time and space matter when designing research and interventions). It invites us to reflect backward, inward, outward and forward, directing attention to imagining sustainable and peaceful futures that take seriously the material and discursive challenges at multiple levels.

## **Recognizing the tensions within and between social justice and reconciliation**

In keeping with Fraser’s line of thought, while the dimensions of the 4Rs are separated for analytical purposes, they are actually closely interlinked. We also need to acknowledge how internal relations between these ‘Rs’ can be reinforcing or conflictive. If we briefly return to the earlier example on Myanmar, recognizing formerly-excluded ethnic languages in education and redistributing resources to train teachers and develop textbooks and educational content to enhance this process could lead to greater representation of ethnic minority graduates in decision-making positions at the school governance level or in political positions. However, opening up to diverse languages also might hinder the reconciliation process, as some minority languages might be included as a language of instruction while others are not, thus creating resentment among various groups of students. This is particularly a concern in a context like Myanmar, where education service provision has been on the table at various levels of peace talks between government and non-government parties (Maber, 2019).

Similarly, addressing and redressing inequalities that drive conflicts is not necessarily a win-win process. Previous or current

dominant social groups might feel threatened by redistributive policies that seek to rebalance societal privileges in favor of oppressed groups. This is where tensions might emerge between those who want to emphasize social justice and those who seek to emphasize peace and reconciliation. For example, while treating everyone the same—for example, by equalizing the per capita education spending on all children might work as a mechanism for ‘reconciliation’ where all citizens feel they are being treated the same regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender etc—this equality of treatment in a highly unequal society might inadvertently reproduce the historical inequalities that underpin social injustice. Such an approach to education policy might give the illusion of change without any real transformation.

## **Applying the 4Rs to analyze the relation between education and peacebuilding**

So, what does this analytical framework mean in terms of examining the relationships between education, armed conflict and peace, whether in research projects or when designing or reviewing policy-related or programmatic work? Sustainable peacebuilding should not be conceptualized just as a means ‘to’ education (access) but also ‘in and through’ education. It should consider how teaching and learning processes and outcomes can reproduce certain (socioeconomic, cultural, and political) inequalities (Keddie, 2012) and thus can stand in the way of, or reinforce, processes of reconciliation and foster education’s negative, or positive, face (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000).

We also see the 4Rs model as a possible approach to designing and structuring research and programs, whereby starting from a comprehensive 4Rs-inspired context-and-conflict analysis informs the choices made. The 4Rs framework has also been applied to analyze and examine the way specific interventions positively or negatively impact sustainable peace outcomes on various fronts, for instance in the cases of Myanmar, Kenya, Pakistan, South

Sudan, South Africa and Uganda, in the context of the Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding<sup>1</sup>. To do justice to education's full potential, the model aims to move away from narrow technical approaches to understanding, designing, and implementing education in conflict-affected regions, and toward a model that allows for the examination of and positive engagement with a wider range of conflict drivers and legacies.

## Moving beyond a focus on textbooks

A number of important aspects emerge when exploring the four interrelated Rs. The affirmation and recognition of learners' diversity and everyone's learning needs in educational processes, structures, and content can be referred to as 'curricular justice' (Connell 2012). This aspect of recognition is strongly related to the redistributive aspect of equal opportunities and outcomes for children and youth of different groups in society. The structure and content that feed into pedagogical processes are again connected to both reconciliation (e.g., if and how history is taught or if attitudinal change is part of an educational initiative) and representation (e.g., whether learners are made aware of their various rights and responsibilities as citizens, and if, how and why (certain) political and conflict-related issues are discussed or negated). Issues around representation extend further into the actual 'equitable participation' of various stakeholders, including teachers, students, youth, parents, and community members of all genders at the grassroots level. This can be illustrated with examples from Myanmar and Pakistan derived from studies conducted in the context of the Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding. In interviews with ethnic minority students in Myanmar, they expressed their frustration at a curriculum that did not recognize their

1 For all outputs of the Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding, see <https://educationanddevelopment.wordpress.com/rp/research-consortium-education-and-peacebuilding/>

particular historical traditions and failed to incorporate diverse perspectives. Such youth responses were not only linked to the nature of the content, but also to the pedagogical processes through which such subjects were taught. Myanmar ethnic minority youth emphatically called for approaches that were less teacher-led, lecture based and authoritarian and which gave them opportunities to do their own research and express and develop their own views within a more participatory approach (Higgins et al., 2016: 56). In Pakistan, the research team noted that 'when students are able to engage in activity based learning and are exposed to alternative historical narratives they develop a relatively open and critical understanding of history' (Durrani et al., 2016: 177).

The actual decision-making power over education is often related to the allocation, use, and (re)distribution of human and material resources (Young, 2006; Robertson and Dale, 2013). Especially in conflict-affected societies, an important aspect of redistribution is for all students to have equal access to a safe journey *to* and *through* their learning environment. Finally, and connecting all intersecting dimensions of recognition, representation, redistribution and reconciliation, the inclusion of all students—regardless of age, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, race, language, class, among others—requires a genuine and long-term commitment by both government and non-government actors to encourage and support formerly marginalized or disadvantaged youth in their educational and (early) professional careers.

## Theory-building in process: implications and suggestions

In this short piece, we have shared the 4Rs analytical framework, calling for a peace with social justice and reconciliation approach to education systems affected by violent conflict. While aspects of the model are potentially relevant across different contexts, it must be tailored to the specific needs of each area of research or



intervention. This will allow researchers and practitioners alike to produce high-quality, relevant understanding of the challenges, roles, and possibilities of education's contribution to promoting sustainable peace. As highlighted at the start of this text, the 4Rs framework acknowledges the crucial nature of textbooks and education content in terms of both its transformative and reconciliatory potential, as well as its potential to reproduce negative stereotypes and harmful perceptions. In doing so, the 4Rs framing situates and scrutinizes the role of educational content and curricula as part of a multidimensional, social justice-oriented analysis.

We are conscious that, like any research tool, it is the skill of the researcher(s) that will determine whether its application is powerful enough to capture the complex interactions between the different Rs. We are also aware that the research is grounded in sufficient depth and knowledge of the particular historical, political, economic, social and cultural conditions of the research context. We therefore hope the 4Rs framework is treated as a starting point for critical reflection rather than a normative and simplistic endpoint.

We hope to refine, develop, sharpen, and transform the framework so it can more accurately reflect the combined knowledge that emerges from ongoing research processes in academia, practice and policy fields.

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## Constructing national identity in the midst of ethnic diversity in Botswana's junior secondary schools

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### ABSTRACT

This brief examines how national identity constructed through the social studies curriculum—as written and as taught—takes into account the reality of ethnic diversity in the nation-state of Botswana and its schools. It is based on an analysis of written curriculum and case studies in four junior secondary schools (JSS) situated in different regions of Botswana. The selected schools vary in the ethnic composition of their student bodies and surrounding communities. The curriculum, as written and taught, perpetuates an assimilationist construction of Botswana's national identity built around the culture and language of the majority Tswana ethnic groups despite growing government support for a discourse of a tolerant, multicultural nation. The brief concludes with a discussion of the implications for sustainable peace and steps that education policy-makers and curriculum writers can take to support a more inclusive national identity in Botswana's curriculum.

### KEYWORDS

Botswana, national identity, curriculum, assimilation, multiculturalism

## Constructing national identity in the midst of ethnic diversity in Botswana's junior secondary schools

From a global perspective, virtually all multiethnic states face the dilemma of how to negotiate ethnic diversity while promoting a unified national identity. In Botswana, a remarkable example of peace and stability in sub-Saharan Africa, two highly visible discourses around national identity currently compete across public spheres—one constructing national identity around the majority ethnic group's culture and language, and the other of a tolerant, multicultural nation.

Formal schools are key institutions through which the nature and effects of these competing discourses can be observed. Globally, many states use mass education as a vehicle to transmit an authorized version of national identity through centralized education policies and curriculum. Yet schools are also sites in which ordinary teachers and students actively participate in constructing the nation.

Botswana has been regionally exceptional in its avoidance of armed conflict—particularly along ethnic or racial lines—despite similar linguistic and cultural diversity to that of its neighbors. This brief examines how national identity constructed through social studies curriculum, as written and as taught, takes into account the reality of ethnic diversity in the nation-state of Botswana and its schools and discusses the implications of this kind of curriculum intervention for sustainable peace.

### Post-independence nation-building

Since independence in 1966, the state leadership in Botswana has been well aware of violence and weak governance in surrounding countries and has consciously and preemptively worked to build peace and stability in Botswana. Leaders have recognized that they faced the same dilemma as those countries; that is, how to manage ethnic diversity while promoting a sense of national unity.

A significant drive behind Botswana's construction of a unifying national identity has been the avoidance of 'tribalism' leading to inter-ethnic conflict. There are numerous ethnic groups within Botswana's national borders. Of these, the Constitution recognizes eight 'major tribes' who share a common language, Setswana, and who live mainly in the south and east of Botswana. These eight Tswana ethnic groups form the majority in political and legal terms, while around 20 non-Tswana groups make up the minority.

For the first three decades after independence, Botswana's leaders took the approach of building national unity through assimilation to a 'common' identity built around the Tswana culture and language. In the past two decades, due to domestic pressure from minority rights activists and changing global and regional dynamics, the government began introducing multicultural discourse into national policies (Dryden-Peterson & Mulimbi, 2017). Both discourses—assimilationist and multicultural—coexist and compete in Botswana today.

These two competing discourses are particularly apparent in expectations placed on schools, which current policies simultaneously ask to: (a) promote unity through educating all students in Tswana culture and language and (b) 'recognize, support and strengthen Botswana's wealth of different languages and cultural traditions' (Presidential Task Group, 1997, p. 5).

Tensions between assimilationist and multicultural constructions of Botswana's national identity in school curriculum are significant for both Botswana's continued stability and students' well-being. Assimilationist policies, alongside equitable investment in infrastructure, may have supported national unity and the avoidance of ethnically-based violence in the immediate post-independence period (Dryden-Peterson & Mulimbi, 2017; Gulbrandsen, 2012). On the other hand, scholars have recently attributed comparatively higher school drop-out rates and poor academic performance among many minority ethnic groups to assimilationist school policies and curriculum (see, for example, Jotia & Pansiri, 2013).

## Botswana's public education system

Botswana's government has consistently viewed public schools as a particularly important institution for building national unity. From the first post-independent education policy document, they declared public education 'potentially the most important single instrument for nation-building' (Republic of Botswana, 1977, p. 12). By investing heavily in education, the government rapidly increased access to schools nationwide, so that today approximately 90% of children in Botswana complete a ten-year basic education. The curriculum used in all but the most elite private schools is written and approved by the central Ministry of Basic Education, ensuring that the syllabus and approved textbooks are uniform across Botswana.

Language of instruction policy has been a contentious issue. In public schools, Setswana—the common language of the Tswana groups as well as the national language—is the language of instruction for all students for the first year of primary school, after which instruction is carried out in English, with Setswana a compulsory subject through the end of senior secondary school (Republic of Botswana, 1994). When the most current education policy was drafted in 1993, the committee included a recommendation to offer primary school instruction in minority languages, but this recommendation was rejected in the final policy because it was 'counter to national language policy' (Republic of Botswana, 1994, p. 85). With the introduction of one year of public pre-primary education in 2015, minority languages are allowed in this year alone, during which time children are expected to develop basic proficiency in spoken Setswana.

By and large, teachers in Botswana's government schools are dependent on the central government and Ministry of Basic Education for their own education, sponsorship of their tertiary studies, employment, and content delivery. They have little control over what they teach, since the programs they are eligible to study and receive government sponsorship for at university or colleges

of education are dependent on their performance in the secondary school leaving exams. They have similarly limited control over how they teach, as the highly specific content of syllabi and approved textbooks leaves little room for teachers to make content and delivery decisions.

### **Junior secondary school cases: Social studies curriculum**

This analysis is based on case studies in four junior secondary schools (JSS) situated in different regions of Botswana. These schools were chosen because JSS is the last level of the ten-year basic education program. The national identity constructed through JSS curriculum therefore reaches approximately 90% of students, as opposed to the 60% that attend senior secondary school. Moreover, students at JSS (approximately aged 14–18) have reached a developmental stage in which individuals are concerned with developing their identity in relation to a larger society beyond their family, and when national and ethnic identity may become especially relevant.

The school sites were intentionally selected in four regions of Botswana that vary in the ethnic composition of their student bodies and surrounding communities. The ethnic identities with which teachers, students, and community members identified were hypothesized to influence how teachers conveyed notions of national identity, as well as how students responded to the curriculum and how schools responded to their students' multiculturalism. These latter lines of inquiry are developed in more detail elsewhere (Mulimbi & Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Mulimbi & Dryden-Peterson, in press).

The data comprises JSS social studies syllabus (2010) and centrally approved textbooks (2009–2010) which were current at the time of the study; interviews with curriculum writers (2); lesson observations (25); field notes; and interviews with social studies teachers (11) in the four schools. An in-depth examination of the

curriculum and schools allows insight into the extent to which formal classroom instruction around Botswana's national identity recognizes the cultural diversity of the nation's student body, and into the underlying rationale on the part of curriculum writers and teachers.

The social studies curriculum as written reveals a mainly assimilationist construction of Botswana's national identity, albeit with some acknowledgment of contributions of minority ethnic groups. Tswana cultural norms and historical understandings dominate the cultural components of national identity as described in the textbooks, while the texts include a strong emphasis on civic components that transcend any ethnic group. Throughout the textbooks, readers encounter more direct references to Tswana culture and historical Tswana individuals and groups than to all other ethnic groups combined. The textbooks confine content drawn from minority ethnic groups almost exclusively to chapters on cultural diversity and pre-colonial history. In contrast, they integrate knowledge of Tswana groups and Setswana phrases into every chapter, on topics as diverse as traditional initiation and marriage ceremonies, expectations for family life, environmental conservation practices, proverbs governing morality, and the roles of chiefs and traditional courts in present times.

While the social studies textbooks encourage assimilation to Tswana norms and historical understandings as a common culture, they also devote great attention to civic building blocks of Botswana's national identity. The textbooks regularly call upon *kagisano* (social harmony) and Botswana's five national principles—*botho* (roughly translated as respect), democracy, development, self-reliance, and unity—as they discuss elements of common national values. Most of the focus on national symbols, values, and goals falls within the textbooks' civics units, which ask students to conceptualize the world using national rather than ethnic frames of reference. The textbooks also celebrate the equal rights and responsibilities bestowed on individuals by virtue of being citizens of the nation, but rarely do they position ethnic groups

as actors and never as entities that could be granted group-level rights. For example, the textbook's explanation of law establishes both how the law protects individual level rights and how it would be dangerous if applied in such a way as to privilege a group: 'The law defends the rights of all equally. If by any chance it is applied unequally to one class of people over the others, the law turns from being an instrument of protection to being an instrument of oppression' (Tsayang, Rampha, & Mpitse, 2009, p.174). Through their emphasis on individuals and nations as actors, the textbooks sideline ethnicity and its cultural signifiers as a potentially important source of identity.

In interviews, curriculum writers described the conscious decisions over decades, and still in force today, to emphasize civic national ideals for the sake of building a peaceful nation, and to focus on tolerance more than detailed knowledge of ethnic diversity. As a syllabus author explained, 'At the time of independence, it is ethnicity in Africa that has actually led to a lot of civil wars. Our main task as a nation has been to try and bring the different people we have in Botswana together.' He further explained that the social studies syllabus builds unity upon national principles, the electoral system and national symbols. Limited passages in the textbooks describe a diversity of cultures within Botswana and promote tolerance of cultural differences. Still, content on non-Tswana groups is limited to three chapters of a single textbook, whereas details of Tswana language and social practices is infused throughout the books.

The curriculum as taught largely mirrors the syllabus and textbook-based conceptions of national identity. Across 25 observations of social studies lessons, teachers demonstrated exceptionally high fidelity to the curriculum as written, regardless of their own diverse backgrounds. Approximately 75% of all lesson content observed directly matched or supported, through additional examples, the written curriculum.

Interviews with 11 social studies teachers (of which five identified as Tswana and six as minority ethnic groups), revealed a variety of

pragmatic and ideological reasons for the teachers' choice to tightly align their instruction to the syllabus and textbooks. Many teachers offered perspectives that largely matched the curriculum they were expected to teach, frequently citing a desire for unity fueled by fear of ethnic conflict. Most of the teachers interviewed saw value in promoting Setswana as a common national language, for the sake of unity. Teachers also mentioned the same civic elements of national identity that they taught as part of the curriculum when they described enjoying rights and safety as citizens of Botswana, which they did not perceive other countries in the region offering.

In addition to these ideological explanations for closely following the written curriculum, teachers described practical concerns that encouraged them to implement the syllabus and textbooks as written, even in cases where they might take issue with the curriculum. Teachers demonstrated great deference to the authority structures governing their schools, sought to cover the syllabus to avoid blame for students' failure on high-stakes exams, and expressed fears of the political ramifications of presenting dissenting views on Botswana's national identity and the integration of ethnic groups.

## Implications for sustainable peace

Despite a growing discourse of tolerance and multiculturalism in Botswana, the social studies curriculum as written and taught largely maintains Tswana dominance in constructing Botswana's national identity. The curriculum integrates multicultural content at the most basic level—acknowledging some contributions from minority groups without attending to the meanings of these contributions from their group members' perspectives. The emphasis on tolerance over deep knowledge and multiple perspectives does not create a space where intricacies of cultural and linguistic differences can be discussed meaningfully.

Teachers in the four ethnically diverse junior secondary schools participating in the case study accepted the assimilationist



approach to national identity out of ideological and practical concerns. These teachers, regardless of their own cultural background, had successfully navigated an education system that required them to study Tswana cultural practices and gain competence in Setswana. They earned their living, and relatively high socioeconomic status, as servants of the state that has promoted such assimilationist policies.

Many of their students cannot expect such positive outcomes. Nationally, only about two-thirds of JSS students progress to senior secondary school, and the proportion is far lower in the predominantly minority northwestern region. Fewer still progress to tertiary institutions that will prepare them for gainful employment. Equal access to schools clearly does not equate with equitable outcomes from schooling. Scholars and minority rights advocates within Botswana, citing global research on multicultural education, fault a curriculum that encourages assimilation to a dominant cultural group while alienating students from minority cultures and contributing to achievement disparities.

The contrast in realities facing adult teachers and their adolescent students points to changing conditions that may warrant a change in the construction of national identity. In the first decades after independence, sacrificing some rights to cultural and linguistic recognition may have been acceptable to attain collective freedom from violence. Yet in the current era of extended peace in Botswana, the public's attention is increasingly focused on economic downturn and youth unemployment. In this environment, power and opportunity imbalances—rather than violence—between ethnic groups may be the more relevant threat to Botswana's stability.

## A way forward

To support long-term stability by explicitly teaching a more inclusive national identity in Botswana's public schools, educational policy-makers and curriculum writers can take

several steps. First, social studies curriculum and instruction can include and promote discussion of alternative viewpoints within historical narratives, thereby teaching students to attend to issues of time period and position of various authors. Second, contemporary issues of discrimination and inequalities between ethnic groups that have arisen from historical events can be included in the official curriculum, with teachers offered professional development on how to lead an effective discussion on controversial topics. Finally, language of instruction policies should be reviewed, considering minority languages not as problems to overcome but as resources through which to foster equitable learning in a tolerant and diverse nation.

Curriculum and policy revision periods represent the most feasible moments to make these suggested changes in Botswana. The written curriculum is reviewed every 5–10 years, with changes to the syllabi reflected in revised textbooks or memos to teachers to 'infuse' new topics into the curriculum. Schools submit requisition requests annually and receive a steady supply of current textbooks for teachers and students. As Botswana is currently moving toward a model of continuous professional development for teachers, trainings in managing effective classroom discussion and debate and teaching controversial topics could be developed and offered. Decisions about languages of instruction were debated when the first and revised national education policies were developed. The current policy dates back to 1994 and will soon be revised. Language of instruction policies should again be carefully reviewed as part of the background study and debate of changing national needs and priorities. As is common in Botswana when policy and vision documents are written, this process should include opportunities to hear perspectives of a wide variety of stakeholders and consider lessons learned from other country contexts on the outcomes of different models. Through such consultative processes, Botswana has the opportunity to gauge the evolving needs and concerns of the people and incorporate them into national education policy, preparing its

diverse citizenry for meaningful participation and sustainable development.

## Learn more

This brief is adapted from 'Pathways Toward Peace? Negotiating National Unity and Ethnic Diversity Through Education in Botswana' (Dryden-Peterson & Mulimbi, 2017) and "'There is still peace. There are no wars.': Prioritizing Unity Over Diversity in Botswana's Social Studies Policies and Practices and the Implications for Positive Peace' (Mulimbi & Dryden-Peterson, 2018). To read more about the case study schools' responses to their diverse student bodies, see 'Responses to Cultural Diversity in Botswana's Schools: Links Between National Policy, School Actions and Students' Civic Equality' (Mulimbi & Dryden-Peterson, 2017). For case studies of two students negotiating their developing national and ethnic identities within schools, read 'Experiences of (Dis)Unity: Students' Negotiation of Ethnic and National Identities in Botswana Schools' (Mulimbi & Dryden-Peterson, in press).

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## Linking teacher training to effective delivery of curriculum reform: Why listening to teachers is key to achieving progress toward SDG 4 in Somaliland

ALEXANDRA LEWIS

### ABSTRACT

Somaliland is a semi-autonomous quasi-state in the Horn of Africa, whose independence has yet to be recognized by the international community. Though there has been significant diaspora and returnee investment in private schools in Somaliland, state schools are severely underfunded, and teachers across both education systems are paid hourly, teaching in multiple schools at once to earn a full-time salary. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education lacks the capacity for effective monitoring of all schools in Somaliland. This has led to the importation of multiple rival curricula which exist in competition with the state curriculum. Teachers make difficult decisions in navigating these different curricula, but this means that the intended message of curriculum reform rarely makes it to the classroom. In light of this situation, rigorous teacher training is needed to help empower teachers to support their students effectively. Such training must be designed in consultation with teachers, so as not to add more pressure to their lives.

### KEYWORDS

Somaliland, Somalia, education, conflict, peacebuilding, teacher training, curriculum reform

## Introduction

Somaliland is a semi-autonomous quasi-state in the Horn of Africa, which declared independence from Somalia in 1991 following the collapse of Siad Barre's Government and the outbreak of the Somali Civil War. Its independence has yet to be recognized by the international community, due predominantly to concerns that such independence might lead to the break-up of the rest of Somalia and the compromising of regional security (but also, sometimes, due to fear for the stability of Somaliland's border territories) (Pijovic, 2014). Martha C. Johnson and Meg Smaker explain that this lack of recognition has had an impact on aid flowing into Somaliland, in that the delivery and distribution of this aid is frequently stalled as it is channelled through Somali institutions in South Central Somalia (2014). They argue that, in the quarter century that Somaliland has existed as a quasi-state in Somalia, it has not been entitled to the 'international protection, large-scale aid, and loans available to governments in other post-collapse contexts', leaving Somaliland to fend for itself in a state-building project that has largely been 'a bottom-up process, relying on clan elders and the financial support of business and diaspora communities' (ibid). Yet such support has had significant impact (Lindley, 2007), turning present-day Somaliland into somewhat of a development paradox. Driving through the streets of Hargeisa, foreign investment by businesses and private individuals is readily apparent in the growing number of high-rises, the expansion of new hotels, cafes and restaurants, the presence of generators to power independent shops, and the mushrooming of billboards advertising the latest fashions and gadgets. However, the streets that connect these attractions are linked by roads that are potholed at best, and simple dirt tracks at worst. Generators are needed everywhere because many buildings are either without central power or without access to reliable power. Water trucks are seen coming in daily to compensate for the absence of an effective water and plumbing system, and shops flood each time that it rains. Cloth

and corrugated iron shanty towns in the hills surrounding the city are what constitute its camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). This is what a landscape looks like when investment in a city does not reach its institutions, when there is little to no capacity for a state to tax its citizens, and when incoming international assistance does not match the pace of internal development. This landscape offers a good metaphor for understanding what is happening in the Somaliland education sector, which is a hodgepodge of underfunded state schools and private schools of varying and questionable quality. 'Anyone can open a school in Somaliland', a teacher tells me in Hargeisa in 2018, 'and it's impossible to know what each one is doing'. The state monitoring capacity is not there, while high demands for new schools and universities make it politically risky for the state to stall the opening of new learning facilities, Ministry employees confirm to me.

The Somaliland Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) also faces continuing external pressure to reform the education system, with much of its ongoing funding linked to foreign aid channelled through UNICEF and partner organizations working towards progress in achieving SDG 4, funded by the EU, DFID, USAID, DANIDA, the Norwegian Embassy, Turkey, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the Government of the Netherlands (Ministry of Human Development and Public Services, Directorate of Education, 2013). This has prompted the MoEHE, with support from the Africa Educational Trust (AET) and the EU, to reform its curriculum, in particular to consolidate its learning resources and textbooks for peacebuilding purposes in order to ensure that all of the different schools across Somaliland are teaching a cohesive vision of a singular national identity rather than a divisive history of clan conflict (Lewis & Winn, 2018). This is important for several reasons. Firstly, SDG 4 upholds the principals of inclusive and equitable quality education, which means that the curriculum should be representative of all Somaliland clans, rather than discriminatory or exclusionary, especially in its narration of recent history. Secondly, graduates of the Somaliland

education system should receive a qualification that represents the completion of secondary school, and this document needs to have recognizable meaning for potential employers across the territory in order to allow for economic and social mobility (whereas currently unrecognized or uncredited qualifications bar such mobility). Thirdly, steering students towards the same exam may allow monitoring of education quality across different schools to ensure that students in rural areas, for instance, are not receiving an inferior quality of education, which might be detectable in their exam results.

In 2018, I travelled to Hargeisa for three weeks on a small grant from the London International Development Centre to investigate the degree to which the reformed curriculum and textbooks were accepted by local teachers as representative of their vision of Somaliland's national identity. Building on past research experience that I had gained through regular travel to the territory since 2013, I found that the textbooks were held in high regard by Ministry employees, and that the textbook authors had put significant effort into making the work representative. However, I also found that teachers and teacher trainers had largely dismissed the arrival of the new books without serious examination of their contents. In particular, most of those teachers whom I interviewed had received the new textbooks some months previously, but only a few had opened them. Some working in private schools had been instructed to disregard the books entirely. Of those who had read them, many had made changes, ripping out chapters that they thought were 'not relevant' to their students because these were not specifically about the districts in which they lived (though the overarching history presented by the books was not entirely out of keeping with their own versions of events). This is not unusual in Somaliland, where teachers are paid hourly per taught lesson and moonlight in multiple schools with insufficient time to learn each curriculum that they teach. It is also not uncommon for a country prone to importing external curricula that are often not relevant for local needs, leading to frequent reforms and resulting in reform

fatigue on the part of teachers, as will be detailed in later sections. In the past, teachers have had to learn to think quickly in adapting curricula to the needs of their students, and often assume that a curriculum is flawed before they receive it: they come to each new textbook ready to make their own changes to the content. Added to this are challenges relating to a lack of widespread teacher training, poor retention of qualified teachers, and problems related to teaching low-income students in a foreign language, with secondary schools mostly being taught in English, and sometimes in Arabic. In this paper, I unpack these challenges further, in order to analyze some of the major obstacles to achieving SDG 4, as they relate to the barriers for delivering quality education provision as explained to me by teachers and education practitioners in Somaliland.

My work is speculative, based on 42 interviews with Ministry employees, teachers, teacher-trainers, UNICEF and Save the Children education specialists, journalists, and students in Hargeisa. Participants were selected for their past experience in Somaliland: in having established schools; authored policy reforms on education; contributed to curriculum reform or textbook authorship; trained teachers; written teacher training program; taught in primary or secondary schools; or, fully completed the national primary and secondary school program. Initial participants were identified in consultation with the University of Hargeisa, where I had a previously established working relationship with Mr Nasir M Ali, Director of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, and then snowballing was used to identify additional participants. I also worked in collaboration with Dr Idil Osman, a colleague at SOAS, who was researching media literacy and whose work had direct bearing on mine, as it was important to establishing the wider context in which learning about national identity took place for teachers and students alike. Due to my focus on teacher experiences and perspectives, as well as my time limitations, I did not seek to interview or observe children in Somaliland classes, though this

would likely be my next logical step. Nevertheless, my findings indicate that significant investment is likely to be needed in teacher training rather than curriculum reform in order to ensure that quality education is delivered equitably. This view was in part echoed by interviewees from the MoEHE, who are also pushing for increasing the level of basic training required to work in Somaliland's schools. However, such training must be implemented carefully, with great sensitivity to the context of Somaliland, in which the significant economic pressures that teachers face in their daily lives have resulted in entrenched suspicion of training initiatives, which are sometimes perceived as a threat to their job security.

### **Reconciling SDG 4 with challenges faced by teachers in Hargeisa**

The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) famously pushed towards universal access to primary education, as did the Education for All goals. However, not all of the EFA goals were met by the framework's deadline of 2015 (Sayed & Ahmed, 2015). This is not to say that the implementation of both frameworks did not lead to a significant push in enrollment of students in schools. On the contrary, in Somalia and Somaliland, it resulted in an increase from 18.8% net enrolment in 2004 (Transitional Federal Government, 2010) to 32% in 2017, in large part due to increased funding made available through donor support to the MDGs (UNICEF, 2017). However, upon reflection, the MDGs were criticized for promoting access over quality, as well as enrollment over retention, and for being too slow in the progress they generated (Unterhalter, 2014). Hence, the UN SDGs have been advanced as a new global agenda for 2030, with SDG4 advocating for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning. To achieve better results in Somaliland in this regard, each of these terms—inclusivity, equity, and equitable quality—need to be carefully redefined and contextualized, taking into



account the current context of education as well as the interplay of education with wider socio-political challenges related to post-conflict recovery.

Compared to its southern neighbors of South West State and Puntland, Somaliland is relatively peaceful and stable. Nevertheless, it is a post-conflict quasi-state with unresolved disputes between clans that periodically turn violent, particularly during times of elections and political change. State education and education policy set by the MoEHE in the form of an official Somaliland curriculum is therefore a sensitive issue, as this determines the official narrative of Somaliland's history and independence, as taught to the children who live there. In 2000, Bush and Saltarelli's ground-breaking review of *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict* established that the design of education in conflict-affected societies can have either a peace-promoting or conflict-promoting role, depending on key factors pertaining to its distribution, content, and representativeness. Their work has been taken further by Novelli, Cardozo and Smith, who have adapted this concept into a '4Rs framework' for peacebuilding education' (2017). Crucially for us, Novelli et al argued that to be peace-promoting, education must be representative of inputs from all the different stakeholders living in a society, and that it must recognize the identities of those stakeholders as legitimate (ibid). It must also be redistributed fairly, to ensure that people living in a society have access regardless of identity (ibid). To ensure that education interventions in Somaliland are not harmful to the stability of the peace, these factors should be considered in their post-conflict setting as measures of the inclusivity promoted by SDG 4. All Somaliland stakeholders should be consulted in education reform and should have equitable access to education opportunities. 'Equitable access' here goes beyond mere availability of places in schools to consider the barriers to completion of education faced by children of different backgrounds. In short, as Tomasevski (2001) asserts, education

must meet the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability, taking into account poverty, safety, distance and relevance as potential factors inhibiting child engagement in schools.

The latest curriculum reform in Somaliland has been underpinned by a significant consultation process, spearheaded by the Africa Educational Trust and the Hargeisa Cultural Centre, to ensure that representative textbooks of Somaliland's history have been produced and distributed through interviews with representatives from all the major clans and sub-clans. The textbooks are not perfect, but they are careful in their presentation of events. Unfortunately, as has been alluded to in the introduction, this inclusive message is not necessarily reaching classrooms, where teachers have significant control in determining what message students receive. Clan identities are carefully avoided in the new textbooks, but some of those teachers I spoke to listed this as a problem, stating that their students understand history in clan terms, and that they have therefore compensated for the shortfall by adding their own interpretations to their lesson plans, replacing official textbook chapters with local news stories, cut out of newspapers. One teacher moonlighting in public and private schools explained to me that clan elders will themselves also take on this responsibility on occasion, stating:

[schools] are owned, sustained and maintained by the clan, and they are clan dominated. So [a clan] might recommend strongly that the school teaches the history of that clan. If a clan has an influence on the school, they will have an influence on the identity of the students. Members of the diaspora might also come to the school and visit and tell them about the clan, or an elder can come in and talk about it, and the school can be linked to clan identity.

These teacher-, news- and community- or clan-generated narratives are not monitored, but they enter into the classroom and may be a significant bar to promoting inclusivity, particularly if children of rival clans do not want to learn together, or if the history presented by their teachers is hostile or intimidating. Students

I interviewed also mentioned learning different narratives in different classrooms within the same school as a challenge that they faced, stating that children in different year groups might be learning different versions of history, depending on their teachers. Appropriate teacher training is needed to resolve confusion around these issues, but the sensitivity of clan politics means that clannism is a topic generally shied away from in teacher training programmes (again, with exceptions that are determined largely by the personalities of individual teacher trainers, rather than by training programmes themselves).

Moving on to the issue of equity and equitable quality, there are further challenges unique to the Somaliland case. Based on my interviews, schools across Somaliland fail to retain qualified staff. All teachers seem to begin their teaching careers by teaching in primary schools, whether or not they are trained to do so. Those who do well are promoted firstly into secondary school, and later into positions at ministries, INGOs, or universities, becoming lecturers. Therefore, those working in primary education are the least experienced teachers—this is written into the very tapestry of the education system. There is also a reluctance in Hargeisa to teach in conflict-affected territories, in rural areas, or in areas dominated by rival clans, while teacher training colleges are mainly found in Somaliland's big cities, and teachers from neglected parts of Somaliland cannot attend them easily. This results in a discrepancy in the quality of education delivery in state schools, though the discrepancy may be slight, as staff at the Department of Education in the University of Hargeisa noted to me that their teacher training programmes are routinely undersubscribed. A bigger factor is the role of returnees, who open private academies in urban centres, some of which are better funded and supplied than state institutions, adding another layer of potential inequality to the education sector: some of these private schools are staffed by qualified teachers, others are entirely unaccredited.

When I visited the MoEHE in 2018, my interviewees noted that there was a push by the Ministry for mandatory teacher

training to be implemented across all private and public schools, prohibiting teaching by untrained staff. It is difficult to see how this policy could be effectively implemented without creating teacher shortages in state schools, and it might be impossible to implement in private schools altogether, given that they operate on their own incomes, independently of the Ministry. While I was there in the summer of 2018, the proposed mandatory training led to significant teacher protests in Hargeisa: many teachers found the idea that they needed to be completely retrained to do their jobs to be insulting, while others were afraid that they would lose their positions if they could not pass the entry exams. These findings indicate that teacher training is likely to be crucial to meeting SDG 4 in Somaliland, but that training itself is potentially an explosive issue.

## **Reform fatigue and its impact on teaching practice**

Education in Somaliland has a long history, with schools becoming politicized during the colonial period, when they were associated with imperialism and indoctrination (Lewis & Winn, 2018). From the 1990s onwards, due to the widescale destruction of schools in Somaliland, new textbooks and learning materials were imported from Kenya, Ethiopia, and more broadly from donor countries in the West and Middle East. Many schools still use these textbooks, ignoring reforms due to their frequency. Others are disillusioned by the reform process itself, which has not always been effective in generating original content, preferring to keep relying on the old books. This 'reform fatigue' has led some teachers to distrust the learning materials that they are given, and to make use of them only minimally (at least, based on my small sample of interviews).

Teachers complain that many of the textbooks they have been given in the past are confusing and inappropriate. Illustrations and songs used in imported language-teaching textbooks are frequently ill-chosen. For example a small girl may be shown playing with a

dog, which is not acceptable in a society where children in general are prohibited from doing so; a drawing of a house might have a Western style of construction; with resources and technologies that communities do not have access to; or a song about Old MacDonald and his farm may describe a farmer with multiple animals in a society where pastoralists will only ever own either camels or goats. A former Somaliland faculty member commented to me: 'The stories are not ours, the geography is not ours, the history is not ours, and the identity is not ours'. Thus, many old textbooks are unrepresentative of the local identity, and this delegitimizes the education sector as a whole, contributing to societal division between those who continue to value the importance of liberal education and those who reject it as a neo-colonial institution. Perceptions of outside interference in curricula decisions are also pervasive, with another faculty member commenting:

Basically there are international organizations in the system, pushing for more reforms, even though there have already been reforms. When I look at the Somaliland curriculum, in a nutshell it's more like a cut-and-paste job. The curriculum that we have is simply a dictation from UNICEF and UNESCO.

The immediate solution to this challenge for the international community, who rightly feel the urgency of the need to strengthen the education system in Somaliland, is not apparent. As I have argued, recent work in curriculum reform has been far more rigorous, but it will take time for teachers to start trusting the learning resources that they are given.

Teachers also expressed to me a lack of confidence in their students' ability to do well as a motivator for adapting textbooks to their classroom needs. Some teachers stated in interview that they would remove chapters from textbooks if these were not going to be featured in exams, knowing that few students attended all of their lessons, and that they therefore needed to maximize the time they spent in class preparing children and young people for exams. If they felt unable to prepare students for exams adequately,

they would also tear difficult questions out of state exam papers and mark their classes on the remaining answers. Some of the teachers I spoke to had only a rudimentary grasp of the English language, but were preparing their students to pass all subject exams in English. Tearing out exam questions that their students could not answer seemed to them to be the only way around this challenge. Here, again, rigorous training is needed to give teachers the confidence to support their students all the way through the education system.

## Conclusion

Somaliland has failed to meet its 2015 MDG targets in education, and is in danger of failing to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Past failure stems in part from the persistent internal inequalities and development challenges facing Somaliland's children, and in part from a failure on the part of donors to channel sufficient resources for real change into the unrecognized state. Now that equitable quality is a focus of the next cycle of development interventions, greater attention will need to be given to the role of teachers in supporting students to overcome these challenges. Meeting SDG4 will require a revolution in quality, orchestrated by changes to the very structure of teacher recruitment, training and retention, supported by a significant commitment of resources and based on in depth consultations with teachers themselves. Teacher training is badly needed, but such training must be very carefully planned to support teachers, rather than to put further pressure on their capacities, which are already stretched dangerously thin. Given that training is an explosive and threatening issue for many teachers, it is important that in-service training is provided to teachers where they teach, and not simply in urban centers. It is also essential that such training not be disruptive: because teachers work in multiple schools simultaneously, it is difficult to discern their full schedules early in a term. Therefore, teachers should be offered a variety of different times in which to complete training and should

be compensated for the exams that they pass as a further incentive to learn. Finally, one risk in training teachers in Somaliland is that over-qualifying them empowers them to leave schools in pursuit of better work. To avoid this, salaries for trained teachers need to be competitive. Employing teachers full time, rather than hourly, would not only encourage them to remain loyal to their schools, but would also provide them with greater preparation time in which to absorb curriculum reforms. Importantly, the Somaliland MoEHE is aware of the challenges faced in teacher training and retention, but cannot achieve any of these reforms without a new influx of funding. Such funding needs to be regular and reliable, and needs to be allocated directly for Somaliland's teachers, but this remains difficult to achieve in a state whose independence from Somalia is not yet recognized.

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## ‘If youth are given the chance’: Effects of education and civic engagement on Somali youth support of political violence<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Mercy Corps’ Somali Youth Learners Initiative was based upon the theory that improving Somali youths’ access to both education and civic engagement opportunities has the potential to reduce the likelihood of their supporting or participating in armed groups in general, and political violence in particular. An evaluation of the initiative sought to test the impact of two common violence-reduction approaches—education and civic engagement—on youths’ level of support for armed violence and to understand whether improving access to secondary education alone or when

1 This brief is condensed from the full report (Tsfaye et al., 2018).

combined with increased civic engagement opportunities would reduce support for armed opposition groups by Somali youth. The evaluation found that the greatest reduction in youth support for political violence comes from the combination of participation in quality secondary education *and* civic engagement opportunities. The report recommends that in countries emerging from conflict, priority should be given to expanding access to public services, without neglecting the underlying grievances that threaten long-term stability.

### KEYWORDS

Somali youth, secondary education, civic engagement,  
political violence, positive youth engagement

Understanding and addressing the root causes of conflict to promote long-term stability is a perennial focus of development programs, yet policymakers still struggle to find proven, effective solutions. Underlying this challenge is a dearth of evidence regarding violence-reduction approaches. Though an increasing number of empirical studies have focused on evaluating the impact of development programs on attitudes and behaviors related to violence (including Mercy Corps’ own research in Somaliland and Afghanistan), questions remain about the relative effectiveness of different types of interventions and about the conditions under which some interventions may or may not succeed in reducing violence.

The motivation for the study ‘If youth are given the chance’ (Mercy Corps, 2018) was to help fill these knowledge gaps. In particular, the research sought to test the impact of two common violence-reduction approaches—education and civic engagement—on youths’ level of support for armed violence. By expanding Mercy Corps’ [previous study from neighboring Somaliland](#) (Mercy Corps, 2016) to examine education, civic engagement, and political violence in South Central Somalia and Puntland, this study allowed Mercy Corps to understand whether the effects of the same education and civic engagement interventions persist across different contexts.



Somalia faces many challenges and opportunities when it comes to violence reduction. Though the nation is striving to move beyond decades of unrest and violent conflict toward stability and broad-based development, the security situation remains tenuous. Two truck bombs that exploded on October 14, 2017 in Mogadishu, killing more than 500 people, highlighted both how deadly armed opposition groups continued to exist and Somalia's continued vulnerability to violence. Armed groups have proven repeatedly how resilient they can be, constantly adapting to new threats—both internal and external—to ensure their own survival. A steady source of resilience for armed opposition groups is a large pool of frustrated youth whom they can recruit and indoctrinate.

To promote stability, several youth development programs in Somalia have sought to engage vulnerable youth and address their needs. Among these programs, Mercy Corps' Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI) focused on increasing access to secondary education and civic engagement opportunities for youth.<sup>2</sup> SYLI was based upon the theory that improving Somali youths' access to both education and civic engagement opportunities has the potential to reduce the likelihood that they would support or participate in armed groups in general, and political violence in particular. The present brief focuses on the civic engagement component of SYLI and addresses the question of whether improving access to secondary education alone or when combined with increased civic engagement opportunities might reduce support for armed opposition groups by Somali youth.

The aim of the youth leadership/civic engagement component of the SYLI was to 'empower youth to contribute positively and productively to society through civic engagement' (Mercy Corps, 2018).

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2 The USAID-funded SYLI project implemented by Mercy Corps included construction or improvement of 60 secondary schools, professional development of 3024 educators, creation of 39 student clubs, and training of youth leaders (1250 in-school youth and 1598 out-of-school youth), across Puntland, South Central Somalia and Somaliland.

This component of the program focused on supporting youth as leaders in their communities through skill building and organizing community action campaigns. The SYLI program sought to provide young people with soft skills, including leadership skills and nonviolent conflict resolution skills, through sports and recreational activities, and structured and positive interactions with peers to build self-confidence.

The program also provided youth with civic engagement opportunities, including peer-to-peer dialogue allowing youth to engage in regional and national issues, interaction within communities through youth-led service learning and awareness activities, and participation in the design and implementation of government policies.

The program specifically identified youth leaders in each of the constructed or rehabilitated secondary schools and youth currently not enrolled in school to serve as peer mobilizers. These young people were trained in the areas of conflict analysis, team building, and leadership. Youth leaders then applied their leadership, team building, and mobilization skills to work on concrete issues at the local level that arose from their own daily experiences. Youth leaders mobilized their peers to plan together and carry out youth-led community action projects that would highlight the value of civic participation and civic responsibility and model the principles of good governance and peaceful action.

This exercise gave youth first-hand experience on how to identify, plan, and execute projects working with the wider community to achieve social impact. Furthermore, the program provided young people with opportunities to engage with politicians from both the state and federal government to help inform policies and laws affecting them, such as individual youth policies for each region.

Evaluating the SYLI program provided an opportunity to better understand if and how improved access to formal secondary education and increased opportunities for civic engagement might help reduce young Somalis' support for armed groups and the use of violence to achieve political aims.

From an impact evaluation that surveyed 1220 young people in Puntland and South Central Somalia, Mercy Corps found that both SYLI-supported secondary education alone and SYLI-supported secondary education combined with civic engagement opportunities pulled Somali youth away from supporting violent groups:

Data collection occurred between April and May 2017 and was carried out by a hired research firm. A total of 1220 youth participated in the survey. The treatment groups were assigned based on whether or not Mercy Corps implemented any SYLI programming in the location. Within each of the eight locations, in-school and out-of-school youth aged 15–24 years old were invited to take part in the survey at community centers and schools.

Predictor variables were enrolment in secondary education provided through the SYLI program alone and enrolment in SYLI-supported secondary education, plus participating in a civic engagement opportunity through the school. A primary outcome variable (support for armed opposition groups) measured self-reported willingness to lend moral or material support to armed opposition groups.

## Key findings

- Both components of the SYLI intervention evaluated—secondary education and civic engagement—decreased youth support for armed opposition groups. These findings were robust across multiple models.
- Youth who gained access to improved secondary school through SYLI were nearly half as likely (48.2 percent) as out-of-school youth to demonstrate moral or material support for political violence.
- Students in SYLI-supported schools invited to participate in civic engagement opportunities were 64.8 percent less likely as non-engaged youth to demonstrate moral or material support for political violence.

- Significant effects of SYLI-supported education persisted with or without the inclusion of civic engagement program effects, but the two interventions combined reduced support for political violence even further.

Mercy Corps identified possible explanations for these reductions in support: both versions of the intervention led engaged youth to be more optimistic about their future job prospects and more confident in the use of nonviolent means to achieve change in their communities. These two significant pathways suggest that the SYLI program enabled youth to feel more capable of shaping their own futures and influencing their communities, which in turn may explain the reduced support for armed opposition groups that feed off young people's frustrations and feelings of disempowerment.

Key informants highlighted the importance of multiple forms of positive youth engagement, including having space for themselves and other young people to come together to reflect on the challenges they face and discuss solutions, providing resources and opportunities for youth to utilize new skills, creating opportunities to connect with mentors, and incorporating young people into community decision-making processes. The SYLI-supported civic engagement activities, which included actions ranging from improving a school library to pursuing community-wide service projects, appeared to provide this type of space. Key informants described a variety of issues that they thought they and their peers could address, if empowered and supported to do so, including clannism, corruption, early and forced marriage, and *propaganda by organized armed groups*. They also thought that young people could help improve schools, economic opportunities, and the security situation.

A 19-year-old woman in Luuq described young people as an untapped asset for the community: 'I have no doubt that the situation can change because if youth are given the chance to mobilize the community and given some small incentives, they can change the community since they are young and so energetic

to do the work at ease without getting tired or becoming reckless.’ A 24-year-old man from Belet Hawa said that youth need to feel like they are part of the system, and added: ‘If youth are allowed to participate in issues regarding the community then I am sure youth can do marvellous (things) by doing mobilization and showing good examples to the rest of the community.’ It seems that youth see themselves as potential change agents, but not currently active ones because of their own limitations as well as the limitations of the context in which they live.

Multiple key informants also spoke about the need for a broader type of education to enable youth to make positive life decisions and think critically, especially when faced with propaganda from organized armed groups.

The SYLI program worked to address this need by informing young people about the [Humanitarian Charter](#) and concepts of equality and human rights as well as providing them with a broader, global view of the world. Many felt that armed groups, including violent extremist organizations, intentionally recruit younger people because they are less able to think critically, thus making them more receptive to the group’s messaging. Interviewees stressed the need for youth to have knowledge about the risks and dangers associated with violence—both to themselves and the country overall—and guidance from parents, elders, politicians, and other influential leaders on what is right and wrong. While this finding does not specifically relate to formal education or the hypotheses tested in this study, it is noteworthy that young people in these four communities see a need for education beyond formal curriculum that helps support their critical thinking.

## Recommendations

As national governments, international organizations, civil society, and communities seek to understand how they can better support young people and reduce the appeal of armed opposition groups, these results have important ramifications for designing youth

programming with violence-reduction and stability objectives. Thus, Mercy Corps makes the following recommendations for policy and programming in Somalia and similarly fragile and conflict-affected contexts:

- **When it comes to education, combine concrete skills with opportunities to apply them.** The greatest reduction in youth support for political violence comes from the combination of participation in quality secondary education (which transfers knowledge and skills needed for future employment) and civic engagement opportunities (which empower youth to positively contribute to their communities). Given that these findings hold across three different regions—Somaliland, South Central Somalia, and Puntland—we can say with some confidence that this approach can be an important strategy in efforts to combat political violence throughout Somalia, and perhaps in other contexts with similar conditions. To create more opportunities for young people to apply what they have learned, efforts to expand equitable access to education for youth should be coupled with linkages between students and potential employers to help ensure better market absorption of future graduates, leading to better livelihood opportunities and outcomes.
- **In countries emerging from conflict, prioritize expanding access to public services, but do not neglect the underlying grievances that threaten long-term stability.** While secondary education decreased support for violence in South Central Somalia and Puntland, it had the opposite effect in Somaliland. The key difference is how education affects youths’ perceptions in different contexts: it increased optimism about livelihoods and improved perceptions of the government in South Central Somalia and Puntland, while it led to pessimism about livelihoods and dissatisfaction with government services in Somaliland. This finding indicates that in countries emerging from conflict with few, if any, functioning systems, simply investing in basic services such as education can be a quick win

for governments and donors focused on promoting stability. In the long term, however, this is not enough. As the rest of Somalia slowly develops and becomes more developed and peaceful like Somaliland, our research suggests that education will raise young people's expectations, but it will not address the grievances that drive them to support political violence.

- **Simultaneously seek solutions to macro-level structural challenges while implementing micro-level development programs.** Our analysis found that the level of violence in a community made a difference in the effectiveness of the programming: SYLI-supported secondary education led to a significant reduction in support for political violence only in sites with relatively low levels of violence. This indicates that addressing immediate instability may be an important prerequisite for the success of longer-term investments in youth development. A recent systematic review (Zürcher, 2017) of the impact of development aid in countries affected by civil war reinforces this result: in order for aid to reduce violence, the environment must first be secure enough for violence-reduction programming to be implemented. More generally, the results indicate that broader contextual factors influence the ability of development programs such as SYLI to succeed in reducing support for violence. Insecurity, the political environment and economic growth continue to be important dynamics that shape the nature of conflict in Somalia. Without changes to these broader dynamics, the success of potentially impactful development programs will be limited.

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## SECTION SIX

Bringing it to life  
in the classroom



## Section Six overview: Bringing it to life in the classroom

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### Introduction

At first glance, NISSEM's view of the centrality of textbooks in teaching and learning may seem to look backwards rather than forwards. Won't the traditional textbook soon be replaced by digital, smart media that disrupt conventional and deeply institutionalized structures and enable struggling education systems to 'leapfrog' into a more responsive, adaptive and efficient future? In our view, this transformation is unlikely; especially in low and middle income countries (LMICs) in the near future. We believe that the textbook—whether printed or digital—will remain a major policy lever with an influential role in the classrooms of formal and nonformal education systems for years to come. This is why we place such emphasis on textbooks in support of social and emotional learning and the challenging themes of Target 4.7. We believe that for LMICs with few resources other than textbooks, it is more practical for governments to integrate a social and emotional approach and 4.7 themes *within* the curriculum and textbooks, rather than relying on a supplementary intervention that might be neglected by teachers and students alike.

This does not mean that we overestimate what a textbook can achieve. A textbook is only a resource and is only as good as the teacher using it.<sup>1</sup> It may be well written and accurate but it needs to be appropriate for the class. It can provide a model for good practices but it should also avoid placing obstacles in the path of

1 Some statements in this section assume that textbooks are indeed available, which may not be the case.

teaching and learning. Schools need to develop an overall SEL-based approach that embraces the classroom behaviors of both teachers and students, which the textbook can support and help to model. (See also the paper by Randolph et al.)

In this overview, we consider first how textbook design can incorporate methodology and pedagogy appropriate for LMIC conditions. (There is quite a bit on this!) We then consider how 4.7 and SEL can be included in textbooks, for students' personal development and to support them to become responsible members of society as well as the workforce.

The systemic centrality of textbooks is both a resource and a constraint. Many LMIC textbooks—and the curricula they reflect—represent a significant barrier to learning: the density of their content and language, coupled with teachers' limited professional education and autonomy, are a toxic mix. As a consequence, rather than using imprecise terms such as teacher-centered and learner-centered, teaching and learning in many LMIC primary schools can be described as *textbook-centered*. Equipped only with dense and poorly-designed textbooks that are written in language pitched high above the comprehension of most learners, when the language may not be the students' or teacher's mother tongue, and when contact time is limited by a crowded timetable and sometimes by double shifts, the only recourse for school teachers—in primary schools, especially—is to march their students through the content of the textbook by means of choral repetition. To compensate for this and also on occasion for low salaries, teachers may offer private, after-school classes, to enable some students to catch up.

Tackling such barriers can help textbooks become a force of equity, rather than a source of inequality. A randomized controlled trial that is often quoted in reference to textbook effectiveness, carried out in Kenya in 2009, found that textbooks increased the scores of students who were already higher attaining but had little effect on other students. In this case, it was chiefly because the books were written in English, which was a third language for most

of the students, and probably gave higher-income students even more of an advantage.

## Removing barriers to learning

An educational reform or intervention that aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning in LMICs should therefore start by removing such barriers to learning. In addition to densely packed informational content—with paragraphs consisting of lists of specialist terms—and over-pitched language, textbooks also place other barriers in the way of learning. These relate to the methods of teaching and learning and how the content of textbooks might contribute positively to more effective teaching, greater academic attainment, and students' social behavior. The brief by Andy Smart provides an example of how improving textbooks in public primary schools in Bangladesh addressed informational density and language issues as well as incorporating a more structured pedagogy to help children engage with sometimes difficult social studies concepts. (Like many terms that suddenly emerge into the spotlight, 'structured pedagogy' is interpreted in different ways by different commentators. NISSEM's use of this term is set out below.)

One reason for the frequent mismatch between textbook content and students' own language, interest and cognitive levels is the way textbook writers themselves are selected. Rather than drawing solely on academic expertise, textbook writing teams could instead benefit from including experienced, practising teachers (not from elite schools) to ensure the appropriateness of content, language density and pedagogy. This selection process should avoid mere tokenism in which a single teacher is seen as an equivalent to representatives from the other academic and government institutions who may be included in the team. Teachers on textbook-writing teams should contribute as equals alongside academic experts, with appropriate gender, ethnic and religious balance. This challenge of inclusiveness in selecting editors-in-chief and authors to write textbooks is addressed in the overview to Section Four.

It has been said that, in education, 'what works' is not the question, since everything works somewhere. Even the increasing number of education metastudies may be of limited value: 'When the results of meta-analyses of education interventions are correctly interpreted, no generalizations are possible. No education intervention can be expected to be more effective than others, and every intervention can produce a wide range of results, including no impact.' (Maset, 2019) And the problem of confounding variables is serious in trying to control for the effects of socio-economic status, parental education, books in the home and so on. Rather than relying solely on partial and inadequate evidence, textbook developers in LMICs should think about how learners learn within the subject, and should obtain as much knowledge as possible about good teaching practices in that subject in similar as well as dissimilar settings, rather than an idealistic 'best practice'. They should engage practising teachers in discussion about how suggested good practices can be applied in their *own* context. In this regard, the initial phase of developing a textbook becomes a *research activity*, the result of which is a detailed teaching plan based on a model of how learning will be supported. The process of developing or revising textbooks and training teachers to use them are opportunities to bring key actors together so that the overall outcome is collaborative, inclusive, coherent and more likely to be effective. The result will be a textbook based on bridges to learning rather than on barriers.

Where inappropriate textbooks are used as yardsticks of teachers' progress and where teachers are held accountable for completing the textbook during the school year, the textbooks can have a *more positive* or *less positive* impact on teacher-pupil relationships.

The above comments on the barriers that textbooks create, while not specifically related to the theme of Target 4.7 and social-emotional learning, nevertheless serve as a reminder that the first rule for textbook developers should be to 'do no harm': if we start by removing barriers, the road to engaged learning becomes easier to follow.

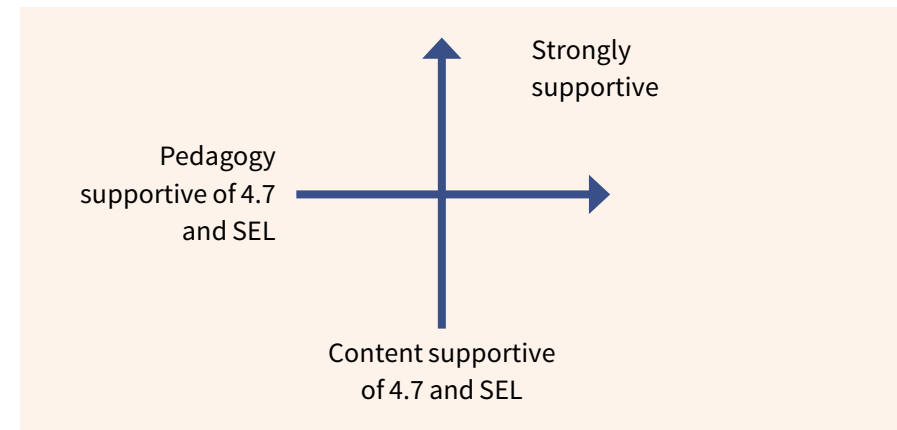
## Textbooks and the curriculum

Most countries operate a system of textbook evaluation and approval. Space does not allow for a detailed discussion of the procedures and criteria for textbook evaluation here. However, the main organizational framework for such criteria is built on the two functions of *curricular content* and *teaching methodology*. It is our experience that in most LMIC textbook evaluation systems, the attention given to how the book relates to and supports teaching methodology is much less than that given to content (even though the content or reading level at least, as suggested above, may often be developmentally inappropriate). NISSEM takes the view that supporting good classroom pedagogy—particularly in primary schools—by means of textbook structure and the implied or explicitly indicated teaching methodology is vital for teaching academic and pro-social content.

In addition, we suggest that inclusive, engaging, pro-social pedagogy, which supports critical thinking and perspective-taking, can alleviate the potential challenges of content that may for one reason or another be somewhat exclusive and less pro-social. For example, in countries with a policy of a single government-published or government-approved textbook per subject and grade, students from non-majority groups may not see themselves adequately reflected in the textbook content. In such scenarios, the textbook methodology can guide the teacher—supported where possible by appropriate pre-service teacher education and continuous professional development (CPD)—to teach students in a more inclusive way.

Both the content and the teaching methodologies supportive of SEL and 4.7 themes can be built into textbooks, as well as into teacher training (e.g. explicit reference to SEL concepts and 4.7 themes when using cooperation or inclusive teaching methods).

The following diagram suggests a model for curriculum developers and textbook writers (for primary grades in particular) to think about textbook content and pedagogy (and for developing



**Figure 1:** Integrating both pedagogy and content that are supportive of Target 4.7 and SEL into textbooks and educational materials

textbook evaluation criteria). In this model, implementers reflect on areas of the curriculum that may be ‘weakly supportive’ or ‘strongly supportive’ of 4.7 and SEL, as well as areas where *pedagogy* may be weakly or strongly supportive. Narrowly supportive content refers to content in which a single point of view or a set of bare facts are represented in, for example, history or literature textbooks. Weakly supportive pedagogy refers to pedagogy in which students have little or no opportunity to compare and discuss their own experiences, perspectives and understandings. The content axis would focus more on the 4.7 themes, while the pedagogy axis would focus both on 4.7 and SEL. According to this model, in an ideal teaching–learning scenario, a SEL- and 4.7- supportive curriculum, syllabus or textbook will be positioned in the top right quadrant of the diagram:

As regards content, the model may apply more naturally to social studies, language and literature, where SEL concepts and 4.7 themes can be addressed explicitly as part of the course—as in the Bangladesh grade 5 social studies cited in Andy Smart’s brief. Science can also be enriched with content related to 4.7 and SEL, as noted in relation to ‘socio-scientific’ concepts, a term adopted

by the Smithsonian Science Education Center (see the brief by Blanchard et al.).<sup>2</sup>

This model of analysis may be applied easily to a textbook but can also be applied to a syllabus and even a curriculum framework. (Comparative analysis of all three sets of documents would also be a valuable exercise. It may even be possible to reflect on an entire education system in this way, at the start of a comprehensive curriculum and textbook renewal program.)

What is therefore needed for curriculum developers and textbook developers are methods and criteria to analyse a textbook on both the *pedagogy* and the *content* axes. Criteria related to textbook content will attempt to measure the overall coverage of the topics and concepts of the conventional curriculum as well as the factual accuracy; other criteria will seek to measure social content related to selected Target 4.7 themes and SEL, notably the messages that the textbook projects for prosocial living.

An example of an intervention based on supportive pedagogy, as used by some Lebanese history teachers, is shown in the brief by Akar & Hamadeh.

## Textbooks and pedagogy

It is useful to pause and define terms. The co-authors of this overview draw upon Robin Alexander's definition of pedagogy, which incorporates not only teaching *methodology* (which is sometimes described as teaching routines) but also teachers' *beliefs about teaching and learning*. The NISSEM co-authors also recognize that the term pedagogy may have different meanings in different contexts. For example, in both Brazil and Chile the terms 'didactics' and 'pedagogy' are distinguished from each other, but what is represented by didactics in Brazil is called pedagogy in Chile, and vice versa.

2 Including SEL in the pedagogical side of mathematics textbooks may also be possible but caution is needed in respect of wordy 4.7-related 'problems' where language skills may constitute a barrier to students achieving success, especially if teachers lack confidence in dealing with this type of unfamiliar content.

When comparing textbooks in LMICs—especially for primary and lower secondary grades—with those of other countries, it is noticeable that teaching methodology (in the sense of teaching routines) is barely present. The content of the lesson shows no sign of what the syllabus states or implies as regards pedagogy, or what the writers believe about effective teaching and how learners might acquire an understanding of the concepts being taught. In effect, the textbooks are frequently written as *self-study* textbooks rather than as teaching and learning resources designed to support teachers in classrooms with over 50 children. One reason for this is due to the often limited classroom experience of the textbook writers, as well as their possibly scant knowledge of developmental psychology.

The briefs by Andy Smart and Vikki Pendry provide alternative glimpses of how textbooks can structure methodology and pedagogy. They both explain the initial rationale for writing or revising the textbooks. This should be the starting point for all materials writers—*Why are we doing it this way?* The Bangladesh textbook renewal strategy may be described as an example of a particular kind of 'structured pedagogy', in which knowledge and skills are gradually acquired by the students in a way that is appropriate to a teacher faced with 50 students but also appropriate to a child of 10–11 years of age. It is therefore worth considering how commentators have begun to use the term structured pedagogy, as well as our own use of the term.

## Structured pedagogy

As Hoadley (2018) says, 'The current notion of "structured pedagogy" ... is a broad term referring to a range of interventions that include customized curricula, lesson plans and training of teachers in delivering this content'. This might sound like scripted teaching, which is *not* being advocated in this volume. For some subjects and levels—and for some teachers—a more scripted approach may be more appropriate than for other subjects

and levels. For example, the work of the Naandi Foundation as well as that of Columbia University in the Gambia (Boone et al, 2015) may appear to suggest that in these contexts, apparently scripted lessons had significant effects on learning outcomes. But a deeper analysis of the Naandi intervention raises the question of whether the lessons were genuinely scripted: 'The CRL (child-related learning) pedagogy ensured that Community Volunteers focused on using the teaching and learning materials to teach by promoting social interaction and peer-learning. Diverse exercises and activities focused on the steps, purpose and the context in which computations were to be done rather than on getting the "right" answer. Therefore, the focus was on learning rather than on answers to a question.' It is also worth noting that the Naandi intervention used scripted lessons because it depended on using after-school 'para teachers', rather than full-time professionals.

LMIC teachers' knowledge of pedagogy is often limited. The challenge for implementers is therefore to embed good methodology in the textbooks and to reinforce this by means of teacher training and coaching where possible. To support this, since a good rationale is a key element of good pedagogy, researchers in LMICs need to know much more about teachers' rationales for what they do in the classroom. As Hoadley says (2018), 'I don't think we clearly understand *why* teachers do the things they do in the classroom' (our italics). Involving teachers in developing and trialling new materials may therefore be a way to connect with teachers and help extend their rationale.

## So, what kind of pedagogy might textbook writers draw on?

Much has been written about learner-centered pedagogy, which may be characterized as the quality of the relationship between learner and teacher, the role given to learners' voices, the degree of higher order thinking, and the way of treating learners as individuals with differing experiences and needs. Schweisfurth

(2011, p.425) observes that 'the history of the implementation of Learner Centred Education in different contexts is riddled with stories of failures grand and small'. She adds: 'Teachers are not fundamentally different from learners. So why are so many learner-centered policies so often evidently implemented without regard for learner-centered principles? If we start by seeing *teachers* in changing contexts as individual *learners*, then message and medium need to be consistent' (italics added).

It is important to distinguish between learner-centered pedagogies in high-income countries and those appropriate to LMICs. Many of the methods used in high-income settings are unrealistic with fewer resources and less teacher support. An increasing amount of research is being carried out into pedagogies that may be appropriate for LMICs. Although Schweisfurth points to the risk that that 'anyone can call anything learner-centered education', she goes on to suggest some criteria for effective pedagogy that avoid replicating 'Western' classroom methods in settings where they are impractical or culturally inappropriate:

- 1 Lessons are engaging to pupils, motivating them to learn (bearing in mind that different approaches might work in different contexts).
- 2 Atmosphere and conduct reflect mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Conduct such as punishment and the nature of relationships do not violate rights (bearing in mind that relationships might still be relatively formal and distant).
- 3 Learning challenges build on learners' existing knowledge (bearing in mind that this existing knowledge might be seen collectively rather than individualistically).
- 4 Dialogue (not only transmission) is used in teaching and learning (bearing in mind that the tone of dialogue and who it is between may vary).
- 5 Curriculum is relevant to learners' lives and perceived future needs, in a language accessible to them (mother tongue except where practically impossible) (bearing in mind that there will be



tensions between global, national and local understandings of relevance).

- 6 Curriculum is based on skills and attitude outcomes as well as content. These should include skills of critical and creative thinking (bearing in mind that culture-based communication conventions are likely to make the ‘flavour’ of this very different in different places).
- 7 Assessment follows up these principles by testing skills and by allowing for individual differences. It is not purely content-driven or success based only on rote learning (bearing in mind that the demand for common examinations is unlikely to be overcome).

We agree with the caution of the above commentators with regard to learner-centered methods that over-reach and over-promise. Schweisfurth’s references to a culturally contextual role for the importance of prior knowledge, motivation, relevance and dialogue are all signposts to effective pedagogy, and can inform the textbook writer.

Research into what constitutes effective pedagogy in LMICs has begun to concern global institutions themselves, which have observed that although combined efforts under the MDGs prior to 2015 might have succeeded in expanding primary school enrolments, educational attainment itself has stagnated. In many cases, these institutions have begun to focus on indicators of good teaching practices as a way of spotlighting present weaknesses and suggesting pathways forward. The World Bank’s recently published, free-to-access, online TEACH instrument is designed for LMICs to ‘holistically measure what happens in the classroom ... by considering not just time spent on learning but, more importantly, the quality of teaching practices’ and to ‘capture practices that nurture children’s cognitive and socioemotional skills.’ This equal attention to cognitive and socioemotional skills is notable, although the impact on actual teaching practices remains to be seen.

Other measurements of teaching quality in LMICs include TIPPS (Teacher Instructional Practices and Processes System), an

observation tool developed by the Institute of Human Development and Social Change at NYU, which aims to understand the quality of the classroom environment: ‘classroom observations of social processes can provide a much-needed context through which we can understand the academic outcomes of students—critical information that, until recently, has been unrecognized in favor of structural and economic considerations’. New York University’s initiative also incorporates Healing Classrooms, as in an Early Childhood Education study in Ghana where it was reported that, ‘One of the challenges with measuring—and, by extension, improving—quality in Ghana and other LMICs is the lack of culturally sensitive instruments available for understanding process quality in these settings.’ The measure that was developed, as described in ‘What Do Teachers Know and Do? Does It Matter? Evidence from Primary Schools in Africa’ (Bold et al., 2017), focuses on:

- How ECE teachers facilitate deeper learning by providing feedback, scaffolding learning, and connecting lessons to teaching objectives;
- Teachers’ emotional support and behavior management, including their use of positive and consistent reinforcement strategies;
- Supporting student expression by using students’ ideas and interests to inform class activities, encourage reasoning and problem solving, and draw connections between subject matter and students’ daily lives;
- The extent to which teachers use developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices

However, we should not underestimate the challenge that change presents to teachers who are charged with implementing the changes. Torrente et al’s (2015) research in the Learning to Read in a Healing Classroom (LRHC) intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo showed that the changes not only unsettled the teachers, they also led to the children in the treatment schools perceiving their schools to be less predictable and cooperative.

## Emotional, authentic and motivating content

Whether writing textbooks or books for reading, writers need to consider the emotional significance of what they are writing. In the brief by Vikki Pendry, textbook development started with what was emotionally familiar. This, in turn, relates to what can be described as ‘authentic’. An authentic approach in a mathematics textbook does not mean that all exercises consist of word problems describing real-life situations (word problems can sometimes obscure the math!). It can mean, however, that word problems use everyday items and calculations but also avoid being *inauthentic* (for example, in a problem involving a girl running, it should not be assumed she will run at an unnaturally constant speed). At the same time, the textbook should seek appropriate opportunities to pose simple mathematics problems that respond to possible social needs, realizing that both teachers and students in LMICs may find these examples difficult (especially where reading and comprehension skills are weak).

Another way of thinking about authenticity is in terms of the practices of adult experts: for example, can an elementary student approach a social problem in the same way a historian approaches such a problem? Or, in other disciplines, how does a professional scientist approach a scientific problem? How does a story-writer use expressive or communicative writing?

In all cases, textbook writers should think about how students can *show* what they can do, through what they write or do as individuals, pairs or—where practical, and from time to time—in groups. While this is an essential part of learning, it of course takes valuable classroom time. It is therefore a requirement that textbooks avoid overloading a learning interaction on any given day, while allowing for appropriate open-ended learning experiences that support collaboration. Although a challenge for many teachers, this approach not only supports emotional and social dimensions of learning, but also improves academic attainment.

Effective textbooks demonstrate that there is no binary choice between *direct instruction* and *student-centered instruction*.

## Preparing to write a textbook that incorporates SEL and Target 4.7 themes

Our focus on pedagogy is not at the expense of content. Besides conveying Target 4.7 thematic content, such as tolerance or threats to the national ecology, the textbook needs to engage students as persons, including the affective dimension. An *emotional dimension* might include drawing on students’ prior self-awareness and self-regulation (which also support good cognitive development). The issue of personal autonomy is also widely shown to be crucial to effective learning. The *social dimension* includes *how* students learn as well as *what* they learn. Textbooks can support this by recognising the social dimension of learning and supporting it by means of the types of learning experiences provided.

There are of course powerful connections between the emotional and the social, just as there are between the notions of knowledge and skills. By extension, there is also considerable reinforcement between knowledge and skills, on the one hand, and the emotional and social dimensions of learning on the other.

While social and emotional learning has often been the preserve of early childhood education, it would be difficult to argue that the emotional and the social play less important roles at the critical age of adolescence. Adolescents tend to be particularly influenced by their peers as well as being highly motivated by powerful issues such as social justice or climate change, which can be supported by the topics included in the textbook. With the growing awareness of agency among adolescents, the fifth sub-domain of competences proposed by the CASEL model—that of responsible decision-making—is clearly significant in preparing young people for responsible and fulfilling lives as adults.

So, how can textbook writers reflect good practices in particular subjects at particular levels and grades, and at the same time reflect emerging models of social and emotional learning and 4.7 themes?

To some observers, SEL models such as the CASEL model<sup>3</sup> are

3 <https://casel.org/core-competencies/>

complex: they are often designed for schools with considerable autonomy in well-resourced countries such as the US. With this in mind, textbooks can provide a practical way for practitioners in LMICs to focus on the essential elements of SEL, rendering these challenges more approachable. For example, the brief describing a textbook lesson on tolerance in Bangladesh includes *content* that is both SEL and 4.7 (tolerance and respect for others) and *methodology* that is SEL: reflection, communicating and sharing with neighbors, and discussion of the issues in class.

To some extent, viewing the multiple elements of SEL competences through the eyes of a textbook writer can help to narrow the focus to a more manageable range of skills. For example, in the CASEL model, there are three domains—intrapersonal, interpersonal and responsibility—which are subdivided into five competencies. A case can be made for textbook writers in the social sciences to focus on the interpersonal and wider social domains, rather than the intrapersonal. The intrapersonal can be harder to address through the medium of textbooks in STEM subjects but is more viable in language studies. Creativity can overcome these boundaries, however, especially when textbook writers learn to use SEL in support of academic learning.

## **The content axis: how can textbook writers engage students effectively with Target 4.7 themes and SEL?**

The discussion may turn now from the pedagogy axis to the content axis of the model proposed above, while acknowledging that the two axes are closely intertwined.

The central cognitive goals in the earlier stages of primary schooling, of literacy and mathematics, offer opportunities for targeting SEL skills and concepts as well as 4.7 themes. In literacy classes, this will be through fiction and non-fiction reading, including read-alouds by teachers followed by class discussion to enable comprehension, which can provide an introduction

to diverse viewpoints, societal needs and the precious natural environment, and children's engagement leading to positive behaviors.

As subject content comes to the fore after the early grades, schools in the US and other better-resourced contexts, often include a separate SEL package that deepens students' grasp of SEL skills and associated values, applied to life challenges facing students in their particular setting. Such challenges may include temptations of substance abuse, unprotected sex, teenage pregnancies and violence (sometimes gang recruitment). These standalone packages introduce students to the intrapersonal and prosocial skills and concepts that underlie the behaviors they will need as 'life skills' (a term often describing health and safety-related behaviors) and as future citizens and workers (including contextually relevant elements within '21st-century skills' and Target 4.7 themes). Alternatively, or additionally, the curriculum framework in these countries may require whole school support for these skills and issues. The subject teaching may integrate these elements: for example, 'cooperation' may be taught explicitly within social studies, integrated into school life and into required pedagogy.

There is a strong case, in principle, for having standalone SEL lessons throughout schooling, as a package or as a separate timetabled subject, addressing explicitly the life issues that students will face personally and as members of society, and linking to 4.7 themes. Standalone life skills or civic/citizenship education, as well as peace education and such, have been introduced in LMICs on a pilot or small-scale basis (Sinclair, 2013). Training and coaching of teachers can enable success even under difficult conditions if there is strong leadership, although sustainability is problematic when external funding or the leadership of a champion disappears. Scaling up, however, is often the greatest challenge.

Well-meaning policies are nevertheless often enacted in LMICs, which essentially require a scaling-up of a pilot program on SEL or a 4.7 theme. As discussed in Section Five, the constraints include teachers' limited professional training or facilitation skills, but also

large classes, lack of resources, limited school hours and often the sensitivity of some topics (making them unpopular with parents, teachers and sometimes national opinion-leaders). Perhaps most critical is that standalone subjects, if they are not included in high stakes national examinations, will be a low priority in many schools. Even though there may be a required SEL subject such as ‘life skills’, this may be ignored by most teachers because classroom time is needed for examination subjects (as well as difficulties faced by teachers in covering this new content and associated pedagogy). Njeng’ere (2014, p.9) of the Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD) noted this problem in respect of life skills education (LSE), which was introduced as a standalone subject for all Kenyan schools in 2008:

The gap between the intended, implemented and achieved curriculum in Kenya is too wide. With the increased enrolment in schools and limited number of places in ‘quality’ secondary schools, and limited places in universities that offer medicine, engineering, law and other ‘high stakes’ courses, educational competition has almost reached a breaking point. Schools and families have responded by devising strategies of ‘teaching to the test’ ... A major victim of this is LSE [Life Skills Education]. Whereas all primary and secondary schools are expected to offer at least one LSE lesson a week, these lessons are timetabled but during the actual teaching a different subject like mathematics is most often taught.

## **How can Target 4.7/SEL content be embedded in textbooks for core subjects?**

The vulnerability of standalone, non-examined subjects in LMICs makes it critical to ask textbook writers to strengthen the coverage of SEL and 4.7 themes in core subjects. This needs political will as well as professional expertise. Typically, the curriculum in any country becomes overcrowded as new content is added without reducing older content, though there is sometimes a spring-cleaning ‘window of opportunity’ when a new minister of education

takes office. The textbook writer faces an overloaded curriculum which sets out in detail a long list of topics to be covered, seemingly leaving little room to integrate cross-cutting issues such as 4.7 themes, or make time for SEL-supportive pedagogy.

A first task is for national professionals and education stakeholders is to select a manageable set of sub-themes from SEL and 4.7 areas, reflecting the country’s priorities, and to integrate these into appropriate carrier subjects in each grade. These SEL and 4.7 sub-themes must, given the extremely limited time available for each subject each year, enable the deepening of subject knowledge. A further step is for textbook writers themselves to engage with this ‘transformational’ aspect of the curriculum—or cross-cutting issues—to become comfortable with SEL and what it means to them and their fellow citizens, as well as with key aspects of 4.7 themes. NISSEM sees this process as a missing link to be addressed, even with a limited number of writers. In a noteworthy previous experience, a five-year inter-agency project with the Ministry of Education in Nepal, focusing on the inclusion of peace, human rights and civics in social studies textbooks, provided wide-ranging experience to social studies writers, including travel to a selected state in India and consultations with men and women from minority groups to enable writers to contextualize the social studies content on an inclusive basis (Smith, 2013).<sup>4</sup>

Curriculum and textbook writers in LMICs need time and space to develop this contextualised, innovative SEL and 4.7 content, aligned to current teacher capacity and infused with supportive pedagogy (see the NISSEM Position Paper). A key activity is also to organize focus group discussions with students at early adolescent and late adolescent stages, and with recent school leavers, who can help identify what impact in terms of SEL and 4.7 aims the current textbooks have provided, and what the students and ex-students would prioritize for their own future in terms of citizenship, life

4 Lack of time for trialling the materials led to textbooks that were too difficult for many teachers, under prevailing conditions (Raj Kumar Dhungana, unpublished report).



skills and environmental support. The purpose of 4.7 education is to build knowledge and skills that will support student agency and positive behaviors, so interaction with youth, and notably with those who have engaged in constructive social and environmental action after leaving school, is vital.

The outcome from this preliminary work can feed into workshops for particular groups of textbook writers, to find ways of incorporating such content into textbooks for different grades and subjects. Through horizontal and vertical planning of scope and sequence, the knowledge and skills can be built in and reinforced throughout the school experience. Again, this requires time and space for serious reflection, rather than asking curriculum staff to squeeze this taxing exercise into a busy timetable. Moreover, the trialling of exemplar materials in schools covering the different regions or sections of society is valuable (not only trialling in elite schools). It is also important to gather feedback from teachers and learners in terms of comprehension, teacher-friendliness and learning outcomes.

Including aspects of gender equality, respect for diversity, culture of peace and the values underlying human rights explicitly as part of social studies is one of the most promising options for implementing SEL and 4.7, if the country has a social studies subject rather than separate history and geography. Where there is no 'social studies' subject as such, explicit units of study and key concepts covering SEL and 4.7 themes can be programmed into language, history, geography and science curricula and textbooks.

As illustrated in the briefs in Section Seven, SEL and 4.7 elements can be included in language studies at all levels, as part of comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and thinking skills development. These texts can introduce and deepen SEL and 4.7 concepts such as inclusion, cooperation, negotiation, conflict resolution and reconciliation, as well as appreciation of the environment and issues of sustainability. If basic SEL is not explicitly introduced in social studies then the role of language studies in this regard will need to be enhanced. Affective aspects of

SEL such as empathy fit naturally into language studies as well as procedural aspects (such as negotiation, conflict resolution), which fit equally well in social science.

The coverage of SEL and 4.7 in science is especially important, given the need to convey messages regarding adolescent health behaviors, the science of public health and the science of environmental sustainability, including local and global dimensions. When studying plants or the carbon cycle, it is important to link these to the actual environment in different parts of the particular country. Textbooks in LMICs should not, however, be filled with lengthy and complex activities that students and teachers lack time and means to implement. Instead, textbooks can provide succinct information and modelling, including examples of how young forest officers or volunteers tackle a specific environmental science problem such as the erosion of hillsides or protection of wildlife. The exercise of identifying key national environmental and health messages for enrichment of school science lessons is a good starting point: they need not be many but should be reinforced in greater depth as students mature.

Explicit teaching of core SEL and related 4.7 concepts and skills is essential. Otherwise, even in an ideal school climate, children may not pick up the steps of conflict resolution and quietly assertive 'I-statements', nor the ideas of valuing all people equally, avoiding negative stereotypes, and being inclusive of people from other groups. (Centuries of in-school bullying testify to this.)

## **Can international resources be helpful?**

The example of key health messages that have been developed internationally may be helpful in this regard. Facts for Life (UNICEF, 2010) presents 14 key health messages (one or two sentences each), identified through international cooperation. The third edition was translated into 215 languages. These key messages are short and take up two sides of an A4 sheet, but the guidebook also provides supplementary information for health and community workers



as well as guidance on educating for behavior change. The topics include malaria prevention, HIV/AIDS, major childhood illnesses, pregnancy, childbirth, child development, early learning, parenting, protection, and care and support of children. We would suggest that this approach might be adapted to generate a similar global guide to key 4.7 messages and related SEL, perhaps beginning with those in the science sector.

For example, science textbook writers could select priority topics from this guide, relevant to their own country. The writers would of course be able to add additional key messages suited to their country and to develop nationally adapted versions of the messages. In some countries, desertification may be a problem while in others there may be a need to preserve mangrove swamps. Health topics may evolve over time, as for example, learning—where relevant—about the danger of Ebola or Zika epidemics when studying viruses and bacteria.

In each case, the science—and for some messages social science and humanities content—can be linked to youth agency. For example, the life cycle of the mosquito and malaria parasite may already be in the curriculum. It will add little to the factual learning load—but a lot to the motivation for agency—if there is a cameo in the text about youth groups working to eliminate breeding grounds of stagnant water in their neighborhoods. SEL-supportive pedagogy in the textbook can encourage classroom discussion with a neighboring student about action needed in the light of a basic science concept. Thus, the basic science of the stages of insect development (egg, larva, pupa, adult) can be brought to life by students discussing malaria prevention modalities in their locality for the pre-adult phase (mosquito eggs, larvae and pupae are in stagnant water) and when the adults are flying in search of food.

Linking practical messages directly to core science concepts may make the latter more informative, while avoiding overloading. Science teachers in rural areas cannot be expected to have this information at their fingertips and to see how to make it motivational for student agency. This preparation for

contextualization and motivational content needs to be done *before* the textbooks are written and to be included in textbooks with SEL-supportive pedagogy built in.

## Final reflections

Developing a good SEL model is a valuable part of planning, whether for curriculum developers or textbook writers. Without a pedagogical model, a textbook can very easily become like so many in LMICs—that is, a comprehension-based approach, full of statements that lend themselves to traditional test items but lacking in cognitive and emotional depth and in which social values are included only as admonitions rather than being explored through analysis and discussion.

Textbook planners should therefore organize textbook content around the topics and concepts of the curriculum, including appropriate sequencing and revision, but take care to view the way that topics and concepts are taught through both an *emotional* and a *social* lens. The elements of SEL and 4.7 themes (whether or not they are named in this way) can be included in core subjects as explicit course units and systematically inserted as cross-cutting issues and/or 21st-century competencies.

As a first step by curriculum developers or other champions, a group of writers, teachers, youth, women's groups and other stakeholders, assisted by supportive university staff, can be formed to identify priority topics that support SEL-supported 4.7 themes and SEL-supportive embedded pedagogy. Discussions with students and school leavers can help identify potential impact in terms of SEL and 4.7, and what these young people would prioritize for future students in terms of education for citizenship, life skills and environmental support. This can provide context and innovative thinking to support the efforts of textbook writers tasked with contextualizing global targets.

Additional to those mentioned earlier, briefs by Batra, Popović and Rutayisire illustrate ways of bringing SEL and 4.7 themes to life in school texts.

While *NISSEM Global Briefs* aims in general to provide information, ideas and examples for use by policymakers and practitioners, we hope the briefs in the following section will be especially helpful to curriculum planners and developers and to textbook publishers and writers.

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## Redesigning school texts to develop democratic and socially responsive citizens

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### ABSTRACT

Socio-educational research links the idea of citizenship to the cultural and social lives of young people, bringing into focus concerns of inclusion and exclusion, rights and responsibilities. As mainstream school education focuses on developing 'model' citizens, it often underplays the need to engage with questions of diversity, social disparity and democratic citizenship. Developing a social scientific orientation and rational ways of understanding diversity and social conflict implores the social sciences to engage young people with everyday meanings of being a citizen. This paper engages with the large potential social sciences have to provide critical overarching frames towards developing sensitive, interrogative and transformative citizens for a just and peaceful society. It presents some of the key issues that guided the design of middle school textbooks initiated by Eklavya, a non-government organization with the aim to bring about radical change in the teaching of civics. The paper concludes by highlighting the promise of institutionalizing some of these ideas at the national level.

### KEYWORDS

civics curriculum, school textbooks, civic education in India, textbook design, learner empowerment pedagogy

## Introduction

School textbooks in India are published by state governments (for state schools) and private publishers for the expanding private school sector. While education remains a concurrent subject in India, decisions with regard to school structure and texts lie with individual state governments. The basic features of textbooks include an overemphasis on capsuled information and a clear tilt towards evaluating student learning in terms of rote memorization of 'facts'. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), an autonomous body which largely functions in consonance with the central government, designs school textbooks that are merely recommendatory and not binding on each state or union territory. Although the trend since independence has been to virtually reproduce NCERT texts in regional languages with minor local adaptations, several states have begun to assert their autonomy to create textbooks that are in consonance with state ideology. Examples range from attempts to distort or undermine history to privileging technological knowledge and skills over scientific thinking and reasoning.

Until recently, government school textbooks made little attempt to weave in pedagogical approaches. Most textbook developers, chosen from disciplinary specializations, and because they often lack relevant classroom experience, may have little knowledge of how children of different ages learn and engage with textual material and abstract subjects. A consequence of texts being heavily loaded with abstract content and weak connections to pedagogical understanding means that most students struggle to comprehend what they read. This phenomenon has been described by the Yashpal committee<sup>1</sup> as the 'burden of non-comprehension'.

While the term 'curriculum' has a wider meaning, it is often reduced to 'selected knowledge' that has been chosen to be transmitted to students through the textbook. The textbook in Indian schools constitutes the most important tool for transmitting

1 Government of India (1993).

curricular content and yet is the most criticized and controversial aspect of our education system. Criticism has ranged from perceiving the textbook as a passive medium of curriculum transaction, often loaded with information and developmentally inappropriate concepts that stretch beyond the capacities of children, to texts ridden with stereotypes, prejudices of caste, class, community, language and even religious overtones. Nevertheless, textbooks reign supreme and are often the only written, authoritative source of knowledge for the teacher and student alike.

This paper engages with the processes, issues and concerns of writing social science textbooks for state schools of Madhya Pradesh by Eklavya, a non-governmental organization that worked closely with the state government schools during the period 1982–2004. The basic condition laid out by the state was to follow a given syllabus that was meant to be within the existing National Curriculum Framework developed by the NCERT in 1988. While Eklavya also developed textbooks in subject areas of history and geography, this paper focuses on the redesigning of civics texts with the aim of showing how the treatment of subject matter attempted to radically alter the idea of citizenship.

The author of this paper was deeply engaged with the process of reviewing the social science program developed by Eklavya, including examining middle school texts and collating individual subject reviews and processes documented by the Eklavya team, which eventually culminated in a publication<sup>2</sup>.

## **Citizenship: a running theme of social science curriculum**

In India, social sciences are referred to as ‘social studies’ in schools and are taught as separate subjects at middle and high school. The theme of citizenship has cut across national curriculum

2 Batra, P. (Ed). (2010). *Social Science Learning in Schools: Perspective and Challenges*. New Delhi: SAGE. This paper draws upon major sections of the book including the introduction, chapters on pedagogic review of the Eklavya texts and the review of civics.

frameworks (NCF) since the first document was released in 1975 and has characterized the early inclusion of social sciences in schools. A closer scrutiny of documents reveals finer nuances and some radical interpretations of this curricular aim since independence.

The 1975 Curriculum Framework aspired to ‘...enable the growing citizen of tomorrow to *participate* in the affairs of the community, the state, the country and the world at large’, through the teaching of social sciences in post-independence India. The following decade saw the National Curriculum for Elementary School Education (NCESE, 1988, p. 5) re-emphasize the critical importance of teaching social sciences for creating a citizenry conscious of their *rights and duties* and committed to the principles embodied in our Constitution...’ The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) formulated in 2000 under a new political regime, redefined citizenship education with an emphasis on ‘... content essential to *nurture national identity*’ that aimed to develop a sense of ‘*fundamental duties (and)... a sense of pride in being an Indian.*’ (All emphases added by the author.)

This later view was in sharp contrast to the Curriculum Framework of 1975 which explicitly stated the need to keep away ‘... narrow parochial, chauvinistic and obscurantist tendencies’ and teach social sciences to ‘promote values and ideals of humanism, secularism, socialism and democracy...inculcate attitudes and impart the knowledge necessary for the achievement of the principal values of a just world order, maximization of economic and social welfare, minimization of violence and maximization of ecological stability.’ (NCF, 1975, p.19). Views stated in the NCFSE of 2000 were also in sharp contrast to the 1988 curriculum document, which located the social sciences in the overall aim of education as a powerful instrument for enabling social transformation.

The last NCF Review, now more than a decade old (NCERT, 2005), reiterated a commitment to the values enshrined in the Constitution while articulating a more radical aim for the teaching of social sciences. Relocating the ‘social sciences in the overall aim of education’, it establishes social enquiry as a scientific



endeavor that must challenge patriarchal frames and strive to generate in students ‘...a critical moral and mental energy, making them alert to the social forces that threaten these (Constitutional) values...(and) develop amongst them ‘...sensitive, interrogative and transformative citizens...’ (NCF, 2005, p.48).

## **Social sciences: an overarching framework for school education**

Social science curriculum and textbook reform in post-independence India was motivated by the rejection of the colonial legacy and the consequent need for a well-informed, active citizenry in order to participate in a democracy. However, most of school social science, especially civics, tended to continue with the colonial tradition of packing textbooks with ‘information’ that is disconnected from the lived realities of learners and presented in a manner that fails to arouse interest in the subject. The obvious but little reflected upon disconnect between the aims of social science teaching, the manner of subject organization in school texts, and the practice of education has gradually led to a systematic erosion of faith in the utility of social science as a school subject.

Many curriculum developers believe that the ‘perceived’ lack of relevance of social sciences is an inevitable consequence of its subject matter. For instance, the NCF 2000 position, that the quantum of history needs to be ‘substantially reduced’, favors the argument that social science provides ‘unnecessary details about the past’. Scholars have cautioned that the suppression of history is a form of ‘social amnesia’ (Jacoby, 1975) and ‘the call to ignore history’ in the US curriculum debates of the 1970s as ‘an assault on thinking itself’ (Giroux, 1981). Attempts to ideologically capture school curriculum in India since the 1970s<sup>3</sup> appear to have resulted

3 See Sahmat Publications on ‘Against Communalisation of Education’, ‘Saffron Agenda in Education: An Expose’ and ‘The Assault on History’ 2000 for a critique of the NCFSE 2000, on the issue of communalizing; ShikshaVimarsh: Shaishik Chintan Avam Samvad ki Patrika, January-February, 2007, Published by Digantar, Jaipur. [www.digantar.org/vimarsh](http://www.digantar.org/vimarsh) for a critical review of Rajasthan textbooks.

in some cases in creating a false consciousness about how the imprints of history shape ordinary lives.

The notion that social sciences are bereft of the ‘skills’ required to function in the real world, coupled with the cultural hegemony of the physical and natural sciences (corresponding with neo-liberal agendas and reflected in international assessments), leads to the popular belief that the subject is redundant. The challenge lies in arguing for their critical value in providing social, cultural sensibilities and analytical capacities required to adjust to an increasingly interdependent world, and to develop an active citizenry required to deal with the political and economic realities that govern its functioning. Towards this end, the NCF (2005, p.49) recommends that the social science school curriculum draw content from history, geography, political science, sociology and economics to engage learners with issues of poverty, illiteracy, child labor, class, caste, gender, and environment from multiple perspectives.

A sharper articulation of the role of social sciences as critical to the specific aim of education for social transformation is visible in the Eklavya texts and the NCF, 2005. School social sciences hold the promise of engaging young learners with concerns and perspectives that cultivate and nurture egalitarian and secular values.

## **Social sciences and the Eklavya perspective**

The social science program of Eklavya was initiated in 1983 to enable teachers and children to interact on social issues and processes in an active and analytical way. The prime concerns were to find ways of strengthening conceptual understanding in social sciences and to alter the purpose of giving information to this end. A systematic experiment was carried out by Eklavya to achieve this aim. A new framework of curriculum was evolved, a new set of textbooks was created, a new scheme of evaluation of learning was developed, and training methodologies were developed to interact with teachers on the basic principles and pedagogic approaches of social science teaching.

In the Eklavya perspective, the study of social science implies an awareness of the concrete life experiences and perceptions of a wide cross-section of people that constitute different societies and an 'awareness of connections between all elements that shape society'. It promises to foster the awareness that even the most fundamental aspects of society can change through conflict of interests and the organized efforts of ordinary citizens.

Constructed through a process of reflective enquiry, social science contributes to the building of critical, scientific thinking about the actions of human groups in natural and social environments; it promotes the ability to acquire facts, to assess the worth of information to particular ends, to perceive the role of selection, interpretation and multiple viewpoints in determining the quality of evidence. Within this conceptual framework, Eklavya outlined key basic principles<sup>4</sup> for the teaching of specific social science disciplines, namely, history, geography and civics. Even though it is important to examine the integrated impact of social sciences, for the purpose of this paper we focus exclusively on civics.

## Civics: an overview

Early thinking on the subject of including social science teaching in Indian schools<sup>5</sup> was to include courses in civics without the systematic teaching of economics or sociology. Civics is seen as responsible for making students into 'ideal citizens' with a strong sense of national pride as well as faith in the working of the socio-political system.

The notion of creating 'citizens' has been in part a legacy of colonial educational policy in India, wherein 'natives' were supposed to be culturally elevated into 'citizens' via the process of

4 Saamajik Adhyann Shikshan: Ek Prayog, 1984, Eklavya, Bhopal.

5 Round Table Conference on the Teaching of the Social Sciences in South Asia: Papers and Proceedings of the Meeting Organised by UNESCO at Delhi from 15-19 February 1954, UNESCO, New Delhi, India.

education (Jain, 2004). In the post-colonial state, civics education was seen as an important means of instilling the requisite values into students in order to transform a 'backward' society into a 'modern' nation-state. This process is, however, not specific to post-colonial societies but is seen in almost all countries across the globe, with varying degrees of state control.

Development of appropriate policies and curriculum for 'citizenship education' became the focus of attention for educators and policy-makers in the Asia-Pacific region, which was undergoing major economic change. As economies in the region boomed and then sank into recession, calls for a stable civil society based on the principles of participative democracy became stronger and translated into attempts to instil 'values of democracy' into students (Murray, 2000). This interest can be interpreted in different ways. On one hand, the teaching of values, rights and responsibilities of citizens could be regarded as liberating and engaging, involving participative democratic citizenship where a full range of rights and responsibilities are exercised, while on the other it may be seen as a means of creating acquiescent, docile and 'good' citizens who unquestioningly obey the diktat of an unequal and oppressive state in the name of loyalty and patriotism. This needs to be kept in mind while examining text content that attempts to educate children to become 'citizens' of a country.

Civics texts have been criticized for fostering insidious government propaganda and for their lack of connection with the real world. Breaking fresh ground, the Eklavya civics texts moved away from the conventional emphasis on the state to a much wider consideration of the concerns and activities of common people. Beginning with the premise that the importance of civics is intimately related to the idea of citizenship, the texts redefine civics. The case studies, examples and narratives that comprise the text project the citizen as a proactive agent who seeks to understand complex phenomena and his/her position in society based on economic and socio-political equations. This kind of content aims at educating children about their role as citizens in understanding

reality as well as intervening actively to make a difference in the quality of their lives. Objectives such as these place the Eklavya texts in stark contrast to most civics texts across the world, which aim to maintain a benign attitude towards the state and learn about various structures of governance in mechanical and uncritical ways.

## Civics in Eklavya texts

The subject matter of civics projects state agendas and is most immediately affected by state power structures and the social origins of its functionaries. While all school subjects are constructed partially by relations of power, most subjects also have the prestige and authority of a university discipline behind them. Civics, however, is a school subject that is guided directly by the state. Civics texts designed by Eklavya change the equation between the state and its people. The texts present a new and different vision of the state and its interpenetration by society. This is a vision in which the people, too, have a voice. They lobby and pressurize, they are active agents and not passive recipients.

While the state continues to have a significant presence, economic relations emerge as a major axis in Eklavya's vision of civics. The class VI<sup>6</sup> text begins with the idea of interdependence through an economic example rather than through the idea of social life as necessary for human existence. Much of Class VII<sup>7</sup> is devoted to narratives of visits to places where economic production and distribution take place. This approach draws readers to contrast the lives of people at different nodes of industrialization in India. The everyday relations of kinship and community are juxtaposed with much wider socio-political and economic processes. An examination of economic relationships makes possible a much deeper comprehension of social power, inequality and the changing

6 Eklavya, 1993, *Samajik Adhyayan: Kaksha Chhe*, Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Pathyapustak Nigam.

7 Eklavya, 1988, *Samajik Adhyayan: Kaksha Saat*, Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Pathyapustak Nigam.

face of opportunities, including that of exploring the interface of kinship with the secular world.

## People and the state

A key feature of the texts is their portrayal of the role of ordinary people in development and in society at large. Drawing from the disciplines of economics and political science, civics chapters engage young readers with questions and issues of development from a critical perspective. The kind of civics predominant in schools saw the state as the bearer of all initiative, in which the people basically cooperated and collaborated with the actions of the state. In the Eklavya texts, a variety of examples demonstrate how people interact with the state and achieve what they desire through complex processes of lobbying, persuading and reasoning. There is no sharp dividing line separating the state from society. Individuals come together to form powerful groups whose collective efforts bring about the desired results. This is a fundamental shift in emphasis and through it Eklavya both expresses and encourages the democratization of Indian society.

The texts represent different people having varying vested interests because of their positions in society. People are seen cheating, being heroic, selfish and altruistic. A sense of agency of the people is clearly conveyed, while acknowledging a complex socio-political context in which the 'good' does not always succeed. Through this, Eklavya's approach to teaching civics seeks to empower students through a grasp of the possibility of social action in scenarios that are realistically embedded in social contradiction and conflict. The state and the economic fabric of life are portrayed not as smooth, consensual entities, but as arenas of conflict and contradiction.

## The interplay between content and pedagogy in redefining civics education

Traditionally, textbook writing is influenced by positivist approaches wherein the driving force is to search for a single

correct answer and in which children memorize 'given' information by rote. The uniqueness of the Eklavya books lies in communicating complex phenomena by means of concrete images of the social world being discussed. The texts use a variety of methods to draw concrete imagery and present a critical perspective of the social, historical and contemporary world through stories, case studies, illustrations, travelogues and primary sources.

Conventional social science teaching emphasizes learning about societies and times without reference to the child's actual, lived experiences. Eklavya books are unique in making the social world of the learner both an object of study and a process of constantly getting learners to reflect upon their own social experiences. The texts in many ways resolve the dichotomy often posed between the child and the curriculum. They address the multiple dynamic issues of organizing subject-matter in developmentally appropriate ways and engaging young readers in a dialogical process of constructing meaning—all at once.

Converting a set of 'social science facts' into a process of social inquiry is a major strength of the Eklavya texts. This was done by presenting different viewpoints about a phenomenon, comparing the normative with actual experiences and by demonstrating the methods of constructing knowledge. Without impinging upon the autonomy of the teacher, the texts provide useful pedagogical spaces and ideas through various activities interspersed in the text.

The texts scaffold children's learning by appropriate positioning of relevant questions and generating questions in the mind of the learner, by posing questions that prompt children to reflect on the concepts under study in a variety of ways, and by invoking capacities and skills at several levels of meaning-making and learning.

The writers made conscious attempts to refrain from merely stating facts, which is the usual style adopted in conventional textbooks. The texts interpret facts for the child, and dwell on them elaborately in an effort to arrive at a connected understanding of what is being discussed. Facts are not stated with finality. Instead, an element of tentativeness characterizes the information presented.

A great deal has been carefully left for the children to discover and to figure out for themselves, expecting them to use their imagination and discretion. The constant reference to, and comparison with, the immediate physical and social milieu of the child sustains their interest and engagement in the topic. The presentation of the texts is systematic, cohesive, detailed and self-explanatory. Short sections with subtitles break the monotony of text and help children to 'locate' information or an argument with ease.

One of the biggest strengths of the Eklavya textbooks is that people are not nameless, homogeneous categories who exist in a social vacuum; rather, they participate actively in social processes. Structural inequalities in society and the social consequences of an unequal and divisive social milieu are highlighted, such as how it affects their bargaining power in the market or how they are exploited by those placed above them in the social hierarchy. The value of collective mobilization of people towards a positive end is also highlighted. The texts use information to sketch a functional picture of the systems of governance, which is usually presented as a series of facts in conventional texts. But even there, the larger social frames of diversity and active citizenship are prominent.

The plural nature of Indian society is reflected in the textbooks in many ways. Stories are placed in a rural context to enable children to relate these to the socio-cultural milieu in which they live. Women and young girls are projected in positive and active roles and ethnic minorities are an integral part of the social fabric. The child characters in the stories are shown with dignity as being intelligent, aware, curious and questioning.

### **Developing capacity via pedagogic communication**

The pedagogic strength of the Eklavya texts lies in the diverse set of skills they intend to develop in the learners through activities and questions and the way in which the texts prompt children to compare things, ideas, events and situations. The texts ask searching questions, encouraging children to draw inferences and arrive at generalizations, observe and compare phenomena, pose

problems, formulate hypothetical questions, draw conclusions and articulate new questions, thus facilitating critical thinking. In their presentation, content and perspective, the texts present the teacher with immense possibilities and a trajectory of a developmental pedagogy that is based on dialog, integrating subject knowledge with a deep understanding of children's knowledge and experiences, and of their thinking and learning processes.

The in-text questions, activities and brief comments prompt teachers to engage children with the subject matter through a dialogical process. The texts 'include rather than exclude children with different histories...to acknowledge the otherness and significance of different cultures...and to provide space for different modes of learning and ways of understanding at the child's own pace' (NCERT, 2005: pp. 80, 86). They make certain assumptions about learners, namely that they are unique individuals who possess divergent views of the world, who learn in different ways, whose prior knowledge and experiences influence the meanings they make from new learning experiences, and for whom learning is most effective when they engage with subject matter in collaboration with others.

The conflicts, contradictions and multiple perspectives that surface in subject matter, the tentative tone of interpretive voices, and the quietly assertive child and adult characters help participating students take different perspectives on the subject of discussion and to 'decentrate' from their primary point of view while developing a new more nuanced approach (Zuckerman, 1994).

## Conclusion

The basic task of social science education is to enable people to move towards a society with greater freedom and human agency. Crucial to this endeavor is the uncovering of forces that control people and limit their agency. Through the social science texts, learners engage with structural inequalities in society, differences in terms of identities and the social consequences of these. There

can be little doubt that the Eklavya approach to civics teaching and learning broke fresh ground in this direction. It moved away from a state-centric view of civics to one where people are active agents amidst ordinary lives that are continually influenced by socio-economic structures and power relationships. The texts portray the state and society as arenas of conflict and contradiction where people intervene actively to bring about positive social change. Such an approach takes the educator and the learner into the larger issue of meaning and aims of education and the specific role of textbooks in contributing to developing an active citizenry.

The criticality of social science teaching, in particular 'civics' in schools, assumes greater significance in the current context of a globalized world where matters of individual and national identities are highly politicized, creating insecurities and a strong desire for protectionism. This view stands at odds with a policy discourse that threatens the very existence of social sciences via an imposed regime of standardized curricula and evaluation.

Textbook writing in several Indian states, along with teacher professional development, was deeply influenced by the Eklavya experiment<sup>8</sup>. Eklavya was called upon by states in the west, east and much of the Hindi heartland<sup>9</sup> to help redesign the social science curriculum and textbooks. Many of these ideas found traction in the national-level textbook development process post-NCF, 2005. Some of the finest exemplars of social science texts written for the middle, secondary and higher secondary levels emerged during this exercise.<sup>10</sup> The framework used to create, in particular, middle school texts, including the texts on 'social and political life' that replaced civics at the national level, derives ideas and inspiration

8 For details on the expansion of Eklavya's curriculum across various states See Rashmi Paliwal and C. N. Subramaniam (2006). Contextualising the Curriculum, *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, 4(1), Monsoon 2006.

9 The Hindi heartland refers to the bulk of the northern and central states of India that speak Hindi or variations of it.

10 The textbooks being referred to here are those of NCERT based on NCF, 2005. <http://www.ncert.nic.in/NCERTS/textbook/textbook.htm>



from the thirty years of experience of Eklavya in curriculum design and textbook writing. 'Social and Political Life' integrates disciplinary knowledge to create thematic texts that engage with key concerns of the everyday citizen.

The redefinition of civics by Eklavya provided direction to replace civics as a middle school subject with inter- and transdisciplinary texts on the 'social and political life' of ordinary people, and to replace political science with 'democratic politics' at the high school level. The example of the Eklavya texts attempted to unfold a social science curriculum in its true spirit—in Pinar's (2004, p.848) words 'not to produce accomplished test-takers...efficient and docile employees... (but) to help us think and act with intelligence, sensitivity and courage in both the public sphere—as citizens aspiring to establish a democratic society—and in the private sphere, as individuals committed to other individuals.'

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## Teachers' humility, openness and moral responsibility: An emerging grassroots theory of change for history education reform

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### ABSTRACT

We argue that education reform for the most contested of educational programs demands a teacher-driven theory of change. Education reform in conflict-affected areas typically isolates teacher agency from top-down initiatives. We report on the work and reflections of four history teachers in Lebanon who have influenced degrees of reform in history education, a curricular program in gridlock for over two decades. These teachers demonstrate an emerging grassroots teacher-driven theory of change in education that is driven by teachers who are empowered to critically question learning and develop new approaches with peer teachers and young people. This theory of change is critical where classroom pedagogies are established as cultural practices. Changing a culture of pedagogy is a long-running process of struggles and collaboration driven by teachers who are critically reflexive and willing to try new approaches. These teachers exercised humility by continuously questioning their practices, expressed injustice when their students learn only information, and measured the success of their teaching by the quality of critical questions and discussions

that their students brought to the classroom. We describe these teachers as 'high-impact' because they took the initiative to question and challenge curricula and develop new questions, materials and activities that engage their students in collaborative and critical dialogic pedagogies and inspire other history teachers and history education policymakers.

### KEYWORDS

Lebanon, history teaching, Lebanese Civil War, disciplinary approach, collective memory, social cohesion, theory of change, conflict prevention, high-impact teachers, history education reform

## Education reform for social reconstruction in Lebanon

In areas affected by armed conflict, governmental and non-governmental agencies turn to education as a critical means of social reconstruction. Education reforms in these contexts are mostly directed from political and government authorities and often focus on revising curricula and learning activities to ensure that educational provisions (eg, citizenship education, social studies, history education, community service) foster social cohesion and active citizenship. For example, peace treaties often prescribe reforms such as demanding access for minority groups previously denied access to schools or unifying conflicting historical narratives into a single narrative—a narrative most frequently dictated by those in power. National curricula and ministerial decrees are also top-down policies that stipulate exactly what, and sometimes how, information is to be learned.

Top-down approaches to education reform, however, are vulnerable to political conflicts and can even contradict their own aims of inclusion and active participation. Political drivers in conflict-affected areas underpin curricular processes, the selection of content and the development of textbooks, further reinforcing traditions of reciting pre-selected content knowledge (Fontana, 2017). In ending the 1975–90 civil war in Lebanon, the

1989 Ta'if Accord stipulated the revision of the national curriculum in order to 'strengthen national belonging...and cultural openness' and 'the unification of history and civic education textbooks as a step towards social cohesion' (Government of Lebanon, 1989, p. section III.F.5). History textbooks would present a single grand narrative that would foster collective memory and a unifying national identity. The 1994 Education Reform Plan produced the 1997 national curriculum, which is still in effect in 2019. The Center for Education Research and Development (CERD), the arm of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) largely responsible for curriculum development, produced one civics textbook per grade level that all public and private schools are required to use for their Lebanese program. However, despite many attempts by successive governments, the history education program of study is the only subject that did not successfully undergo complete curricular reform after the 1975–90 civil war.

In 2000, a committee of history scholars representing the main sectarian parties submitted to the MEHE a curricular program that was approved by the Council of Ministers (Presidential decree no. 3175). Following the approval, textbooks for grades 2–6 were published. The MEHE minister, however, disapproved of these textbooks' portrayal of the Arabs and the rise of Islam and, thus, immediately rejected the materials and suspended the work (Bashshur, 2005; Frayha, 2004). A subsequent attempt ten years later was also blocked by the Council of Ministers in 2012 following street protests and riots over the exclusion of certain narratives particularly related to the Lebanese Civil War period. The government gridlock over consensus on a grand narrative has left schools teaching a history program that was last revised in 1971.

Reforming the history education curriculum and textbooks in Lebanon is critical to shift away from a 'do no harm' approach that avoids addressing controversial issues (eg, causes of the Civil War) in classrooms toward a direction that fosters deliberative dialogue. This shift would transform the current pedagogical culture of reciting information from textbooks to develop

historical arguments based on evidence that students would critically examine together with their peers. This shift toward a more collaborative approach to learning allows for the creation of spaces for open dialogue and the expression of different and sometimes conflicting perceptions. Teachers and students alike share an enthusiasm for learning about the Civil War, for example, but the controversies that continue to surround the conflict and the climate of 'silencing conflict histories' have reduced history education to the knowledge of people, places and dates of events (van Ommering, 2015, p. 204).

Indeed, traditions of reciting history when studying the Lebanese curricular program are prevalent in public and private schools. In Lebanon, where over two-thirds of registered students are in private schools, all public schools must follow the Lebanese program. Students in the Lebanese program sit for an official exam after grades 9 and 12 for the Lebanese Baccalaureates I and II, respectively. While most private schools also teach the Lebanese program, some award the US High School Diploma, French Baccalaureate, British Graduate Certificate of Secondary Education, German Deutsches Sprachdiplom and International Baccalaureate (Akar & Albrecht, 2017). Schools that do facilitate collaborative and dialogic pedagogies in their history classrooms return to practices of reciting information in preparation for the official exams while others begin preparations during the preceding year; for example, using grade 8 to start memorizing grade 9 history.

Civil society has also taken the lead in attempts to reform history education in Lebanon. Some schools have developed their own curricula and textbooks aligned with the historical periods outlined in the national curriculum. They introduced new resources and strategies such as research projects and groupwork, and the use of multimedia and various technologies is increasing; but schools still rely heavily on traditional teaching methods of lecturing, storytelling and reciting information for the official exam. A few non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have developed resources to facilitate learning about

sensitive events in history, such as the Civil War. The Civil Peace Service at [forumZFD](#) developed a curriculum entitled 'Memory of War' that aims to support teachers' approaches in having learners examine sources and questions about the Civil War. This NGO also developed an Oral History Toolkit that comprises a full oral research process for teachers and learners. [Fighters for Peace](#), another NGO, has produced resources that can also engage students with the history of the conflict. These learning resources include documentaries and filmed testimonies of how young people engaged in the war, how fighters lived the war and details of specific battles or episodes.

The [Lebanese Association for History](#) (LAH) has led pioneering work in advancing new pedagogies and discourse on history education reform. In 2011, the [Lebanese Association for Educational Studies](#) (LAES) hosted a conference, 'Learning and teaching history: Lessons from and for Lebanon' in Beirut (Ghusayni, Karami, & Akar, 2012), which set into motion a new wave of grassroots activism for history education reform in Lebanon. Teachers and academics were inspired by the learning of historical concepts as part of the discipline of learning history advanced by history teachers in the UK who have published their work in the peer-reviewed journal, [Teaching History](#). We, the authors of this brief, participated in the conference and became part of a group of history teachers from public and private schools and academics that later established LAH in 2013. During the first year of LAH, we organized and participated as learners in a one-year capacity-building program facilitated by Christine Counsell and Arthur Chapman<sup>1</sup> on historical concepts and other tools for learning and teaching history as a discipline. This formed the knowledge base of the work at LAH for subsequent history teacher professional development programs across Lebanon.

1 During the time of the capacity building program, Christine Counsell was Senior University Lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge and responsible for its secondary PGCE history course. Arthur Chapman was senior lecturer at the Institute of Education, University of London and had taught courses and supervised research in secondary history pedagogy.

The significance of the work at LAH lies in its bold position to depart from the government's mission of producing a single narrative of the past. While a grand narrative approach emphasizes the learning of one officiated account, assessed by accuracy of learners' recitation, resembling an authoritarian political system, a disciplinary approach requires students to construct arguments by critically examining various sources, accounts and interpretations, resembling a liberal democratic political context (Seixas, 2000). History education reform in Lebanon has focused nearly all of its efforts on writing a grand narrative, the dominant reform discourse reinforced by the Ta'if Accord. Even collections of scholarly work in Lebanon (eg, Ghusayni et al., 2012) largely attempt to unlock the curricular stalemate by suggesting new methodologies of reaching consensus on a grand narrative. Such a grand historical narrative theoretically fosters collective memory that nurtures social cohesion and prevents future armed conflict. This is a belief that most political parties in Lebanon embrace as a critical means of ensuring sustainable peace (Albrecht & Akar, 2016).

Despite the politically and pedagogically conflicting approaches, the MEHE and CERD have endorsed and supported the professional development activities of LAH for history teachers. Representatives from MEHE and CERD have regularly accepted invitations to attend workshops, symposia and project closing ceremonies. When LAH organized a series of local workshops over two years across the country, MEHE consistently forwarded invitations to all public school history teachers. Then, in the early summer of 2017, CERD initiated dialogs on trainings that LAH could provide to build the capacity of public sector teacher trainers. By October 2017, CERD and LAH shared experiences and approaches in an exchange workshop. An agreement was later signed in Spring 2018 for a series of training workshops that LAH facilitated from August 2018 to March 2019 on disciplinary approaches to history education. The workshops have been well-received by CERD, and further trainings by LAH will take place in September 2019.

We recognize a breakthrough in the initiative from CERD to invite LAH to explore how the public agency for curriculum development can develop a disciplinary approach to learning and teaching history in the Lebanese education program. Hence, the public-private partnership to diverge from the politically grounded mission of producing a single narrative prompts investigation into a wider theory of change that positions teachers as education change agents, even in the most stagnant and vulnerable contexts of education development. We identify these teachers and activists as ‘high-impact’ because their agency has paved the way for new directions of history education reform through the public sector. In Lebanon, we have not observed similar impact through common development activities, such as specialists producing resources for teachers to use in their classrooms or asking schools to select teachers to attend professional development workshops.

### **High-impact teachers for a grassroots theory of change**

The research reported in this paper focuses on experiences and reflections of high-impact teachers who have challenged or motivated paradigm shifts in pedagogy and policy. We examine high-impact teachers as instigators or catalysts of educational change and curriculum makers. In the UK, Stenhouse (1975) developed a curriculum development theory based on the experiences and findings of teachers working with young people in facilitating sensitive dialogues, collaborating to solve main inquiry questions and gathering and challenging evidence as part of disciplinary knowledge. A similar discourse continues with Counsell (2011a, 2011b), who narrates history teachers’ testimonies of developing pedagogies that empower learners to produce knowledge collectively in the history classroom. Similar activities led by history teacher associations in Cyprus, the Netherlands and the UK (Akar, Hamadeh, & Makriyanni, 2013) have, to various degrees, influenced history education

policy levels that were initially resistant to such change. Even in citizenship education, recent studies (eg, Alexander, 2016; Banks, 2017) describe teachers as change agents who facilitate progressive learning activities that engage young people in active forms of citizenship.

Our research examined the narratives of four high-impact history teachers and activists who are members of LAH and play various leading roles in the advancement of disciplinary approaches to history education in school classrooms and public sector professional development. For a one-year history education professional development program organized by LAH, they were selected to participate based on their experiences in planning and facilitating lessons that encourage learners to study and express various interpretations of historical events. With no resources available for research, we invited only four from the small group of high-impact history teachers at LAH who demonstrated commitment to change their classroom practices towards disciplinary approaches that foster critical and historical thinking. They have all taken part in professional development programs where they shared their innovative classroom practices, invited feedback from peers and taken leadership in advocacy and training on how history teachers in Lebanon can foster disciplinary approaches to learning history. High-impact teachers bear witness to changes in their classroom, new questions that their students ask and the struggles they endure while planning and facilitating. Our research is, in itself, a modest attempt to exercise the moral responsibility of narrating teachers’ questions and struggles and making sense of their attestations of learning and changes in their classroom (Hansen, 2017).

We conducted semi-structured interviews with the four selected history teachers, each of whom went beyond their job descriptions to advance the learning of history as a discipline. Three of the teachers come from the private sector, while the fourth is a full-time public school teacher and teaches part-time in a private school. The most senior of the four has taught history and civics in



a private school in Beirut for over 20 years and has now dedicated the rest of her career as a civil society activist for education reform. The other three have been teaching history for ten years or less. Out of the six governorates that make up Lebanon, each of the teachers comes from a different governorate: Beirut, Mount Lebanon, South Lebanon and Nabatiyyeh, and each teacher also identifies with a different religious sect. In the interviews, we asked teachers (referred to hereafter in this report as teacher [1], teacher [2], teacher [3] and teacher [4]) to tell us about:

- How they started their profession as teachers;
- Their motivations to start and continue professional development;
- Their responses to feedback on their work;
- How they manage between work and home responsibilities.

### Extreme measures

From the conversations, we heard some stories of actions they had taken that demonstrated an unwavering commitment and great sacrifice to improve the quality of learning history. The senior teacher [1], in fact, resigned in order to dedicate more of her time to supporting other history teachers in developing disciplinary, or 'open inquiry' approaches. After the LAES conference in 2011, she and a small group of teachers and academics started raising seed money to invite speakers on new approaches in history education. With this small group, she participated in two years of intensive professional development on learning and teaching history as a discipline and later co-founded LAH. Currently, she leads professional development activities for high-impact history teachers. A younger teacher [2] found her transformative opportunity when she learned of the history project on disciplinary approaches. She called in to apologize for missing the first session because, on that day, she had given birth to her second child; she later attended the second meeting, only 40 days after giving birth. We report

these expressions of dedication because we may find a pattern across other studies where teachers who demonstrate agency also sacrifice stable work positions or time from work or home to voluntarily advance their teaching or the subject matter altogether.

### Indicators of successful pedagogy

Traditions of classroom learning and teaching mostly focus on retention of information in history textbooks that each school or teacher selects from a range of private book publishers. One teacher [2] reported success in her class after the workshops on disciplinary approaches when students started to question information in the history book. Some of her students drew on their knowledge of politics from home and began challenging the names of chapter titles, titles of political movements or reasons why certain countries were allies in the past. When her students reached grades 9 and 12, she announced that she would have to teach information more oriented to the official exams. Upon hearing this, however, the students' parents protested, asking her to continue the activities that had engaged their children during the previous year. She believed this buy-in or support from the parents was a major indicator of success in the transformation of how we think about history education.

The public school teacher [3] also measured success through feedback from parents. At school meetings, they mentioned how their children talked about history far more frequently than the other subjects and said that their children's curiosity about the past was evident in the way they shared with them the discussions they had in class. Teacher [4] reported that students who were low-achievers started engaging more in class, even bringing material from home. On the other hand, students who regularly secured high grades through traditional testing of reproduced information protested against the open inquiry approach.

## Humility

One of the four teachers said she always struggled with the question, ‘Could I have done this better? Can I be more challenging?’ For a long time, she felt frustrated for not having done anything new. The senior (former) teacher also reported that she used to ask, ‘Is this working?’ and ‘Why are we doing this?’ She also found her work as a history teacher incomplete without the support of the Arabic teacher, Arabic being the language of instruction for history. She, too, noticed that her students were unable to express themselves clearly when writing in Arabic. Although Arabic is the first language of most learners, writing requires knowledge of classical Arabic, which is not used in their daily lives; thus, she took the initiative to coordinate with the Arabic teacher, saying, ‘We need your support’. In hindsight, she believed that ‘you have to have the audacity to ask for support’. Many teachers would find this a threat to their self-efficacy. Another of the teachers interviewed also reported that she doubted the effectiveness of her teaching and found herself in a vulnerable position when learning new approaches, yet still continued to experiment with them in her classroom.

## A universal level of morality

Some teachers expressed a sense of social injustice for their students, seeing it as unfair that these children are forced simply to memorize information. The (former) senior teacher [1] believed it was critical to respect the diversity of ideas that young people bring to the classroom. Similarly, teacher [3] was always concerned about his students’ learning and described the teaching of grade 9 students for the official exam as a burden. Teachers also found a sense of injustice in their profession; for example, one teacher wished she had received more support from her administration to institutionalize new approaches, while another felt unprepared to teach on the basis of her undergraduate studies in history even though, apparently, this was enough to qualify her as a history teacher.

Some also spoke of the larger picture, how their efforts serve the wider aims of education such as personal growth and lifelong learning (3). One teacher reported that an inspirational series of workshops had changed her outlook on the purposes of schooling: ‘How do we want the children to be after they leave school?’ Another teacher found it unfair and demotivating to think that ‘all my efforts are only benefiting my class and not the wider discipline’ (eg, improving the curriculum, policy, larger culture). She also found that the discipline itself never received its worth; professional development normally grouped history along with civics and geography.

## Expressions of positivity and openness

During the interviews, we easily noticed the excitement in the teachers’ voices when sharing success stories and their positive attitudes when facing struggles in their planning and administration. One teacher [2] shared a personal transformation that revealed a new level of openness. After two years of developing disciplinary approaches to learning history in her classroom, she confessed to new and critical reflections over her longstanding loyalty to a political party. Also, two of the teachers committed to developing a unit plan on the Lebanese Civil War, an extremely sensitive and controversial topic. Although one received questions from parents, they still had the school’s support and students’ engagement to continue.

## Support at home and school

All four teachers described how supportive their principals were, allowing them to spend time away from school to develop more progressive ways of learning history or civics. They appreciated their principals’ visions and leadership and found the workshops that they facilitated to be inspirational. Public schools, however, seemed to have shown resistance instead of support. The teacher who moved to a public school reports that he was not encouraged to deviate from traditional approaches to transmitting information.

Two of the teachers have families with two children. Their work outside school hours has been a great sacrifice in managing between home and work. Despite the support from their partners, they still experienced guilt for not spending enough time with their children.

## Teachers who struggled to go against the grain

We believe that the commitment and innovations from the teachers mentioned above are exceptional. The majority of history teachers who participated in a similar year-long professional development program on disciplinary approaches to history education neither attempted to develop new unit plans nor reported trials of classroom activities using historical concepts. Approximately a fifth discontinued the program altogether. We captured expressions of resistance that they voiced during the workshops, as summarized below:

- They appeared to be consumed by concerns about how to assess learning of disciplinary knowledge that focused more on producing evidence-informed claims than knowledge of a single account of the past;
- They regularly expressed concern over the feasibility of encouraging young people to learn history as a discipline within a limited and narrow state curriculum;
- They protested the view that history had incontestable truths (these comments mostly came from history teachers who held doctorates in history);
- Some described their practices as sufficient and effective and, therefore, did not find any reason to genuinely try new approaches.

These were struggles that many teachers experienced, but the teachers who left the programs as freely as they had joined did not see enough reason to consider new approaches. We juxtapose these teachers with the high-impact teachers partially

to illustrate the institutionalization of teaching, and how some teachers have conceptualized their roles as deliverers or messengers of a curriculum. High-impact teachers openly grapple with and reimagine the curriculum. Here, we reflect on Bruner's (1999 [1977]) argument that illustrates an ideal relationship between teachers and curricula:

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 (xv).

## Significance for sustainable peace

The four high-impact history teachers interviewed during the course of our research have not only reimaged their curricula and developed new materials through their classroom teaching and critical reflections with mentors, but have also moved on to become facilitators of history education development and reform projects for other history teachers across public and private sectors in Lebanon. This, in itself, is a very important achievement particularly in the context of Lebanon where the deadlock of the history curriculum has led to the freezing of professional development for history teachers by the public institutions. Accordingly, CERD employs up to six trainers for around 3300 history teachers, and these trainers who have been contracted for a couple of years have not started training teachers yet. To justify this situation, CERD officials explain that the training will only start when the long awaited curriculum is issued. Nevertheless, the four teachers in this study have become part of a training team that is developing at LAH. This group were invited to offer a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop for CERD, aimed at building a professional team of trainers who will be in charge of providing training to all history teachers in Lebanon. The workshop, which lasted for nine full days and was attended by eight trainers appointed by CERD and two teachers by LAH, focused on:

- 1 curriculum development;
- 2 disciplinary approaches in history education;
- 3 active learning strategies;
- 4 designing teacher training programs;
- 5 working towards the learner's profile suggested in the national curricula; and
- 6 facilitation skills.

Based on the conclusions of this initial ToT workshop, the overall objectives of the training programs for history teachers in Lebanon are to:

- promote critical reflections about the past;
- foster historical thinking, dialogue, and openness; and
- empower the trainers to work towards a shift in pedagogical practices in history classrooms both in the public and private sectors.

While work continues with this group of CERD trainers, LAH's team has been invited again by CERD to prepare a new group of teachers to become national trainers. The new group will involve around 10 public school teachers identified by the CERD as being potential trainers. While the first round of the new ToT program involved only one of the four teachers included in this study's sample, the second round will involve three of them. Thus, teachers who have taken initiatives to change their classroom practices are now being involved in training the trainers appointed by CERD, the highest educational body in Lebanon in charge of curriculum development and teachers training. It is becoming more evident that, despite the long journey, the grassroots initiative is starting to impact history teaching at the national level.

The vision of high-impact teachers leading a paradigm shift towards a culture of inclusion, collaboration and critical dialogue in the classroom is significant for fostering sustainable peace because:

- The teachers who participate become learning mentors and the number of high-capacity teachers will gradually grow;

- Teachers will help shape a professional development curriculum through the work they showcase, which can to a great extent inspire other teachers;
- The students who will have the opportunity to experience new approaches will not only gain more confidence as empowered young citizens but will also contribute to the critical discourse of how we learn and teach;
- A theory of change will emerge to inform the design of effective and sustainable interventions; this means that interventions for educational change will continue through the momentum of grassroots movements and leadership of high-impact teachers.

We caution against a possible misuse of profiling high-impact teachers. The purpose of identifying these teachers is to find a catalyst of change that requires mostly direction and support. The attributes of a high-impact teacher are not to be used during the selection processes for teacher positions. We cannot expect that all teachers, especially those in areas ridden with conflict, are committed to improving their own practice, possess the humility necessary for critical self-reflexivity or demonstrate a universal worldview in their moral judgment. Nevertheless, we have witnessed how infectious and inspiring are teachers' testimonies of young people engaging through classroom pedagogies as active citizens and co-constructors of knowledge. These teachers become agents of sustainable change through supported grassroots professional movements.

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## Refining primary social studies textbooks for behavior change in Bangladesh

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### ABSTRACT

Textbooks can model good pedagogy as well as addressing content aspects of a syllabus. In many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where textbook writers are often drawn from among curriculum developers, textbooks for subjects such as social studies are often presented as a sequence of comprehension exercises, with little apparent pedagogy. This brief describes an example of revising government primary school social studies textbooks in Bangladesh in order to reflect curricular aims in a clearer, more engaging and more practical way for classroom conditions in low-resource contexts. The paper considers some of the broader issues regarding ways in which primary textbooks in LMICs can support behavior change. The new textbooks in Bangladesh provide for a structured pedagogy rather than a content-heavy comprehension-based approach.

### KEYWORDS

textbooks, social studies, structured pedagogy, low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), Bangladesh

Textbooks in LMICs frequently lack a noticeable pedagogy—that is, a considered approach to teaching a particular subject at a particular level of education. This may be most noticeable in textbooks for primary mathematics or literacy, where pedagogy is often under the global spotlight, but it is also common in other subjects. In government textbook publishing contexts, this lack

of appropriate pedagogical support may be due to the minimal role played by teachers, or writers with teaching experience, in the development of the textbooks. In some LMICs, the curriculum developers themselves may write the textbooks, even though they may lack relevant classroom experience.

A consequence of this weak connection to classroom pedagogy among some textbook writers in LMICs is a common tendency for textbooks—in particular, for literacy, science, and the social sciences—to become a series of comprehension exercises, often including demanding passages of text that students may struggle to understand. The textbooks are effectively designed for ‘self-study’ and are little different from books for home-based revision practice, where the student works through the book on her or his own.<sup>1</sup> The combination of dense texts and lack of pedagogy reinforces the prevalent tendency to teach through rote-learning.

This brief describes the process of developing new textbooks for social studies in Bangladesh, where the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB)—which reports to the Ministry of Education—has the sole right to publish textbooks for basic education in all government schools. It shows how a simple pedagogical approach was introduced into the textbooks to reflect the general syllabus aims and to provide for more effective teaching and learning.

In Bangladesh, the textbook writers are often drawn from among the curriculum developers. The author of this paper worked with the NCTB specialists as part of donor-funded assistance to a renewal process that was described, for reasons noted later in this paper, as textbook ‘refinement’.

## Social studies as a vehicle for behavior change

In many countries, social studies is an examinable subject at the end of the primary cycle. The discipline of social studies

1 In the UK, for example, the CGP series of books: <https://www.cgpbooks.co.uk/primary-books/ks2/geography/g2r21-ks2-discover-learn-geography-study-bo>

emerged from the USA after the Second World War and became the focus of progressively-minded education reformers, including Jerome Bruner, as described in *Man: A course of study* in the 1960s. A little later, Pring (1984, p.121) proposed that ‘an integral part of the understanding of humanistic studies in their contribution to personal development is the classroom atmosphere, the active mode of learning, the non-authoritarian relationships between teacher and pupil, and the strategies for involving pupils in deliberative and reflective learning.’ However, the increasing focus on ‘core curriculum’ in the US in recent decades has led to a perceived diminishing of the profile of social studies in the country.<sup>2</sup>

Social studies seeks by its nature to develop social understandings, attitudes, and behaviors. In contrast with, for example, language arts and mathematics, social studies aims to modify social behavior as well as promote cognitive understanding.<sup>3</sup>

Social behaviors can also be modelled in the classroom itself by means of the teacher’s relationship with the students and through pedagogy. In higher-income countries, the pedagogy of civics teaching has been found by some commentators to be a critical factor (Campbell, 2006:63):

Rather than focus on curriculum—what is taught—the best available evidence indicates that civics educators should worry also about *how* the content is taught. Woven throughout the research literature on civics curriculum is one consistent conclusion:

- 2 ‘Social studies education facing ‘crisis’ as class time is slashed, departments closed’ (Washington Post, 31 March 2015) [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/03/31/social-studies-education-facing-crisis-as-class-time-is-slashed-departments-closed/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.70314381e683](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/03/31/social-studies-education-facing-crisis-as-class-time-is-slashed-departments-closed/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.70314381e683) In England and Wales, by contrast, history and geography have always maintained a distinct identity even in primary schools, with the recent addition of a new subject known as personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), which is aimed at behaviour change.
- 3 For an example of social studies textbook evaluation criteria for the state of Kentucky, see: <https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/books/Documents/Social%20Studies%20Eval%20Form%202016%20-%20DRAFT.pdf>

the most effective civics instruction involves the free and open discussion of current political events within the classroom, or what is often called an open classroom climate.

On the other hand, commentators might ascribe to educational sociologist Michael Young’s argument (Young, 2010) that ‘the differentiation of knowledge makes explicit that concepts, skills and content are all important and must be stipulated in the curriculum. Failure to do so means a slowing down of any progress that has so far been made towards equalising epistemological access’.

The nature of social studies or civics teaching is also affected by its status as an examinable or non-examinable subject. Morris and Cogan (2001:109-123) characterized it as follows:

The subject can become academicized as it emulates the characteristics of the high status subjects. Teachers may focus on propositional knowledge and rely on didactic instruction, with pupil learning measured solely by examination results. Conversely, where the curriculum framework relies on permeation and school-based or teacher-centered initiatives, the potential benefits relate to relevance and flexibility of provision. Specifically, several features can be stressed: relevance to pupils’ and the community’s needs, a sense of ownership by teachers and pupils of what is taught; and a pedagogy distinctive from, rather than imitative of, that prevailing in the more formal academic curriculum.

In LMICs, the social studies curriculum and textbooks often focus almost exclusively on developing students’ sense of identification with the ‘national narrative’: the syllabus and textbook represent a social agenda. The result is often an overloaded textbook with a large number of definitions, using complex terminology.

Little research has been carried out on appropriate pedagogies and resources for social studies in LMICs. In the 1980s–90s, an initiative was undertaken in the state of Madhya Pradesh in India, where new social studies textbooks were developed by the Eklavya organisation with the agreement of the state

government. Poonam Batra (Batra 2010:44 and 292) describes the approach that was taken:

The concern for a holistic treatment of themes, engaging children in ‘thought activities’ and ‘classroom dialogue’, ensuring children’s engagement with information and its use, rather than the learning of text by rote, relating themes to children’s physical and social environment and personal experience formed the major principles on which textual materials were developed.

... it is not the retention of ‘knowledge’ of the discipline which is more important but the understanding and application of that knowledge, possible via skills of logic that was sought to be enabled through the texts. For example, the language and method of comparison, description, articulating causation, summarizing an argument, inferring and extrapolating was considered necessary if learners were to grasp the subtle differences in perspective on the subject-matter.

The Eklavya initiative came to an end in 2002 with a change in the state government and controversy over certain historical statements in the textbooks. (See also the paper by Poonam Batra in this volume.)

Behavior change in relation to the students’ community can extend to health awareness. In 2017, a small-scale study of the impact of textbooks and teacher training on students’ critical health awareness in Uganda was published in *The Lancet*. At the outset, the authors of the paper (Nsangi et al, 2017) state that ‘We did not find any studies that evaluated a primary school intervention to teach children to critically appraise treatment claims or make informed health choices, in any country’. The intervention itself ‘recorded a large effect on critical thinking about treatment effects’. The research focused on ‘the key concepts that people need to understand and apply when assessing claims about treatments’:

- recognizing the need for fair comparisons of treatments
- judging whether a comparison of treatments is a fair comparison
- understanding the role of chance
- considering all the relevant fair comparisons
- understanding the results of fair comparisons of treatments

- judging whether fair comparisons of treatments are relevant.

Most of the above are high level cognitive skills, located towards the top of Bloom’s pyramid (Bloom,1956). Targeting higher-level skills and competencies requires rethinking traditional approaches to teaching and learning.<sup>4</sup>

## Social studies in Bangladesh primary schools

In common with other countries in the Indian sub-continent, primary school in Bangladesh consists of five years. Children in grades 1–2 learn environmental studies, which includes a science strand as well as the foundations of social studies, but they do not receive a textbook in the first two grades.<sup>5</sup> In grade 3, a social studies textbook—*Bangladesh and Global Studies*—is introduced, which includes strands of history, geography and civics.

In 2012, the Bangladesh social studies syllabus was revised as part of an entire primary curriculum review.<sup>6</sup> The revision was intended to strengthen the primary curriculum’s competence-based approach. The new 2012 primary social studies syllabus described the intended methodological approach as follows:

The teaching-learning methods, planned activities, guidelines for writers and artists have been given in such a way so that the children easily understand different topics and can perceive with interest

- 4 In England and Wales, history and geography have always maintained a distinct identity even in primary schools, with the recent addition of a new subject known as personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), which is aimed at behaviour change.
- 5 Teachers of environmental studies in grades 1–2 are provided with a teacher’s guide.
- 6 The new curriculum was supported by new textbooks, presented in this paper as the *pre-refinement* versions. However, MoPME (the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, which manages primary education but has no authority over NCTB), along with the multiple donors of the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDPIII), decided that the textbooks did not fulfill the aims of the new curriculum. Hence, the decision to invite international consultants to refine the new curriculum textbooks.

Subject wise Terminal Competencies	Attainable Competencies	Learning Outcomes	Subject matter/ Topic	Planned Activities	Instructions for Writers and Artists
1 To know about society, environment and the different elements of the environment and realize the importance of the mutual relationship of these.	1.1 Will know about the natural and social elements of the surrounding environment. 1.2 Will understand the mutual dependence of the different elements of environment.	1.1.1 Will be able to tell the names of the different elements of social and natural environments. 1.1.2 Will be able to tell the mutual relation of social and natural environments.	Our Environment Different elements of the environment. Mutual relationship of the elements of the environment.	To show mutual relation of man and environment (pictures of food and life cycles).	The contents should be presented with diagrams according to learning outcomes. The pictures of the environment around the house, picture of house and beautiful environment around it.
2 To acquire the mentality of cooperation and love for all, irrespective of men-women, class, caste, religion and complexion including the children with special needs	2.1 Will have good terms with everybody at home, school and surroundings and cooperate with them. 2.2 Will know the names of the religious festivals of classmates of different life styles and religions, as far as practicable.	2.1.1 Will be able to tell as to why to behave well and equally with all at home, in school and around. 2.1.2 Will love and respect everybody. 2.1.3 Will cooperate with everybody according to ability. 2.1.4 Will be able to tell as to why to help children and persons with special needs according to ability. 2.1.5 Will be able to tell the importance of helping the classmates and others with own things of use, if needed, and will help them.	<b>We all are equal</b> 1 Equal and cooperative behavior and co-existence with all. 2 Friendly behavior with children with special needs 3 Religious festivals of different religions and showing respect to those.	1 To make it understand through pictures that all including boy-girl, rich-poor, people of different religions and disadvantaged groups are equal; the children will show by role playing. 2 To show with the help of pictures and video film the children with special needs and make all sensitive to their problems and needs.	1 Should be given Examples of the sayings of the wise should be given so that the love for younger's and respect for elders are enhanced 2 There should be separate pictures of customs, tradition and culture of different castes-religion-complexion, rich-poor and other groups of people.

**Figure 1:** Sample from Bangladesh National Primary Curriculum: Bangladesh & Global Studies, class 4

without memorising them. In order to implement the teaching-learning methods, planned activities and instruction, these are made attractive, realistic/practical, participatory using elements from the immediate environment.

After a general introduction, including the above statement, the curriculum is presented in terms of terminal competencies (that is, the outcomes expected to be achieved by the end of the primary cycle) and attainable competencies (the outcomes expected to be achieved by the end of the grade). The sample on the previous spread is taken from the grade 4 matrix of competencies, topics and planned activities.

This curriculum format is not unlike that of many LMICs: it provides a convenient framework for textbook writers.<sup>7</sup> The curriculum does not define the meaning of competency, but the above extract indicates that competencies are intended to target specific behaviors such as ‘show tolerance’, ‘practice democratic rules and norms’, and ‘express own opinions ...’

## Background to the intervention

In 2013–15 a small team of international textbook specialists worked with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The specialists were tasked with refining the textbooks and teachers’ guides for three subjects: Bangla language, English and social studies.<sup>8</sup> The author of this paper was the team leader, supported by a specialist in language-teaching textbooks (in this case,

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7 Generally, to save time, the sections of the textbook are assigned to different writers, which can make for difficulties in ‘horizontal’ coordination (eg. of cross-cutting behavioural issues) between subjects.

8 The term ‘refinement’ was agreed between MoPME and the donors. Since the textbooks had already been revised in 2012 to support the revised curriculum, they could not officially be revised again, only refined. At the same time, as the specialists were working on a DFID-funded contract to support Bangla, English and social studies, another team of specialists were working on a Japanese-aid (JICA) funded support to mathematics and science textbooks. This was the first time in Bangladesh’s history that international textbook and publishing consultants had been invited to work within NCTB.

Bangla language and English) and another specialist in social studies textbook publishing. The three consultants made a series of frequent short visits over a two-year period, during which the textbooks were refined for all primary grades. The consultants worked with NCTB’s own specialists, who are responsible for curriculum development as well as co-authoring textbooks in collaboration with invited academic specialists. NCTB’s management describes the organization as the ‘largest state-owned publisher in the world’.<sup>9</sup>

Due to reforms in textbook production and distribution in recent years, most children in Bangladesh primary schools now receive a complete set of new textbooks, free of charge, at the start of the school year in January. The textbook is the only resource used by teachers and students. As in many LMICs, government primary schools in Bangladesh have large class sizes of 40–50 pupils. Reading levels are not high, which, combined with large classes, means that many pupils may fail to grasp the meaning of the texts.

Fortunately for the refinement process, NCTB produces English-language editions of its textbooks. These cater to the large numbers of families returning to Bangladesh after spending time abroad, whose children have limited reading ability in Bangla language. The examples used in this paper are taken from the English-language editions.

## The intervention

The first two activities of the consultant team were to:

- identify a Dhaka-based organization that could provide the day-to-day publishing services and liaise with NCTB<sup>10</sup>
- contract an organization to carry out a needs assessment in sample schools across the country

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9 [http://old.moedu.gov.bd/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=329&Itemid=229](http://old.moedu.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=329&Itemid=229)

10 The organization that was selected was the Institute of Education Development (IED), part of a large Bangladeshi NGO called BRAC.



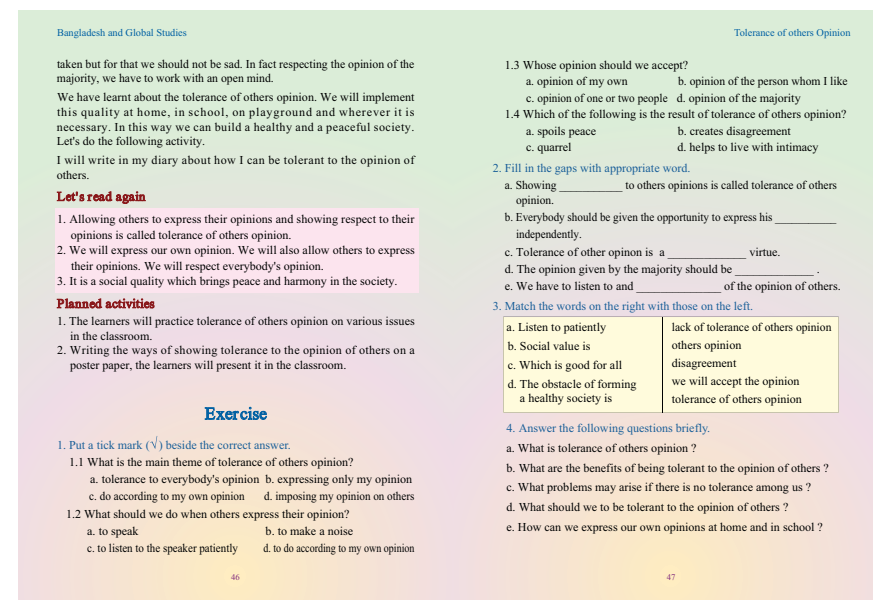
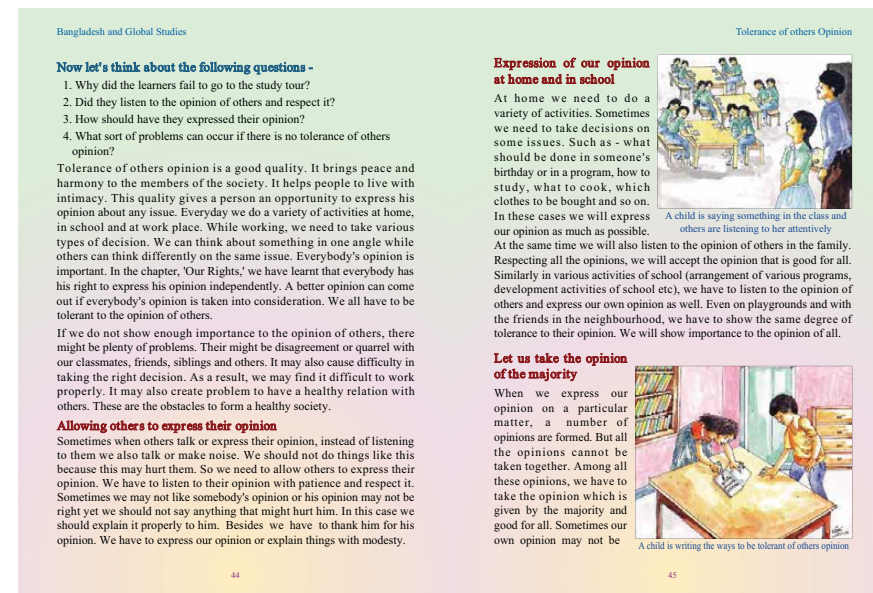
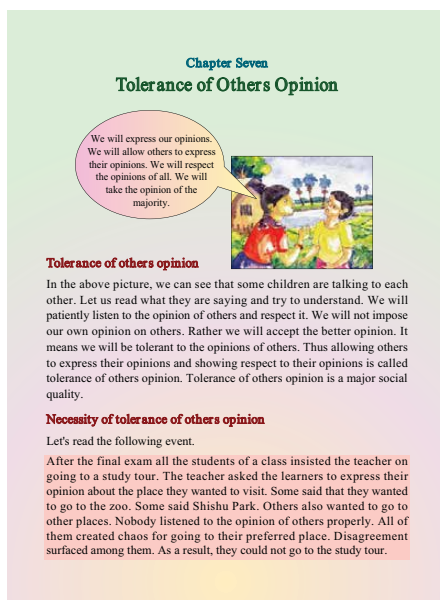
The needs assessment demonstrated that teachers were not able to cover the content in the time available and students had difficulties with the concepts and language of the textbooks.

The social studies textbooks that were being used in schools before the refinement consisted of large amounts of text followed by comprehension questions (similar to textbooks in other LMICs that the author has worked in). This text-plus-comprehension approach is the result of the textbooks being written by specialists with little or no direct experience of classroom teaching. The focus for such writers is frequently on providing factual information, which is expected to be learned by heart. The exercises that follow the text are usually of a gap-filling type, encouraging word-for-word memorization of the text.

The chapter entitled 'Tolerance of others' opinion' was allocated five pages in the old edition of the class 4 textbook. (See Figure 2.)

The first observation to make from this sample is that it presents a large amount of dense content to be covered in a very short time. In grade 4, from which this textbook sample is taken,

**Figure 2:** Sample pages from Bangladesh & Global Studies, grade 4 (old edition)



the subject Bangladesh and Global Studies is allotted a total of 60 periods during the year. Each period is 35–40 minutes long, which means at most 30 minutes of teaching time. The grade 4 textbook contained 110 pages of teaching content, meaning that the teacher would need to teach the above five pages in two lessons; that is, in about 60 minutes. It was therefore impossible for the teacher to do more than work through the passage of text. There was no time for anything else. The ‘planned activities’ on page 46 of the textbook would themselves have needed at least one period per activity.

The curriculum itself was challenging. From a curriculum planner’s perspective, many children do not continue their education beyond primary education (i.e. grade 5 in Bangladesh). Therefore, all content that is considered to be the basic ‘social agenda’ must be covered by the end of the primary cycle. However, instead of the ambitious learning outcomes that the curriculum developers intended, in which students would cover a wide range of high-level content, actual learning is limited.

Curriculum overload is a widespread challenge in LMICs.<sup>11</sup> According to Pritchett and Beatty (2012), ‘Paradoxically, learning could go faster if curricula and teachers were to slow down.’ For teachers, the density of the content means teaching ‘to the top’, as Glewwe and Muralidharan (2016) put it:

Since teachers continue to follow the textbook as the default mode of instruction, and define their goals in terms of completing the curriculum over the course of year, it is not surprising that they are effectively ‘teaching to the top’ of the distribution and that a large number of children are in the class but not learning because the lessons are too advanced for them.

Although the refinement of the textbooks was not tasked to modify the curriculum, some action was necessary in order to make the teachers’ work more feasible. One perspective that was brought to bear was that of E.D. Hirsch (2016:66):

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11 The more so, given the scale of teacher absenteeism.

To label a topic ‘developmentally inappropriate’ implies that it is being taught prematurely, like feeding small children oysters Rockefeller when they should be eating oatmeal. But as the eminent research psychologist Jerome Bruner once memorably observed, the idea that there are ages for which particular topics are appropriate has no scientific support.

### Refining the passages of text

Although the textbook refinement had no mandate to interfere with the actual content, the lengthy text could be made much more readable. Given the typically low reading levels of students in grades 3–5, it was important to reduce the barrier to learning that was posed by pages of text consisting of long sentences, often with complex syntax and a large amount of dense, specialist vocabulary.

Specialists in reading estimate that over 90 percent of a text should be familiar to a reader in order for the reader to understand what they are reading. The amount of new language that the reader is expected to understand in social studies is considerable. Therefore, the reader needs as much support as possible.

### Refining the pedagogy

Although teachers in Bangladesh are provided with a teacher’s edition of the textbook as a resource, which includes a reproduction of the textbook page accompanied by methodological notes for the teacher, many teachers—as in most LMICs—do not actually receive a copy of the teacher’s edition. Cost factors mean limited print-runs and reprints for teacher’s guides. In this case, the pedagogy of the approach must be clear from the textbook itself; in other words, the pedagogy should be made transparent.

The approach that was adopted reflects the process described by Nuthall (2012:4) for a classroom activity: ‘A social studies activity might begin with a brief whole-class discussion in which the teacher elicits what the students already know and explains the questions the students are to investigate; it might then change to a small group research activity, and end with the students working

individually on a written report.’ The pattern of this approach—whole-class to group to individual—was adapted for the context of the government school classroom in Bangladesh.

As part of their preparatory work, the consultant team provided examples of social studies textbooks from other countries, with an explanation of how and why the textbooks differed from those of NCTB. It was agreed to adopt a double-page spread format and to allocate more space for activities relative to the passages of text. The passages of text would be considerably reduced, without reducing their conceptual content. The activities would follow a clear pedagogy, based on what was believed to be an appropriate application of good pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986:4-14). The following pages show the same lesson content as above, as set out in the refined grade 4 textbook.

It can be seen that the right-hand page of the spread consists of four parts, developing from a semi-structured, whole-class, oral activity, to a guided writing activity, leading finally to an activity intended to allow students to apply their learning:

- In the ‘Speak’ phase the teacher develops the children’s use of the new language and ideas, and monitors their understanding (‘responsive teaching’).
- The ‘Write’ phase provides a bridge from the guided learning of the ‘Speak’ phase, via peer-supported learning, to students’ independent application of the learning (in the following ‘Extend’ phase).
- In the ‘Check’ section, the teacher provides immediate feedback and guidance in dealing with exam-type questions. The ‘check’ section was a requirement of NCTB. The format of the questions follows that of the Primary Leaving Certificate.<sup>12</sup>


Comparing the two versions, we see that the original edition intended that students would engage in a classroom activity to bring to life the concept of democratic decision-making. However, given

12 Assessment questions are either multiple choice, ‘short form’ or ‘long form’ answers.

Chapter 6  
Tolerance of Others' Opinions

Topic 1 The majority view

Read the recommendations below:



We will **express** our opinions. We will **listen** to and respect other people's opinions. We will **decide** on the majority view.

This ideal invites everyone to speak their opinion. It requires us to listen to every opinion with **tolerance**. And then it suggests that we follow the opinions of the majority. This is what we call **democracy**: following the opinion of the majority. And there are three stages to this process: express, listen and decide.

**At home**  
Some of the situations that might require you to express, listen and decide are:

- How to celebrate someone's birthday
- What to cook and eat
- Which clothes to buy

**At school**  
Some of the situations that might require you to express, listen and decide are:

- What games to play in the playground
- Where to sit in class
- Which topics to study

**A | Speak**  
With your teacher, choose one of the topics listed under 'school'. Act out with the whole class the three stages of:  
• Pupils expressing their views  
• Listening and respecting these views  
• Reaching a majority decision

**B | Write**  
In pairs, choose one of the examples listed under 'home'. Write a plan for how you would resolve the decision, under these three headings:

Express	
Listen	
Decide	

**C | Extend**  
Act out a role-play in small groups. Think of a situation where you all have different opinions. Take it in turns to express your views. Then reach a decision, based on what the majority want to do.

**D | Check**  
What should we do when others express their opinion?  
a. speak  
b. make a noise  
c. listen to the speaker patiently  
d. do what we feel like


Chapter 6  
Topic 2 An example

Here is another particular example. Let's read the following event.

After the final exam all the students of a class insisted the teacher take them on a study tour. The teacher asked the learners to express their opinion about where they wanted to visit. Some said the zoo. Some said Shishu Park. Others wanted to go to other places. Nobody listened to the opinion of others properly. All of them created chaos for going to their preferred place. Disagreement surfaced among them. As a result, they could not go on the study tour.

Now let's think about the following questions:

1. Why did the learners fail to go on the study tour?
2. Did they listen to the opinion of others and respect it?
3. How should they have expressed their opinions?
4. What sort of problems can occur if there is no tolerance of others' opinions?



**A | Speak**  
Discuss with your teacher the answers to the four questions opposite.

**B | Write**  
In pairs, write how the class opinion should have worked through the three stages of making democratic decisions:

Express	
Listen	
Decide	

**C | Extend**  
Hold a **debate** in class on a subject that interests you all. Have a speaker to express the view on each side of the argument. The rest of the class are then invited to state their views. Finally you all vote on the majority decision.

**D | Check**  
What does tolerance of others' opinions mean?  
a. taking in everybody's opinion  
b. expressing only my opinion  
c. do according to my own opinion  
d. imposing my opinion on others

Figure 3: Sample pages from Bangladesh & Global Studies, grade 4 (refined edition)

the amount of teaching and learning content, the teacher had little time to carry out such a demanding task. Neither the teacher nor the students were provided with enough support to plan and carry out a major classroom activity. In the refined version, the teacher and students are given scaffolded support. On pages 28-29, the process of 'express-listen-decide' is explained and practiced, and key concepts are presented through concrete steps. The format of each topic means that students learn to gradually take control of the process throughout the topic.

### Other refinements

In addition to the texts and pedagogy, the illustrations were also refined. The criteria for refining the illustrations were:

- Follow the new format (the double-page spread layout)
- Support the refined texts
- Make the design and illustrations more child-friendly

An editor also followed up all photographic illustrations to ensure that everything possible was done to trace copyright holders.<sup>13</sup>

## Discussion

The refined textbooks did not modify the curriculum. In fact, they aimed to implement the stated methodology of the social studies syllabus, which was that the approach should be 'attractive, realistic and practical, and participatory, using elements from the immediate environment'.

The main input aimed to transform the approach from one that was largely 'text plus comprehension questions' to one in which the text was made more readable while conveying the same essential information, and in which the teacher would have enough time in the classroom to use a pedagogy that engaged the students in cognitive reflection by means of a well-scaffolded process. For a subject such as tolerance', the process can also lead to shared

13 This was the first time for Bangladesh government textbooks to include acknowledgements to copyright holders.

student and teacher reflection on values or social and emotional learning.

Given the constraints of the syllabus, the input bore in mind that the content of the textbooks had to be meaningful to the students: it had to have relevance to their lives and have intellectual coherence. Likewise, the pedagogy had to be appropriate to the subject and the age of the students.

## Conclusion

The refinement of the social studies textbooks for grades 3–5 was an example of improving the interrelation of content, pedagogy and textbook design to support more effective teaching and learning. For the NCTB textbook writers, this was their first institutional collaboration with international specialists who brought knowledge of commercial textbook publishing, new pedagogical approaches and ways of adapting good practice to local conditions.

It is a consequence of project-style educational inputs that longer-term outcomes may never be communicated to those who contributed to designing the inputs. The intervention, designed jointly by MoPME and the donors, included a needs assessment at the start of the process but no impact assessment after the textbooks were delivered to schools.

If such an initiative were to be repeated, and if time allowed, it would be valuable to include more collaboration with practicing teachers throughout the textbook refinement process. Without such collaboration, any intervention risks being ineffective. As the noted American education thinker and former social studies teacher, Larry Cuban, observed of his own experiences working in the US education arena (2017):

From the mid-19th century through the early decades of the 21st century, no instructional reform imposed upon teachers has been adopted by most teachers and used in lessons as intended by designers. The history of top-down classroom reform is a history of failed efforts to alter what teachers regularly do daily. I include new content and ways of teaching reading, math, science, and



history over the past century. Where and when there have been deep changes in classroom instruction, teachers were involved in the planning and implementation of the reform. ... Reforms aimed at altering dramatically classroom instruction require working closely with teachers from the very beginning of a planned change and includes using their existing expertise and expanding their knowledge and skills.

#### NOTE

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## Social and emotional learning as a theme and cross-cutting issue for quality education in the new curriculum for South Sudan

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### ABSTRACT

In September 2013, the Curriculum Foundation began supporting the Ministry of Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) in South Sudan to design and implement a new curriculum aimed at promoting peace, prosperity and growth in order to prepare young people for their changing life ahead. The new national curriculum was officially launched in February 2018 and textbooks followed in February 2019. This paper outlines key features of the challenges relating to designing the new curriculum and textbooks and how this process embraced the development of social and emotional learning (SEL) in order to achieve the aims of the curriculum and promote quality education for all, as defined in the UN Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG Goal 4).

### KEYWORDS

South Sudan, social and emotional learning, curriculum frameworks, teaching and learning materials, textbooks

## Background

In July 2011, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan as the outcome of a 2005 agreement ending Africa's longest-running civil war. However, in 2013, civil war broke out, leading to the

displacement of around 4 million people. In 2018, a power-sharing agreement was established in a renewed bid to end the conflict. South Sudan currently has a population of approximately 13 million, with a median age of 18.7 and life expectancy of around 58 years. More than two-thirds of girls living in the country's conflict zones are married before they turn 18. There are approximately 2.2 million school-aged children who are out of school, and most children are categorized as at risk (UNESCO, 2018).

To give further context to the challenges faced by teachers and learners in South Sudan, the 2016 national education statistics (MoGEI, 2017) reported that untrained teachers are common across all school types, representing over half of all teachers in alternative education systems (61%), 58% of those in primary schools and 52% of those in pre-schools. Only just over half (55%) of all primary school classrooms are permanent or semi-permanent, compared to 95% of secondary school classrooms. The ratio of classrooms to pupils was on average 90 across all school types for 2016. In relation to school facilities, 36% of primary school students and 39% of primary school teachers had no access to latrines.

South Sudan has an extremely diverse population, with approximately 60 indigenous ethnic groups and 80 linguistic partitions, across which English is the official language. Up to 95% of the country's population depends on farming, fishing or herding for income to meet their basic needs. The physical geography of the country presents stark contrasts—from the Nile River and the Imatong mountain range in the south to the vast swamp, the Sudd, in the lowland central region. In a country with an area of 620,000 km<sup>2</sup>, there are only 280 km of paved roads.

## Introduction

From the beginning, it was clear that a new country would need a new curriculum. The MoGEI, education establishments and curriculum writers were adamant that the curriculum should be rooted in the rich culture and heritage of South Sudan, making it

contextually relevant while also ensuring a sense of ownership and advocacy. The curriculum should clearly reflect the needs, interests, challenges and opportunities facing the world's newest nation.

This firm initial commitment to authenticity has been a factor in the substantial progress made during the curriculum reform process. Overall, curriculum aims were created through wide-ranging consultations among ministers, teachers, school leaders, examiners, university staff and other stakeholders. Establishing a robust curriculum framework with these stakeholders, through which the curriculum aims could be realised, has been a further significant contributing factor for successful implementation.

The curriculum reform process began in 2012 and was still in process in July 2019 as we continued to monitor and review the implementation phase. A basic principle of the curriculum design process from the beginning was to ensure advocacy by engaging MoGEI staff based in Juba, South Sudan's capital city, as well as their colleagues across the various states as key implementation partners.

The plan for phasing in stages of the curriculum reform envisaged that teaching and learning materials, including policy and guidance documents, would be developed collaboratively to ensure they were specific to the context of South Sudan in terms of teacher capabilities and the needs and interests of learners. Trialling materials through school leaders, teachers and development partners served two purposes: ensuring continued advocacy and capacity-building, and also ensuring that images, texts, historical/geographical and cultural references were accurate and appropriate. In my role as an associate and, latterly, strategic director of the Curriculum Foundation, I worked with other implementing partners to review and redesign teaching and learning materials based on feedback from the field, balancing suggestions for improvement with the need for materials to maintain robust opportunities for assessment and to reflect a repertoire of teaching approaches.

## Moving towards a competency-based curriculum

A competency-based curriculum was championed by the then Education Undersecretary (now Honorable Minister) Deng Deng Hoc Yai, who recognized that the existing curriculum provided an education experience that featured a disproportionate focus on direct teacher instruction with limited opportunities for students to think for themselves, innovate and solve problems. Leading educators were in agreement that in order for peace and prosperity to be achieved in South Sudan, the school curriculum should be designed to enable young people to develop a critical balance of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that would allow them to make valuable contributions as competent global citizens, thriving in the 21st century.

### A competency-based curriculum for sustainable development

The Curriculum Foundation embraces education for sustainable development as a key principle of curriculum design. Building on the [Brundtland Report's](#) classic definition (1987) of sustainable development as 'meeting the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,' the Curriculum Foundation worked with the South Sudanese to ensure that curricula were designed to enable learners to leave school with the confidence, desire and ability to make the world a better place. Education for sustainable development is increasingly seen as 'giving people the skills and knowledge to engage in society to secure global as well as local and national change in order to create a more just and equitable society.' (Bourn, 2005). South Sudan's competency-based curriculum offers a framework which aims to ensure that knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes are effectively blended so that learners develop their capacity to make better decisions on issues that affect the environment, their own lives and those of others at a local and global level.

Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (the Education Goal) states that all learners should:

...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 non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

There are strong links between this statement and a competency-based curriculum. A focus on the combination of knowledge and skills is an important shift away from over-reliance on memorization. The curriculum used by teachers in South Sudan before the introduction of the new curriculum was based mostly upon the Sudanese curriculum and often used textbooks from neighboring countries. This approach did not fulfil a sense of national pride and unity and was quickly rejected as governmental bodies sought to strengthen the status of South Sudan as an independent country. Target 4.7's reference to the need to *promote sustainable development* further promotes equipping learners with the attitudes and abilities to help them solve problems and adapt to change. Learning relating to *peace education, human rights and gender equality* is greatly supported through the development of student competencies: learners develop their ability to think critically and creatively, working together (competency of cooperation) to effectively learn about these issues, and communicating (competency) their findings to promote and enable change. Considering *global citizenship and developing an appreciation of cultural diversity* means that learners should think critically about their own culture and heritage (a cross-cutting issue in the curriculum for South Sudan) in order to be able to effectively learn about other cultures, deepening their understanding of globalization and global citizenship.

## The challenges of adopting a competency-based curriculum

The route to textbooks being introduced in February 2019 was not without challenges. Moving from a curriculum which focused so heavily on memorization and a teacher-centered approach to a competency-based curriculum has required extensive training, support, encouragement and capacity building.

Although from the beginning there was a clear consensus at MoGEI that a competency-based curriculum would most adequately prepare children and young people to be effective global citizens, the understanding amongst many curriculum staff of how this could actually be achieved through teaching and learning materials was limited, in part due to their own educational experiences that largely featured rote-learning and a passive engagement with learning materials. Using a wide range of international examples, the Curriculum Foundation was able to provide examples of what a competency-based curriculum looked like in textbooks and lessons. However, for many of the curriculum writers and the teachers, learning to think about teaching and learning in this way took time and deliberate practice and remains an ongoing issue.

In order to support the effective design and implementation of the new curriculum, the Curriculum Foundation has strived to work across the educational landscape, ensuring that key changes are understood and championed by a range of actors. Key messages have focused on the development of student competencies across the curriculum, a move to a more learner-centered approach, the importance of learning being rooted in the local context, the benefits of formative assessment, and the embedding of cross-cutting issues. These features are seen to be the biggest drivers in relation to promoting education for sustainable development. As already stated, the syllabus itself, the subject overviews and the curriculum framework were all created through extensive consultation with curriculum subject leaders from across the country.

Sustaining curriculum change and adopting new approaches is a challenge for any school, district, state or country. The challenges

in South Sudan are acute in relation to the capability of teachers to deliver a new curriculum as a result of limited, poor quality training and their own, often narrow, experiences of education. In order to ensure that materials were appropriate to the needs of most teachers while maintaining high standards of teaching and learning, the materials were developed to carefully balance 'script' and 'opportunity'. In other words, a certain element of script is provided for teachers in order for them to develop key vocabulary and phrases associated with areas of learning as well as pedagogy. But all materials also present opportunities for teachers to develop and build upon initial ideas by providing a structure for further thinking and activity. This balance between specific direction and support and the freedom to develop and innovate is mirrored in the training teachers receive through the in-service programs we have designed and also in the new units of study within a newly developed set of pre-service teacher training modules.

In order to enable educators to move towards implementing a competency-based curriculum throughout the country, the Curriculum Foundation has worked with Unicef and MoGEI to design workshops, teaching learning materials (TLMs) and guidance documents that reflect the new approach, featuring activity, participation, questioning, creativity and collaboration. These have been, and continue to be, vibrant themes throughout workshops during the curriculum design and implementation process and have had a positive effect on participants' ability to write competency-based TLMs and design related training programs. Designing rich activities and experiences for learning rather than content-driven lessons still poses a challenge for the teachers and curriculum writers, but as their own experience of learning develops through the support of the Curriculum Foundation, other agencies and NGOs, these educators are able to increasingly design and prepare effective TLMs as shown in recent work with the University of Juba in developing pre-service teacher training modules.

The main activities conducted from 2013 to the present day (July 2019) to support effective implementation of the new curriculum have been:

- adapting the primary and secondary syllabuses to be suitable for alternative education and accelerated learning programs and community girls' schools in particular (MoGEI, 2016);
- reviewing and redesigning the pre-primary and primary initial teacher training programs;
- designing and delivering pilot textbook materials;
- creating guidance for assessment, which features formative assessment strategies (MoGEI, 2016);
- designing two-day training courses to introduce teachers to the new curriculum and orient them to the new textbooks (MoGEI, 2017);
- guidance and training materials for early childhood development (MoGEI, 2017);
- guidance for schools to work in clusters (MoGEI, 2018);
- guidance for schools to develop their own bespoke school programs as part of their curriculum (MoGEI, 2017);
- guidance for school inspectors to monitor teaching and learning in line with the new curriculum (MoGEI, 2018);
- guidance for examiners to write tests that match the content and approach of the new curriculum;
- guidance for school leaders to support the implementation of the curriculum.

To support the development of rich TLMs in all the above situations, three planning principles provided educators with a framework:

- *One learning activity leads to many learning outcomes.* Each learning activity is designed to promote a number of learning outcomes. Previously, learning activities were often narrow and missed opportunities for related learning. If for example a science lesson focused on photosynthesis, it is likely that learning about plant structure and taking measurements would form an important aspect of learning. By just focusing on



knowledge associated with photosynthesis and ignoring learning about root structure, growth differentials and fair testing, for example, learners do not learn to make connections across the curriculum.

- *One learning outcome requires a number of learning activities.* This relates to the need for learners to develop a depth of understanding that cannot be achieved if a learning objective is explored only in one context or activity. Any learning objective benefits from being explored in a number of contexts if learners are to be able to apply what they have learned in increasingly unfamiliar situations.
- *Each learning outcome should be part of a carefully constructed sequence of learning.* This principle reflects the need for learning to be structured so that it builds on prior knowledge, thereby enabling learners to use what they know in order to find out something new.

While leaving a substantial degree of autonomy to the teacher, the TLMs place a much greater emphasis on the learner and encourage what is often referred to as a 'learner-centered approach', moving from lessons learned only in classrooms towards experiences, and from memory only to memory and understanding. The development of skills also has a much higher status than previously, a shift that is clearly reflected in the learning outcomes listed in the subject overviews. TLMs for initial teacher training programs, in-service teacher training programs and examples of formative assessment activities have been designed to support teachers by providing significantly more opportunities for learners to have a voice, so that learners to some extent direct what they are learning and how they are learning. Teachers are encouraged to celebrate learners as unique individuals and to nurture and encourage their interests and particular talents. As an example of an activity to reflect this approach is the way the popular children's story *Handa's Surprise* by Eileen Brown (1994) was used in the two-day training course for teachers to introduce the new curriculum. Teachers

were guided to follow up the story with activities that enable learners to connect to their own experience, for example by writing poems about fruits they like (compared to the fruits in the story) and creating recipes for a nutritious meal based on some of their favourite fruits from the story.

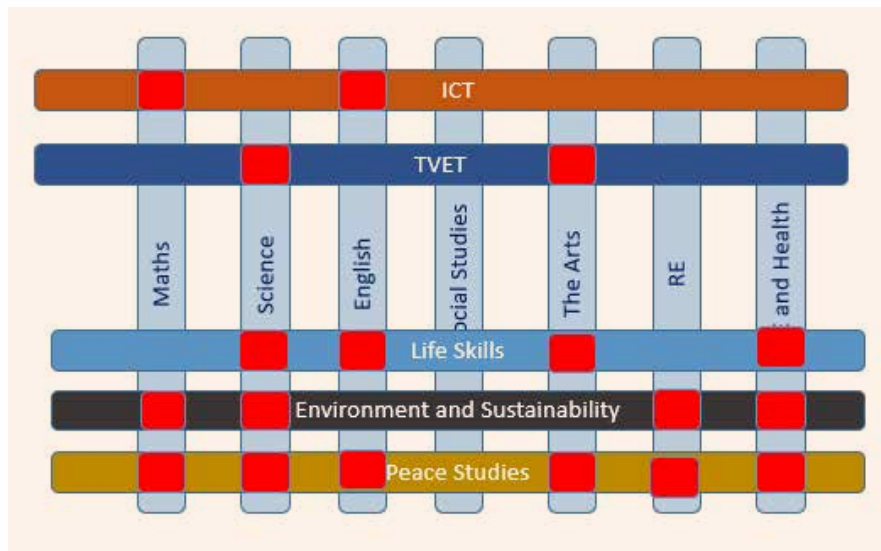
## **Integrating social and emotional learning**

Social and emotional learning (SEL) aims to support all children to access the curriculum, improve their interaction with others and their self-management of emotions. It is integrated throughout the curriculum as a subject for study, a theme to influence pedagogy and as a key aspect of student competences to be developed for lifelong learning. Importantly, SEL-related skills, values of peace education and life skills have been integrated across the South Sudan curriculum rather than being placed as isolated subjects or topics within subjects. This integrated, 'cross-cutting' approach ensures that aspects of SEL relating to citizenship, peaceful negotiation and human rights, for example, are developed in a range of relevant contexts rather than in isolated lessons where they might lose their significance, lack clear purpose and therefore motivate learners less. A geography lesson about town planning, for example, might involve a discussion of the importance of community spaces for people to come together and celebrate or for meetings to take place in support of community decision-making processes. A math lesson might focus on data relating to a particular aspect of human rights, such as the decrease in the number of people negatively affected by contaminated water.

Figure 1 shows examples of opportunities for cross-cutting issues and the integrated subjects of ICT and TVET to be developed and explored across the curriculum.

Year-by-year details of each cross-cutting topic or theme are listed in the subject overview (long-term plan) and all relevant syllabus units (medium-term plan). TLMs, including textbooks,





**Figure 1:** Examples of cross-cutting issues and integrated subjects

have been developed directly from syllabus units, ensuring that cross-cutting issues are not missed. For South Sudan, which has experienced immense conflict, peace education and life skills are particularly important in enabling learners to develop socially and become more able to cope with their experiences and prepare them for uncertain futures. Ex-child soldiers, for example, of which 900 were released in 2018 alone, are likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. According to the UN, there are still 19,000 children in the armed forces in South Sudan, with many more among the 1.9 million people in South Sudan who are estimated to live in displacement (International Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2018). Children who have been displaced are also likely to display symptoms of PTSD along with other behaviors associated with psychological distress.

In each syllabus unit there is also a reference to student competencies of communication, co-operation, critical and creative thinking, so that these are also embedded across the curriculum, linked as appropriate to SEL.

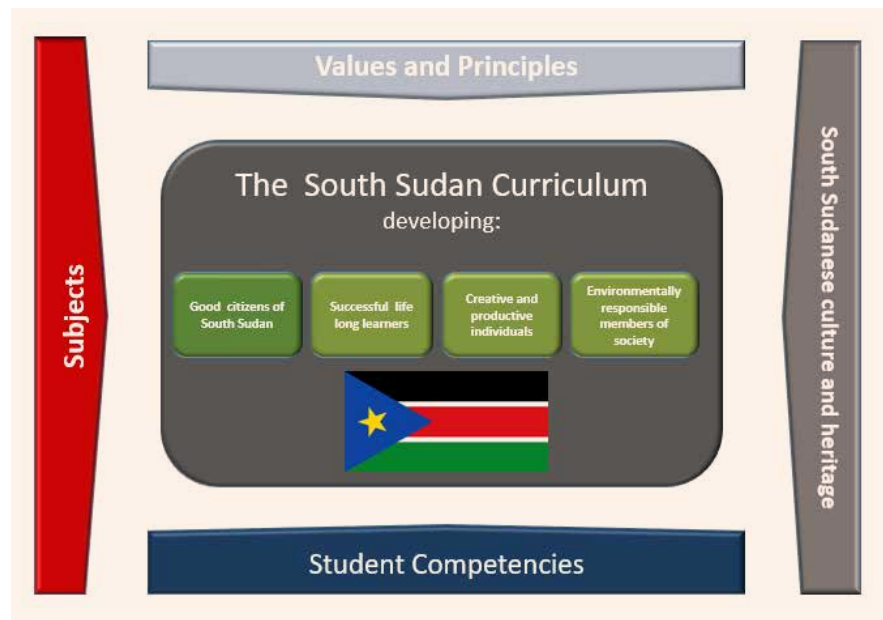
By rooting learning in the natural, cultural and social context of South Sudan, the curriculum and TLMs aim to ensure that learners have an emotional connection to what is being studied, and therefore recognize its relevance and significance. This sense of moving from the 'known to the unknown' is a key feature in supporting the emotional development of learners, providing some comfort and encouragement through the familiarity of images and texts. Where learning reflects local communities, physical features or recent events, learners are more likely to have the desire and means to communicate and collaborate effectively as they move to discuss wider, more complex issues. Context-rich learning activities more reliably allow learners to talk about, question and share what they know. This approach provides a useful structure for learners to develop the social skills required to participate in situations that are increasingly unfamiliar, having developed the confidence to question, justify and contribute to ideas and activities that are more familiar. Rooting learning in the context of South Sudan goes some way towards a learner-centered approach, as previously discussed. By beginning with what is familiar also promotes the need for learning to enable children to begin to explore the world beyond their immediate experiences, so that they can develop the curiosity and resilience to understand the diverse cultures, identities, practices and economies across the country and beyond, thus reducing negative stereotyping and eventually the causes of conflict.

The new curriculum also moves away from a focus on summative tests that encourage rote-learning, towards a greater emphasis on formative assessment and ongoing, classroom-based assessment. This allows the teacher to gain a better understanding of the needs and interests of individual pupils or groups of pupils. Teachers' resource materials, based on a reflective approach to teaching, accompany the textbooks and training programs. Lessons can be adapted as teachers respond to what they know about what is being learned. If teachers are successful in adapting lessons in this way, learners are much more able to access the curriculum.

## Bringing it together in the TLMs

The Curriculum Framework (figure 2) provides a model for thinking about the new curriculum and a structure for designing TLMs. The framework has greatly supported educators and other stakeholders in South Sudan who have worked together to design classroom activities, lesson plans and other learning experiences. At every point in the design of textbooks and training for senior leaders and the induction materials for the new curriculum, the following question has shaped the creation of TLMs: ‘How can learners reach *this* intended learning outcome in a way that reflects the curriculum framework?’

As already stated, *Handa’s Surprise* was used in a variety of ways to support teaching and learning across the curriculum. Most schools in South Sudan are classed as being ‘low resource’, and teachers have limited choices or no choice at all when it comes to selecting materials to excite imaginations, encourage curiosity and



**Figure 2:** The Curriculum Framework for South Sudan

develop creativity. Therefore, selecting resources that are rich in opportunity for multiple learning experiences was a useful feature of the design process.

The following paragraphs provide some examples of how the new TLMs reflect the framework so that education for sustainable development and SEL are appropriately integrated into all learning experiences. It should be noted again that all TLMs were designed in full consultation with South Sudanese educators and other stakeholders. This ensured that the activities reflected South Sudanese culture and heritage—and multilingual and multicultural landscape where appropriate—and that any perceived challenges in relation to the way teachers might interpret how to use TLMs were identified and approaches adapted accordingly.

### The String Shape Challenge

This activity was designed to be used by senior leaders in schools, such as head teachers and subject leaders, to help them explain features of the new curriculum to teachers. It formed part of a two-day course for senior leaders to run in their own school, with four practical activities to run with their teachers to help illustrate and explain the curriculum framework.

The materials accompanying this activity explain that senior leaders should invite teachers to follow the teaching and learning sequence, noting that learners will work in groups, communicating using mathematical vocabulary, negotiating effectively to create each shape and setting their own challenges according to their own experiences. Importantly, this activity demonstrates to teachers that a simple activity can promote a range of learning outcomes, all of which can be ‘correct’ for the activity but which require assessment to ascertain whether mathematical concepts and terminology have been applied accurately. This activity demonstrates that by using simple materials, learners can have an enjoyable experience within a carefully structured group activity, which should further encourage them to develop positive attitudes

# The String Shape Challenge

In this activity, learners are challenged to make different shapes with a variety of mathematical properties. Groups work to create shapes at the request of the teacher and of their peers. Learners should explain their thinking in order to clarify their reasoning and to develop accurate related mathematical vocabulary.

Teaching and Learning Sequence		Learner Competencies
A	Ask learners to arrange themselves into groups of four to six. Provide them with a loop of string about 6m long. Tell them to keep both hands on the string at all times and to stretch out the string into any shape.	Negotiating and coordinating groups. Working collaboratively towards common goals.
B	Call out some of the shape challenges listed below. Encourage learners to narrate their ideas and justify their choices of position and shape.	Thinking critically about how to form shapes accurately and how to respond appropriately to ideas from others.
C	Ask a few learners in each group to volunteer to give shape challenges.	Sharing responsibilities for leading learning. Communicating ideas clearly.
<b>Possible Shape Challenges</b>		
Make a shape with two or more acute/obtuse/right angles. Make a shape with one pair of parallel or perpendicular sides. Make a quadrilateral. Make a shape with one line of symmetry. Make a three-dimensional shape.		

**Figure 3:** Sample workshop training activity

towards mathematics and learning in general. In relation to sustainable development, learners are being encouraged to think critically and creatively in order to address the challenges presented by rapidly changing global problems such as climate change and migration, as well as to develop socially and emotionally through the interactive, practical nature of the task.

## Sort It!

In order to introduce primary and secondary teachers to the new curriculum, a further two-day course was designed for trainers to deliver in schools. The course again followed a practical, interactive approach. A booklet of four activities was provided for all teachers and was the focus of the course. Each activity was delivered during the pilot course in early 2018 and was discussed in detail so that teachers could use it in their own schools and become familiar with the new approaches in advance of its launch with textbooks the following year. Each activity was designed to reflect the curriculum framework shown in figure 1: exploring a learning outcome from one particular subject; developing student competencies; reflecting the culture and heritage of South Sudan; and promoting values of peace and prosperity and the principles for effective curriculum implementation.

The Sort It! activity focused on enabling teachers to see the benefits of groupwork while also promoting the use of images that are familiar to most learners and are related to South Sudan. The competencies are clearly listed and teachers are encouraged to adapt the activity in other ways, thus building a resource bank of ideas for TLMs. The booklet that this page was taken from was used to train a group of trainers to introduce teachers to the new curriculum during a two-day course. The activity described above was designed with trainers, which they then used to train teachers. The teachers, in turn, were encouraged to use the activity in their schools to help them embed what they had learned about the new curriculum. It also introduced learners to a new style of learning. The activity was designed to be replicated using other sets of materials and images. In the training booklet, the page facing this page provided ideas for using images in this way across the curriculum.



## Exploring Group Work

# Sort It!



In this activity, learners are asked to work in groups to sort a number of pictures of animals native to South Sudan. There are various challenges here that require learners to think in different ways and to collaborate effectively as a group. It is important that these kinds of activities are practised regularly, so that learners develop good habits for group work.

Other images to sort and explore include: trees; buildings; rivers; famous people; foods.

Other objects to sort and explore include: leaves; sticks; bottles; books; bags; clothing.

	Teaching and Learning Sequence	Learner Competencies
A	Ask the learners to order the animals from, for example, the most to the least beautiful, the most to the least dangerous, their most to least favourite, the fastest to the slowest, and/or the most to the least lazy.	Learners work in groups of four to six and compare and share ideas.
B	Ask the learners to sort the animals into two groups, such as: hot/cold; smooth/rough; happy/sad; rare/common; bright/dull.	Learners work in the same groups and take it in turns to choose animals and explain their views.
C	Ask the learners to challenge each other to create a sequence of pictures that could illustrate a story. Learners choose titles such as: The Hunted; The Chase; Amazed Animals. Learners then narrate their stories.	Learners work in pairs to create a picture sequence and practise narrating a possible story.

### Features of Effective Group Work

- Assign roles: questioner; encourager; leader; reporter.
- Provide a clear description of the expected outcome.
- Create opportunities for creative thinking and problem solving.

Get on  
Respect each other  
On task  
Use quiet voices  
Participate  
Stay in your group

**Figure 4:** A page from the booklet introducing teachers to the new curriculum

## Quality questions

Quality questioning across the curriculum is an important aspect of promoting the development of student competencies and enabling education for sustainable development. Learners can routinely challenge, critique, exemplify and elaborate upon what they are learning. Throughout the creation of TLMs, this aspect of critical and creative thinking has been an essential feature of the design process. Working with a range of stakeholders, the Curriculum Foundation has promoted the need for learners to be provided with opportunities to develop thinking skills in a range of contexts.

Early childhood development (ECD) is a feature of education in South Sudan that has yet to be fully developed. ECD centers are opening in increasing numbers, but resources and expertise are scarce. Training materials have been developed which carefully balance the need for specific examples of classroom activities with more generic approaches that can be applied across learning areas. Parallel to the two-day training course described above for primary and secondary teachers, a two-day course was also prepared for ECD teachers or lower primary teachers who may deliver the ECD curriculum.

‘Quality questioning’ is a feature of TLMs for ECD that promotes language development using a learner-centered approach. All ECD teachers participating in the course were provided with a booklet of activities to use in the classroom, which includes a section on using quality questions (figure 5). Trainers were guided on how to effectively enable teachers to recognise the importance of questioning through a script (not entirely prescriptive, but rather key phrases and questions) and the related supporting features of the ECD document, ‘Guidance for the Early Childhood Development Curriculum’.

The ‘Question Stones’ shown in figure 5 illustrate a resource that teachers can create to support language development and the development of student competencies relating to critical and creative thinking. Teachers were trained to use these stones across

## Examples of Quality Questions



### Remembering

How would you describe...?  
What did...?  
Who were the main...?

### Understanding

What can you say about...?  
What is the best answer for...?  
How would you compare...?

### Applying

What examples can you find to...?  
How would you use...?  
What would happen if...?

### Analysing

Why do you think...?  
Can you describe the differences between...?  
What is the main idea...?

### Evaluation

What is the best...?  
Where is the best place for...?  
How will you work out...?

### Creating

Can you think of a new way to...?  
Where would you go next...?  
How will you make...?

**Figure 5:** Sample page from the two-day ECD teacher training booklet

the curriculum and, in contrast, extensively within one learning activity. Training materials aimed to enable teachers to use the stones in such a way that learners would have the opportunity to talk about things that were familiar to them, offering a connection between the world of home and the school environment.

## Textbooks

The Curriculum Foundation supported the development of textbooks through the Quality Assurance process, working with Kenyan publishers and South Sudanese curriculum writers through a series of six workshops in both Kenya and South Sudan to ensure that materials reflect the syllabus units of the new curriculum. Activities were designed with key questions in mind, relating to how learning reflected the elements of the curriculum framework in figure 1. The activities are written so as to enable the teacher to deliver a competency-based curriculum. In lower primary, where pupils require very little text on the page, more detail for implementation is provided in the accompanying teacher's guide.

The textbook writing process took the form of two workshops in Juba for curriculum writers from South Sudan alongside textbook writers and publishers, in order for the team from Kenya to be able to deepen their understanding of the South Sudan curriculum. The Curriculum Foundation guided the structure of these workshops and quality assured the ongoing conversations about each subject, guiding groups of curriculum writers and publishers to effectively examine each subject and the related pedagogy.

After these two workshops, the publishing team began to draft materials in Kenya. During a series of six (re)drafting stages, samples were sent to the South Sudanese team for comments and edits. This was followed by edited drafts being sent to the Curriculum Foundation for further comment and guidance. The Curriculum Foundation and curriculum leaders also visited the publishing houses in Kenya on three occasions to work with the publishers directly while the materials were being re-drafted.

The following examples show how education for sustainable development and SEL have been integrated in the textbooks, partly as a result of their close correlation to syllabus units but mostly because of the way this approach was promoted during the support provided to publishers by the Curriculum Foundation and curriculum writers from Juba during the development stages of the writing process.



### Activity 6: Oral discussion

In pairs



Discuss the questions below:

1. Identify the conflicts in the passage on pages 104 - 105.
2. Which of these conflicts have you witnessed? Talk about them.
3. What are some of the causes of family-based conflicts?

Take turns to share your answers with the class.

### Activity 7: Discussing conflict resolution

In groups



Read the passage on page 105-106, again and answer the following questions.

1. How can the conflicts highlighted in the passage be resolved?
2. Discuss how the following can contribute to co-existence:
  - (a) sports.
  - (b) cultural festivals.
  - (c) religious leaders.
3. Talk about how learning institutions are a source of co-existence.

Read your answers to the class.

As a class



Study the conflicts below and suggest the best ways to solve each conflict.

1. Buwa and Lagu wanted to play together but Buwa wanted to skip rope while Lagu wanted to play football.
2. Deng and Lam both wanted a piece of cake but there was only one piece left.

Figure 6: Sample page from P6 English textbook

#### Source 1.5

Study the source shown and answer the following questions.

1. In your own words describe how farming in Inca civilisation was done with reference to this source.
2. Would the Inca farming system be useful in your own community or other parts of South Sudan? Explain why.



Inca farming

Figure 7: Sample page from S3 History Textbook

## Textbook samples

The example shown in figure 6 is from the Primary 6 English textbook. We can see how learning moves from pairs, to groups to whole-class work, which requires increasingly complex social and communication skills. The context of the activity is conflict, reflecting the cross-cutting issue of peace education. It is framed by discussions of conflicts that learners have experienced themselves in order to root learning in the local context. Questions for learners include knowledge-level questions (*'Identify the conflict in the passage'*) but also include deeper thinking questions about how sports and cultural festivals can contribute to peaceful co-existence.

The example in figure 7 is taken from the Secondary 3 history textbook. Learners are asked to think critically about what they can infer from the photo and are then challenged to relate what they know to agriculture in their own country. 'Explain why' is a simple instruction, but by routinely explaining their thinking, learners develop the vocabulary to describe how they arrive at decisions. In doing so, they help other learners to experience different points of view.

Figure 8 shows two pages from the Primary 3 mathematics textbook. Math is contextualized wherever possible and learners are directed to think about how math is applied in the real world. Estimating and comparing numbers is a useful strategy, for example (figure 8), which can be used in many contexts. Learners are given the opportunity to practice this repeatedly so that they become increasingly familiar with this kind of reasoning.

In summary, the approach to TLMs takes a learner-centered approach, in which learners must think about their own experiences. Most of the books use symbols to direct individual, paired, group or whole-class work, which supports the development of communication and co-operation. Most activities include 'quality questions' to challenge learners to think deeply about what they have learned and to apply this in a new situation. Finally, formative assessment consists of frequent 'progress checks'

## 1.1 Reading numbers

### Activity 1

In groups, look at the picture below. What do you see?



1. Are there any numbers you recognize?
2. Read them out loud.



### Activity 27

Estimate the weight of the following.

1. Stones of different sizes.
2. Text books of different subjects.
3. Your own weight.

**Figure 8:** Sample from Primary 3 Mathematics textbook

or ‘quick quizzes’ rather than a lengthy summative test at the end of each year, which has been discouraged in the Assessment Guidance document. Only in Primary 8 will a summative examination take place, in preparation for secondary school. This ensures that learning does not ‘drift’ and teachers can adapt their lessons to ensure that all learners are better supported to make progress through the curriculum.

## Conclusion

It is hoped that quality education for all in South Sudan will be greatly enhanced by the new curriculum and that TLMs, training programs, supporting guidance documents and increased expertise will assist teachers to teach in a way that gives more learners a positive experience of school. Textbooks and other supporting

materials contribute to bringing a competency-based curriculum to life. Learners have to think for themselves and relate what they know to new experiences and opportunities. Teachers and learners will experience the benefits of working more collaboratively and creatively, developing social and emotional skills, and paving the way towards lifelong learning.

This change in approach requires extensive support and guidance for all teachers and lead educators, the generation of additional curriculum materials, and continuous work by textbook writers. Thinking creatively about how to present learning so that it guides teachers effectively to deliver a competency-based curriculum takes experience and expertise that only develops over time. New textbooks to be disseminated for all subjects (some in 2019 and others in 2020) and accompanying materials will contribute to enabling this transition, but much support and guidance is required to ensure quality education for the world’s newest nation.

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## Challenges of addressing SDG Target 4.7 themes and the role of textbooks in promoting social and emotional learning in post-conflict countries: The Rwandan experience

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### ABSTRACT

Children in Rwanda face social challenges and pressures at home and at school due to the changing environment, circumstances and conditions in which they live. Although peace and reconciliation remain a key priority after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the needs of children and youth are different from those of 25 years ago. Circumstances demand attention to achieving SDG Target 4.7, which has become an important standard against which governments around the world are measuring progress in education. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without due consideration to cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender equality, and promotion of a culture of peace, non-violence and global citizenship. To achieve these targets, education policymakers, school leaders, teachers, Development Partners and other stakeholders are looking to embed social and emotional learning in their curriculum and textbooks to enable teachers and learners to give due attention to aspects of learning in addition to cognitive development. What children learn in Rwandan schools must reflect the social issues they face in day-to-day life: policy and practice need to emphasize positive behavior change and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are

essential for social and emotional development in order to motivate students to enjoy learning and to allow them to act as future responsible citizens of Rwanda.

### KEYWORDS

competence-based curriculum, cross-cutting themes, textbooks, Genocide, peace, reconciliation

### Introduction

According to the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018/19–2023/24, Rwanda is committed to the SDGs, especially SDG 4, which aims to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.’ Targets under SDG 4 cover every level of education from pre-primary through to tertiary education, including that by 2030 all girls and boys will complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Targets also make reference to skills development, education for global citizenship and education for sustainable development. Gender and equity remain cross-cutting themes. Target 4.7 refers to the year 2030, when all learners should have acquired the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace, non-violence and global citizenship. The extent to which these aspects are mainstreamed into education policies, curricula and textbooks will to a large extent influence the achievement of these goals.

### Context

Curriculum and textbooks have played a significant and positive role in national reconstruction, especially peace and reconciliation, in post-conflict Rwanda. Immediately after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, some of the causes that contributed to the Genocide were identified to include violence, a breakdown in



social and moral values, discrimination, oppression, victimization, favoritism, corruption, human rights abuses, ignorance, lack of individual responsibility, submissiveness and social powerlessness (Rutayisire et al., 2004).

Education has played a major role in addressing these issues in the past 25 years. Curriculum developers attempted to create conditions for lasting peace by integrating the teaching of life skills into primary and secondary schools (Rutayisire et al., 2004) and the school curriculum and textbooks carried positive messages of peace and values (Rutayisire, 2007). These attempts were not sufficient. In order to achieve the goals of SDG 4.7, different approaches, interventions and innovative programs are required, in which social and emotional learning is a vital and integral part. Although the Rwandan Ministry of Education integrated cross-cutting issues in the new, competence-based curriculum that was implemented in 2016, the implementation has continued to focus on cognitive learning, whereas the main challenges facing children at home and at school seem to be social and emotional in nature and therefore require different solutions. Among the challenges for textbooks is to address how teachers teach and how and what children learn, including cooperation, communication, creating relationships of trust, practicing empathy, skills of assertiveness, self-esteem and self-image, the skill of taking increased individual and social responsibility for one's life and decisions, and responsibility for other people, and the skills of controlling emotions and mediation skills.

The need to integrate social and emotional skills into Rwandan textbooks cannot be overemphasized. Radio stations and TV programs, public officials, religious organizations and community leaders all emphasize the role of parents, citing socio-economic imperatives and pressures that require parents to be away from home for long hours, leaving the education and care of their children almost entirely in the hands of teachers at school and caregivers at home. Social conflicts in homes have resulted in quarrels, conflicts, separation and divorce between parents, culminating in personal, social, psychological and emotional

challenges for children. The issues facing Rwandan children and youth today cannot be solved by a kind of learning that is conceived as the transmission of knowledge and the acquisition of basic skills. SEL programs and activities in schools can help learners to avoid conflict both in school and at home.

## **Reflections on education policy and the provision of textbooks**

The Rwandan education policy (2002) affirmed that education should aim at recreating in young people the values that had been eroded prior to the Genocide, and that Government would continue to support the national reconciliation process through the curriculum reform effort by providing sufficient textbooks in an effort to reduce the dropout and repetition rates in the school system. It was envisaged that the effective use of textbooks would help restore the skills lost and would inculcate essential values for national reconciliation and development such as peaceful resolution of problems, gender awareness, respect for the physically and mentally disabled, understanding health issues and respect for the democratic process. In 2014, the textbook policy was revised to take account of the competence-based curriculum, emphasizing the importance of textbooks in the teaching and learning process (Ministry of Education, 2014a). At the same time, the curriculum and assessment policy (Ministry of Education, 2014c) also stresses the need to take account of the human and linguistic rights of children; promoting peace and reconciliation and a unified and tolerant national identity; promoting the role of women in society and the education of girls in school; being responsive to differing local needs and aspirations; promoting traditional and modern Rwandan customs, culture and skills that are beneficial to Rwandan society; promoting respect for and an understanding of the value to society of the mentally and physically disabled and those suffering from emotional distress; and catering to all levels of ability, from those with learning difficulties to the specially gifted. This is



complemented by the Teacher Development and Management Policy (2014b), which emphasizes the need for teachers to be trained to understand, interpret and use textbooks appropriately.

## **Integrating SDG Target 4.7 themes and social and emotional learning (SEL) into school textbooks**

The competence-based curriculum—now in its fourth year of implementation—addresses some of the aspects of Target 4.7 through its cross-cutting themes, including dignity and integrity, self-reliance, national and cultural identity, peace and tolerance, justice, respect for human rights, solidarity and democracy, patriotism, hard work, commitment and resilience, excellence, aspiration and optimism, equity and inclusiveness, learner-centeredness, openness and transparency, the importance of family, and Rwandan culture and heritage. These cross-cutting values are well within the requirements of Target 4.7, which emphasizes the improvement of equitable and inclusive quality education for all, an explicit understanding of student learning, and the nature of the support that students require as they progress through the school system.

However, in addition to the social challenges that schools have experienced—such as school dropout and repetition, family-based conflicts, early pregnancy, orphanhood, delinquency, diseases, the need for school children to earn an income, and parental attitudes in which some parents do not regard their children's education as a priority—other challenges include curriculum delivery and assessment that continue to emphasize cognitive learning strategies. There are also issues of irrelevant pedagogical practices and a lack of sufficient textbooks, as well as challenges of the language of instruction. The social and school-related factors referred to above impact student learning achievement, and therefore the achievement of Target 4.7.

The implementation challenges referred to above demand a review of the current curriculum and textbooks to take account

of social and emotional learning. A revised curriculum would recognize that from infancy to adulthood, children grow and develop in different ways, in which social and emotional learning plays a key role. Rwandan teachers, students and parents need to begin to recognize—even in the earliest growth and development of the child—the need to address the emergence of the self, the search for identity and the individual's relationships with others. This also implies that the emotional changes and their relationship to the children's social environment and culture will be an important consideration for those in charge of developing the new curriculum and writing school textbooks. Education policymakers, school leaders, teachers and parents also need to recognize that children's individual social and emotional learning experiences and the challenges of moving from one level of education to another, have a lasting effect on self-image and how children view themselves and their respective communities. It is also possible that failure to resolve some of the challenges in early stages can have a negative impact throughout life, which is why the children will need to learn new skills early to avoid a sense of failure and incompetence in the early years of their development.

How children develop the abilities to cope with peer pressure as well as school demands and requirements—and in the Rwandan context, where rural schoolchildren especially are expected to help their parents with household chores—affects their success and competence. In adolescence, between the ages of 13 and 18, social pressures including teen pregnancy and drug abuse have become important issues to government officials, schools and communities. In addition, the Genocide of 1994 continues to affect school-age children in Rwanda, many of whom still experience trauma. However, even children who may not have experienced such trauma may still experience crises of identity and mental health. These children need help to be strong socially and emotionally and to develop positive images of themselves. Self-perception influences the choices and decisions that children make regarding their education and their general way of life. School textbooks

need to prepare these youth for such challenges early on in life, to help them make relevant decisions and choices and to pursue them. In a classroom situation, social and emotional learning may be promoted by encouraging children to make and act on their respective decisions and choices through learning activities and games, getting children to concentrate on what they are doing, encouraging students to suggest activities, and respecting their ideas, creating opportunities for students to experience success by moving step by step when introducing new concepts, skill or game, using storytelling to encourage creativity, and being tolerant and allowing for mistakes to encourage further exploration of new ideas. This kind of learning could also be promoted by making sure that children have opportunities to set and work towards realistic goals and are given an opportunity to show their independence and responsibility, as well as by teachers providing support to students who seem discouraged by focusing more on the progress they are making and on their improvements and hard work. It is also important to provide sufficient examples involving role models for career choices and other roles that portray Kinyarwanda culture through social studies, history and citizenship, or in the official languages provided for in the curriculum—Kinyarwanda, English and French. Other ways to encourage SEL in Rwandan classrooms might include inviting eminent women and men from the community to talk about and discuss with students how they made their career choices and decisions.

Rwandan textbooks also need to be user-friendly so as to help students work harder to search for other sources of information to help them solve their personal challenges as they navigate the turbulent waters of growing up. Teachers using such materials ought to give students and other youth realistic feedback about themselves: for instance, by understanding the consequences of their behavior and how such behavior may affect themselves and their friends or families. This may also be a challenge for teachers, who need to be role models themselves. While student behavior may be criticized, students should not feel *they* are being

criticized. Textbooks can be tools for facilitating and enabling SEL, by supporting learning that is stimulating and through which students feel valued by their teachers and school management.

## Conclusion and suggestions

Promoting and integrating SEL programmes and activities in schools requires a collective effort on the part of policymakers, school leaders, teachers, and parents as well as students and other stakeholders such as community leaders and most notably, Development Partners. It is therefore suggested that an appropriate legislative and policy framework be put in place to provide a basis for the review of the current competence-based curriculum. Coupled with this is the need to review the textbooks and other learning and teaching materials, paying attention to an appropriate level of language in the textbooks and systematically integrating SEL activities. This will require that teachers be trained in pedagogy that provides them with skills and abilities to allow them to present themselves as non-aggressive models who do not use corporal punishment or threats to win the obedience and respect of children.

Schools need to discourage students from benefitting from aggressive behavior. MOE should encourage the teaching of positive behavior through carefully selected lessons of social and emotional learning in the curriculum and textbooks, including discussion of the effects of anti-social behavior and actions. Schools also need to ensure that SEL lessons include opportunities for learning friendship-formation and the effects of failed friendships such as rejection, learning about sharing, caring, cooperation and tolerance. Emphasis needs to be put on similarities among Rwandans in their respective communities as well as the school community, the nation and globally, rather than differences. Focusing on differences can lead to disastrous consequences, as Rwandans have already experienced during the 1994 Genocide.

Achieving these goals requires not only a concerted effort but also changes in attitudes and practices by all stakeholders

especially policymakers, school leaders and teachers. Most will have been socialized and grown up on rote learning and memorization, and will therefore need to replace old habits and approaches and to appreciate the importance of SEL as a complementary imperative rather than a competing concept on the school timetable. This demands capacity development of school leaders and teachers, to know the right time to do the right things and to make it possible for school leaders and teachers to carry out their duties using their own initiatives without being pushed or urged to do so by superiors or supervisors.

For the time being, with no specific focus on SEL in the current curriculum, the MOE and school leaders should work with Development Partners and other stakeholders to encourage teachers to identify key elements that make up or promote SEL and consolidate these into subject matter or learning activities. Schoolteachers can then use these to provide opportunities for their students to learn more effectively. In this way, Rwandan schools would create a supportive learning environment that can achieve Target 4.7.

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## Emerging citizens in functional basic education for adults

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### ABSTRACT

The paper presents experiences from two projects on basic adult education in Serbia. The way life skills, civic education and responsible living are included into the curriculum is depicted and analyzed. Teaching and learning materials, developed for educating adults in basic education in topics related to citizenship, environmental issues, health, peace, tolerance, equality, democracy, are presented. The focus is on their position in the curriculum, their depictions and formulations in the textbooks, and the way they are taught based on these materials. Some success indicators and factors are shared at the end, as well as lessons learned.

### KEYWORDS

adult basic education; life skills; functional literacy; teaching and learning materials

### Context

For countries in political and economic transition, the teaching of knowledge and skills needs to quickly surmount numerous economic, political and social problems. After 2000, Serbia had several challenges—to deal with the consequences of conflict and war in the former Yugoslavia, of the years under the authoritarian regime and the international sanctions and isolation, and to start the transition from a state-run economy to

a modern, free market-driven economy. An additional challenge was the process of European integration, which not only changed the political landscape of the country but also created a problem for the still very traditional political and civic culture. In terms of education, the situation was exacerbated by the large number of functionally illiterate adults in the population, a factor which increased the challenge of addressing the new economic, political and social problems.

Several education initiatives were launched and various projects implemented during this period. This overview of the experience with curriculum, textbooks and other teaching materials is drawn from two such projects:

*Functional basic education of adult Roma (FBEAR)*, supported by the Roma Education Fund and implemented by the Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. 'FBEAR experiment has provided a new, tested model for functional basic education of adults' (Medić, Popović, Despotović, Milanović, 2010, p.46). It involved 10 primary and 25 secondary schools within 11 municipalities, including almost 300 beneficiaries. (Medić et al., 2010, p.89). Curriculum was developed by a large expert team, while the team for the development of didactical material counted only 26 members.

*Second chance: Systemic Development of Elementary Practice Based Adult Education in Serbia* was supported by the European Union (IPA 2008—Instrument for the Pre-Accession Assistance) and the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and implemented by the consortium of several international partners and pool of national experts. The project involved 4000 participants during two school years, and was intended for adults above 15 years of age with incomplete elementary education or without vocational qualifications, with priority being given to socially vulnerable target groups. The new system was piloted by 80 elementary school teams and 75 teams in secondary vocational schools. Fifty master trainers organized trainings for more than 1000 teachers about the curriculum



delivery and teaching methods for adults, and broad partnership was created at national and local level.

The aim of both projects was the development of elementary, practice-based adult education in Serbia that is accessible and adaptable to the needs of adult learners, focused on life skills and competencies and based upon lifelong learning. FBEAR was a kind of a pilot project, whose success led to the second project (Second chance), which took it further—to the establishment of a system of functional elementary adult education in Serbia.

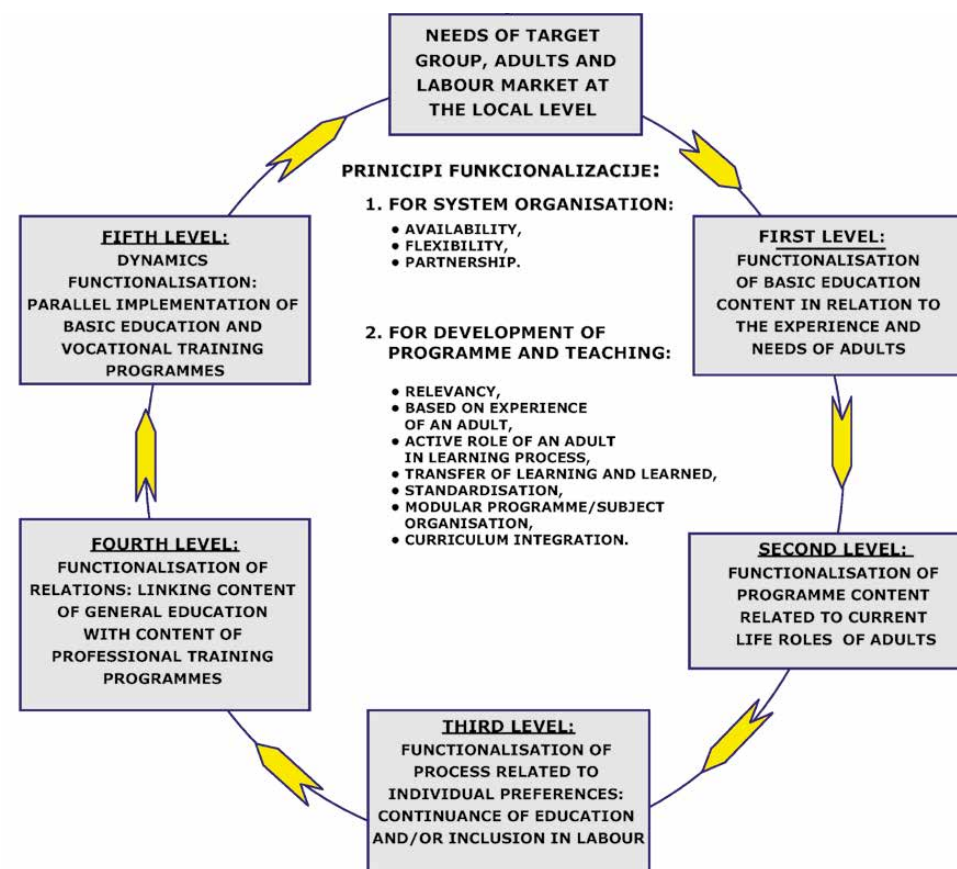
The concept of functional basic adult education was developed, along with a methodology for its monitoring and evaluation, but probably the most important result is the formal establishment of the new system of basic education for adults in Serbia, with appropriate legislative procedures. This has replaced the old, traditional system that was simply a 'shortened' copy of the formal school system developed for children. An important result is also a newly designed curriculum along with newly developed and published teaching and learning materials.

The concept of functional basic adult education is structured in the three levels of education, which comprise: (1) full basic education for adults, (2) enabling employment (through the vocational part) and (3) continuation of education (through general education subjects). Beyond the program for children, the adult curriculum includes citizenship skills in the broadest sense of the word, which are gradually developed through all three levels (Medić et al., 2010, p.69).

## The challenge of creating new curricula

The previous program and curriculum for full basic adult education was different from the children's curriculum only in its duration, which was exactly half. In all other characteristics, the programs were the same: the adults were supposed to learn content tailored to children, with no specially adapted textbooks or learning and teaching materials.

The most important step was, therefore, to create a new curriculum that responds to the needs of adult learners. The formal requirements and expected outcomes were taken into account, as well as the needs and real-life situation of adults. The curriculum was created parallel to the subjects of traditional elementary education; that is, mathematics, physics, history, language, etc. However, the need to respond to the requirements and challenges of the new era was immediately recognized and accomplished by establishing five 'functionalization' dimensions, or levels of the curriculum (Medić et al., 2010, pp.58–62), as shown in figure 1:



**Figure 1:** The five levels of functionalization of the curriculum (Medić et al., 2010, p.59)



The first level of functionalization relates to the tailoring of curriculum to the needs of an adult in general, and to the needs of special target groups (e.g. Roma), in such a manner that all subjects taught to adults have relevance for the roles of participants in their work and life realities specific to the target group. The functionalization related to the target group is carried out by providing them with specific knowledge and skills through the content of curriculum, which was preceded by the analysis of the concrete target group, consultations with the representatives of related communities and relevant research studies.

The second level of functionalization is focused on the life roles of adult participants in general—for their personal development, citizens' roles and family lives. Since such topics were hardly present in the existing curricula and in the 'traditional' subjects, new subjects were introduced. Having in mind that adults have important roles not only in their working life, but even more in their families and in their social environment, the precondition was that their motivation to learn will increase if the learning content is in the function of the roles they carry and take. The following new subjects were introduced: basic life skills—for the beginner's level, responsible living and civic education—for the second and third levels, also entrepreneurship and IT literacy. All new subjects present one more important step ahead from the previous curriculum, which lacks an entire segment of different contents necessary for the life of adults in society—primarily in terms of civic participation, health care education, family education etc. This level of functionalization, therefore, provides adults with the necessary knowledge in the priority areas of everyday life and thus the possibility to voice their personal activism, as well as initiative for active job-seeking.

The third level of functionalization focuses on work-related competencies and on the possibility to gain knowledge and competencies that enable participants to continue their education. Thus, adults got a second chance to obtain basic education, enter

the world of work, or continue their education in the next level. For the participants, it was very important to have the opportunity to simultaneously acquire general education and training for a particular occupation. The fourth level is based on the close connection between general subjects and selected trainings for future occupations. A part of the curriculum of general education subjects includes knowledge specific to the chosen training programs for vocational courses that run parallel to the basic education courses.

Obviously, the second type of functionalization is the most closely related to the challenges faced by a society in a post-conflict era and transition. New approaches and topics and the need for new knowledge, attitudes and skills were challenges for curriculum developers, since there were no models, standards or guides. Therefore, the curriculum developers planned 'backwards'—starting with the behaviors and skills needed and having in mind the characteristics of the target group—that is, adults without basic education, and with low levels of literacy.

The new courses were structured in the following way (*Druga šansa*, 2013 b-c):

### Basic life skills

- Responsible living (health and factors influencing it; family and family life and roles, gender equality; life situations and orientation, finding places, finding sources of various information);
- Civic education (personal documents, relevant institutions, procedures for applications);
- Entrepreneurship (responsibility, self-confidence, planning of personal life and career; creativity, initiative, problem-solving; critical thinking about and problem solving in the local community, social environment and influences, strategies for action; quality of life).

## Responsible living and civic education

- Citizens' rights, duties and responsibilities (different rights, ways to get them, civic rights in the EU);
- Peace and violence in the community (stereotypes, prejudices, tolerance, group pressure, violence prevention, achieving peace);
- Information (types of information, use and misuse, public information), sources of information (types, importance, mass-communication, Internet, tabloids, risks);
- Local and national government (structure, responsibilities, ways of functioning, community level, democracy—its importance and preconditions for its functioning), civic initiatives and civic activism (NGOs, local associations, initiatives);
- EU (development, rationale, structure, functioning, ethnic and religious diversity) and the European integration process (advantages, human rights, gender equality, minority rights, solidarity, mobility).

## Life skills (non-violent communication; conflict prevention)

- Family as a system (recognizing strengths and weaknesses of one's family, cycles in the life of a family, functional and dysfunctional family patterns, violence);
- Improving the quality of family life and of parenthood (parenting styles, children's needs, rewards and punishments, school problems, conflicts);
- Health education (reproductive and sexual health, HIV and AIDS, STDs; smoking, alcohol, drugs and prevention).

## Textbooks and teaching materials

The difficulties around developing textbooks and other teaching and learning materials were multiple. The main challenge quickly became clear: there could not be a single universal textbook for each subject. Since the project was targeting the unemployed, women, rural populations, redundant workers, the

underemployed, and especially those at risk of job loss, such as ethnic minorities, etc., making one textbook per subject or field would be possible only on a very theoretical, broad level and would not meet the needs of the participating adults. It became obvious that developing and adapting different kinds of materials would be needed. So, traditional, printed books were not planned, but rather a collection of 'working papers' and suitable handouts and similar materials.

In the FBEAR project the teaching materials were developed by the team of experts, after which training was organized for teachers of all subjects. The teachers were also accompanied by the experts during the first stage of developing the training materials. In the project targeting the adult Roma, 'assistants' from the Roma community were engaged to help participants overcome the difficulties in learning and orientation in administrative and social issues. Together with the experts, they first developed 'Proposals for designing didactical materials', which included numerous suggestions and recommendations. An important piece of advice was to use anything that was fit for the purpose which could help participants learn about the topic, and which was close to their life experience and relevant for them. A variety of materials was suggested, with different media, different styles, approaches and levels of required engagement. For example, for the 'responsible living' in the project for Roma, it was suggested (Medić et al., 2010, p.150–151) to use:

- The Constitution of The Republic of Serbia;
- The EU Human Rights Charter;
- City maps, list of addresses of relevant institutions, public transportation map;
- Various forms (for embassies—visa-related, passport, form for identity cards, health insurance card, etc.);
- Calendar (and an 'empty' calendar, so participants can design their own calendar and practice planning skills);

- Movies and video-clips, magazines (educational institutions were advised to subscribe to magazines that could be used in teaching), CDs;
- If visits to various institutions were organized, materials could be brought from the visit, analyzed and discussed (museums, theatres, the zoo, the botanical gardens, the city water supply facility, fire-fighting unit, the Red Cross, an NGO, etc.);
- Devices for measuring different levels of environmental pollution;
- Schemes and charts: for example, showing the circulation of water in an unhygienic settlement and the consequences for fruits and vegetables, food and health;
- Health-related articles from newspapers, examples of vaccines, thermometer, condoms and other family planning methods;
- Items for everyday life: compass, scales, manometer, batteries, magnets.

A handbook for each subject was developed as a kind of orientation for the teacher. Later, for each topic, a draft of the proposed plan for didactic materials was prepared by the ‘assistants’, discussed with the teacher, adapted if needed, and adopted. Material would be copied for each of the participants, who would make a collection of these materials in a folder, thereby creating their own ‘textbook’. Additional, supplementary materials could be added for each curriculum unit. Since this was quite a new way of working, it was constantly monitored and improved., Participants showed a great level of satisfaction, reflected in a low percent of drop-outs (especially for this type of target group) and high satisfaction of attendants with the classes (Medić et al., 2010, p.175).

The project for the functional basic education of adults developed two types of resources—a guide for the teacher and a handbook for participants. Basic life skills were included in the handbooks for the first level of education, and responsible living/civic education in the second and third levels.

The topics covered by *Basic Skills* (at the first level of education) and *Responsible Living/Civic Education* (at the second and third

levels) were also treated as cross-cutting issues. For example, during the IT courses the topics chosen for internet surfing should be related to civic education (e.g. videos about the EU, reports about national and religious issues and how they are arranged in the EU, videos about other countries and cultures, issues about consumerism, etc.); in biology courses, issues related to the environment should be tackled (e.g. pollution, human role in environmental degradation, possibility for environmental actions in the local community, sustainable lifestyles, etc.). An example is the task (one of many of that kind) for participants to decide, for each of the offered items, what kind of waste is, for example, recyclable, biodegradable, medical, or dangerous (Druga šansa, 2013a, p.162), as shown in the illustration from the participants’ handbook below.

Further on, during the preparatory training, teachers were instructed to choose teaching materials—such as pictures—that were not gender- or culturally-biased. Some materials were aimed,

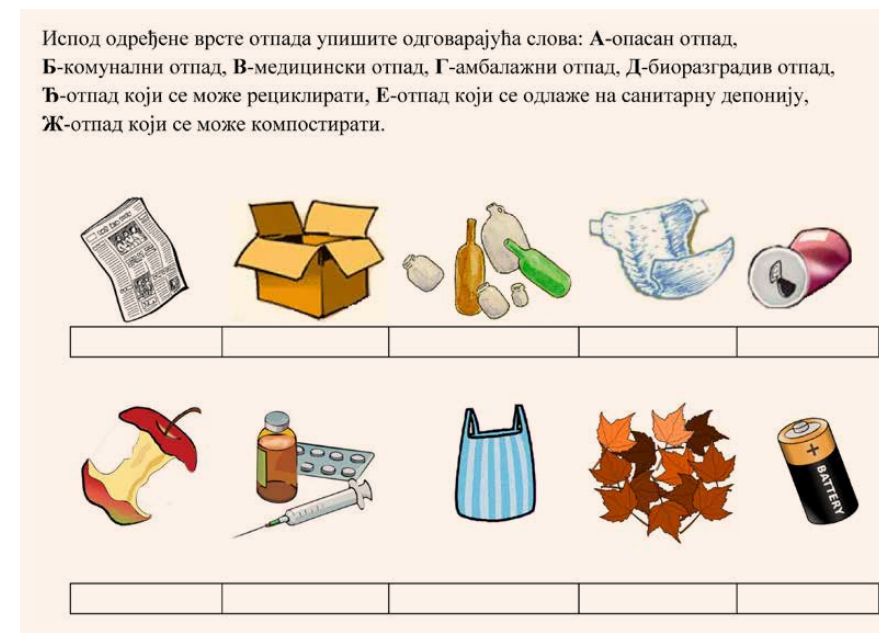


Figure 2: *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.162.

нема довољно воде за пиће, хране, медицинске опреме, здравствене и социјалне заштите. У савремени проблеми човечанства спадају нарушавање мира и безбедности што изискује стварање услова за безбедност, толеранцију, мирну сарадњу и очување мира. Уједињене нације и друге међународне организације ангажују се да ублаже или отклоне све ове проблеме.



Figure 3: *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.106.

ПРАВА КОЈА СЕ ОСТВАРУЈУ У МОЈОЈ ПОРОДИЦИ	
Чланови породице-домаћинства	Права
1. -----	1. Право на рад и права из радног одн
2. -----	2. Право на пензију
3. -----	3. Услуге социјалне заштите
4. -----	4. Материјална подршка
5. -----	5. Заштита породице и деце
6. -----	6. Право на образовање
7. -----	7. Здравствена права
8. -----	
9. -----	
10. -----	

Figure 4: *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.2.

directly or indirectly, at increasing a sense of global citizenship, using illustrations not common in the previous Serbian textbooks. For example *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.106 (figure 3).

This sense of belonging to an international community and connection to the ‘wider world’ was strengthened by a compulsory foreign language (English) even in the first cycle of education, with low-literacy participants.

The teaching materials provided numerous real-life situations that made participants reflect and analyze. For example, in the

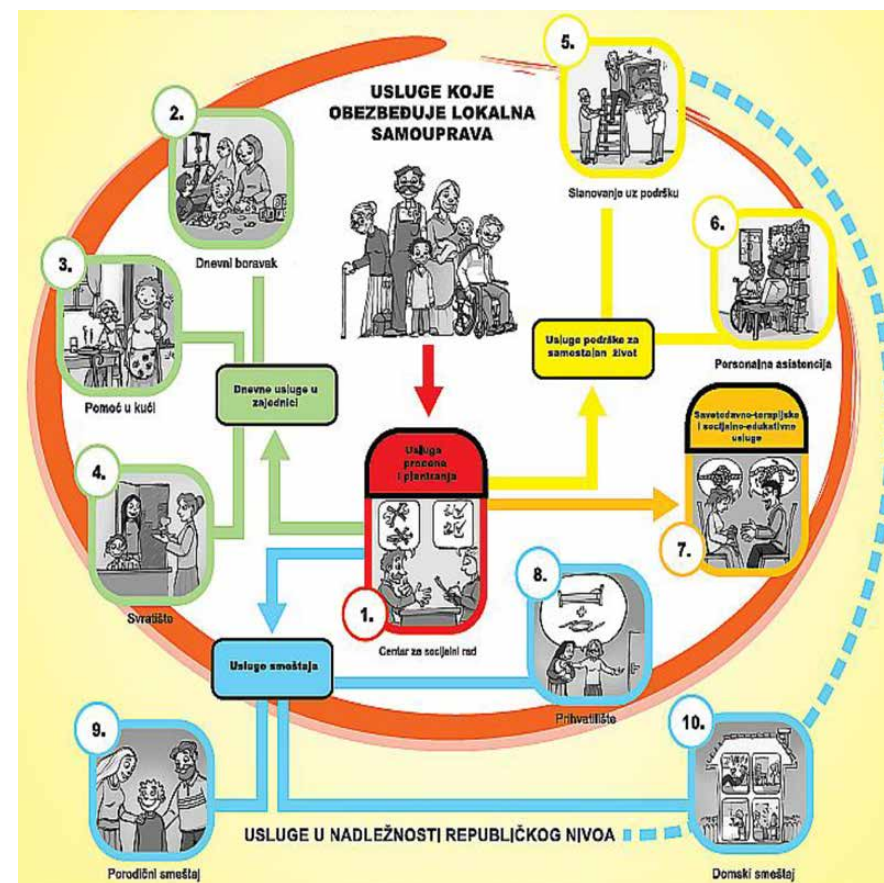


Figure 5: *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.253.



activity in figure 4, various human rights are listed, with a task of connecting each right listed in the right-hand column with the family members (children, parents, grandparents) added to the list in the left-hand column (*Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.254).

Since many participants came from underprivileged and socially disadvantaged groups, an important topic was also to make them aware of their rights, especially in relation to various social services and the responsible institutions, where it was important to teach learners about the difference in responsibilities between local and national level, for different groups of beneficiaries. Thus they would learn how and where to practice their rights (*Druga šansa*, 2013c, p.253):

A similar task concerned the connection between rights and responsibilities, or about violence, with different types of violence and their causes. These were analyzed as a starting point for the discussion. Participants could also talk about violence they had experienced and witnessed, which could evoke an emotional process that might support learning. They would be encouraged by teachers to share experiences, to give examples of such events, to tell how they felt, and to think about the feelings of other participants in the process. Thus, they learn not only to understand and manage emotions that will certainly emerge in situations when violence occurs, but will also increase empathy, solidarity and readiness to act as responsible citizens, preventing the use of violence wherever possible.

Life situations and questions about possible reactions in different life situations were frequently offered in teaching materials. For example, the topic of non-violent communication consisted of describing several situations, with the task for participants to describe their reaction or a solution to the situation. The aim was to broaden the repertoire of skills of non-violent communication, but also to initiate emotional reactions and the kind of interaction that would lead to an intensive process of emotional learning

Similarly, topics that participants might have experienced themselves would start with reflections, dilemmas or personal



**Figure 6:** *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p35.

stories. Facts and fallacies about the use of psychoactive substances were confronted, and participants were invited to share their personal views and experiences. Other health risks and risk behaviors are also an important topic in the curriculum, depicted and discussed in several subjects.

The use of illustrations, charts and photos was encouraged. For example, to explain the topics relatively distant from participants' experience, such as the main bodies of the EU (*Druga šansa*, 2013c, p.35): see figure 6.

This would be a starting point for a role play or similar game, where not only knowledge would be increased, but also social interaction among participants, as well as curiosity for the diversity of cultures and ways to deal with it. Ethnic, religious and cultural diversity as one of the positive values of EU would be pointed out, as well as mobility. Writing a postcard might sound old-fashioned, but some target groups can really enjoy learning how to do it, as shown in the illustration in figure 7 (*Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.36):



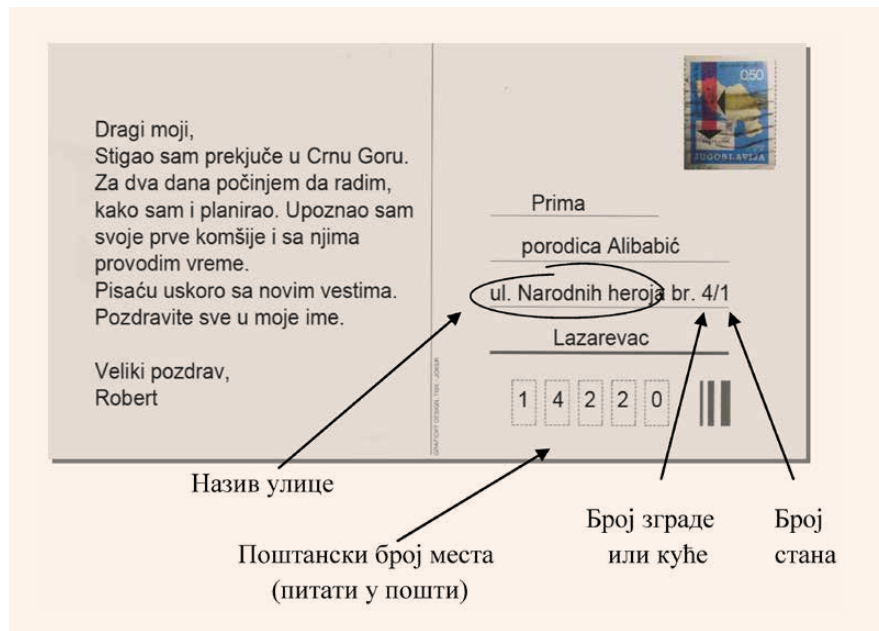


Figure 7: *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.36.

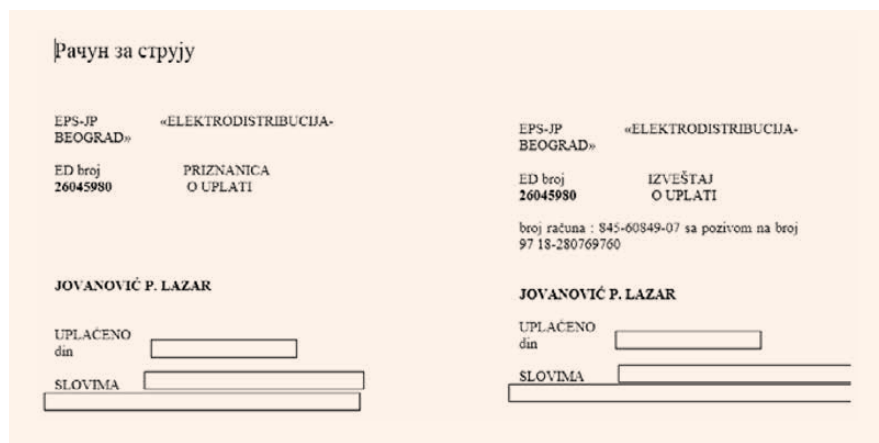


Figure 8: *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.17.

Similarly, a practical task included 'how to read a monthly invoice for household electricity costs and check if it is correct'; for this activity, an image would be given with additional copies to be filled in as a form of exercise.

A role play depicting someone complaining to a public institution was also included, showing a critical, active citizen, aware of his/her rights and practicing his/her social skills, interaction and non-violent communication.

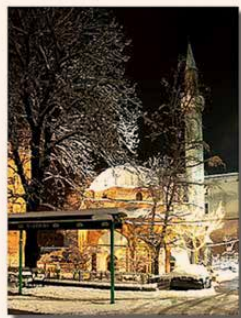
Lessons about discrimination, with a focus on discrimination against women and on gender-based violence, included texts from newspapers and magazines, where discrimination was not only discussed, but also the ways that it is reported in the media (the use and misuse of information), the responsible institutions at local and national levels, the initiatives that could be taken to prevent it, and similar related topics. In order to support social learning, many tasks in the teaching materials are planned for groups and teams.

Issues related to the recent past and the war in former Yugoslavia are mentioned in a very limited way. Lessons in more distant history included activities such as identifying responsibility for the Holocaust (*Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.123):



Figure 9: *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.123.

4. Погледајте пример непоштовања локалних споменика културе припадника других народа или вероисповести. Потом покушајте да одговорите на постављена питања



џамија Ферхадџија, Бања Лука



Изглед џамије Ферхадџије у Бања Луци,  
уништене током рата у Босни.  
Данас, после рата џамија се обнавља.

**Figure 10:** *Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.137.

It can be seen that personalities from the region are hardly mentioned in the history materials. But the values the curriculum is based on do send a clear message even without mentioning direct responsibilities. For example, there is an illustration of a mosque in Bosnia, showing it before the war and after it was destroyed in the war. The lack of the respect for local cultural monuments of people from other religions or cultures is indicated in the title (*Druga šansa*, 2013a, p.137).

The questions that follow these images invite a critical examination of what happened, of the consequences and of participants' feelings, and of examples where tolerance, mutual respect of cultures and peaceful co-existence are possible. There are also pictures of various objects from different religions, with parallel quotes from the Bible and the Koran.

## Conclusions

The curriculum and materials developed for adult basic education in Serbia clearly reflect the social and political context of the country at a certain stage of its development. The required

transition to the new economic model and skills is clearly reflected, as well as the new political orientation of the country, which is oriented towards the EU, trying intensively not only to increase knowledge and develop skills, but also to develop positive attitudes towards the EU and its values. Topics such as sustainable development and environmental issues are also very present in an effort to create a curriculum and textbooks that would reflect this new orientation of the country. Cultural diversity (including the presence of content relevant to Roma participants), religious diversity and tolerance, gender equality, human rights and similar topics are also high on the agenda. Identity nurturing, inclusion and social cohesion are obviously the aims, especially when it comes to ethnic minorities.

What is partly missing is addressing the recent past, in particular the conflicts and war in the former Yugoslavia. The curriculum contains only basic facts about recent conflicts—the amount of information is very limited, probably reflecting the main idea of that moment in the political development of the country, that people shouldn't be obsessed with the past, but have an orientation to the future, moving forward, progress, and 'catching up' on what was missed in the years of war and isolation, as fast as possible.

Past conflicts and war are not sufficiently reflected, even in the formal education of children, and reconciliation among countries was tried on, a political and economic level, without critically reflecting on the past and addressing the responsibilities for past events. One of the reasons was also intensive disputes about the recent past, different interpretations of the events and political manipulation of the data and nationalist narratives in the public arena. Critical voices, dealing with the recent past, and alternative views on the history of the region were missed in the society, coming just from a few experts and from civil society (such as the four-volume *Teaching Modern Southeast European History. Alternative Educational Materials* (Koulori, 2005), developed by a team of experts from all countries in the region, intended as an alternative resource for secondary social studies). However, material like this

did not enter the formal education system, adult education and education initiatives supported by the government. Nevertheless, the main values of respect, tolerance, peace, human rights, and the way that different nations, cultures and religions can live together are clearly present here in the textbooks and teaching materials.

On the professional side, the use of adult learning principles and the respect for professional standards in working with adults is obvious, enabling, among other factors, valuable results, including the success of initiatives to modernize the basic education of adults and to make it fit for the challenges of the new phase of development of the country.

- The approach proved to be successful according to several criteria—internal evaluations of the projects, and external evaluation of the FBEAR project (Medić et al., 2010). Furthermore, the project Second chance was included in the list of the best EU projects in Serbia (EU, 2015). But the very low level of drop-out, high employment rate and the high level of satisfaction speak for themselves. The most important indicator is the fact that the concept and the practice replaced the traditional, obsolete system of basic education of adults at the country level.
- There were plenty of factors that made the approach a success, and each of these was carefully analyzed. Focusing only on teaching material, it could be said that the following main andragogical principles were crucial factors: relevance of the topics for the participants, closeness to their life and work situations and their timeliness. Further on, the flexibility in use and the possibility to combine the textbooks with other learning and teaching material, temporarily developed and used, was significant, since it gave teachers the opportunity to further adapt to the needs, pre-knowledge and specifics of the target group. Not only that—flexible use, where main facts and ideas are presented, but examples could be replaced, also enabled adaptation to the concrete situation and changing circumstances. Another important factor was the visuality

of learning and teaching materials and the way they were developed and designed—interesting, dynamic, and inviting personal experience and reflection. Last but not least—even the best curriculum and textbooks are useless if they are not used in a good way. Therefore, intensive preparation of teachers to use and further develop materials was, and continues to be, a precondition for success.

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## SECTION SEVEN

The social dimension  
of reading and writing



## Section Seven overview: The social dimension of reading and writing

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ANDY SMART

UNESCO defines literacy as ‘the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts.’<sup>1</sup> In the past, however, globally shared operational definitions, as well as those held by most teachers and learners today, describe literacy more narrowly as the ability to read and write, to receive and send messages using a shared orthography. Acquisition of this functional dimension of literacy is widely regarded as a first, essential step toward success at subsequent levels of learning as emerging literates progress from masterings the mechanics of the writing system to fluency, from ‘learning to read’ to ‘reading to learn.’

From a practical standpoint, attention to acquiring a foundational level of literacy, interpreted as decoding words and simple text, is understandably at the center of the early grade reading curriculum. Given the current struggles of education systems in LMICs to successfully enable students to perform at this basic level of proficiency, efforts to improve the quality of early grade literacy instruction tend to focus more on methodology than on meaning. Such interventions are a matter of urgency, especially in low resource and conflict-affected countries where it is not unusual for children to be unable to read a single word after four years of schooling. This can be due to any number of issues, including teacher absenteeism, lack of teaching and learning materials, interruptions due to crisis and conflict, and/or the lack of a coherent and systematic pedagogy that enables children to decode the simplest words in their own language. However, to focus *only* on the mechanics of literacy,

1 UNESCO, 2018

whether in early grade reading, alternative learning programs for out-of-school youth and adult literacy programs, is short-sighted as a response to what the World Bank and others have called ‘a learning crisis in global education’. In many LMICs, especially those in the midst of curriculum reform, the emphasis has been slowly shifting away from exclusive emphasis on decoding skills in the early grades (learning to read) toward reading more for meaning (reading to learn), and in the middle and secondary years toward higher-level comprehension skills, such as inferring, determining the author’s purpose, differentiating facts from opinions and critically evaluating text and images. Such a profound transition is not easy, even in the early years, partly because it necessitates teachers adopting new sets of skills and, in many cases, transforming classroom and school cultures.

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular Sustainable Development Goal 4, calls upon education systems to orient teaching and learning toward building peaceful, sustainable societies. From the perspective of education ‘for people and planet’, there is an urgent need to expand the focus of national and local curricula in ways that include a social dimension. The overview to Section Five refers to ‘carrier subjects’ for embedding specific themes identified in SDG Target 4.7, which challenges systems to ‘ensure that all learners acquire the basic knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development’, including education for sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity. The teaching of reading and writing is arguably the subject with the most potential as a carrier—even at the pre-school and early grade levels—and to do so through a pedagogy that activates social and emotional learning and supports students’ emerging sense of identity, agency, pro-social skills and values. The social dimension—whether in the early years or in later schooling—is intentionally transformative. Becoming a proficient reader and writer changes the way people think,

perceive the world and interact with others. This transformation helps to lay the foundation for personal development, both cognitive and emotional, and has an influential role in forming strong and lasting social relationships.

The shift toward a more expanded definition of literacy that incorporates the social dimension and addresses SDG Target 4.7 themes can be observed in new international and national policy statements as well as in programs designed for enabling writers to produce early grade teaching and learning materials in children's first language (mother tongue). For example, the latest USAID education policy paper states that as the second of four key priorities, 'Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.'

From a NISSEM perspective, there are multiple opportunities to integrate social and emotional learning as well as Target 4.7 themes in both the narrow and broad definition of what it means to be literate and the pedagogical approaches that these definitions imply. Achieving the ability to decode and create text is, in itself, a significant accomplishment that enhances a child's self-concept and can lead to literacy as meaningful social communication, provided that adequate reading materials are within reach.

Increasingly, writers and illustrators are encouraged to create a bank of materials that both build children's basic literacy skills in a sequential manner and engage them emotionally in the content. In many LMICs, where it is often the case that children's first exposure to books of any kind happens at school (Smart, 2019), it is especially important in the procurement and/or local development of early grade reading materials to balance motivational, linguistic and social priorities. That is, the materials should be designed to engage children emotionally as well as cognitively. This can be accomplished in various ways, but as a general rule young children become immediately engaged when they see characters drawn from their own experience portrayed in familiar situations and settings.

This 'new wave' of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) can be brought into schools and communities in a variety of ways; for example, in the form of enhanced language arts textbooks, as leveled, thematic reading materials for differentiated reading groups, as stories for read-aloud time in classrooms, as drama, poetry and song, or as community-wide tutoring programs. NISSEM is especially interested in the potential of teacher read-aloud stories, which can enable SEL and 4.7 vocabulary and meaning to be conveyed and discussed in the classroom even when reading skills and perhaps command of the language of instruction are weak. Preparing more elaborate read-alouds for teachers to accompany early grade reading materials could provide a powerful and easily implemented tool for addressing SEL and 4.7 themes, even with large classes and difficult teaching and learning conditions. The only requirements are the provision of suitable materials, which can be created by local writers, and the allotment of sufficient time in the daily schedule.

The briefs in this section address the formidable challenge of how to incorporate the social dimension of reading and writing into or alongside the literacy curriculum in ways that do not detract from the process of building learners' functional literacy skill set, but rather enhance it. As described in Eva Kozma's brief on the QITABI project in Lebanon, early grade reading sessions can become provide a safe and welcoming space for peaceful communication. From a practical standpoint, this means enabling local writers to create fresh, local content. It also means supporting teachers in their efforts to facilitate classroom interactions that build learners' social and emotional skills while inculcating knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that enable learners to become contributing members of inclusive, equitable and environmentally responsible communities. Learning to read and write, in other words, involves 'a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society' (UNESCO, 2018).

In an ideal world, a framework for incorporating the social dimension of reading and writing would be established within a comprehensive curriculum reform, articulating expanded standards, suggesting new teaching methodologies, and creating new assessment measures—all aligned with a country’s vision for achieving the SDGs, including in the area of education. Given the challenges of initiating system-wide innovations as components of national curriculum reforms, however, it is more typical for changes to take hold at grassroots level or in pilot projects that can be scaled up over time. To this end, the briefs in this section describe a diverse and thoughtful collection of creative and inspiring project activities designed for use within school systems or refugee communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uganda, India, and Lebanon—each with its own set of priorities and approaches to creating accessible materials and supporting teachers, parents and tutors.

The common denominator among these widely varying contexts is that there is a pressing need to provide engaging materials to newly emerging literates in a language they understand, along with space to discuss, respond and interpret them. The texts and images must, in other words, be understandable and encourage a love of the written word. In the words of Rana Dajani, founder of [We Love Reading](#), this is the ‘secret sauce’. The medium of message delivery—from traditional textbooks to read-alouds to storybooks to tweets—is less important than integrating three essential characteristics: (1) themes and storylines that engage young readers emotionally, (2) literal and conceptual comprehensibility, and (3) sustained emotional attachment to the act of reading. To produce a plentiful supply of good quality teaching and learning materials that fulfill these requirements, international and local organizations are working with writers and artists to help fine tune their skills. However, in low resource and conflict-affected countries, the pace of this work lags far behind the pace needed to fulfill the promise of SDG 4, the education goal, to ensure

inclusive and quality education for all and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

The approaches described in the briefs in this section address a range of priorities and interpretations in relation to Target 4.7 themes related to peacebuilding, cultural diversity and environmental responsibility. It is no coincidence that these themes are prioritized in countries that are now, or have recently been, in situations of violent conflict or continue to experience deep and abiding divisions along ethnic and religious lines. Introducing new approaches and themes in situations of conflict and extreme poverty presents its own set of challenges, yet international and local actors have long recognized the power of education, and specifically the power of stories, to impart messages of peace, inclusiveness and reconciliation: in the language of 4.7, ‘promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence’ and ‘appreciation of cultural diversity’. In countries that are coping with environmental degradation as a result of rapid population growth and climate change, there may be an added emphasis on environmental responsibility and disaster risk management, reflecting the Target 4.7 theme, ‘sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles’. The cross-cutting themes of human rights, gender equality and global citizenship may be handled in different ways; for example, as general guidelines for pre- and post-reading activities and the balanced representation of girls and boys, women and men in text and images as well as the characterization of female characters as possessing agency and wisdom.

With all these considerations in mind, ‘What’, we must ask, ‘lies within the realm of the possible and the practical’? In designing new materials for use in LMICs, it is useful to highlight some of the approaches recently introduced in high income contexts such as the [4Rs approach](#)<sup>2</sup>, which CASEL has rated as among the most effective SEL programs in the US. In this program, ‘Children are guided through writing exercises, role-playing, and

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2 CASEL 4Rs (reading, writing, respect and resolution) Elementary SElect Program: [https://youtu.be/v2\\_9QnO9Zl4](https://youtu.be/v2_9QnO9Zl4)

meaningful discussion, as the teacher poses questions about how the characters handled conflict, how they might be feeling, and what alternatives exist for making new decisions.’ We must note, however, the reviewers’ cautionary note that ‘While the 4Rs has demonstrated some success towards this goal, developing and testing integrated models that may be more appropriate for other geographic locations and student and teacher populations will require considerable attention and resources.’ In bringing about a successful transition to developing teaching and learning materials that successfully incorporate the social dimension of reading and writing as locally and/or nationally defined, a series of issues or turning points shape the process. As the processes described in the briefs illustrate, these do not always occur in an orderly, evenly sequenced fashion. However, we outline here five broad steps that can help guide the course of materials development from inception to distribution and use.

## 1 Clarify and prioritize key messages and skills

The first step involves identifying and prioritizing key messages and skill-building areas, as featured in briefs describing USAID’s Afghan Children Read Project (Hirsch-Ayari, van Ginkel & Muhib) and the QITABI project in Lebanon (Kozma). Part of this step involves identifying the sequence of progressively more complex reading and writing skills alongside the SEL/4.7 competencies to be integrated into the new or revised materials, along with transversal skills such as critical and creative thinking that have been identified as high priority. The process leading to identifying such a list is shaped by the primary objective of the program, along with contextual factors grounded in cultural values and social norms. If the materials are intended for use over a progression of levels, as in the Uganda Conflict and Disaster Risk Management (CDRM) supplementary readers (Bernard), messages are recycled or ‘spiraled’ in increasingly complex renderings parallel to the cognitive and personal development arc of the curriculum.

## 2 Develop a detailed plan for development and use

Once the target skill areas and key messages have been identified, a detailed plan is needed for deciding appropriate genres, settings, storylines and formats that engage learners and can be easily facilitated. This process is described in two of the briefs in this section: as part of the preliminary planning for developing the Journey of Peace stories originally conceived for Afghan refugee children in Peshawar (Land and Weera) and in the development of accessible and affordable picture books in multiple languages for Indian children (Vachharajani and Vijayan). Plans often include developing corresponding teachers’ guides, activity books, or instructions for guiding the pedagogy directly integrated into the learners’ materials, as illustrated in the Ugandan CDRM materials. Integrated teacher guidance includes not only suggestions for presenting the content, but for structuring classroom activities such as role-plays, discussions and writing tasks that build comprehension, SEL and critical skills while further amplifying the theme.

## 3 Implement the plan

When an action plan has been established, it may seem to be simply a matter of following the scheduled guidelines, distribution of work and approval processes that have been laid out in the plan. However, it is here that the challenges of pulling together the human and material resources present the biggest challenges, including recruiting the creative development and production teams, assessing the needs of the teams for capacity development, facilitating training workshops and continually monitoring the process from initial concept through to final product. This is typically where the setbacks may occur, even in the best of circumstances, with schedules reconstructed to accommodate changes at both creative and production ends of the development spectrum.

#### 4 Decide on publishing options

The fourth major step requires taking action on how to finalize and distribute the materials. Even after the materials have been drafted, field-tested and finalized, this stage is fraught with obstacles, especially in low-resource countries where distance, infrastructure and looming funding cutoffs are a continuous threat to an adequate and sustained supply of teaching and learning materials. Technology can help to overcome some of these obstacles. For example, to ‘put the power of stories into the hands of local authors’, Paul Frank describes how a software program that can be learned in a day enables local writers, including children and young people, to ‘quickly build small books that can be shared easily for pilot testing and dissemination’. A sampling of other obstacles to sustaining broad access and use of newly created materials is presented throughout the section briefs, along with the challenges that teachers face when materials are provided as ‘add-ons’ to already overloaded curricula. In India, Pratham Books has created [StoryWeaver](#), a digital gateway to thousands of titles, and in Jordan and elsewhere the We Love Reading program enlists and trains community volunteers to complement the school reading curriculum or, in emergency situations, to replace it.

#### 5 Create tools to assess impact

The final step addresses the frequently overlooked question of how to measure the impact of new or revised learning materials. Traditionally, the quality of teaching and learning materials for reading and writing has been in terms of easily measurable learning outcomes, such as the ability to decode and comprehend a specified length and difficulty level of text. But what measures can be used to know whether the materials have contributed to strengthening children’s emotional awareness, empathy and social relationships? We in NISSEM believe that improved materials can help build children’s social and emotional skills and ultimate agency for facing 4.7 challenges at the same time as improving their academic performance and enhancing their educational experience, but

to date we do not have the tools to gather sufficient evidence to demonstrate whether and how much of this is actually happening. Expanding the focus on literacy to include a social dimension by integrating social and emotional learning and themes related to peace, sustainable development, cultural diversity and global citizenship creates an entirely new challenge. For the most part, with the exception of the battery of measures described as part of the Journey of Peace program (Weera & Land) and the broader studies underway for Syrian refugee education (Diazgranados Ferráns), as well as guidance on how to measure SEL competencies (D’Sa), our briefs leave these questions to be further explored and developed. We recognize, however, that in the design of new curricula and new materials, feedback from the ground up is critical to improving both process and product. Creating and applying valid ways to measure learning in all its dimensions, including the social dimension of reading and writing, is the grand challenge for teachers, writers and education systems.

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## Field Notes: Social and emotional learning in USAID's Afghan Children Read project

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### ABSTRACT

Afghanistan has suffered for years from conflict and upheaval, which has affected every person in the country. Research has shown that in crisis-affected countries, the harmful effects of toxic stress caused by exposure to adversity can be stopped or even reversed. This happens when children are exposed to safe and predictable learning environments, have positive, nurturing relationships with key adults, and actively participate in explicit social-emotional learning (SEL) activities. To provide support to lower primary children, a new Early Grade Reading (EGR) curriculum was developed that includes SEL as a cross-cutting theme. The aim is to provide teachers and young students with SEL skills and opportunities to participate in activities to reverse the harmful effects of conflict and nurture positive relationships. Furthermore, in-service and pre-service training also include SEL to guide teachers to develop a positive classroom environment and support teachers' own wellbeing. The new EGR materials are being piloted in four provinces in Afghanistan. Initial anecdotal data seems to suggest that this approach has had a positive impact

on the students. The new EGR materials are being piloted in four provinces in Afghanistan and a study will soon be carried out to understand the effectiveness of this approach.

### KEYWORDS

Social Emotional Learning (SEL), curriculum, early grade reading (EGR), conflict, learning environments

## Introduction

Afghan Children Read (ACR) is a USAID-funded primary education initiative designed to improve equitable access to education and generate measurable reading outcomes for girls and boys in Afghanistan. ACR supports education service delivery through building the capacity of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to provide an evidence-based early grade reading (EGR) program in Dari and Pashto for students in grades 1 to 3 (G1-3) in both formal and Community-Based Education (CBE) schools. The new EGR materials are piloted in four provinces of Afghanistan, replacing the previous language learning materials. The materials fulfill the curriculum requirements and are used for 45 minutes each day, 6 days a week.

Applying a 'learning laboratory' approach, the project engages the MoE in the development of the EGR program and side-by-side implementation in four pilot provinces (Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar and Laghman), while developing MoE capacity to advance and sustain the program on a national scale. Strengthened skills, systems, models and materials will also enable MoE to develop mother-tongue reading materials in other languages such as Pashai and Uzbeki for the national reading curriculum.

With technical support by the project, the MoE developed the materials package and piloted the model, which in turn informed improvements to the model and supported capacity building for the MoE through a variety of feedback loops. Social and emotional learning runs throughout the package.

## Why Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?

Decades of research in the USA have highlighted the importance of social and emotional skills for success in school, career, and life (Aspen Institute, 2019; CASEL, 2019; INEE, 2019). It has shown that students who participate in SEL perform measurably better in school compared to peers without exposure to SEL. They engage in fewer risky or unhealthy behaviors, are less likely to get married or have children before 18, are more likely to be employed and earn more, show more resilience, and are better able to manage conflicts non-violently. In high-income contexts, the stream of benefits from SEL has been estimated to be worth \$11 for every \$1 invested (Belfield et al., 2015).

While SEL is important for all children and youth, for those in conflict and crisis it is critical. Research from high-income countries and emerging evidence in crisis-affected countries demonstrates that the harmful effects of toxic stress caused, for example, by exposure to adversity can be stopped or even reversed. This happens when children are exposed to safe and predictable learning environments and have positive, nurturing relationships with key adults, such as caregivers and teachers, who actively participate in explicit SEL activities (USAID & Education in Crisis & Conflict Network, 2018). At the same time, teachers can also benefit personally from SEL. Teachers working in contexts affected by crisis and conflict, like their students, are vulnerable to stress and burnout, with impacts on their psychosocial wellbeing and motivation. Addressing how teachers cope with their concerns and support student education is critical to student learning outcomes and wellbeing (OECD, 2018; Schonert-Reichl, K.A., 2017; Shriberg, J, 2008).

Communities in Afghanistan continue to suffer from conflict and crisis with 25% of children having to engage in labor (HRW, 2016) instead of or in addition to going to school, putting them at risk for physical and emotional injury and abuse. The cost to civilians from the escalation of violence in 2018 is far greater than the numbers of

those killed or injured. Each death has an enormous effect on the family network, with spouses, children, parents, and other relatives suffering losses in support, emotional and social security, and income (HRW, 2018). By integrating SEL topics in early grade texts and lessons, teachers and young students are armed with skills and participate in activities to reverse the harmful effects of conflict and work on positive nurturing relationships.

## How does reading support SEL skill development?

As children and youth experience the world and form belief systems, the texts to which they are exposed can play a critical role. Themes including peace, acceptance, collaboration, friendship, and the value of diversity can help them make decisions that will positively impact their lives and communities. If we want young people to engage in conversations about issues of great significance that are included in books, we must not only teach them how to read, but show them how to reason (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997). We also need to provide them with stories that inspire thinking and conversations around self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2019) and how these competencies 'fit' into the context of the classroom, schools, and homes and communities. Reading good stories provides opportunities to bring the process of reading and the process of developing positive SEL competencies together in an explicit, yet integrated approach. At the same time, having SEL content/topics in the reading materials makes both the reading and the activities more engaging as the topics directly relate to their lives. Furthermore, as students develop SEL competences they will engage more productively in learning, which will improve their literacy skill development. Also, learning to read is positive SEL. When children are successful and confident, and enjoy learning and going to school, then effective teacher performance is reinforced, and children's wellbeing is improved.

## Why did Afghan Children Read choose an integrated approach?

Despite all the progress Afghanistan has made to improve its delivery of education since 2001—improved literacy rates, increased numbers of schools constructed and/or rehabilitated or constructed and a nine-fold increase in teachers—3.7 million children are out of school (UNICEF, n.d.). The penetration of public schools in rural Afghanistan has been limited and the demand for schooling in urban areas has resulted in many schools operating double and triple shifts, thereby reducing critical time for learning. Practically, there was no way to add another content area to the existing curriculum. So, the MoE and the project chose to adopt an integrated approach to including SEL in the development of Afghanistan’s EGR curriculum. This decision is supported by Durlak et al (2011), which shows that classroom teachers can help students develop social and emotional competencies by means of directly teaching these skills, using engaging curriculum materials, and implementing specific instructional and classroom-management practices (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Given this understanding of how SEL can be used in classrooms, the project and the MoE developed the G1-3 Dari and Pashto reading and teaching materials with an SEL approach. SEL is integral to Afghan Children Read’s in-service training modules so teachers can learn how SEL competencies are embedded in the materials and explore the activities in the teacher guides.

Initial project research (Afghan Children Read, 2018) to assess the effectiveness and perception of the grade 3 materials shows that this integrated approach is positively received by students, teachers and parents alike. Through focus groups, research participants shared that ‘comparing to the previous curriculum, this curriculum has created an unprecedented variety of children’s tastes that strengthened the child’s sense of well-being and integrity by a hundred percent.’ Others mentioned that ‘the minds of the children have become stronger, they are alert, more active than before.’ All

teachers were able to express how different aspects of the lessons help students to develop their SEL skills—including empathy and respect. They also mentioned how the illustrations and stories reinforce positive behavior in students. Feedback from the students (Afghan Children Read, 2018) indicates that this approach is having a positive effect on them. They shared that during the listening and speaking exercises they learned how to relate to each other, how to talk about emotions, give advice, how to pay attention, how to think, listen to elders, and listen respectfully to others.

## How did Afghan Children Read incorporate SEL in the Early Grade Reading program?

Early grade reading and SEL are integrated in the following ways:

- Early Grade Reading teaching and learning materials
- In-service teacher training
- Preservice teacher training program

### 1 SEL and the Early Grade Reading teaching and learning materials

For each of the three grades, a set of objectives related to SEL competences was identified. The approach taken to integrating SEL in G1-2 is slightly different from the approach taken in G3. In G1-2, the time for teaching reading is limited and it is essential that students master decoding skills and develop reading fluency and reading comprehension. Since little time is left over for explicit teaching of SEL skills, we integrated the SEL skills using a more implicit approach.

In G1-2, each week has specific SEL objectives and lessons are designed to include activities that allow children to develop and practice SEL skills. Each week’s lessons include stories for students to read, a story for students to listen to, reading and listening comprehension exercises and creative writing exercises developed to draw out the SEL theme and objectives. Additionally, several of

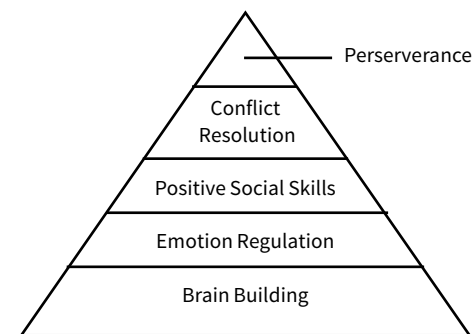
**Table 1**

Brain building objective	Integrated in Literacy activities
Recall information	Ensured that questions are asked requiring students to recall information
Pay attention in order to follow guidance	Ensured that students pay attention and follow guidance throughout each lesson segment
Listen to and follow instructions	Embedded in listening stories and related exercises
Make organized lists	Integrated in comprehension activities; children asked to make their own lists linked to the story content
Identify what they need to do to in order to improve their own outcomes (eg: in health)	Provided examples of children who improve their own outcomes; comprehension questions asked students to think about topics further and reflect on them for their own lives

the SEL skills objectives easily align with activities that practice reading and writing skills. For example, the SEL competency Brain Building (as defined by IRC) aims to help students to focus their attention, think flexibly, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Activities to develop this skill and its related objectives are integrated as shown in table 1.

We followed this process for each of the five SEL competences to deliberately determine meaningful topics for the reading lesson. The resulting activities enable students to practice reading based on a related SEL competency and theme aligned to the reading lesson. We found that integrating SEL skills in the listening comprehension stories, reading passages, reading comprehension activities and creative writing exercises made sense and is perceived as effective by teachers, students and parents (Afghan Children Read, 2018).

In G3, as a result of an expected decreased need to spend time on developing decoding skills, more time was available to explicitly focus on building SEL skills through the literacy lessons. Therefore,



**Figure 1: IRC SEL pyramid**

we developed a sequenced SEL curriculum and integrated it in the literacy curriculum. Using IRC’s SEL pyramid of the five skills (see figure 1), we integrated concepts and activities beginning with brain building and ending with perseverance—allocating several weeks to focus on each skill. The specific objective for a week is integrated into the reading stories and during the listening, speaking and creative writing exercises. The students explicitly work on the specific objective for the SEL skill. For example, during the week centered on addressing emotion regulation, one of the of topics is ‘predicting my feelings.’ The objectives are: (1) Name basic feelings when presented with environmental, situational and/or physical clues; (2) Name a variety of feelings: happy, lonely, scared, bored, angry, sad, upset, describe how various situations make you feel; and (3) Identify situations that require the use of emotion-management strategies.

During the week, the students read stories that incorporate these objectives. The comprehension activities focus on discussing feelings and identifying emotions. On the fifth day of the week, the listening and speaking activities focus fully on these objectives. Then a creative writing exercise is introduced in which students express their feelings and strategies for managing them.

In addition to the teaching and learning materials, there are also supplementary reading materials (stories) developed for classroom libraries. These stories are linked to the curriculum materials and



the writers included the SEL objective in each story developed for that week. Thus, when students are reading these stories during free reading time in class or at home, the skills are reinforced.

## 2 In-service teacher training

The teachers of the G1-3 pilot receive an initial ten-day training on how to teach the new EGR materials and a five-day refresher training each subsequent year. Each training includes a module on SEL. The teacher's guide that accompanies the in-service and EGR program provides guidance on SEL as well as how to develop a positive classroom environment, referred to as a 'healing classroom' (International Rescue Committee, 2009).

## 3 SEL in pre-service training

In addition to integrating SEL in EGR and teacher training materials, ACR and the MoE developed five pre-service courses for students attending teacher training colleges. Of these five courses, the third is on SEL and its integration in early grade education. Throughout the sixteen-session course, pre-service teachers develop an in-depth understanding of what SEL means, strategies for incorporating SEL into teaching practice, and examine examples of how to monitor the impact of social-emotional learning on students—both academically and emotionally. They also learn that developing SEL competencies is best achieved through a holistic approach within the classroom, the school and the broader school community. At the same time, pre-service teachers will have the opportunity to reflect on their own wellbeing, including effective approaches to manage stress, which is crucial to their success as teachers. Teachers focus on the SEL of their own students through the relationships they develop with their students, the behaviors they model, and their approach to classroom management and organization (Jones, Buoffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). This pre-service course is an important contribution to sustaining SEL in Afghanistan's schools.

## Next steps

ACR is embarking on an SEL-related qualitative research effort to understand how teachers, parents and students understand or perceive the language around SEL within their cultural and social context. We would like to understand what qualities Afghans believe are important for living a positive and successful life and to see how these qualities align with the CASEL and IRC's SEL competencies. Within the current pilot and with the MOE, we will address what we have learned from the research so that when the EGR materials and the teacher training model are scaled nationally, every child in primary school will benefit from an effective, integrated SEL approach.

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## Building peace capacity through stories for children and youth in Afghanistan

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### ABSTRACT

From 1998 to 2010, a series of peace initiatives for Afghanistan was developed at the Centre for Peace Studies, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. The peace projects were intended to strengthen the capacity of Afghan civil society to address violent conflict, promote national reconciliation and begin personal and social healing. Seddiq Weera, a medical professional and a refugee from Afghanistan, facilitated partnerships among groups of experts from Canada, USA and the UK to work with Kabul University, a number of peace and educational NGOs and the emerging government of Afghanistan. The key principle of ‘peace with others begins with peace within’ framed high-level political processes as well as the development of a school-based curriculum that addressed healing of war trauma, the development of empathy and compassion, inter-group prejudices and stereotypes, gender issues, reconciliation and conflict resolution. The curriculum comprised sixteen stories entitled ‘Journey of Peace’, a teacher’s manual and teacher training, including a train-the-trainer program. The challenges of implementing and evaluating this curriculum in a situation of on-going conflict will be discussed.

### KEYWORDS

Afghanistan, conflict reduction, reconciliation, healing war trauma, building peace capacity, school-based curriculum, psycho-social stories

## Background to the Afghanistan Children’s Peace Project

By the early 2000s, children in Afghanistan had experienced long-term war and were being raised by parents who themselves may have been adversely affected emotionally and psychologically by war, resulting in intergenerational trauma. Many of these children were being exposed to domestic violence or corporal punishment in schools. Exposure to or becoming a victim of violence not only affects children’s attitudes and their ability to learn, but often prevents them from developing emotional awareness, self-esteem, and empathy.

Having experienced the trauma of war during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the consequences for refugees, Seddiq Weera—who left Afghanistan as a refugee before settling in Canada and taken up a teaching post at McMaster University—became interested in ways of reducing the impact of chronic stress caused by exposure to war and conflict on learning, relationships and overall well-being. He contributed to development of the ‘Health to Peace’ model—a collaboration between the Centre for International Health and the Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University in Canada. The model focuses on *peace within* and *peace with others*, through both education and health promotion. This vision for how health initiatives can contribute to peace was inspired by ceasefires for vaccination in war zones.

Working with refugee families in Pakistan in the 1990s, Seddiq had observed pervasive social-emotional problems including: poor awareness of negative emotions and how they are expressed or repressed, especially among children, youth and women; violent expression of anger among men, including verbal, emotional and physical violence within the home; pervasive avoidance or passive aggressive reaction to anger as a peaceful alternative to violence;

widespread loss of compassion and empathy across ethnic lines that followed the positioning of the warring factions; stereotyping and unintended discrimination; disinformation and identity-based hatred.

Sharing Seddiq's vision with people working with approximately six million Afghan refugees in Pakistan led to interest from BBC Radio's 'Reach' program for Afghan refugees. Together with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan's education leaders, the BBC producers invited Dr Weera in 1998 to facilitate a workshop on psychosocial education for a group of Reach story-writers as well as teacher educators. This Peshawar workshop targeted stress-reduction, anger- and grief-management, the interface between distorted thoughts and lingering negative emotions, communication and conflict resolution skills, and approaches to reconciliation.

The workshop participants' stories of pervasive anger or sadness and night-long nightmares were overwhelming. Their personal and observed stories included parents, teachers, and political leaders all struggling with lack of peace within and constant unhealthy interactions, such as angry exchanges at home, school and workplace, offensive and insulting expressions as part of daily communication, especially with younger family members or subordinates at work, and avoidance and passive aggression as a common approach to dealing with anger. Lack of awareness of one's own thoughts, emotions and behavioral patterns was viewed as a common challenge. In spite of limited space for sharing feelings, especially among boys and men, participants reported that the cultural and religious norms of social warmth and close networks were helpful in coping with stresses of extensive civil war.

Participants in this first workshop recommended that similar events should be urgently provided for political, warring groups and faction leaders. They saw an obvious correlation between the *peace within* and *peace with others* model and suggested ways of expanding the reach of the approach via the popular BBC radio-drama 'New Home–New Life' and the Swedish Committee's teacher educators who were writing education materials and training teachers in village schools in resistance-controlled areas of Afghanistan.

The positive feedback from the Peshawar workshop led the Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University to explore further partnerships. As part of the Canadian government's Afghanistan Peace Education Program, work proceeded on two fronts:

- to develop illustrated stories for children
- to promote conflict resolution and national reconciliation through two 'peace manuals' and subsequent training and design of a national reconciliation program.

The project team based at McMaster University consisted of Seddiq Weera (epidemiologist, peace educator and context expert), Dr Joanna Santa Barbara (child psychiatrist and peace activist), Dr Graeme McQueen (peace scholar), Mary-Jo Land (trauma psychotherapist), Kevin Land (playwright), Yar Taraky (Afghan-Canadian artist), Dr Jack Santa Barbara (social psychologist) and renowned peace researcher and practitioner, Johan Galtung.

The topics of both the Peace Manual and the stories included stress, self-esteem, anger, grief, distorted thoughts, effective communication, conflict-analysis, and conflict resolution. The Centre for Peace Studies continued its parallel strands of educational resource development for school-based peace education (illustrated stories) and peace-capacity building initiatives at the political level. The latter focused on civil society organization, educators and leaders of the warring political parties, thereby creating stakeholder support for the school-based programs. The focus of the remainder of this paper is the illustrated stories for children.

## **The Afghanistan Children's Peace Project: Journey of Peace stories and curriculum**

The project was first designed for the Afghan refugee population in Peshawar, and later, after September 2001 and 'Operation Enduring Freedom', within Afghanistan. Although all schools for girls and many schools for boys were closed or destroyed by the Taliban in



Afghanistan, refugee children were going to school in Peshawar and camps elsewhere in western Pakistan. The team decided that a psycho-social healing and peace capacity building program could be school-based, provided that teachers could be taught to deliver a curriculum that was effective. The psycho-social goals had to be reached via the curriculum content, and could not depend on teachers' skills, as they too were refugees, coping with very difficult circumstances.

The team decided on stories as the best medium for content delivery. The character of the wise grandmother, providing emotional and therapeutic support to her children and grandchildren, was chosen as a common element in all the stories. Given the erosion of the standing of girls in society after Taliban rule, it was also decided that the central character of the stories would be a girl. Her older brother was at risk of joining into the conflict and needed support to become a peace builder rather than a part of the violence. Her younger brother brought joy and lightness to the family. The children's father had lost a leg to a landmine and was affected by trauma and grief. An uncle in the family was killed by this same landmine. The family was experiencing grief and loss. The widowed aunt lived a life of sadness and isolation within her husband's family and provided a window into issues of gender roles in the family and society.

But how was a team of Canadian professionals to write about the experiences of a family in war-torn Afghanistan? The team needed to know about family relationships, behavior, activities, experiences, and family life, both rurally and in an urban setting. Seddiq spent many weekends describing to the team his own childhood and how family routines and social interactions occurred. He also provided information from his conversations with other people. The stories were read by Afghans and feedback was incorporated. Kevin Land, the only professional writer, helped to create the narrative arc within and across the stories. The stories were then translated and back-translated twice, in both Pashto and Dari. Yar Taraky and another artist in Peshawar, who was working for the Sanayee Development Foundation, provided the illustrations. The result was the 'Journey of Peace', sixteen stories that describe the life and times of a family experiencing war, internal displacement and a return to home to rebuild a peaceful community.

The key principles of the Journey of Peace curriculum include:

- *Inclusiveness*: Because Afghanistan has many ethnic groups, with intermittent inter-group conflict and hostility, the stories needed to be acceptable to peoples from all ethnic groups. For example, the names of the story characters are Arabic and common to all ethnic groups in Afghanistan. The clothing depicted in the illustrations was also selected to be either a mixed presentation or common presentation across ethnic groups. The roles of women and girls had been dramatically changed in the Taliban era. The books were to be experienced as free of gender discrimination and supporting women's important role in society.
- *Grandmother as Wise Woman*: The stories presented realistic scenarios of grief, loss, fear, and conflict. Grandmother Bibi-jan provided empathy, support and understanding (and remarkably effective psychological interventions!) to address the situation. She assisted her children and grandchildren to cope with



their feelings and traumatic experiences. Bibi-jan promoted reconciliation and conflict resolution. By dwelling on the practical and psychosocial consequences of war, the readers learn to cope and also that peace is something to be appreciated and worked for.

- *Readable and enjoyable stories:* The team did not wish to sacrifice the narrative or the readability of the stories to didactic messaging. Therefore, the psychosocial messages in stories needed to be subtle and embedded in naturalistic conversations and social interactions.
- *Cultural competency:* The stories were reviewed by Afghan partners, including several rounds of pilot-testing with schoolchildren in Nangarhar and Kabul. Only two edits were suggested for cultural reasons: first we were asked to edit a short paragraph about a pregnancy and childbirth, making it less graphic; secondly, we were asked to include quotes from the Koran when the grandfather was giving sage advice, as this was common practice.
- *Using play and theatre to support retelling of the narratives:* We had to consider that literacy in Afghanistan had dramatically declined over the preceding two decades. In order for the stories to be remembered and retold, independent of literacy skills, hand puppets of all of the major story characters were created. The puppets were observed to enhance playfulness and joy; they facilitated the re-telling of the stories. The puppets also facilitated playing out personal narratives of difficult or traumatic experiences.

The following are the overarching objectives of the curriculum:

- Teach ways of coping with loss, grief, sadness, trauma, fear and anger.
- Develop understanding of the psychological effects of war on children and family members

- Provide role models for compassion, empathy, nurturing and altruism
- Facilitate empathic and compassionate relationships within families and among community members
- Teach peace skills such as reconciliation and conflict resolution
- Enhance tolerance of and appreciation for ethnic diversity
- Encourage education for girls and women
- Develop understanding of experiences of internal displacement
- Encourage rehabilitation after injury and loss to create hope and resilience.
- Support the cultural and faith practices of Afghan peoples.
- Encourage peace-building at the intra-personal, interpersonal, familial and communal levels.

### **Implementing the Journey of Peace with UNICEF support: 2003–07**

In 2003, when Seddiq Weera was working as a curriculum reform consultant with the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan, along with experts from the Teachers College at Columbia University, UNICEF supported the pilot testing of the Journey of Peace stories in schools with Afghan children and teachers. The stories were presented to students in three formats: puppets alone enacting the stories, stories read aloud with no puppets, and stories read aloud with puppets simultaneously playing out the action. It was found that the students enjoyed and remembered the stories best with both oral reading and simultaneous visual presentation with the puppets. The puppets did not create any cultural discomfort and were enjoyed by adults and children alike.

Subsequent to the pilot testing, UNICEF funded teacher training in the Journey of Peace curriculum at the Teachers College at Kabul University. Mary-Jo Land wrote a teachers' manual to support delivery of the curriculum including additional activities for primary, middle and high school students. In July 2007, she provided a five-day training for teachers. She demonstrated



teaching methods using the first story, after which rotating groups of teachers taught the remaining 15 stories to the other teachers. In this way, the teachers not only learned how to deliver the curriculum, they also experienced the emotional and healing benefits of the curriculum as they participated.

UNICEF also funded the Ministry of Education to print four sets of 16 stories plus a teacher's manual for every school in Afghanistan (approximately 9,000 schools). The Centre for Peace Studies and UNICEF had hoped to have the books printed in Kabul, but unfortunately the printing—over 600,000 books in color—was fraught with problems, necessitating printing outside the country. Distribution to schools that were being rebuilt or repaired in high conflict zones was also challenging. Although the books were supposedly distributed to all schools, no follow-up was undertaken. Eventually, the original electronic Dari and Pashto versions were lost. The books are now being used predominantly by NGO-run schools such as Help the Afghan Children and Turquoise Mountain.

In addition to the Journey of Peace stories, the Ministry of Education agreed in 2003 to have at least ten peace, equity and reconciliation messages incorporated into each newly developed textbook. Seddiq also led the development of new textbooks on Life Skills for grades 1 and 2. These were the first textbooks in the history of formal education in Afghanistan to have contents ranging from emotional intelligence to decision-making, problem-solving, effective communication, avoiding hazards, protecting the environment, resolving conflicts and reconciliation. These textbooks were rated the best by teachers during pilot-testing. While the storybooks have not been reprinted by the government, the Life Skills textbooks, with the overall familiar aims of 'promoting peace within and with others,' have been reprinted many times for public schools across the country. The latest reprint of the primary textbooks including the Life Skills, was in 2014.

## **Journey of Peace in Help the Afghan Children (HTAC) schools**

While the Journey of Peace stories were printed for all public schools only once, they were reprinted by a few NGO-supported schools. Help the Afghan Children (HTAC), an innovative education NGO that provided good facilities, teacher education and extracurricular support (peace education, computer literacy and health and environmental education), chose the Journey of Peace curriculum for the HTAC peace education program. In 2008, HTAC undertook to retranslate and reprint the stories and teacher's manual. HTAC and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) contracted Mary-Jo Land to train teachers and master trainers. As of 2012, HTAC had delivered the peace education program to 54,000 students in 44 schools in five provinces (Sadeed, 2013).

## **Evaluation of Journey of Peace Education Program**

Two efforts were made to evaluate the Journey of Peace curriculum, in 2007 (Land, Mary-Jo, 2008, unpublished) and 2010, led by the Centre for Peace Studies and McMaster University, which provided ethics approval. In 2007, the post-curriculum battery was not completed due to lack of in-country capacity at the time. Because of the observation in 2007 that empathy seemed to be a risk factor for witnessing adverse events and because enhancing empathy was an important targeted goal for the curriculum, it became important to understand this dynamic. To this end, in 2010, a measure for empathy, the Empathic Responsiveness Questionnaire (Olweus and Endersen, 1998), was added to the curriculum evaluation research battery and the research was repeated. Unfortunately, in 2010, the post-curriculum battery was not completed correctly and was unusable. In 2007, pre-curriculum data were collected from seven schools in rural Pagman District, east of Kabul. Three hundred and twenty-five (175 male and 150 female) grade 8 student / parent dyads were selected. The assessment battery of questionnaires and

research methodology was informed by Thomas Miller's work in the Gaza Child Health Survey (Miller, 2000). Specific references to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict were changed to reflect the situation in Afghanistan. The questionnaire that surveys peace skills, knowledge and behaviour was created by Joanna Santa Barbara and Mary-Jo Land.

The following is a list of the research measures:

**1** Parent measures derived from interviews that took place in the home or school. The purpose of some of these questionnaires was to determine if factors other than war trauma better predicted the children's behavior and responses. It was also hoped that exposure to the curriculum would help parents use less physical discipline. Also, it was hoped that potential changes in their children's behaviour post-curriculum would create support and interest peace education.

- Relationship to child, age, gender, health of child
- Parent's education level
- Main income earner (to determine SES and gender of head of household)
- Mother's and father's emotional health status (to determine effect of emotional health on child functioning, pre- and post-curriculum)
- Parenting style/discipline strategies (determine if physical discipline is problematic, pre and post curriculum)
- Life Events Scale to reveal recent hardships
- Child behavior and feelings: parent response to Ontario Child Health Survey (Conduct Disorder, ADHD and Emotional Disorder) (Boyle et al, 1987a) (pre- and post-curriculum)
- Curriculum evaluation: Parent response to child's peace behavior, attachment, altruism and resilience (Land and Santa Barbara, 2007, unpublished) (pre- and post-curriculum)

**2** Student self-report measures comprised (all questionnaires were given pre- and post-curriculum):

- Empathy: Empathic Responsiveness Questionnaire (Olweus and Endersen, 1998)
- Mental health: Self-Report Ontario Child Health Survey (CD, ADHD and ED)
- Trauma exposure: Health Reach War Trauma Q. adapted for Afghanistan
  - experienced
  - witnessed
- Trauma symptoms: Child Post-traumatic Stress Reaction Index (Nader, 1997)
- Parent discipline style
- Peace behavior and knowledge, attachment, altruism, resilience, hope and empathy (Land and Santa Barbara, 2007, unpublished)
- Social Distance and Ethnic Attitude Scales (Woodside, D., Santa Barbara, V.J. and Benner, D.G. 1999, adapted for Afghanistan by Land and Santa Barbara)
- Questionnaire about feelings experienced while completing the battery (to assess for negative impact of completing the battery)

**3** Teacher questionnaire assessing training in use of curriculum, use of curriculum, and experiences teaching the curriculum

**4** School Administrator forms: assessing school demographics and school culture (Higgins-D'Alessandro, Ann; Sadh, Devyani, 1998)

In 2010, research assistants from HTAC were trained to deliver the battery. Pre- and post-curriculum measures were to be taken. Sadly, the complexities of working in a post-war country with few resources and high levels of insecurity resulted in an inability to collect the post-curriculum measures. Without the post-curriculum measures, the curriculum could not be evaluated.

In the absence of evaluation results, the researchers offer the following selection of comments gathered from teachers after their training in the Journey of Peace curriculum:

'These are the stories of our people, of Afghanistan. They are set in the Afghan context and are about what our people have been through. It is everyone's story.'

'This curriculum will help a lot. They are stories of hope and resilience.'

'The stories teach how to be productive, even if you are injured or disabled.'

'This curriculum is fun to teach, a big change from just memorizing.'

'These are stories of hope that everyone in our country needs. If we teach 25 students, then we teach 25 families and it will have a domino effect.'

'All the stories are written skillfully, addressing the problems of families. If we have love, hope, and forgiveness, we can defeat many problems.'

'Narrow-minded people can become open-minded people.'

'These stories were helpful to myself first.'

'The new teaching method (student-centered) and group learning is good for students.'

'Drawing is useful.'

'Now I can be Bibi-jan (the wise, healing grandmother in the stories)'

'These stories encourage kids not to fight and to be peaceful.'

'We need a script of this story so the students can perform it.'

'The stories reflect the peace teachings of the Koran.'

'Younger students can enjoy the stories while older students can learn the theory behind the stories.'

'The stories teach us that peace is in the heart. The stories heal the heart first.'

'I feel like these participants are like family. I have shared my stories with them more than I have shared with my own family.'

'After this training, I am able to be a teacher and a trainer of this curriculum.'

'I have learned how to use this learning in my own life; to not let war destroy faith and joy in life. I have learned to discuss my problems with others.'

'I thought this workshop would be a waste of time when I saw story books and puppets but then I learned how deep the program goes and I hope to implement it in my own life.'

'I have gained self-confidence in this workshop.'

Teachers in the training workshops not only learned to teach the curriculum with stories, puppets, and psychodrama, they also participated in the experiential activities found in the teacher's manual. It was hoped that this experiential learning would develop in teachers the same healing and peace capacities as in students participating in the curriculum. The comments above suggest that our hopes may have been fulfilled. It was observed that after two days of the workshop, male and female teachers no longer self-segregated. In fact, women who would not look at male participants (they had never been in a co-ed workshop before) were, by the third day, sharing taxis and laughing together with male participants. When asked about this, they reported that the workshop had made them family. Some of the participants were also religious leaders. These mullahs reported that the stories support the teachings of the Koran.

Examples of activities in the curriculum include:

- Classroom: reading the stories to the class, enacting the stories with puppets, telling your own story with puppets and writing stories;
- Schoolyard: noticing students who are unhappy and offering kindness;
- Home: included telling the stories at home to other family members, and making puppets;
- Community: making a peace garden

Activities varied according to grade level of the students.

See: [http://www.journeyofpeace.ca/teachers'\\_manual.htm](http://www.journeyofpeace.ca/teachers'_manual.htm)

In this way, the curriculum reached beyond the classroom, filtering into family homes and the community. It was hoped that by reducing trauma symptoms and increasing peace capacity, inter-personal and community-based violence would be reduced.

In 2013, Help the Afghan Children reported:

For students exposed to peace education (Journey of Peace), there is often a dramatic reduction in observed aggressive behavior (i.e. fighting, bullying, harassing) among students of up to 70% in the first year alone. Equally dramatic has been the increase in percentage of students consistently modeling peaceful, positive behaviors of up to 85%. In one province where the program was initiated, chronic fighting and harassment among three (competing) ethnic groups of students virtually ceased altogether, and was replaced with friendships between these same groups of students that continued to flourish even after the initial year. (Sadeed, 2013 p.130)

## Postscript: Curriculum reform 2017–18

In 2017, ordered by President Ashraf Ghani and supported by UNESCO and education specialists from Finland, the Ministry of Education undertook a third round of curriculum reform (the first was in 2003–05 and the second between 2007 and 2012). Seddiq, as a process leader, facilitated the partnership between the specialists from Finland and the Afghan curriculum developers. This time, incorporating 21st-century competencies, the curriculum offered a platform for integrating peace education that aimed for ‘peace within and peace with others.’ Seddiq provided his input into the peace and social competencies and assisted the curriculum developers to translate these competencies into draft subject syllabi and the content of subjects such as religion, social studies and languages.

The challenge addressed by Seddiq throughout the period described in this brief has been to convey the advantages of peace while not negating the possibility of holy or righteous war (jihad)

which is a faith tenet for many (though it can be interpreted to emphasize the ‘greater jihad’ of fighting for inner virtue). Without condemning ‘righteous war’ or jihad, the Journey of Peace stories point out the terrible consequences of this or other kinds of war. The concept of ‘peace within and peace with others’ likewise emphasizes the importance of the inner struggle that every person faces in their daily life.

The Journey of Peace stories, teacher’s manual and puppet-making instructions are available in English, Dari and Pashto at [www.journeyofpeace.ca](http://www.journeyofpeace.ca). The stories have been translated into other languages and used in other contexts with some revisions and different illustrations. For example, Hannah Sun-Reid, a Chinese-Canadian psychotherapist, substituted ‘earthquake’ for ‘landmine’ and, using new names, used many of the stories in China after the 2008 earthquake. Mary-Jo Land continues to use the stories in psychotherapy with refugees. The Journey of Peace stories are an excellent resource for teachers whose classes include newcomer students affected by war.

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## Literacy learning for peaceful communication: the USAID-funded QITABI project in Lebanon

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### ABSTRACT

Building strong early literacy skills is essential for children's success in school. In Lebanon, the USAID-funded QITABI project is being implemented by World Learning to increase public school primary grades reading fluency and comprehension in Arabic. Other aspects of the project are based on the belief that language is a tool for learning and peaceful communication. Strategies include creating a safe classroom environment to establish positive relationships among students and daily circle time for children to open up and express their feelings. Daily read-alouds use pre-selected children's literature books to develop students' empathy and ability to understand others' perspectives. Leveled books were initially selected to increase students' reading stamina and enjoyment, including stories that allow students to understand themselves, the world around them and get them engaged in addressing real world issues. This brief, from a practitioner's perspective, suggests that young children's literacy materials should include content that is relevant to their wellbeing, socio-emotional development and social skills, to enhance their language communication for a peaceful world.

### KEYWORDS

literacy, reading, read-alouds, socio-emotional learning (SEL), Lebanon, Arabic

## Introduction

The USAID-funded QITABI project in Lebanon enhances students' reading skills in grades 1–4 of a representative sample of 260 public schools. The project is implemented in close collaboration with MEHE (Ministry of Education and Higher Education)/ DOPS (Direction Orientation Pédagogique Scolaire) teacher coaching unit and the CERD (Center for Educational Research and Development) office of the bureau of pre- and in-service training. It has been in schools since 2015 and will wrap up activities in December 2019. Based on the Early Grade Reading/Balanced Literacy Approach (EGR/BLA) World Learning model, the daily 55-minute Arabic language session includes circle time, reading aloud, a mini-lesson (explicit teaching), independent reading work, guided reading work, and sharing time. The national textbooks remain the main content for Arabic lessons, enriched with literacy resources to support teachers to teach all skills explicitly (including phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, fluency, and comprehension). The complementary literacy resources include read-aloud books, leveled books, children's e-books, and a teacher portfolio (educational games). The QITABI approach is that literacy is achieved not only by targeting the alphabet, phonics, vocabulary and reading comprehension but also by seeking to ensure that young children acquire language as a powerful tool for learning about themselves and communicating their thoughts assertively and peacefully.

QITABI's EGR intervention includes capacity-building for MEHE/ DOPS mentors, CERD master trainers, and training and coaching for over 1000 primary teachers through weekly support by the project's EGR facilitators. The resources provided include carpets, flipcharts, audio system and bookshelves, in addition to classroom libraries composed of read-aloud and leveled reading books for grades 1–4 and ICT classroom support in grades 1–6 to improve classroom teaching and learning environments for a total of 50,000 students.

## **A safe classroom environment for learning and wellbeing**

To enhance literacy learning, QITABI promotes a safe classroom environment for children to open up and share their feelings and thoughts. Children need a safe environment to construct their learning by discussing read-aloud stories and sharing perspectives. A very popular classroom activity is daily circle time, in which children start by greeting each other and sharing their news. The teacher then introduces a socio-emotional activity that encourages children to talk about their feelings of the day. Teachers use ‘feeling faces’ to raise awareness and encourage discussion. Students are encouraged to select a feeling face to describe their feeling. They are also tactfully prompted to say more about what made them feel this way. During circle time, a main message may be shared about a national event/occasion (such as Independence Day or Mother’s Day) or from the spirit of the school day. Teachers might reinforce the value of collaborative work, cooperation, respect for others and respect for agreed classroom rules.

The circle time activity faced resistance at the beginning. Many teachers refused to sit on the carpet provided by the project and expressed concern about classroom management because students were asked to leave their desks and sit on the floor. Others complained their classroom was too small, making it impossible to roll up the carpet and ask all students to join in. Three years later, it was rewarding to see how teachers’ perspectives and practice had changed. In fact, in 2018, 97% of teachers reported that they were implementing circle time and their students were enjoying it. The DOPS coaches from the MEHE along with the QITABI coaching team supported teachers in finding solutions to accommodate such an activity. Gradually, most teachers were capable of managing their students’ behavior when moving back and forth to the carpet in large classrooms. In smaller classes, teachers drew each day the names of seven students from a jar and called them to sit on the carpet while the rest came to the front seats. More importantly, through pause and reflect sessions, teachers reported the positive value of circle time.

The QITABI team’s field visits to schools also revealed children’s excitement and motivation during circle time. Many teachers said their students had developed positive relationships with them and with each other and also reported witnessing children opening up slowly and talking about important matters, such as losing a family member or being bullied. Teachers take the opportunity to discuss classroom problems and reflect with students on how to solve them peacefully. Language is used as a tool to express anger, fear, anxiety, happiness, and most importantly to build a peaceful classroom community of learners.

## **Reading aloud to strengthen citizenship**

Teachers’ daily read-alouds have inspired young readers to lead on such activities. At Kfarsir Public School in Nabatieh, grade 2 student Ghina enjoys reading Arabic stories to her friends and classmates. It wasn’t until her Arabic language teacher, Mrs Fatima, gave her a story from QITABI’s leveled classroom library and asked her to read aloud to her classmates on the reading carpet, that she discovered her passion for storytelling. Ghina read the complete story aloud following the guidelines modeled by her teacher: pausing, asking questions, and kindly reminding her classmates of the rules during read-alouds. This kind of activity motivates Ghina during her free time or when she finishes her class exercises before her friends; she grabs a book from QITABI’s Leveled Classroom Library and reads it silently. She asked, ‘We want more stories, we want to read more in Arabic.’

‘Ghina is one of many students who started to show interest and enjoy the Arabic class,’ Mrs Fatima, her Arabic language teacher said. ‘Students were never big fans of the Arabic language class. Teaching Arabic is sometimes challenging; the material is too dry and lacks excitement. Right now, especially after introducing such an array of interesting children’s books, students can’t wait for the lesson to start. They are more enthusiastic and much more energetic in class. They are learning to love their mother tongue, especially the read-aloud activity. The kids adore it.’

More than that, teachers read aloud daily to expose children to authentic literature from their culture, which sheds light on real world issues and strengthens the connection between school and community. As a result, students learn how to become engaged as local and global citizens (Down, 2010). They learn from fiction and non-fiction about family dynamics, friendship, animals, the environment, and moral values. The texts model how to make polite requests, resolve conflicts in a peaceful way, express feelings assertively, feel empathy, accept different perspectives and think critically to participate confidently in solving problems. The students also learn how to derive their own lessons about moral values—such as honesty, cooperation, respect, and perseverance as pillars for a rewarding life and just world—and how to connect reading to their own experience and to reflect and share their perspectives on events. Some of the reading strategies used in the QITABI EGR/BLA program request children to make self to text, text to text, and text to world connections. Students are encouraged to critically evaluate the stories read to them and to think about what they learned from each story. Teachers ask students to use the facts in the story to try to solve a problem at school or in their neighborhood, and students are encouraged to learn to rely on facts to make informed decisions to solve their problems or contribute to dealing with bigger challenges such as global warming.

In a way, language learning in the literacy classroom bridges the linguistic dimensions of phonics and words to empower young minds with a powerful tool for communication and good citizenship skills.

## Children’s books for emotional awareness

In our latest visit to Btekhmay public school in Mount Lebanon, Ghadi in grade 3 was eager to retell the story he had read: *I am stronger than anger*. He held the book in his hands but did not open it. When he had finished reading the story aloud, his teacher told us he had been reading this story over and over until he had learned it by heart. The teacher confirmed it was Ghadi’s own choice. Ghadi

himself confidently said: ‘I was feeling angry all the time, just like the boy in the story. I was shouting and getting into trouble. I learned from the story how to become stronger than anger. Now, every time I feel angry, I take a deep breath, count to 10 to relax, and then say what I want to say.’

The story that Ghadi retold is one of many children’s books distributed to classroom libraries in grades 1–4 in the schools where QITABI is implemented. Each classroom was provided with a leveled library to make books accessible for teachers and students. The books were selected based on criteria that target both gradual language learning and other aspects of socio-emotional development and character building.

In Lebanon, Arabic language learners face the challenges of diglossia: at school, they are required to learn high level Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which differs in some aspects from day to day Arabic (Kozma & Yacoub 2018). To address this, the QITABI literacy committee selected books based on criteria aligned with the primary grade learning outcomes of the national Arabic language curriculum. The criteria aimed at moving the child gradually from familiar everyday Arabic to the unfamiliar MSA. However, the committee responsible for selecting the books from more than 21 local publishers applied many lenses, including language difficulty, emotions, social skills, citizenship, and moral values. Major criteria, building on international and local research, included how the story helps the child learn about her/himself, learn about the world, address developmental issues, and be a good citizen locally and internationally. As a result, the books in QITABI classrooms are authentic and meaningful to young readers. The stories help young readers to become aware of their feelings and target their developmental needs and include challenging, real-life issues.

## Impact

There was no direct measurement in QITABI of the effect of socio-emotional learning on literacy acquisition. However, M&E data showed that grade 1–4 students benefited from the EGR/BLA

model. QITABI'S curriculum-based Universal Screening tools were used to measure students' skills in reading accuracy (using text with diacritics) and comprehension without time constraint. The screening was administered by Arabic language teachers during individualized assessment sessions three times per school year, to diagnose students' reading abilities, to track and monitor students' reading progress, and to measure their improvement in reading skills. The tool incorporates assessment of the understanding of the concept of print, alphabet knowledge, sight words, and reading skills using running records.

The pre-running records of students' reading level at the beginning of their school year were compared to the post-running records at the end of their school year. The analysis showed that 79.4% of 10,841 students in grades 1–4 of 157 schools improved by at least one reading level<sup>1</sup> during one year of EGR/BLA intervention. Among this population, 58.7% achieved the beginning-of-grade benchmark, which implies that some students were way behind their grade level: even though they showed improvement in reading levels, they did not manage to reach their grade level within the same school year. Nevertheless, 34.8 % achieved the end-of-grade benchmark.

The reading level reached for each student depends on their initial (pre-) reading level: as expected, a higher percentage of project students in grade 1 showed improvement of at least three reading levels while the highest percentage for students achieving just one reading level improvement within a single grade was in grade 4. Younger learners are more likely more to advance than older learners. 'Improvement of scores by domain of universal screening-Results' showed that generally the students' reading skills, including concept of print, letter/sound identification and high frequency words, improved significantly during the fourth year of the project.

1 In the QITABI leveling criteria, each level specifies the set of skills to be mastered by young readers as requested by the national curriculum at grade level. One level improvement indicates that the student fulfilled that objective. There are two levels per grade except for grade 1, where there are three levels.

Building on the success of the project, USAID launched QITABI 2 which is also being implemented by World Learning in collaboration with MEHE and CERD. The project focuses on improving the reading, writing, math, and socio-emotional learning outcomes in all grades (1–6) in primary public schools.

## Reflection

From a practitioner point of view, language learning should not be separated from its main functions of self-expression and effective communication in peaceful ways. A holistic language learning approach should be adopted when targeting basic reading skills. Capacity-building programs should target teachers' skills in teaching subject content and socio-emotional skills. Literacy resources should include content that facilitates socio-emotional learning. After all, language is a cognitive human tool that should be used by students to communicate clearly as well as peacefully, in ways that can contribute to making the world a better place.

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## Alt Shift Change: How Pratham Books is exploring social and emotional learning in picture books

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### ABSTRACT

For the past 15 years, Pratham Books, a publisher based out of India, has been creating engaging picture books in multiple languages and formats to help children discover the joy of reading—in mother tongue languages, set in locations they can recognise, featuring characters with whom they can identify, and telling stories that capture their attention and fuel their imagination.

For this, Pratham Books has developed a unique process of creating over 110 picture books annually, where inputs from the field underscore their commissioning. The not-for-profit publishing house works with a network of people and methods—guest editors, writers, illustrators, art directors, workshops, and experts—to shape social, environment, emotional learning in their books. This paper offers specific examples of books that can potentially impact young readers' thoughts, ideas and beliefs, and the way in which Pratham Books makes the books accessible in print and digital formats.

And through this process, the book editors and creators are attempting to play a significant role in shaping the literary landscape with books and characters that depart from traditional roles and gender biases. The editors are commissioning

manuscripts that seek equal voices for all genders, and give space to democratic themes free of stereotypes and foster social and emotional learning.

### KEYWORDS

reading, reading levels, indigenous languages, mother tongue, digital reading books, audiovisual books

'The simplest way to make sure that we raise literate children is to teach them to read, and to show them that reading is a pleasurable activity. And that means, at its simplest, finding books that they enjoy, giving them access to those books, and letting them read them.'

NEIL GAIMAN

Reading is powerful. It shapes our imagination, it equips children with tools for social and emotional learning and it offers an escape into different worlds while enabling an understanding of their reality.

For the past 15 years, Pratham Books has been creating engaging picture books in multiple languages and formats to help children discover the joy of reading. In this context, the picture book refers to a children's book created through a play between text and illustrations. The books are written and/or translated in the children's mother tongues, set in locations they can recognise, feature characters with whom they can identify, and tell stories that capture their attention and fuel their imagination.

In a study titled *Books Make a Difference: A Study of Access to Literacy*<sup>1</sup>, the researchers examined the impact of early literary intervention in child care centres and found that enhanced physical access to books indicated 'greater verbal interaction around literacy, and more time spent reading and relating to books as a result of the intervention.' In this study, teachers worked with trainers to make their classrooms and teaching practices more reading-friendly. Children between the ages of three to four were provided with age

1 Neuman, Susan. (1999). *Books Make a Difference: A Study of Access to Literacy*. Reading Research Quarterly - READ RES QUART. 34. 286-311. 10.1598/RRQ.34.3.3.



and interest-appropriate books to read, and storytelling became a part of their daily routines. Teachers also created libraries for the children to encourage independent reading where books were regularly circulated.

However, in India, and in countries across the developing world, there is a lack of affordable access to reading material for young children. To that effect, Pratham Books creates books that are affordable with a print price point of an average of Rs 50 (less than US\$1.00) and also publishes them digitally for free in an open access format.

UNESCO's<sup>2</sup> report on mother tongue literacy states, 'children should be taught in a language they understand, yet as much as 40% of the global population does not have access to education in a language they speak or understand'. The lack of reading material in mother tongue languages is also linked to children's inability to read at grade level.

In 2015, Pratham Books launched StoryWeaver, a digital gateway to thousands of richly illustrated, open-licensed children's stories in mother tongue languages. By openly licensing quality multilingual content under CCBY 4.0 and using the power of technology, StoryWeaver is directly addressing these challenges. It not only provides free access to a large repository of story books but the content is also adaptable to serve the needs of the user, as they can re-level, translate, retell and even print the books using the many tools available to them. So far, StoryWeaver is home to 15,144 stories in 198 languages (Indian and international) that have been read seven million times. This is not accounting for the number of downloads by educators and educational institutes, and secondary, multiple readings in the classroom. StoryWeaver is also a multi-publisher platform, with books from the African Storybook

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2 EFA Global Monitoring Report (2013–14). Children need to be taught in a language they understand - UNESCO.

Initiative, Book Dash, Ms Moochie, Room to Read, The Rosetta Foundation, Sub-Saharan Publishers, to name a few.

## Many books, one mission

Pratham Books has developed a unique process of creating over 110 picture books annually, where inputs from the field underscore our commissioning. Our carefully-constructed briefs and style guides are level appropriate—offering writers and illustrators guidelines on writing for different levels. Our reading levels<sup>3</sup> are linked to the child's reading development, but also keeping in mind that children have different fluencies in different languages. Each book comes with a colored reading band and a legend at the back that explains the reading level to the teacher or facilitator.

### *Reading levels*

Level 1: Beginning to Read

Level 2: Learning to Read

Level 3: Reading Independently

Level 4: Reading Proficiently

At the same time, it is important to allow for on-ground realities—such as the fact that 50 per cent of Class 5 students cannot read a Class 2 level text (Aser Education Report 2018<sup>4</sup>)—while developing these books. Which is why at Pratham Books, the team is constantly innovating—for instance, we are now focusing on a list of books that are meant for Level 4 readers in terms of theme complexities (such as depression, sexual abuse etc) while keeping the text to the simplicity of Level 1 reading.

We work with a network of people and methods—guest editors, writers, illustrators, art directors, workshops, and STEAM experts—to shape Social and Environmental Learning (SEL) in our books.

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3 [https://storyweaver.org.in/reading\\_levels](https://storyweaver.org.in/reading_levels)

4 <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/50-class-5-students-cannot-read-text-of-class-2-level-10-highlights-from-the-aser-education-report-2018-1431859-2019-01-16>

Respect for diversity, a commitment to commission new and own voices, and stories that challenge gender stereotypes are all integral to the core editorial team at Pratham Books.

The way we have approached social and emotional learning in picture books is to use it as a kind of lens during the process of reviewing a story, both in terms of text and illustrations. So, regardless of genre and themes, we're often able to weave in aspects of social and emotional learning into a range of stories. For instance, in *The Case of the Missing Water*—which is essentially a story about a water crisis—the protagonists, two school-going girls, are portrayed as purposeful and spirited, even during trying circumstances. *Friends Under the Summer Sun* explores gender and identity, but is also about a lot more: friendship, food and the delights of summer. And while *A Butterfly Smile* is about migration, it is equally about a girl trying to find her place in a new school. Then there's *The Tino, the Rhear and the Biger*, a humorous story ostensibly about muddled animals that has the underlying story about being comfortable in your own skin.

We further work closely with the Pratham Books partnership team, independent bookstores and partner schools to understand first-hand the thematic gaps in books. These are informal discussions, conversations and classroom observations which help the editorial team gain an insight into its readership. Titles such as *Behind the Lie* (on domestic abuse) and *Chuchu Manthu's*



**Figure 1:** *Angry Akku*, written and illustrated by Vinayak Varma

*Jar of Toffees* (on loss) were commissioned based on feedback from partner schools that there is a need for stories that deal with darker and more complex themes. From there, the team examines different themes—Anganwadi and NCERT STEM curriculum, the Sustainable Development Goals, Life Skills—to work on a thematic approach to commissioning picture books.

## Emotional intelligence and life skills

Around the world, children's books are being used to teach children to read and develop their literacy skills. Yet, very little has been done to tap into the potential of children's books to foster empathy and further children's emotional development. Recognizing the tremendous potential that stories have in helping children identify and express their feelings, we have published a range of books that explore emotional quotient.

In *Angry Akku*, Akku's anger is portrayed as a normal feeling, something that we all experience. The idea is for children to be able to recognize this emotion and find various ways of managing it. In this story, Akku's anger dissipates as she is fed, as she draws (art as catharsis), and mainly, as she gets the chance to talk to someone about the events of the day. This is especially important, as girls are often taught to contain their rage and not express it. *Kalpana's Cycle* explores the notion of failure with the view that what's ultimately important is that we try, and not give up easily. In *Stage Fright*, Champa learns to cope with her crippling stage fright, while in *Gappu Can't Dance*, what may be commonly seen as a mistake is celebrated by Gappu's teacher. Through these stories, children will discover that they are not alone in what they feel, and find more ways to navigate their emotions.

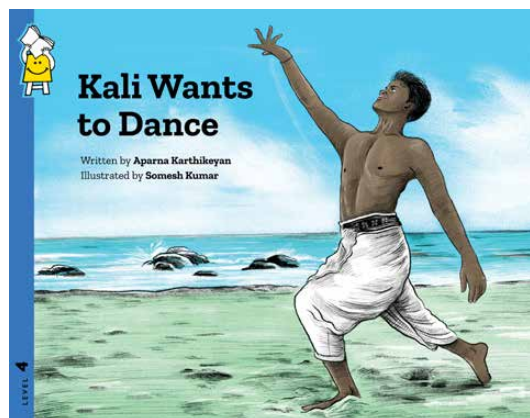
In *Farida Plans a Feast*, Farida goes around her neighborhood collecting bits and scraps in preparation for a generous feast, which is revealed only at the end. *My City, My Dogs* is a heartfelt tribute to the street dogs of Mumbai. Both these stories about empathy make a strong case for a more compassionate and inclusive world.

## Challenging gender stereotypes

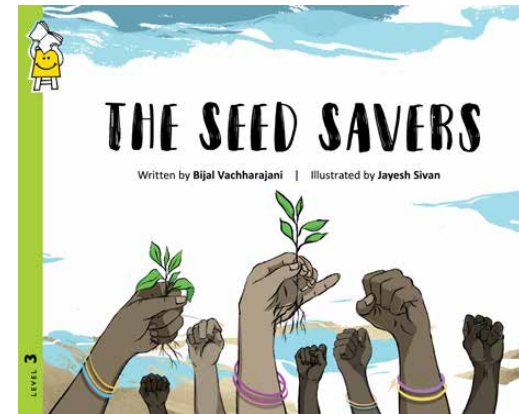
It is crucial that children have access to stories which reinforce the idea that you can be who you are, regardless of your gender. Taking into consideration conventional roles and traits that have been assigned to specific genders in India, our stories aim to challenge these notions.

In *Ammachi's Amazing Machines*, an inventive and energetic grandmother uses various simple machines to cook coconut barfi. The true story of *Kali Wants to Dance*, about a boy who aspires to become a trained classical dancer, is powerful because he pursues his dreams against all odds. Even as he is repeatedly told that dance is not for boys, Kali perseveres.

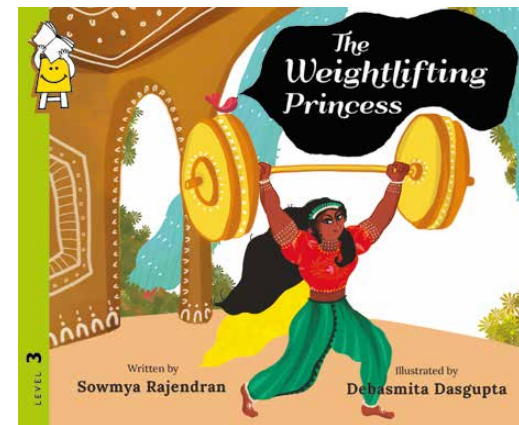
When *How Do Aeroplanes Fly?* was introduced to a group of children in Rajasthan by a Pratham Books employee, they were struck by an illustration of a woman pilot. 'We didn't know that women could fly planes,' one of the girls remarked. This serves as a reminder, to continue to publish children's books with positive female role models. *The Seed Savers* narrates the inspiring story of a group of women cotton farmers who came together to form a seed bank in order to protect seeds. In *Teaching Pa*, a young girl teaches her father math. Stories like these play a huge role in shaping existing perceptions about the mathematical abilities of girls (ASER report 2018 findings in *The Indian Express*).



**Figure 2:**  
*Kali Wants to Dance*,  
written by Aparna  
Karthikeyan, illustrated  
by Somesh Kumar



**Figure 3:** *The Seed Savers*,  
written by Bijal Vachharajani,  
illustrated by Jayesh Sivan



**Figure 4:** *The Weightlifting Princess*,  
written by Sowmya  
Rajendran, illustrated  
by Debasmita Dasgupta

*The Weightlifting Princess* was commissioned with the intention of creating a 'non-traditional princess story' to add to the vast and expanding universe of princess stories. This princess was conceptualized as strong and daring, moving away from the established notion of princesses as delicate and amenable. Illustrations play a significant role in many of these books as well, using captivating imagery.

Gender-based roles are also explored more subtly through our stories. The father is shown at home, taking care of children in *What's Cooking?* and *Angry Akku*. In *When Will Amma Be Back?*, the mother is at work all day and returns home only in the evening.



During a workshop conducted for educators by the Pratham Books team, a teacher remarked on how good it was to see the character's father and grandfather spend time with her while the mother was away on work. Other stories which explore gender-based expectations creatively are *Amma's Toolkit*, *Dum-a-Dum Biryani*, *Satya*, *Watch Out!*, *Cracking the Code* and *Manikantan Has Enough*.

## Redefining biographies

Over the last few years, Pratham Books has attempted to fill a certain gap in biographies written for India. Until recently, most of the biographies published in India have primarily been of male political leaders. As there are very few biographies of everyday heroes and women, in particular, we decided to look for more such stories and publish them. It is essential that children read these stories of grit, hope and resilience, and realise that success means different things to different people. By publishing a range of biographies that outline the journeys of remarkable contemporary individuals, we hope to present to our young readers a variety of role models.

*Walking in the Wild* and *Jadav and the Tree-Place* offer a glimpse into the lives of environmental heroes Zakhuma Don and Jadav Payeng who work tirelessly to protect our forests and wildlife. Based on the life of a woman mountaineer from Arunachal Pradesh who was the first from the region to climb Mount Everest, *Tine and the Faraway Mountain* celebrates the power of believing in yourself. Dipa Karmakar was the first Indian female gymnast to compete in the Olympic games, and her admirable journey has been captured in *Dipa Karmakar - In Perfect Balance*.

The dearth of stories about Indian women in science have also nudged us to seek more such stories. *Anna's Extraordinary Experiments with Weather* is about renowned meteorologist Anna Mani, while *Sudipta Sengupta - The Rock Reader* is based on the life of one of the first female geologists from India to set foot in Antarctica. In an article on Scroll.in about *Anna's Extraordinary*

*Experiments With Weather*, it has been mentioned that, 'Though Jayaraj intended the book for a young audience, it seems to have struck a chord with readers of all ages.' The article also examines why we know so little about Anna Mani, despite her having been a pioneering scientist. Apart from Anna Mani, who passed away in 2001, the rest are all contemporary figures.

## Commissioning own voices stories

It's critical that children find themselves represented in the books they read. Worldwide, there is a movement to create books that reflect the lives of the children and to address the shocking lack of diversity<sup>5</sup> in the content of the books. In India too, there is a chasm between the children shown in books and the diverse population of the country and there is a need for books<sup>6</sup> about 'underrepresented characters by marginalised authors.' Further, UNESCO has declared 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages to 'to raise awareness of the consequences of the endangerment of indigenous languages across the world, with an aim to establish a link between language, development, peace, and reconciliation.'

The Pratham Books editorial team has been working on expanding our writer-illustrator pool through commissioning and workshops with more writers from minority communities. This includes *Chiu's Power* by Shrujana Sridhar, an adorable story about getting spectacles and *Tiger, Tiger, Where Are You?* by Mujahid Khan. Our commissioning editors focus on stories such as *Welcome to the Forest*, where a class of visually-challenged girls visit a forest in India; *A Helping Hand*, about a new girl who is different, and the discomfort that it causes among her classmates; and *My Brother's Wheeeelchair*, a heartwarming poem written by a differently-abled writer and poet.

5 Flood, A. (2018). Only 1% of children's books have BAME main characters: [Guardian](#).

6 Forde, K. (2019). Readers embrace marginalised 'Own Voices', but book industry lags: [Al Jazeera](#).

We've developed a set of contemporary tales set in Northeast India and written and illustrated by Northeastern Indians. Set in Sikkim, *A Very Wiggly Tooth* is written by Reshma Thapa Gurung and illustrated by Canato Jimo. It is about the universal experience of losing a tooth, while Dawa Lahmu-Yolmo's *Scratch, Scratch, Scratch* is about the boredom that comes with being forced to stay at home because of an illness like chicken pox. Working on *The Very Wiggly Tooth* inspired Jimo to create *Snip*, a wordless mischievous story set in his hometown in Nagaland.

In 2019, the team collaborated with Green Hub youth and community-based video documentation centre for recording biodiversity in North East India, for a picture book writing workshop in Assam. The format of the workshop has been developed using Education for Sustainable Development modules, which breaks down the idea of a picture book for the participants, invites them to explore their emotions and experiences through word games and activities and then offers a gentle critiquing process. The result is a set of engaging picture books that reflect the forests, the island of Majuli, and its denizens. What's wonderful is that some of the participants chose to write their manuscripts in their mother tongue language of Assamese.

In the past, with its Adikahani series, Pratham Books delved into the rich repertoire of oral stories that can be found in Odisha and attempted to navigate at least part of India's diverse linguistic landscape by documenting them in the form of picture books for indigenous children. The main aim of this series was to offer relatable and contextual stories for children from indigenous communities, who rarely get to read picture books in their own language. The ten books in the series have been written and illustrated by authors and illustrators who belong to four different indigenous communities from Odisha. The stories are illustrated in the Saura wall mural style (the art form common to all four tribes).

## Greening our stories

Pratham Books is committed to fostering children's sense of wildness and wonder through their books. These picture books promote Education for Sustainable Development, especially in the age of the Anthropocene, as the editors believe it is vital that children are aware of their natural surroundings and the implications of climate change for their future.

For the past three years, we've been working with subject matter experts, scientists, writers and illustrators and editors and art directors to create a diverse set of books about nature, wildlife and environment. These books are unique in that they are available in many languages and introduce children to Indian wildlife and Indian green heroes. Furthermore, our STEM library campaigns enable access to these books in schools and community libraries.

Our repository of stories has taken a dive into the underwater world, an often overlooked space in children's literature in India, but one that holds a deep fascination for children. *Dive!* offers a peek into a coral reef teeming with life while *Goby's Noisy Best Friend* examines the symbiotic relationship between a goby fish and a pistol shrimp. Written by marine biologists Shreya Yadav and Divya Panicker, *The Night the Moon Went Missing* touches upon bioluminescence and *Razia Learns to Swim* is centred around how different creatures move in water.

Apart from that, instead of concentrating on the usual large mammals, our books cover species such as crabs in *Keya's Day at the Beach*, spiders in *Off to See Spiders*, garden fauna in *Best Foot Forward*, pufferfish in *Whoop! Goes the Pufferfish*, hornbills in *Inku Chomps, Gobbles and Slurps* and dragonflies in *An Umbrella for Druvi*. *Ghum Ghum Gharial's Glorious Adventure* spotlights the endangered gharial and *How To Be An Otter* is a playful introduction to river otters.

*The Case of the Missing Water* uses the beloved mystery trope to examine why the tanks in Ranj's village are going dry, while



*Gadbad Das* in 'No Water For You' looks at everyday water issues and rainwater harvesting. Our future titles will focus on climate change for younger readers as well.

## Reading in the classroom

In India, there's a distinct gap when it comes to students being able to read fluently at their grade level (ASER report, 2018). Many of these children have very little access to affordable books that are not textbooks, especially in languages that they are fluent in. In addition to that, reading for pleasure isn't seen as a priority in most government and affordable private schools.

Stephan Krashen says that 'evidence for the value of Free Voluntary Reading, or recreational reading, continues to accumulate.' A fact that resonates with our vision—having books available and accessible is fundamental to Pratham Books mission of a book in every child's hand.

To make books accessible, Pratham Books team developed the Library-in-a-Classroom (LIC) kit. The LIC is a mobile kit for schools or other formal and non-formal learning spaces that opens up to become a library housing over 100 books, categorized according to Reading Levels 1–4, ranging from early readers to fluent. The LIC makes the books more open and accessible to children, without intimidating them. Further, it makes the space it inhabits rich in books, allowing the children to gaze at the books and instilling confidence to pick the books on their own to read.

The Donate-A-Book<sup>7</sup> platform was created so that beneficiaries can put up LIC requests and online donors can contribute through a crowdsourcing model. Once the LICs' are shipped to beneficiaries, the usage depends on the institution, however most serve as supplementary reading resources. The partnership team has observed teachers and librarians picking up books and reading them aloud to get children familiar with a new language (English in most cases).

<sup>7</sup> <https://donateabook.org.in/about#donateThon>

In 2018, we launched Readalong stories on StoryWeaver, a result of several months of in-depth interviews on how stories can be used in the classroom to encourage reading and improve language acquisition in the medium of instruction. They have been designed to be joyful experiences for the child, with enjoyable background music, and a 'natural' narrative voiced by professional artists. In addition, same language subtitling, or SLS, provides synchronised highlighted text that urges the child to "read along" with the narrator's voice. The Readalong feature—available on StoryWeaver—is aimed at the youngest of readers, and as a result, these stories are typically under five minutes. There is considerable research supporting the use of narration and SLS in developing word-meaning association, as well as improving pronunciation and intonation.

The stories are mostly accessed by students in whole group settings. The teacher uses a classroom computer and projector to display the stories. However, in some cases, teachers use laptops with smaller groups of students. For instance, in one partner school in Maharashtra, children independently access StoryWeaver and read the books themselves in a computer lab in school.

To make reading books an immersive experience for younger children, we created a set of Phone Stories in 2017: *Watch Out! The Tiger is Here, Did You Hear?, Wild Cat, Wild Cat, and Who Ate All That Up?* by Sejal Mehta and Rohan Chakravarty—audiovisual books that can be accessed from mobile phones. These books are available in print, as e-books on StoryWeaver, as YouTube videos, as audio on Soundcloud, and as MP3 files on WhatsApp, making them accessible in all possible formats. During the month-long campaign, the set of four books has reached over 2,800 Schools/Centres and teachers, impacting over 56,000 children.

StoryWeaver has enabled Suchana, an NGO working in Birbhum, West Bengal, to create over 60 titles in the tribal languages Kora and Santali. Ten thousand copies of select books have been printed for distribution through a mobile library. In Goa, the Konkani Bhasha Mandal is a pioneering non-governmental institution

striving for the cause of Konkani in social, educational, literary and cultural spheres. Keenly focussed on using children's literature as a means to ensure its continued usage, the Konkani Bhasha Mandal has translated 100 stories to Konkani on StoryWeaver. Soon after, these were printed with the help of Pratham Books, and 25,000 copies of these books were distributed to schools in the region. These storybooks are used in classrooms to retain students' interests and preserve the local culture and language.

## **Conclusion**

With its mission of a book in every child's hand, Pratham Books publishes a diverse range of reading levels and themes to encourage a child to pick up a book and keep reading. Our innovative formats—levelled picture books, story cards, flash cards, poster books—in multiple languages are designed to make reading a pleasurable activity.

In the coming years, we hope to continue to create memorable books which promote social and emotional learning in a way that feels natural and authentic to the narrative, without seeming didactic. In essence, we believe that stories can teach children empathy by nudging them to step outside their thoughts and inhabit the lives of others.

## How to actively engage young children in reading the word and the world

JEAN BERNARD

Senior partner at Spectacle Learning Media and co-convener of NISSEM

### ABSTRACT

Can sustainable development themes be successfully embedded in early grade reading materials? How and at what levels of children's cognitive development and literacy acquisition are they able to internalize the building blocks of sustainable development such as gender equality, inclusion, care for the environment and cultures of nonviolence? This brief will reflect on lessons learned from a training workshop for Ugandan writers and illustrators in which these questions were a starting point for creating a series of leveled readers (primers) in three different formats, intended to improve children's literacy acquisition while reflecting the core values of the Ugandan national curriculum and amplifying components related to conflict and disaster risk management (CDRM). The brief tells the story of how the workshop participants, which included curriculum specialists, writers and illustrators based in the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), conceptualized and produced a complete series of illustrated, reading materials aligned with the national language and literacy curriculum (grades 1–7) within a scope and sequence framework based on CDRM content as well as SEL principles, processes and desired outcomes.

### KEYWORDS

early grade reading, supplementary readers, social and emotional learning, conflict and disaster risk management, Uganda, curriculum development

## Introduction

In her classic memoir, *Teacher* (1963), Sylvia Ashton Warner recounted her experience working with Maori children in New Zealand in the 1940s as one of transformation, both of her understanding of what it means to be a teacher and of how the natural creative energies of children can open the gateways to learning. Fast forward to the planning of a four-week workshop for writers and illustrators of primary level 1–7 reading materials (primers) in Uganda as part of an ambitious project aimed at improving early grade reading outcomes while amplifying elements embedded in the national curriculum linked to social and emotional learning (SEL) and conflict and disaster risk management (CDRM).

The CDRM project was conceived and managed by the National Curriculum Development Centre of Uganda (NCDC) and supported by Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, a programme of Education Above All (EAA) under the guidance of Margaret Sinclair, with technical support provided by Spectacle Learning Media. The central activity was to work with a group of NCDC-based writers, illustrators and editors to produce a set of materials for each grade, ready for pilot-testing in selected schools that were representative of urban, peri-urban and rural areas of the country and serving its many ethnic groups. Over the course of a year, the project generated 41 illustrated reading lessons in three different formats (posters, story cards and books) and 7 review units with teacher guidance notes and learning activities integrated into each lesson.

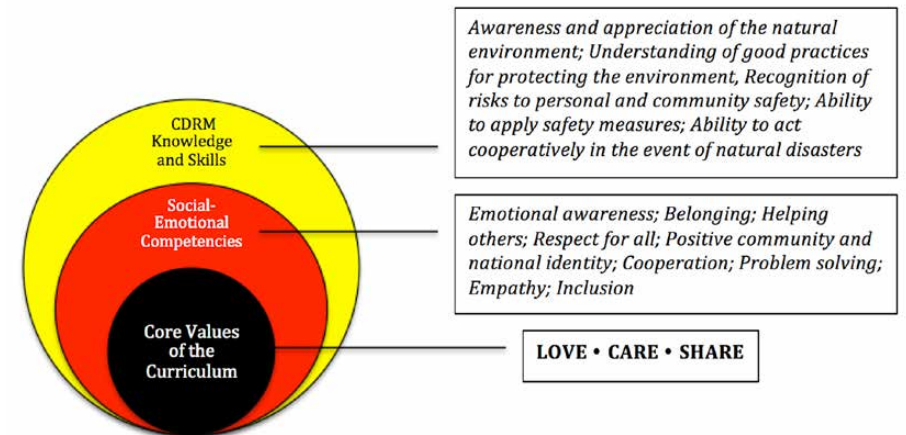
The rationale for the project was based on the general need for additional reading materials to be available to students, especially in rural areas, and on the vision for education to become a more effective tool for bringing about a more cohesive, sustainable and peaceful society. To accomplish this, the NCDC felt that the proposed reading materials would serve the purpose of identifying a set of priority themes and using the power of stories to exemplify and amplify these in engaging and memorable ways.

## Mining the existing curriculum for CDRM topics and SEL themes

Since Uganda was, and continues to be, at risk of renewed ethnic conflict, themes related to tolerance and peace-building are a top priority, as are messages that help students recognize the risks and mitigate the effects of increasingly frequent natural disasters<sup>1</sup>. As noted above, topics that may be said to build the necessary social and emotional skills to prevent and/or negotiate conflicts are spread across several subject areas, while topics related to disaster risk reduction are mainly embedded in the health and science curricula and are often oriented toward teaching recognizing hazards and staying safe.

Core SEL skills such as emotional awareness, empathy and cooperation have been emphasized in the Ugandan basic education curriculum for over a decade, often grouped under terms such as 'life skills', 'peace education' or 'learning to live together.' Many of these topics were cited frequently in the 2006 curriculum<sup>2</sup> as themes, topics or 'soft' skills to be dealt with by textbook developers and teachers in different strands of the curriculum, For example, topics and themes such as religious tolerance, respecting ethnic diversity, and resolving conflicts have been embedded in content areas such as social studies, health and morals education or life skills. However, as noted by the NCDC project lead in discussions with teachers, writers and others involved in the project, such topics and themes were 'buried' in the curriculum and rarely made explicit in classrooms across Uganda. This was the case partly because teachers were (and are) under immense pressure to focus on preparing students for national examinations, and partly because they did not (and do not) have access to training on how

- 1 Including but not limited to droughts, earthquakes, floods, mudslides and volcanoes.
- 2 The 2006 curriculum, often referred to as the 'thematic curriculum', featured several innovative reforms of the 2000 curriculum and had been in place for seven years at the time of the CDRM project launch.



**Figure 1:** CDRM and SEL themes, topics and skills embedded in the Ugandan national curriculum<sup>3</sup>

to meaningfully include skills that were not strictly academic into their daily classroom interactions.

At the same time, there is a strong and enduring imperative on the part of Ugandan educators to embed moral values and codes for good behavior as well as environmental responsibility and social cohesion into teaching and learning at every level. As shown in figure 1 below, the themes, topics and skills selected for story development emanate from the core values of the Ugandan basic curriculum expressed as imperative verbs: to love, to care, to share.

In the initial search for appropriate story themes for each of the seven grades, the project team sifted through a selection of basic education curriculum documents in search of components that could be grouped as SEL skills for preventing conflict and those that fit under the umbrella of disaster risk reduction. Although topics that are now specified under SDG Target 4.7 were very much part of these conversations, the terminology used in the context of the documents reviewed was the language of previous global

- 3 Based on a review conducted by the NCDC-SLM project team in August, 2015.

initiatives but clearly within the broad conceptual domain of education for sustainable development<sup>4</sup>. The team also looked for linkages between conflict and disaster risk reduction that could be spun into plots, characters and settings that would reflect children's progressive intellectual development and expanding world view. For example, fictional narratives based on real situations could convey messages that show the causal links between environmental degradation and conflict, the role of conflict resolution in settling disputes over resources and the imperative for people to cooperate and help each other in events of natural disasters.

The proposed materials were intended to supplement, rather than to replace, the language and literacy curriculum. The purpose was to provide teachers and students with accessible, engaging materials that would enable learners to 'read the word and the world' (Freire & Macedo, 1987)—in the languages and orthographies and at literacy levels specified in the core curriculum—plant the seeds of curiosity, impart useful knowledge and inspire lifelong reading habits. The teaching and learning methodologies integrated into the materials as teacher guidance notes were aimed at tapping into children's natural creative energies and local knowledge to support their personal and social well-being as well as that of their families, their communities, their nation and the world.

## Spinning themes and topics into stories

### 1 Setting the stage

The project's central activity was an intensive eight-week workshop for writers, editors and illustrators which took place in two four-week sessions at Nakaseke Teachers' College. During the pre-workshop planning phase, the primary tasks were to identify story themes, decide on workshop outcomes, and develop a preliminary agenda. Based on the review of the basic education

4 Including, among others sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, cultures of peace and nonviolence, respect for cultural diversity

curriculum described above, the project team decided on nine themes for story development at all seven levels of primary education, in support of and adhering to, the crosscutting and interlinked principles of peace and nonviolence, gender equality and inclusion.

Cross-cutting principles			CDRM story themes and topics, primary 1-7
Peace and non-violence	Gender equality	Inclusion	1 being aware of and managing our emotions
			2 identity and belonging
			3 staying safe
			4 helping and caring for others
			5 cooperation and teamwork
			6 not stereotyping
			7 not bullying
			8 negotiating conflicts
			9 taking care of our environment

**Figure 2:** Thematic framework for development of primary 1-7 stories

With the exception of adjustments to the number of themes at primary 1–3, all of the stories generated were related to one or more of these themes, with quality assurance standards for content at all levels grounded in global commitments to the three crosscutting principles. A second major decision taken during the planning stage addressed the language challenge: in which language(s) should the stories be written and disseminated? Since early grade reading instruction (primary 1–3) in learners' mother tongues had become official policy in Uganda and had been written into the 2006 curriculum, the question of how to develop materials in multiple languages within the limited scope of the project became a major challenge. More than 40 indigenous languages are spoken by some 56 distinct ethnic groups within Uganda's national



borders<sup>5</sup>, and, to date, learning materials in only a dozen of these have only recently become widely available. Given the reality of burgeoning class size, weak teacher support and the many obstacles to distribution in multiple languages, an innovative solution was needed.

## 2 Early forming decisions

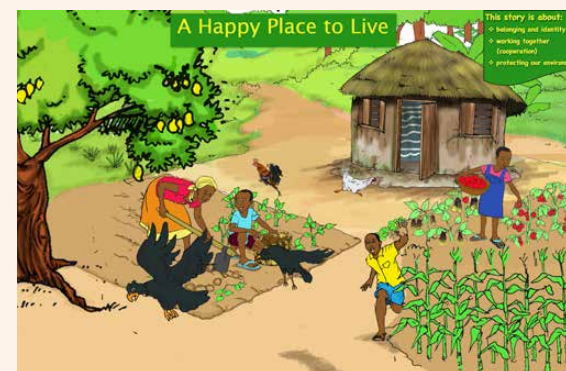
After consultations with NCDC language and literacy specialists, school visits and a cursory review of primary textbooks and other reading materials during the workshop-planning phase, the team decided to ‘think outside the book’ by varying the format and delivery mode of the CDRM sample reading materials, as shown in figure 2. In addition, the forming decision was based on the move toward mother tongue instruction in primary 1–3 and the transition to English as the main language of instruction beginning in primary 4 and continuing through the end of primary and secondary.<sup>6</sup>

The choice of a double-sided poster format for primary 1–3 allows for a teacher who is able to translate the story printed on the reverse of the poster into the language(s) spoken by her students. The value of setting aside class time for teacher read-alouds of motivational materials to enhance early grade literacy instruction is well documented (Trelease 2013), and is especially important in contexts where children have not had the advantage of being read to at home by parents or older siblings. On the side of the poster displayed to the class during the informal read-aloud, the illustration draws children into the setting and characters as they listen to the story in their mother tongue. The teacher follows the guidance notes on

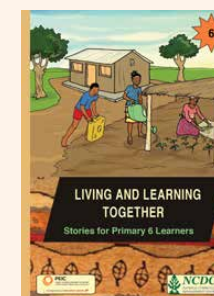
- 5 The most widely spoken indigenous language in Uganda is Luganda, with about 4 million speakers. Other widely spoken languages include Nyoro, Rukiga, and Lunyole. For additional information on languages spoken in Uganda, see <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/UG>
- 6 The official languages of Uganda are English and Swahili. The main language of instruction from grade 4 through secondary is English. Since 2017, Swahili has become a mandatory subject in secondary schools.

Level	Primary 1–3 Learning to read	Primary 4–5 Transition	Primary 6–7 Reading to learn
Language	Mother tongue or as close as possible	Mother tongue to second, national language	English
Format	Posters for large group story-telling and creative interaction with integrated teacher guidance and extension activities	Laminated story cards in graphic story format for small group reading with integrated teacher support and extension activities	Chapter books with teacher notes and extension activities included

### Posters



### Chapter Books



### Story Cards



Figure 3: Content format choices by grade, language and literacy level

the reverse side of the poster to lead children through a series of interactive comprehension, reading and writing activities using key words written on the chalkboard or on flashcards to construct short sentences based on the story, concluding with directions for children to create narratives from their interactions with the picture and their own experience.

From an early grade literacy perspective, this type of format has the advantage of introducing stories orally to children who are not likely to have been exposed to literacy-rich and pre-literacy-rich environments, including picture books, signs, newspapers and screens, but *are* very likely to have formed intimate connections to the real world; that is, the people, objects and living things that make up their immediate world. They will also have achieved a high level of oral fluency in their mother tongues through their experience of interacting with their home environment. The idea of introducing stories orally at first— using pictures to convey setting, characters and themes—and then moving to more literacy-based activities opens a sequence of learning that moves from listening comprehension with contextualized visual support to understanding and decoding the written word.

In primary 4–5 in the Ugandan basic education system, learners are expected to make the transition from mother tongue to English as the language of instruction in all subject areas. This presents obvious challenges for both teachers and learners in that a new language and literacy must be learned as the main medium of instruction in a relatively short time. Therefore, for these grades, the choice of format for CDRM reading materials was based on the need for materials that would support both language and literacy learning while conveying the selected CDRM themes through visual sequences and relatively sparse text. The delivery method also shifts at this level from teacher-led oral storytelling accompanied by basic literacy exercises to student-centered reading practice using shared ‘reading cards’, laid out in the style of graphic novels on double-sided, laminated sheets that can be organized in class sets and coordinated as a supplement to core reading lessons.

CDRM supplementary reading materials for primary 6–7 were conceived as traditional books for use either in teacher-led sessions or as small group/individual reading practice. For practical reasons, the original plan to format the stories written for these levels into nine separate booklets evolved into a decision to combine the stories as chapters of two separate volumes. The illustrated stories featured in these two upper primary volumes are built on the same sequence of CDRM themes and are embedded with a variety of activities designed to engage students, enhance comprehension and build language skills.

### 3 Making it happen

The agenda for the first session of the Nakaseke workshop agenda included three days of orientation, including rationale, goal-setting and initial assessment of participants’ needs for capacity building. Participants selected by the NCDC included nine teacher-writers, three illustrators, four curriculum specialists and two observers from the Ministry of Education Division of Innovation in Curriculum of neighboring South Sudan. Outcomes were listed in the form of performance objectives, as follows:

*Upon completion of the workshop, participants will be able to:*

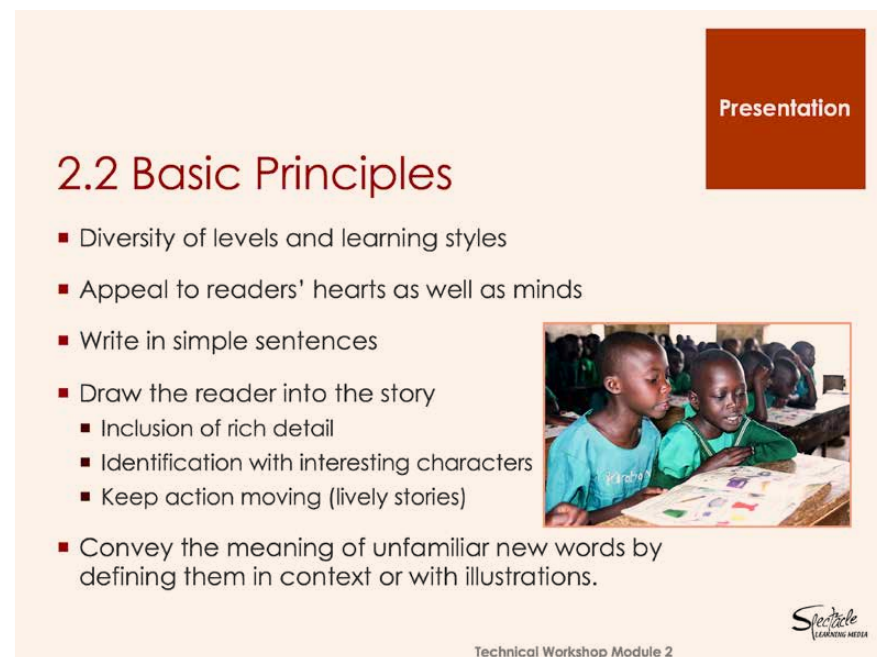
- 1 Identify appropriate themes, genres and story lines that will motivate and engage Ugandan primary school children (primary 4–7);
- 2 Use a variety of writing styles to communicate a selected CDRM theme at progressive levels of cognitive development and literacy;
- 3 Apply internationally defined measures of progressive reading levels to selected text and determine appropriate levels for Ugandan readers;
- 4 Create illustrations that effectively enhance the meaning of the text, taking into account the number, style and placement of the images in relation to the text;

- 5 Write clear instructions for teachers that will enable use of the materials in a variety of modes, e.g. as teacher-led discussion material, as small group reading practice, and as sustained silent reading material;
- 6 Agree as a group on a list of titles, format and design specifications of the materials for pilot-testing.

The six capacity-building CDRM modules that were prepared for the orientation phase of the workshop focused on: orienting participants to the conceptual framework and terminology of CDRM, reviewing basic principles for writing, illustrating and delivering high quality reading materials at progressive levels of literacy, exploring a wide range of formats, and integrating teacher guidance into the materials. The orientation phase of the workshop used a combination of presentations, discussion and small group activity techniques to inform, inspire, and jump start the creative process. The topics and subtopics of the modules, as listed below, were adjusted according to the initial needs assessment and ongoing feedback from participants.

- 1 Orientation to CDRM themes and topics;
- 2 Exploration of different genres, writing styles and images to communicate CDRM themes;
- 3 From learning to read to reading to learn—all about levels and language;
- 4 The art of illustrating children’s materials to engage readers and convey meaning;
- 5 Supporting teachers within the student materials;
- 6 Packaging the materials for optimal use in Ugandan schools.

At the conclusion of the orientation phase of the workshop, participants were divided into teams of two or three writers, with one illustrator for each group of grade levels (lower primary 1–3; transitional, 4–5; and upper primary, 6–7). Formats for each of these levels were introduced in detail and early draft samples of posters, story cards and story book chapters were shared. The teams were encouraged to experiment with a variety of genres, discuss



**Figure 4:** Sample screen, training module 2: Basic principles of story development

storylines, develop characters (if any), and describe settings before beginning their initial drafts. The three artists were assigned to work with the teams at every stage of the creative process, which marked departure from the workflow that participants had experience in previous writing workshops. Because the materials relied on original, high quality illustrations to communicate meaning—especially in the poster and reading card formats—the teams were asked to include the artists as co-creators from concept to draft to final product.

Participants quickly settled into a daily routine, supervised and supported by the NCDC coordinator and the two SLM consultants, free writing story concepts, sketching out rough illustration ideas, and sharing their work with the whole group at the end of each session. Once the stories had reached second draft stage, after undergoing peer editing as well as one or



## Side 1: learner's view

### Our New Classmate




**This story is about:**

- including others
- being aware of our emotions
- sharing resources

## Side 2: teachers' view

**Level 3 Chart 4**

**CDRM Competencies**

- Including others
- Being aware of our emotions
- Sharing resources

**Learning Outcomes**

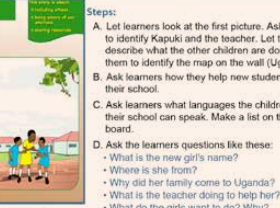
- Give examples of at least three ways children in our community are different.
- Describe how it feels to be a newly arrived pupil at our school.
- Tell a personal story about including and helping others.

**Key Words**  
classmate, terrible, war, South Sudan, lonely, sad, language, English, share, snack, break time, Review Vocabulary  
Uganda, teacher, sad, smile, kind, friend

**Teacher Guidance Notes**

This story should be taught first orally in the language of instruction so that learners can interact with the key messages in a language that they understand well. The main objective is to use the story to teach students important skills, values and behaviours for life. This story focuses on the importance of helping all children to feel included at school, even if they are different. In this case, the different child is a newly arrived classmate from a neighbouring country, but children may also feel excluded because of age, appearance or ability. If the language of instruction at your school is not English, you should prepare the lesson by translating the story into the learners' mother tongue. After introducing and discussing the story in the learners' mother tongue, the pictures can also be used to teach English language and literacy by having learners tell a simpler version of the story, learn the key words in English, and write sentences describing each picture.

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**Steps:**

- A. Let learners look at the first picture. Ask them to identify Kapuki and the teacher. Let them describe what the other children are doing. Ask them to identify the map on the wall (Uganda).
- B. Ask learners how they help new students at their school.
- C. Ask learners what languages the children at their school can speak. Make a list on the board.
- D. Ask the learners questions like these:
  - What is the new girl's name?
  - Where is she from?
  - Why did her family come to Uganda?
  - What is the teacher doing to help her?
  - What do the girls want to do? Why?
  - Do you think Kapuki will be happy at her new school? Why?

**Activities**

- A. In groups, have learners make a list of countries that share borders with Uganda: South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo. Ask each group to make sentences stating the location of each country, for example: "South Sudan lies to the north of Uganda."
- B. In the same groups, ask learners to make lists of the languages they know or have heard. Let them give examples of how to say "Welcome to our school" in as many languages as they can.
- C. In small groups of three, ask learners to make up scenes in which they show kindness toward another learner from another district of Uganda or from a neighbouring country. Invite groups to demonstrate their skits for the whole class.


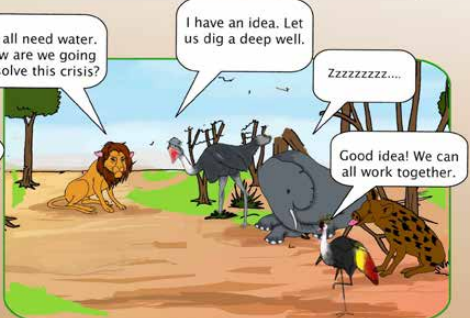
**This story is about:**

- sharing resources
- cooperation and teamwork
- finding peaceful solutions

Figure 5: Sample layout for primary 1–3 posters

## Side 1: dramatic reading in small groups

### The Selfish Elephant

Level 5 Reading Card 2

**PEIC**  
PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE FOR CHILDREN

**1** For many years, annual rainfall in the forest village of Ojama had become less and less. The land became very dry. At last, the whole area was in a terrible drought.

**2** One day, King Lion decided it was time to do something about the situation. He thought and thought.

**3** The next day, the old king called all the birds and other forest animals together for a meeting. All off the animals had something to say, except for Mr. Elephant. He was fast asleep.

We all need water. How are we going to solve this crisis?

I have an idea. Let us dig a deep well.

Zzzzzzzzz...

Good idea! We can all work together.

What are we going to do? Let me think.

When Mr. Elephant woke up, he refused to help. The animals all agreed to work together to build a well, even without the help of Mr. Elephant.

## Side 2: conclusion of dramatic reading, learner-facilitated activities with teacher support (right-hand column)

**4** The new well was strong and deep. There was plenty of water for all, except Mr. Elephant.

Ha! I don't care about the others. I can get water for myself.

**6** When the animals heard that their well was dry, they were outraged. Mr. Elephant hung his head in shame. He begged for forgiveness. King Lion called another meeting.

Mr. Elephant is sorry. We should forgive him. Let him help us build a new well.

What shall we do?

I say, kill him!

**5** One morning, Mr. Elephant decided he wanted a bath. He was thirsty, too.

Slowly, he walked to the well and bathed his enormous body. Then he drank up all the water.

What do you think they decided to do?

**This story is about:**

- sharing resources
- cooperation and teamwork
- finding peaceful solutions

**What do you know?**  
Work with a friend. Put the events from the story in the correct order.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ The animals worked together to build a deep well without the help of Mr. Elephant.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Elephant felt sorry for what he had done.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Elephant used up all the water from the well.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Many animals died because of the drought.

**What do you think?**  
Discuss these questions with a small group of your classmates.  
 1. What was the cause of the drought?  
 2. Was Mr. Lion a good king? Why or why not?  
 3. Why were the animals angry at Mr. Elephant?  
 4. How do you think he should be punished?

**What can you do?**  
 1. Write your own conclusion to the story. Read your conclusion to a small group of your classmates. Choose one of the conclusions from your group to read for the whole class.  
 2. Act out the story with a small group of your classmates. In your performance, include the final decision of King Lion.  
 3. A drought is one kind of natural disaster. How many other kinds of natural disasters can you name?

Figure 6: Sample layout for primary 4–5 reading cards

**Table of Contents**

**PART ONE: STORIES ..... 1**

Introduction..... 1

1. Understanding and Controlling Our Emotions..... 3  
*David, the Shy Boy*..... 3

2. Caring for Others ..... 5  
*The Visit*..... 5

3. Not Stereotyping..... 8  
*Anne, the Talkative Girl*..... 8

4. Including Others..... 11  
*The New Schoolmates*..... 11

5. Not Bullying ..... 15  
*Stand Up to Bullies*..... 15

6. Cooperation and Teamwork..... 20  
*John, the Great Thinker*..... 20

7. Negotiation ..... 25  
*The Broken Fence*..... 25

8. Forgiveness and Reconciliation ..... 33  
*The Young Peacemakers Agree*..... 33

9. Protecting Our Environment ..... 37  
*Wangari Maathai's 'Little Things'*..... 37

10. Review ..... 43  
*A Song for All*..... 43  
*Skills and Values Review*..... 45

**PART TWO: MORE ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNERS..... 47**

A Note for Teachers..... 47

Vocabulary Building and Group Work..... 48

**GLOSSARY ..... 57**


**Figure 7:** P6 chapter book topics and story titles

more feedback-revision cycles, they were collected at the end of the four-week workshop and entered into a word processing program with scanned illustrations inserted for circulation and additional feedback from NCDC and PEIC project advisers. In the interim between the two workshop sessions, SLM began laying out samples of the materials that could be finalized, pending revisions, as prototypes for each level.

The two chapter books developed for primary 6 and 7 followed a more traditional format, with stories at each level created around the same sequence of themes.

Each story is preceded by a short message to young readers introducing the topic, and questions are placed at appropriate

junctures in the storyline to help summarize what has happened and anticipate what may happen next. A separate section of each book contains a collection of activities focusing on building language and literacy skills as well as helping readers internalize the topic of each story and apply it to their own lives.

I ... (action)	When I feel... (emotion)	I look like this
smile	happy	

**Figure 8:** Sample post-reading SEL activity

**Side B**


**CHALLENGE**


Can you give examples of these skills?


**Level 5 Skills Review**


- ☒ protecting our environment
- ☒ cooperation and teamwork
- ☒ finding peaceful solutions
- ☒ sharing resources
- ☒ understanding natural disasters
- ☒ managing our emotions
- ☒ staying safe

**1 THINGS WE KNOW (READ ALOUDS)**  
Read the following sets of sentences slowly and clearly. Tell your group or partner to listen and point to the correct picture.

1. Stay indoors or inside a car if you can. Do not get near concrete walls or electrical equipment. If you are outdoors, do not take shelter under a tree.  **PICTURE B**

2. Ayoub's father became very angry. He could not control his emotions. He threw his panga, and the pig died.  **PICTURE C**

3. One morning, Mr. Elephant decided to take a bath in the water from the well. When he was finished, he drank up all the rest of the water."  **PICTURE D**

4. "There are many things you can do. You can plant trees and grass. Each time you cut down a tree, you must plant a new one."  **PICTURE A**

**2 THINGS WE CAN DO (ANSWERS)**

**1. Put a (✓) next to the things we can do to prevent soil erosion and grow plentiful food.**

Make use of wild forest products.  
 Cut down more trees.  
 Rotate crops each year.  
 Plant crops in rows across hillsides.  
 Build more roads.

**2. Put a (✓) next to the things we can do to help when there is a crisis.**

Meet with others in the community to agree on a solution.  
 Keep everything we have for ourselves.  
 Share what we have with others in need.  
 Refuse to follow the advice of old people.

**3. Put a (✓) next to the things we can do to live together peacefully.**

Stay angry at people with whom we have quarrel.  
 Try to control our emotions.  
 Do not be friends with children who are different.  
 Forgive people who have done something wrong to us.

**3 MORE THINGS WE CAN DO (IDEAS)**

**1. Crossword puzzle answers.**

**Across:**

1. KNOWLEDGE  
2. NET  
3. REFUSE  
4. MUD

**Down:**

1. UGANDA  
2. FERTILE  
3. BUCKET  
4. DROUGHT


2. On your poster, draw a picture of the natural disaster you have chosen (volcano, storm, flood, mudslide, drought, earthquake, tsunami, forest fire). Under your picture, make two lists:

**Nature's warning signs**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Keep safe**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



**Figure 9:** Primary 5 review lesson



For the second four-week session of the workshop, writers and illustrators regrouped at the same venue to finalize the earlier drafts and prepare them for layout within the boundaries of the formats for each level. In general, reviewer feedback asked writers to simplify and reduce the length of the stories and, in many instances, make the story theme more explicit. Adjustments were also made in follow-up activities and formatting to draw teachers' and learners' attention to the central themes. In addition, a review lesson was added to each set of stories to help children recall and internalize the topics and themes.

In their final drafts, the entire collection of stories in each of the three formats was reviewed for language level, gender balance and representation of Uganda's ethnic and cultural diversity. The latter, in particular, turned out to be a challenge for the three illustrators, who were accomplished at figure drawing but did not have models to follow for representing Uganda's less populous ethnic groups. The issue was partially resolved through Internet searches but could also have been addressed during the piloting phase and final rollout of the materials. Similarly, writers attempted to avoid religious, cultural or class stereotyping in their rendering of characters, settings and actions.

## Lessons learned

The orientation, drafting and revision phases of the Nakaseke workshop provided writers and illustrators with a long and comprehensive experience that built on their existing capacity to produce quality, theme-based learning materials at three stages of the primary school curriculum. From reflective discussions with participants, the project team summarized the lessons learned from the experience as follows:

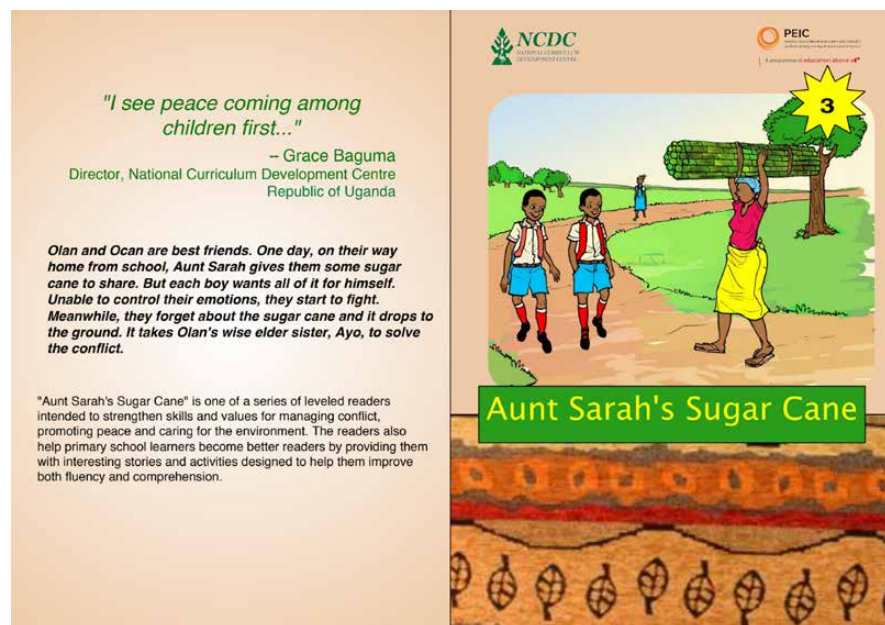
- 1 *Conceptual clarity is needed from the outset.* At the start of the first session, there was considerable confusion over how the topics and themes that had been identified for story development under the CDRM banner were distinct from the conceptual framework

and objectives of similar projects. For example, since several of the writers had been engaged in creating stories to convey messages about climate change, they were uncertain how to shift the focus of a story to emphasize disaster risk reduction, leading in some cases to thinly veiled replications of storylines, settings and characters from one project to another. In situations where the same pool of writers is involved in developing stories for parallel projects, the orientation phase should develop a shared understanding of the project objectives, with a detailed scope and sequence chart for the entire set of materials to be produced.

- 2 *More training is needed in using level-appropriate language.* Almost all of the initial drafts produced by the group were composed using vocabulary, sentence length and syntax that was far above the literacy levels of the targeted grades. In retrospect, it would have been helpful to spend more time on the principles of writing for emerging and transitional levels of literacy (learning to read), particularly for materials that were meant to be 'decodable' with minimal teacher support, in this case the reading cards for primary 4 and 5. To avoid revision overhauls that involve reconstructing the draft, the orientation phase should build in activities that guide the writers to express ideas and action in short sentences using a limited number of unfamiliar words.
- 3 *Illustrations need to be more than an afterthought.* The artists assigned to the project were exceptionally talented and industrious but had little training in illustrating educational materials, especially at the early grade levels. It was important to give the illustrators equal status with writers and to invite their full participation in the orientation, conceptualization, drafting and finalization of the production process.

## What the future holds

The laid-out sample materials are currently awaiting funding that would support pilot-testing, revision, official approval and distribution throughout the country. The materials require substantial investment to enable printing, laminating and binding. A brief teacher orientation session would also need to demonstrate how to integrate the materials into daily classroom interactions, ideally supported by a short instructional video. In the meantime, the collection of stories could be made available at much lower cost and in multiple languages using [Bloom](#) or [African Storybook](#) downloadable software, reformatting the text and illustrations as inexpensive books that could be accessible through school, community or electronic libraries. The following sample conversion of a poster story into a small format book with teacher guidance notes addresses the double-sided themes of negotiating conflicts and peace building.



**Figure 10:** 'Aunt Sarah's Sugar Cane' (P3) formatted as a story book

Viewed from the perspective of the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, and in particular Goal 4, the Education Goal, materials such as these have a critical role in supporting teaching and learning for sustainable development, inclusion, cultures of peace and nonviolence, and gender equality. Without accessible, engaging materials that include clear guidance for teachers, there is a risk that these themes, topics and skills will remain buried in the pages of the intended curriculum

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## Bloom: Putting the power of stories into the hands of local authors

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### ABSTRACT

Narrative is a fundamental vehicle for SEL. Stories illustrate SEL concepts in action. Learners of all ages need to experience these stories in their own languages and within their own cultural context to increase comprehension and support healthy community identity. They also need content from other cultures and places to broaden their perspectives and help them build a more inclusive world view. Technology can enable the creation of rich content but it can also be a barrier in places where people have low levels of computer experience and their local language is not supported by mainstream software.

Bloom software by SIL International makes it straightforward for people to create or translate their own literature in their own languages, even for people with minimal prior exposure to technology. Based on our experience in the field, people can become comfortable using Bloom in less than a day, allowing for their focus to shift from software to communication. Ready-to-use templates enable people to quickly build small books that can be shared easily for pilot testing and dissemination. Digital distribution of books is also possible through a free Android reader app.

### KEYWORDS

educational technology, minority languages, narrative, inclusion, writing, cultural diversity, print disability, cultural preservation

## Introduction

Stories are a powerful medium for social and emotional learning. Everyone—especially children—enjoys a good story, can identify with the people in stories, and can learn the lessons carefully embedded in narrative. Stories in the form of supplementary readers can be thematically linked to the explicit teaching of SEL concepts and skills in a progressive, incremental way, thereby reinforcing both the literacy and ‘soft skills’ components of a curriculum. Stories told by local authors in local languages amplify this positive effect because they reflect local issues, thinking and worldview. Content written in local languages helps to make learning more inclusive for all children, as learners need not face a language barrier in the process of acquiring literacy skills. By adding audio and sign language video, the same local language content further extends the impact of learning materials to groups that are otherwise doubly excluded, by language *and* by their print disability.

In today’s world, creating reading materials means using technology, but most technology caters to majority cultures and languages. People in marginalized communities—whether due to language, class, socioeconomic status, or geography—often lack sufficient exposure to and experience with technology to effectively use mainstream software for book creation. Bloom software from SIL International was developed to enable local authors with modest IT skills to create books in their own languages and adapt relevant content from other places.

Bloom puts the power of stories into the hands of local authors. With just a little technical training they can not only create but lay out, illustrate and prepare their stories for distribution in their own languages in a relatively brief period and with minimal expense. We consider this ‘democratization’ of authorship and book creation to be a key social good.

## Quality SEL content

Bloom’s simplicity and pre-designed book and page templates enable writers to focus on content rather than the mechanics of book creation. It is still the role of the author, however, to write quality content. Most people need training and coaching in order to write stories or informative text that is interesting, informative, and reflective of SEL themes. Since creation of content is the main challenge, workshops for writers concentrate on writing quality SEL

Writing Organizer: Real Life Story	
Title	● Can you summarize the story in a few words?
Character(s)	● Who are the actors in the story?
Setting	● When and where does the story take place?
Problem	● What problem does the main character face?
Action: <i>Beginning</i>	● Introduce the characters and setting.
Action: <i>Middle</i>	● Describe the problem the characters face.
Action: <i>Ending</i>	● Describe the solution to the problem.

Assessment Tool: Real Life Story	✓
My story has an interesting title.	
I am a character in the story.	
I describe the setting in my story.	
I introduce a problem to be solved.	
My story has a beginning, a middle, and an ending.	
My story uses the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘me’.	

**Figure 1:** Guidance for a ‘Real Life Story’

content for children, with Bloom included as a tool for writing but not as the focus of training.

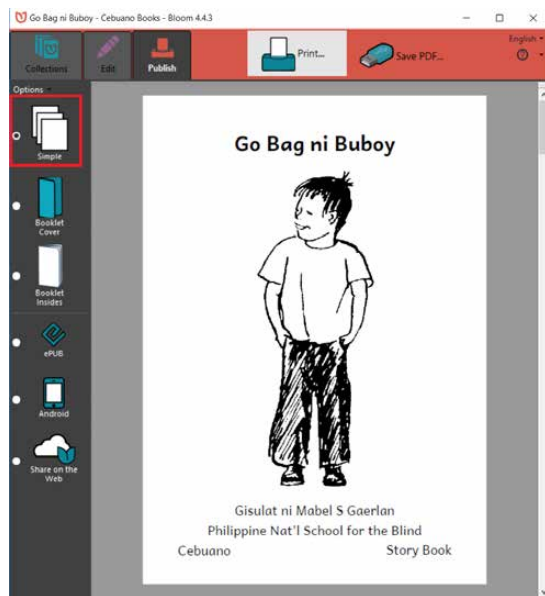
Authors can learn the core Bloom skills in a day; learning to write quality books is a much longer and more complex process! Once the individual has acquired basic Bloom skills, their attention can quickly turn to the challenge of conceptualizing and writing their content. Group discussions around the characteristics of good stories for children can stimulate thinking and brainstorming. The specific themes need to be considered and selected. Cross-cutting themes such as disability, gender, and conflict resolution or another core SEL theme need also to be factored in. A writing organizer can be a helpful tool for outlining the theme(s), characters, setting, plot,

Writing Organizer: Real Life Story	
Title	
Character(s)	
Setting	
Problem	
Action: <i>Beginning</i>	
Action: <i>Middle</i>	
Action: <i>Ending</i>	

**Figure 2:** Writing Organizer for the author to use

and other important elements of the story. These outlines can be shared and shaped even before writing begins or a person's hands touch the keyboard. Figure 1 shows guidance for an author writing a 'real life story' then a writing organizer for such a story.

The ease of jump-starting a new book and adding pages and illustrations means that authors can draft their stories fairly quickly, then share them with others for feedback. Writing in pairs or small teams helps to facilitate the creative process while building in some quality assurance on the fly. Roving coaches can monitor the writers' progress, give ideas, and provide corrections during the writing. People who are new to writing or to using computers invariably take pride in creating their own stories and books, then sharing them with others. Sharing is its own reward but is also a key part of the process of refining the material. Revising the book is as easy as clicking on the page thumbnail and making needed changes. One-click PDF creation turns a book-in-progress into a form that can be shared electronically, projected, or printed.



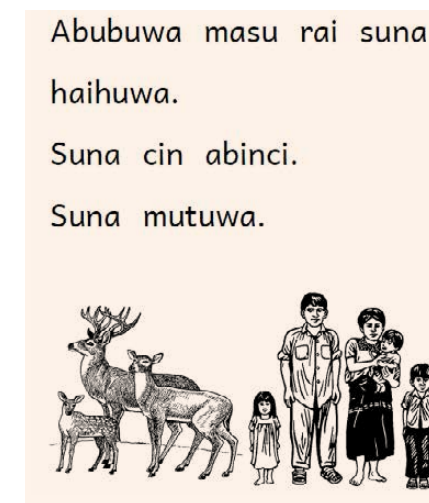
**Figure 3:** One-click PDF creation

Books for those who are still learning to read benefit from illustrations that assist in conveying the meaning of the story. Bloom has a companion Art of Reading image gallery of more than 10,000 black and white line drawings from a variety of countries around the world. This free, searchable collection enables writers to easily add illustrations to their books. In the long run, however, the best illustrations are those that are drawn by local artists to illustrate a specific story. Stock illustrations may lack elements that are important to the narrative, may contain extraneous elements, or may not reflect local people's appearance, clothing or other aspect of the cultural or physical setting. Figure 4 shows a locally-drawn illustration from a book created in Indonesia, while figure 5 shows the use of an Art of Reading illustration from Latin America in a book written in Nigeria.

In addition to images from the Art of Reading, Bloom can import images from other custom image galleries, a camera, a scanner, or a file on the computer.

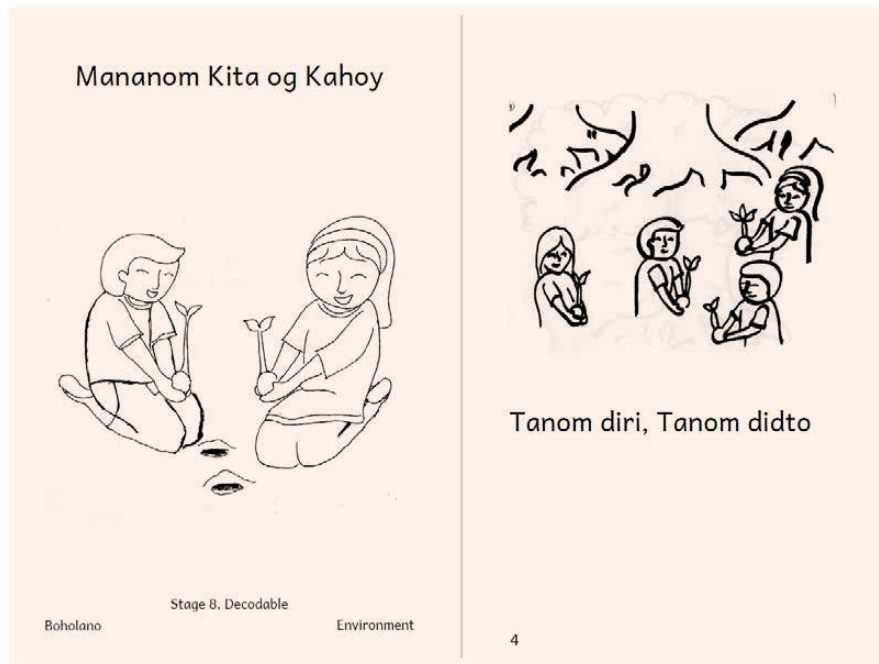


**Figure 4:** Locally drawn illustration, book from Indonesia



**Figure 5:** Stock illustration from Latin America, book from Nigeria (Hausa language)





**Figure 6:** Bloom first grade book about caring for the environment in the Boholano language of the Philippines, written using a limited set of letters

Bloom contains tools to help authors write ‘controlled text’ (e.g. the stories/books can match levels expressed in the curriculum). When writing texts for children who are still learning their alphabet, Bloom monitors the words typed and highlights any words that contain letters not yet taught. Bloom also keeps track of the number of words per sentence, page, and book, and can give writers visual feedback if these counts go over limits set by a reading specialist for the given language and level of difficulty.

Bloom does not check spelling, punctuation or grammar, as such tools do not exist for local languages, so the author and editor need to give attention to those details during their revision and editing.

In addition to peer review and editing, it is important for more experienced writers to go over the books and either make corrections directly in Bloom or provide writers with feedback for them to process. It is often helpful to develop a quality checklist

for evaluating a story. It is difficult to keep all the considerations in mind, so a checklist helps ensure that all the different aspects of quality have been evaluated.

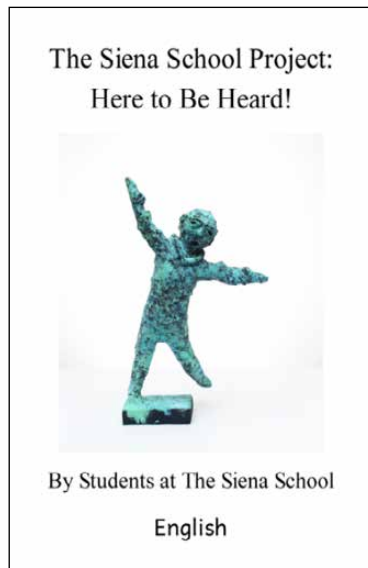
Once a story is ready for sharing, it can easily be exported to PDF (for both print and electronic distribution), ePUB, and ‘Bloom Reader’ Android app forms. Once books are ready for broader distribution, they can be uploaded to the online Bloom Library. Speakers of the given language will be able to access these books, no matter where they may be located.

## Cultural diversity

Although the creation of ‘fresh’, local content is a core function of Bloom, it also facilitates the adaptation of existing content from other people and places. Any book written using Bloom can be shared with others through the online Bloom Library ([bloomlibrary.org/browse](https://bloomlibrary.org/browse)). Users can identify books that will be relevant to their context and download the book to adapt in Bloom. Once opened in the program, users can create a version of the book for their language. The book’s text appears to the side as reference for the writer, who then supplies the text in their language.

Books thus adapted can expand children’s awareness of other places, events, characters, and ways of life. By reading stories about children and people in other places, they can develop an appreciation for diversity but also understand that they have much in common with other people whose reality and context may seem very foreign on the surface. And well-crafted stories that are more universal, once translated into the local language, can complement locally-crafted stories.

Capturing and sharing local traditions and oral literature can help preserve cultural diversity. An SEL classroom activity focusing on sharing can be followed up with a specific assignment to record an elder’s traditional story on the same theme, for turning into a story. If such traditions are lost, the society’s diversity is reduced; if they are captured, they can be preserved for the current and future



**Figure 7:** Siena School student-created Bloom anthology

generations. Demecio, an Awajun indigenous person from Peru, told us, ‘We are forgetting the stories that our grandparents used to tell us...writing our own stories in our own language will help our children to not forget our culture.’ Even the act of creating written literature helps foster the preservation of threatened or endangered languages and cultures. Children and youth can be encouraged to elicit and record stories told by their elders, then turn what they have gathered into Bloom books.

Bloom’s simplicity means that children who learn to type can also create their own books. One teacher told me she plans to take drawings that her young students created and the stories they dictated to go with them and create a Bloom book. The Siena School in Silver Spring, Maryland is made up of students with learning challenges: 35 students in grades 4–12 created original artwork and wrote stories and poems, which they turned into an 88-page anthology using Bloom (see figure 7). Such creative activities using Bloom can be replicated in any setting where there are computers and young people learning to use them.

## Inclusion

Bloom supports inclusion in a number of ways. First and foremost, the creation of books in local languages means that minority language communities are no longer excluded from literacy and reading. Minority language speakers can join the ranks of authors and illustrators. This is no small achievement. National governments and international donors understandably desire to meet the needs of as many children as possible, but this inevitably means working in a dominant language spoken by millions, rather than thousands, of people. The benefits of development and even the simple act of reading can remain out of reach for the one billion people who speak languages not yet adopted as languages of instruction. Bloom lends itself to efforts by smaller communities, smaller actors working with them, and fewer numbers of people. Rather than having to wait for the publishing industry to take notice of them or governments to address their needs, non-dominant language communities and those who serve them can use Bloom to develop the literature they want their children to read, including books that incorporate important SEL themes and topics, such as self-control, caring for others and making responsible decisions. Self-publishing through



**Figure 8:** Bloom story book in Spanish with images, text, audio, and sign language

simple printouts or digital books enable such communities to address their own literature needs.

Bloom also supports other, more commonly recognized needs for inclusive education by using new tools within the existing program to create resources to produce accessible books for learners with certain types of disabilities. For example, any Bloom book can be enhanced to include sign language video or image descriptions and audio recording of a book's text. Writers who have learned to use the basic Bloom software will be able to add these features to digital books using new tools within the existing program that they use for regular print production. The resulting sign language books or 'digital talking books' can be shared either in ePUB form or through the free Bloom Reader Android app. Bloom thus becomes a tool for implementing universal design rather than a tool for creating totally separate resources for those with print disabilities.

## Reflections

SEL stories could be described as 'truth wrapped in narrative.' Bloom helps simplify and facilitate the wrapping process. Bloom does not write stories, but it does put up some fences to help guide writing, to reduce complexity, and to make the writing and book creation processes straightforward for people for whom the technology might otherwise be a barrier rather than an enabler.

## What is the secret sauce?

### The story of the We Love Reading program

RANA DAJANI

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We Love Reading

#### ABSTRACT

We Love Reading (WLR) is a grassroots community program based on human-centered design, with three outputs:

- It fosters the love of reading among children so they can reap the benefits of reading;
- It empowers adults and youth mostly women to become changemakers;
- It creates a community with the mindset of ‘I can.’

Research has shown that reading aloud is the key to fostering the love of reading, from as young as when the mother is pregnant. However, not all parents read aloud to their children for various reasons. WLR trains local volunteers (ambassadors) aged 16–100 from all walks of life to hold read-aloud sessions for children aged 0–10 in public spaces of their neighborhoods. The books are in the native language and from the culture, on themes selected to change children’s behavior regarding the environment, health, gender disabilities etc. By taking books home, children engage their parents and family in an environment of reading. Rigorous academic research has shown that WLR impacts neuronal development, emotional regulation and executive function, resulting in children doing better at school. WLR has also become a mental health preventive program, building resilience through reading among children and adults. WLR ambassadors become leaders in their community, sometimes going beyond the program

to create their own business and projects. WLR has developed a total management virtual platform for training, monitoring and evaluation through all WLR ambassadors around the world. That is why WLR is a scalable, efficient, sustainable program that started in Jordan and has spread to 52 countries and counting WLR is a social movement it is the butterfly effect.

#### KEYWORDS

reading, empowerment, sustainability, motivation, ownership, changemakers

To develop programs that contribute to achieving SDG target 4.7 is no easy feat. The fundamental tenet for such programs is that they must be inherently grassroots. If not, they put the whole objective at risk. The majority of programs developed for low and middle income countries (LMICs) and/or humanitarian situations have originated in the West, far removed from their intended context. There is therefore a risk that such programs can at best achieve only a temporary success towards such an ambitious goal.

We Love Reading (WLR) is based on the proposition that in order to achieve SDG Target 4.7, successful programs need to meet the following criteria:

- 1 The people experiencing the challenge should be the ones to design the solution.
- 2 Experts can help, by supporting, not imposing from without.
- 3 Through trial and error, solutions can arrive at the design that best fulfills the goal and is sustainable. This is what is sometimes called human-centered design or, as I prefer to call it, evolution. Both are fancy names for an ancient process—that of creative adaptation, which has been instrumental to human survival and progress.

In these ways, not only can the intended goals be achieved but they can have much greater impact because the programs are organic and have holistic approaches. As a grassroots community program

based on human-centered design, WLR is an example of such an organic program.

Beginning in 2006, with weekly reading sessions by Dr Rana Dajani in a local mosque in Amman, Jordan, WLR has grown into a global, independent, nonprofit organization that aims to create changemakers by adopting a practical, cost-efficient, sustainable, grassroots approach involving women, men, youth and the community. The program trains local women, men and youth to hold regular read-aloud sessions for children aged 2–10 in public spaces in their neighborhoods. The books are age-appropriate, attractive, neutral in content and written in the children's mother tongue. In addition to promoting the experience of reading, WLR empowers women, men and youth readers to become leaders in their communities. It builds ownership among children and community members and serves as a platform for raising awareness on issues such as health and the environment, through the themes of the books.

The WLR model can be replicated anywhere. It uses public spaces such as mosques or community centers. It does not need bookshelves, since the books are all given out. It simply requires a collection of books to be read again and again. The women who read aloud do not have to be highly educated and trained. After training, each individual is required to 'pay it forward' by sharing his or her newly acquired knowledge and training with another person, thereby creating a domino effect. The newly-trained reader is welcomed because she or he is from the neighborhood. In particular, the community starts to respect women and support their roles as leaders and future change agents. The community starts to invest in the book collection, building ownership and responsibility for the library.

The WLR model has now evolved into a framework that nurtures social entrepreneurship. Young men and women are discovering the potential inside themselves to become changemakers in their own communities through the library they have established in their neighborhood. They have started

their own initiatives, serving their communities by identifying problems that trouble them and coming up with grassroots solutions. WLR has tangible outcomes, transforming, in a short period of time, a whole generation of children into readers who love, enjoy, and respect books through the establishment of a library in every neighborhood, with immeasurable impact on the development of society.

## **The WLR movement**

In Jordan alone, WLR has trained around 7000 volunteer women, men and youth, created 4000 libraries, directly impacted 140,000 children (60% of whom are girls) and indirectly impacted 400,000 individuals, working across various sectors—local and private business, government and civil society—to forge multi-stakeholder relationships to advance the WLR model. The program has now spread to 52 countries in the Middle East, Far East, Europe, North America, South America and Africa. It has been contacted to implement WLR in marginalized neighborhoods in New York City.

WLR has also developed 32 books for children, which focus on energy and water conservation and littering as well as social inclusion, refugees, non-violence, gender and disability. In Jordan, men from neighboring refugee camps encourage women to become library leaders. Mosque clerics proudly open their doors to women to administer read-aloud sessions and donate funds to buy books. Children have developed a culture of literacy, discussing and recommending books and authors to their friends. Older children continue to be readers. Parents inform us that children exhibit greater self-confidence and make progress academically, and are also more likely to buy and read books rather than toys.

In addition, WLR has developed a manual on how to write children's books in Arabic to encourage other WLR hubs in other cultures to create their own books.



WLR is a non-profit organization, funded through grants from international donors such as UNICEF, USAID and private foundations. It has recently developed a financially sustainable business model through licensing the program to international NGOs and donors. The licensed program is used by organizations that can afford to pay to implement the program within their own activities, while the income generated is used to train groups that are underserved and cannot afford the program themselves. WLR also sells the books that it develops, earning revenue to open more libraries.

### **WLR partners**

*International NGOs:* NRC, UNHCR, IRC, IRD, Save the children, Mercy corps, ACEV (Turkey),

*Government entities:* Ministry of culture, Ministry of social development, Ministry of education, local municipalities

In Jordan, WLR works with the Ministry of Social Development to target early childhood development and parents, the Ministry of Youth and Culture to target youth to change mindsets through reading, and the Ministry of Education to target schoolchildren to make reading fun.

In this way, WLR is a scalable, efficient, sustainable program that has become a social movement. It is the butterfly effect.

## **The WLR ambassador network**

WLR volunteers are known as ambassadors and have become leaders in their communities, discovering their voices literally and figuratively. They have ownership of the program and a genuine sense of agency, going beyond the program to create their own businesses and projects. For example, a young man created his own NGO in a small town in the north of Jordan; Nabela from eastern Amman started a compost business; another young woman in the south of the country was able to get a better job; and Asma—a

Syrian refugee who never finished school—was offered a job in a school by Save the Children.

The program has also developed a total management digital solution for training, monitoring and evaluation through a global ambassador network on a virtual platform, connecting all WLR ambassadors around the world.

The Global Ambassadors Automated Network manages the volunteers to ensure quality and sustainability. The network is used by the ambassadors to report the reading session time and the number of children attending and to send requests and success stories. It allows communication among all ambassadors, more easily tracking performance improvement, sustainability, and monitoring and evaluation, and providing targeted information to the ambassadors to ensure a well-established and functioning virtual community of practice amongst all them.

This virtual community allows for capacity-building, data collection, and documentation in addition to sharing and exchange of best practices of read-aloud sessions, creating a global social movement. The virtual community works to inspire the WLR ambassadors to get to know each other and learn from each other. As WLR ambassador Asma said, 'I can talk to a WLR ambassador in Argentina!'

## **The WLR theory of change**

Research and observation show that reading for pleasure is important, not just for education. Reading is entertaining—if children love it they will become lifelong learners. So, how can we motivate them? Human nature demands entertainment. It would be prohibitively expensive to train every parent to read aloud. In each neighborhood, WLR identifies one adult aged 16 to 100 to read aloud to children—weekly or more often, in an engaging way in a public space, in their mother tongue, using stories that echo the child's understanding and viewpoint. Building on this is an exchange system in which children share at home with parents and read aloud to their siblings. The

philosophy is to turn the child into a champion of reading and then through the school unlock the magic of reading. WLR primes the community for a culture of reading.

In many countries, reading has traditionally been considered boring or a waste of time outside of academic or religious contexts. WLR is changing attitudes and letting people know that reading is fun. It achieves impact at scale because it is a simple, effective product that appeals to its market of mothers and children. It depends on networks of women, men and youth who already resemble a movement, to bring about social change through reading. It aims to develop long-term cultural change, not by delivering services that need support systems, but by creating capabilities among thousands of local women and men. Organizations need hierarchies but movements need causes, shared values and common goals to bind them together and give them a purpose. Reading is the means but the cause is to get young children to realize that they can and should think for themselves. The model is formulated in such a way that each person can tailor it to fit their culture and their needs while maintaining the essence of the model, helping to building ownership of the movement and create sustainability.

WLR has three outputs:

- 1 It fosters the love of reading among children so that they can reap the benefits of reading.
- 2 It empowers adults and youth, mostly women, to become changemakers.
- 3 It creates a community with the mindset of 'I can'.

## The secret sauce

We Love Reading is innovative at three levels:

- 1 It has the secret sauce to motivate both children and adults to pursue learning because they want to, not because they have to. Based on research, we know that the basis of human nature

is to follow what gives you pleasure. It is like addiction. The same thing that makes a child play video games will inspire an adult to want to read if she finds satisfaction in it. This is basic marketing. With the right stimulus, children will want to go to school of their own accord and agency, not because their parents make them. The child has a reason to go, which is linked to his or her desire. Also, the teacher wants to enjoy her or his work. She reads aloud because she chooses to, not because it is a duty or to report to a higher authority. This agency is the fundamental principle that has enabled We Love Reading to succeed even in the direst of circumstances.

- 2 WLR is a basic framework based on shared universal human values such as caring for the young, integrity, and wanting for others what you want for yourself. This allows it to scale all over the world while at the same time being flexible enough to adapt to any culture or context. Even where people are not literate, all they need to do is 'read' from an illustrated book and make up the story.

Of course, this may seem contradictory: how can a home-grown solution be adapted to different cultures? The WLR is innovative and unique in that it provides a simple, universal framework. Within this framework, the person takes ownership and makes it personal, shaping it to his/her own culture and needs.

- 3 WLR harnesses technology to serve rather than being controlled by technology. It resisted adapting the stories digitally in the WLR libraries, so that children interact with the books in real life and have a break from technology. The adults use technology to connect with each other through a digital platform while the children engage with adult readers because human interaction is essential for our survival as a species. We are social animals and our brains need human interactive stimulation in order to develop.

## Adding WLR to other programs

We have discovered that any program already being implemented by international NGOs can incorporate WLR to ensure sustainability, regardless of the main program focus. When refugee programs implement WLR, the beneficiaries become changemakers and take their other programs further. Plan International (PI) had set up reading aloud sessions in their safe places, but no girls and few boys were attending. The safe spaces closed at 4:00 PM and the social workers went home. When PI implemented the WLR program, refugees read in the evening or weekends regardless of the social workers' schedule or the safe space hours, because they were reading in their tents and under trees. The trained refugees knew when and where the girls and boys could attend and even with multiple displacement they took the program with them.

When Mercy Corps adopted WLR as an add-on program for raising reproductive health awareness among teenage girls, the girls were initially not very interested. After taking the WLR training they acquired agency, ownership and confidence and started to implement the program with enthusiasm.

WLR is the secret sauce that makes a program sustainable. Our new slogan is: Keep your program and add WLR: it will become better. WLR will ensure sustainability—psychologically and logistically. It is not only about the reading; the reading is the medium, the objective is empowerment. When Plan International and Mercy Corps implemented WLR, their other programs improved. WLR is a core humanitarian program because beneficiaries want to be involved; they are not involved simply out of respect for the INGOs, or for reward; they do not go back to what they were doing anyway as soon as the project ends.

### How WLR can be adopted in vulnerable communities

Ein Al-Helweh camp / Lebanon

Dina Al Mawed / Thursday 5/16/2019, 3:46 PM

'Actually, it all happened by coincidence! I was looking at the website of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and saw the interview with Dr Rana Dajani talking about this initiative. I was really impressed and I opened your website and found that I could be a volunteer in this especially since I live in an area where children are suffering on many aspects. I started reading on Sat 3/2/2019 in the refugee camp in Lebanon. What makes me really satisfied is the feeling I have every time we get together! I know I'm doing a great initiative to the disadvantaged children in my camp! They suffer a lot. Some of them have faced traumas and experienced bad events and situations (due to the clashes). I knew that from their behavior the very first time I met them. The first session was the hardest. The children didn't know me yet and they were laughing about the idea of reading them a story. When I started reading, I noticed children bringing chairs to come and listen. I reread the story that time twice!

After I'd finished, they asked me eagerly about when the next session would be. This initiative is one of a kind in our camp and I feel like a leader in my community. This gives me greater responsibility to pick up a good story for children that has a good moral to learn in every session. In addition to that, I am an organized person but also the sessions have given me the commitment to get the children together every week. I am really grateful to be a part of this community :) Thank you to We Love Reading initiative!

*Translation of email sent to Dr Rana Dajani*

## Measuring impact

Of course, innovative programs such as WLR challenge the status quo about how to measure such programs. To measure the instilling and fostering of agency one has to be creative. Agency is not directly measurable and can only be inferred through qualitative research and indirectly through stories and anecdotes.

WLR has therefore adopted a novel measurement approach that consists of:

- 1 Collecting very basic data, such as the number of reading aloud sessions, the number of boys and girls, the frequency of reading aloud, and the locations that do not impose a burden on volunteers;
- 2 Gathering anecdotal evidence from volunteers, who offer to share it as leaders of the program;
- 3 In-depth, rigorous academic research to understand impact, in collaboration with well-known academics such as Professor Dima Amso at Brown University.

Research has shown that reading aloud to children—from as early as pregnancy—is key to fostering the love of reading: ‘The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children’ (Anderson et al., 1985). However, for various reasons, not all parents read aloud to their children.

Rigorous academic research in collaboration with Brown, Harvard, Yale, Chicago and other local universities has shown that WLR impacts neuronal development, emotional regulation and executive function, with the result that children do better at school. This research enables us to continuously improve our approach, helping us better serve our beneficiaries.

To date, a majority of international educational research has focused on the cognitive domain of learning whereas the affective domain, such as values and attitudes toward learning, has largely been neglected. However, students’ values and attitudes influence how they approach and organize learning on a day-to-day basis. The Brown University study (Dajani et al, 2019) developed and tested a short self-report measure of school interest in Jordan. A regression analysis, controlling for family background variables, showed a significant association with age, confirming the hypothesis that older children report lower levels of school interest. In addition, gender was significantly associated with school interest, indicating

that boys had lower levels of school interest. The study showed over a six-month period that the number of books in the home and the number of children who considered reading as a hobby had increased. Changes in reading in the home from baseline to post-WLR also predicted larger improvements in executive functions, particularly for younger children and for families who reported lower family income.

In a further independent study on the impact of WLR, 80% of children felt more positively towards reading and were more willing to go back to school, 75% of readers reported less aggression and fearfulness in their child listeners, and 100% of surveyed parents felt the program had positively impacted their child (Dajani, 2017). Research has also shown that three months of 15 reading sessions is enough to make the child into a lifelong reader which correlates with habit-changing studies in terms of frequency of adopting a new habit.

A study by Hashemite University (Mahasneh & Dajani, 2018) found that WLR significantly increased the reading practices of children aged 4–12 years by an average of 34%. This increase was regardless of gender or geographical location.

In an as yet unpublished study by Professor Isabelle Mareschal from Queen Mary University, London, refugee children were assessed for abnormalities in emotional processing compared to Jordanian controls of matched ages, to assess whether trauma and psychopathology are associated with emotion recognition bias. Both refugee and non-refugee children showed a bias towards sad facial expressions. When these children were enrolled in the WLR program their bias toward sad facial expression improved by 30%. Another study by the University of Chicago showed that integrating the values of empathy into children’s stories increased children’s generosity by 100% and increased children’s interest in and concern for others. Importantly, the intervention did not affect what is called ‘affective empathy’ or pain sensitivity. These changes were not observed in children who were not read to and who did not participate in the reading sessions. Finally, in another



study on children’s awareness and attitudes towards environmental issues (Mahasneh et al, 2017), it was indicated that through reading aloud, children’s knowledge about environmental issues increased significantly: children who attended reading sessions became more aware of issues and a positive behavior change was noted in relation to electricity and water consumption and littering, as reported by parents. The study found that the WLR model was more effective and sustainable than traditional methods such as television and billboards, and works to improve environmental problems at the grassroots level.

Finally, a psycho-social study designed by Yale University (Yazji, 2014) was conducted to assess the social and mental state of both the reading ambassadors and the children. The results in the test of resilience showed that the children who were read to had a greater ability to recover and return to a normal state after undergoing difficulties. A large number of children in the enormous Zaatari camp are not enrolled in school for various reasons. Reading aloud to these children encouraged them to go back to school. In addition, they learned to love reading and to think and make decisions for themselves.

Compared with the cost of programs that offer similar results, WLR is significantly less, with much larger and diverse positive effects. When the program starts in neighborhoods there is only an initial cost before it runs on its own, with support from the community.

In emergency situations—where it is difficult to set up education systems because of security concerns, as well as practicality, cost, sustainability and lack of qualified personnel—many children remain out of school for indefinite periods. Even where there is a school, it is not sustainable and girls do not attend because of culture, work, safety or ignorance. Refugees are multiply displaced. WLR allows them to carry the program with them wherever they go. It is effective even in areas where only local people can enter. It is also effective where there is no formal education system and/or lack of trained educators, where local people can read aloud to children

in their native tongue, thereby maintaining the local culture. There is no requirement to pay people and the program is sustainable even after the project ends. In Ethiopia, for example, WLR libraries continued to run even after PI stopped working there.

At its best, WLR complements what takes place in school or in emergency contexts where there is no school system. It becomes a placeholder, keeping children engaged in learning so that they can respond to learning opportunities that arise. WLR has also become a mental health preventive program, building resilience through reading among children and adults who share a common purpose and experience.

## Conclusion

Much can be learned from grassroots initiatives from around the world. People and organizations who want to help must listen to and trust people, as well as being open to innovation and creativity that may not at first seem familiar. People come with unique experiences. We all are equal in this world. Each of us has a unique DNA and experiences to share. If we really want to achieve SDG Target 4.7 we need to allow everyone at the table to have equal power dynamics so as to create a better world for future generations. The secret sauce is in how to motivate individuals to take ownership and become changemakers.

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# SECTION EIGHT

Measurement, monitoring  
and assessment

## Section Eight overview: Measurement, monitoring and assessment

AARON BENAVIDE

MARGARET SINCLAIR

### Why measure and monitor?

Many of the briefs in this volume assert that the learning domains found within Target 4.7 and social and emotional learning are best defined in culturally-specific and contextualized terms. At the same time, the nations of the world have committed themselves to measure and monitor progress towards the SDGs using common frameworks and sometimes global metrics. This section seeks to navigate between the contextualized nature of Target 4.7 and SEL, on the one hand, and the demands of the SDGs for more globally comparable indicators and measures on the other. They build on models of cognition, content and learning that have been tested and proven reliable in high-income countries, and work to broaden and realign them to experiences and realities in low and middle-income countries (LMICs).

In the broadest sense, the measurement of learning, if done carefully and competently, can expand the policy discussion to consider different policy options and possible reforms. The history of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) initiative and its impact on donor funding is a case in point. The development of assessment instruments, based on research, undoubtedly led to increased global funding in support of programs that sought to improve both early grade reading and mathematics (using the early grade mathematics assessment instruments, or EGMA). In particular, the use of the EGRA tool to independently measure actual early grade reading levels in sample schools brought into public view the instructional weaknesses that had not been showing up in internal school measurement procedures. And so, a

new focus on early grade reading materials and processes began.

Having said that, measurement as *assessment* may have a number of unintended consequences. These include, for example, the narrowing of learning domains, the weakening of the value of non-tested subjects, and teachers altering their instructional practices to ‘teach to the test’. Smith and Benavot (2019) point out two unintended consequences from using global learning metrics (GLMs) to measure learning outcomes: a narrowing of the notion of good quality education and the side-tracking of equity-related concerns. These unintended consequences are especially salient when assessment results have high stakes consequences for students, teachers or schools (UNESCO, 2019c). Another negative consequence relates to equity: learning assessments often serve as a barrier to social mobility, especially among students from ethnic or linguistic minorities or those from poorer households. Many such families are at a disadvantage since they cannot afford to pay for supplemental test preparation to compensate for poor quality instruction. In other instances, students may successfully pass the test, but are unable to continue their education due to high tuition or other fees.

An overarching goal of *monitoring* is to provide relevant information to policy makers and educators, which they can act upon *during* implementation. Much like formative assessment, monitoring is the equivalent to tasting the soup while we are preparing it, rather than waiting until we have served it to our guests. Monitoring can be used at the macro level, to measure the implementation and effects of intended policies, including indicators of inputs, processes, textbook content, and outcomes. At the macro level, student assessments can help decision-makers benchmark the impact of reforms to enhance learning. They can also be used at the level of schools and classrooms: teachers and school leaders can use formative or summative assessments to take steps to improve learning, by altering lesson plans, revising syllabi (if the school *has* such autonomy), or increasing instructional time. Ideally, then, monitoring should inform the ongoing work

of policymakers, planners and teachers, rather than about the students being assessed, and it should allow for mid-stream corrections and redirections.

At the same time, it is precisely the impact on policy or on individual students that can transform the intentions of the measurement process, risking turning it from an instrument of value for practitioners into a high-stakes and potentially compromised or corrupting activity. As Goodhart's law states: whenever a measure becomes a target, in and of itself, it ceases to be an effective measure. Thus, to the extent that national monitoring of student performance becomes high-stakes, it could become even more complex and challenging to include Target 4.7 themes or SEL.

Measurement and monitoring in support of Target 4.7 themes and SEL therefore needs to find an appropriate balance among all aspects of the measurement of quality education: that is, the inputs, processes and outcomes. Inputs may be easier to measure, but they need to be backed up by careful analysis of classroom dynamics (i.e. the processes) and the learning outcomes, whether in a monitoring function or—when such instruments have proved their reliability—at larger-scale assessment.

Since NISSEM's concern is not only with policy formation but also with practice, and since we view textbooks as the most direct application of policy in the classrooms of many LMICs, we believe the review and analysis of textbooks to be an important element in the measuring and monitoring of education purposes and practices. Such analyses can contribute to an articulation of the degree and type of support provided by the education system for teaching and learning of Target 4.7 themes (e.g. gender equality, cultural diversity, sustainability and global citizenship) and the inclusion of SEL. Ideally such textbook analyses can be linked to the personal responses of children and youth to better capture their sense of what is included in the lesson plan and the extent to which they perceive it as impactful, both in their own context and environment and for future generations.

## Measuring and monitoring the presence of Target 4.7 themes

Measuring and evaluating the inclusion and impact of Target 4.7 themes and values and evaluating the impact of social and emotional learning clearly encompasses a range of knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as a range of purposes and uses for such measurement. That said, for UNESCO—as the lead agency reviewing progress on the global goal on education and its ten targets, including Target 4.7—the key issue is how countries are translating their commitments into concrete policies and action plans so as to effect significant change on the ground. Thus, at this juncture, the focus has been more on compiling evidence on country implementation of policy *intentions*, and less in terms of changes in learning *outcomes*.

As part of their commitments to the 17 SDGs and 169 targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, countries agreed to two 'follow up and review' mechanisms for assessing progress. One mechanism involved country submission of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), which would describe steps undertaken by each country to advance the SDGs<sup>1</sup>. Countries would 'conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country led and country driven...' (para 79 of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). The UN facilitated this process by providing guidelines for the VNRs<sup>2</sup>. Until August 2019, 158 VNRs had been conducted (22 in 2016, 43 in 2017, 46 in 2018 and 47 in 2019)<sup>3</sup> in a total of 140 countries (some have submitted more than one VNR) and represent a valuable source of information for reviewing country initiatives to advance the SDGs, including SDG 4. Analyses of submitted VNRs in which SDG 4 is explicitly mentioned highlight two cross-cutting issues: first, education's role in leaving

1 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

2 [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20872VNR\\_hanbook\\_2019\\_Edition\\_v4.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20872VNR_hanbook_2019_Edition_v4.pdf)

3 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019#vnrs>

### Global indicator

- 4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment

### Thematic indicators

- 4.7.2 Percentage of schools that provide life skills-based HIV and sexuality education
- 4.7.3 Extent to which the framework on the World Programme on Human Rights Education is implemented nationally (as per the UNGA Resolution 59/113)
- 4.7.4 Percentage of students by age group (or education level) showing adequate understanding of issues relating to global citizenship and sustainability
- 4.7.5 Percentage of 15-year-old students showing proficiency in knowledge of environmental science and geoscience

### Box 1: Global and thematic indicators for SDG Target 4.7

no one behind and, second, education's role in achieving the other SDGs (UNESCO, 2019, p.8ff).

The second follow-up and review mechanism involved the elaboration of a global SDG indicator framework. Following recommendations set out in the Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary-General in December 2014, a set of global indicators—at least one indicator for each of the 169 targets—was to be proposed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IEAG-SDGs) and adopted by the UN General Assembly. Led by statistical and demographic experts from different world regions, the IEAG-SDGs held protracted discussions about the definition, validity, global coverage and measurement strategy of each global indicator.<sup>4</sup> After years of discussion, the IEAG-SDGs eventually agreed to 230 global indicators, which were approved by the

4 These global indicators are classified into three different tiers. An indicator for which the definition and measurement approach are fairly well developed, and data exist for most countries in the world, is called a tier 1 indicator. When the definition and methodology are fairly well developed, but global coverage of the data is weak, this is a tier 2 indicator. And when there is little consensus about the definition of the concepts in the global indicator and the global coverage of data is poor, this is known as a tier 3 indicator. The current measurement strategy for the global indicator for Target 4.7 is considered as a tier 3 indicator.

UN General Assembly in July 2017. Notably, the adoption of this indicator framework involved various caveats. For example, the resolution stated that the UN 'adopts the global indicator framework... as a voluntary and country led instrument' and that 'official [national] statistics constitute the basis...for the global indicator framework, while recommending that national systems explore ways to integrate new data sources....' Finally, 'international organizations shall consult... countries to produce and validate... estimates before publication...'.<sup>5</sup> These caveats, especially the voluntary and country-validated nature of the global indicator framework, made palpable the extent to which countries were uneasy about being held to account for the commitments they had made to the ambitious 2030 Agenda.

With respect to SDG 4, the IEAG-SDGs specified 11 global indicators (one for each target, with two for Target 4.2). Previously, the international education community had agreed on a total of 43 thematic indicators, including the 11 global indicators, to better capture the full scope of the global education agenda. This broader SDG 4 monitoring framework was endorsed by UNESCO member states as part of the *Education 2030 Framework for Action* in December 2015. Thus, the monitoring framework for Target 4.7 currently involves one *global* indicator and four additional *thematic* indicators (see box 1).

Specifying a monitoring framework for Target 4.7 is one thing; coming up with high quality and comparable measures for such indicators is another thing entirely. At present, there is no internationally approved strategy to measure any of the five aforementioned indicators. UNESCO has put forward a measurement strategy for 4.7.1, the global indicator, which relies on an existing reporting mechanism—namely, country reports to a 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education related to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which was adopted by

5 [http://ggim.un.org/documents/A\\_RES\\_71\\_313.pdf](http://ggim.un.org/documents/A_RES_71_313.pdf)



the 18th UNESCO General Conference.<sup>6</sup> Six country consultations have been conducted on country implementation of the 1974 Recommendation, the most recent of which ended in January 2017 and included reports (of uneven quality) from 83 countries.<sup>7</sup> During the last cycle of reporting, the survey questionnaire sent to countries was expanded to include themes listed under Target 4.7. This reporting mechanism, while plausible, resulted in less than persuasive information and has not been approved by the IAEG-SDGs as a Tier 1 or 2 indicator. UNESCO and UIS are currently considering new measurement approaches for 4.7.1.

Alternative approaches to measuring and monitoring the embedding of Target 4.7 themes in policies, curricula, teacher education and assessment have been undertaken by other institutions and researchers. The 2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report reported findings on countries' inclusion of concepts related to Target 4.7 in national curricular frameworks, textbooks and some teacher training programs (UNESCO, 2016). The UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) reported findings pertaining to Target 4.7 themes from analyses of official documents in Asia and Pacific countries (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017). Several papers in Section One of this volume capture these efforts. UNESCO's recently published report, *ESD and GCED Up Close: Cognitive, social and emotional, and behavioural learning in Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship from pre-primary to secondary education*, also serves as an example for determining the mainstreaming of Target 4.7-specific topics in education laws, policies, curricular frameworks and syllabi (UNESCO, 2019b). Rather than relying on countries' self-reports on integrating Target 4.7 themes in education policies and curricula, these efforts reflect a more 'objective' content analysis of official documents currently used in

6 [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13088&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13088&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

7 <https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/180320eng.pdf>

a country to determine the extent to which Target 4.7 themes are explicitly mentioned or integrated.

The paper by Esther Care describes an ongoing effort to measure learning outcomes related to Target 4.7 and the embeddedness of 4.7 themes in instructional materials. It discusses the shift in learning goals in many countries resulting in a newfound interest in cross-curricular competencies and a broad set of skills, which could be the basis of an alternative measure of Target 4.7. The papers by the OECD, Diazgranados Ferráns, and D'Sa all address aspects of the measurement of SEL that are foundational and integral to students' commitment to the ideals and themes set out in Target 4.7.

## Measuring within the non-cognitive domain

There is a long tradition of more or less equating cognitive outcomes with academic learning outcomes, and of measuring such outcomes in and across countries. Making the cognitive equivalent to the academic blurs an important distinction between process of learning and the measurable outcome of learning. Although this blurring is reinforced by the use of the term 'non-cognitive' learning outcomes, we will for the purposes of this overview use the term 'non-cognitive' to represent learning outcomes that are 'non-academic' but which may contribute to academic learning outcomes.

The development of non-cognitive or social-emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning are important in their own right. They are also instrumental in advancing Target 4.7 themes centered on citizenship, sustainability, non-violence, gender quality, cultural diversity and human rights. For example, there is value in assessing not only the *causes* of deforestation, but also how people *respond* to deforestation and their willingness to take action to halt it. Assessing cognitive and social-emotional responses in this area might take the form of questions such as, 'How could

you personally play a part in the restoration of a forest?’ ‘Does reforestation impact other environmental or civic issues?’ ‘Would you take actions as an adult (reduced paper use, tree planting) to save the forest?’

For some Target 4.7 topics, the cognitive and the social and emotional elements are closely intermeshed. This would include much of culture of peace, gender equality and respect for diversity. The basics within these topics need to be learned as explicit ‘academic’ concepts or mental tools, such as ‘inclusion v. exclusion and discrimination’, and their application needs to be practiced, as per the evidence from CASEL (see [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)) which coined the SAFE criteria (Sequenced, Active, Focused, Explicit) needful for success. This is illustrated by the UNESCO framework for global citizenship education, which has three elements: academic/cognitive (topics 1–3), social-emotional (topics 4–6), and behavioral (topics 7–9) (UNESCO, 2015). For example, in the social-emotional element, a conceptual assessment question might be ‘What are negative stereotypes?’ or ‘What are the steps to win–win conflict resolution?’ In contrast, a non-cognitive assessment would seek to discover whether students identify with, or are positively disposed towards, the skills and values of inhibiting negative stereotyping or favoring negotiation over violent conflict (social-emotional) and have practiced this or can describe appropriate behaviors. For example, ‘How important is it to actively listen to the views of people whose ethnic, racial or national background is different from yours?’

Organizations such as OECD have strengthened their focus on non-cognitive and SEL assessment. OECD equates SEL with the Big Five concepts—namely, emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness—and considers these traits to be largely consistent across cultures and environments even though they can change over the adult lifespan (Specht et al., 2014). The paper by the OCED describes their 2017 Study on Social and Emotional Skills, which uses 13 components, similar to SEL, to further interpret the Big Five traits. The full results of this research will be published in 2020. The next

OECD assessment of adult skills and competences (PIACC) will also have a SEL element. The editors of this volume would stress the malleability of SEL-related traits, given the powerful roles of culture and context and given the ways such traits may evolve as they are exposed to changing curricular content, pedagogical practice and peer pressure.

One of the biggest problems with measuring non-cognitive or values-based learning is social desirability response bias (respondents saying what others want to hear). Thus, the likely answers in any high-stakes or face-saving situation become: ‘Yes, I do have these plans or values (that are expected of me)’. In fact, the answers might deviate sufficiently from chance and show that students have indeed learned what is the desired answer, but the responses would not verify that students privately hold and wish to act upon the desired values and behaviors. Social psychologists have developed different methodological strategies to address such a bias—for example, the use of negative and positive questions, internal consistency checks, anchoring and vignette techniques.

### **A moving target: measuring 4.7 themes, SEL and related initiatives in LMICs**

This volume provides more examples of good practices for design and implementation of programs than it does for monitoring and assessment processes. As the paper by Diazgranados Ferráns reports, ‘In their review of SEL measures, Halle and Darling-Churchill (2016) identified 75 existing measures of SEL, out of which only six showed good evidence of validity and reliability, the majority of which had been done in high- or middle-income and stable societies.’

In such a dynamic field, there is a danger that anything written down will soon be dated. The toolkit from the International Network for Education in Emergency (INEE) project will soon generate an initial library of measurement tools and trial data, which will be posted on the INEE website

by 2020. GPE may include something in this area in its work to produce global goods, under its KIX (Knowledge Information Exchange) program. The [Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes \(MELQO\)](#) initiative, led by UNESCO, the World Bank, the Brookings Institution and UNICEF, has developed adaptable tools that can be used to assess young children's executive functions and school readiness at the start of school and in pre-primary learning environment.<sup>8</sup> The World Bank is also developing a Learning Assessment Platform (LeAP), which focuses on the aforementioned Big Five traits, and is described as 'first ever evaluation instrument to measure 21st century skills'. OECD's current study on SEL, described in the brief by the OECD, complements its work on PISA for Development. The UNESCO Learning Assessment dashboard is designed to map both cognitive and non-cognitive questionnaires against SDG 4 indicators.<sup>9</sup> Save the Children's work on tool development (ISELA, IDELA, Haldo) provides valuable experience and insights, as described in Nikhit D'Sa's brief.

Citizen-led learning assessments, which originated in India in 2005 and now involve 13 countries in three continents ([palnetwork.org](#)), have played an important role in the pressure to improve standards in LMIC schools, notably in reading and mathematics. Stephen Bayley (2018) argues there is great scope for extending this work to cover other aspects of learning, including 4.7 themes, SEL and related elements of learning.

Approaches to measuring non-cognitive constructs such as those related to SEL include self-reporting, reports by others, and performance tasks. For the purposes of guiding textbook and materials design and trialing draft materials, researchers and interviewers trained in these areas should be engaged to ensure results will stand up to scrutiny and minimize time and expense (Zhou, 2016; Corporación Andina de Fomento, 2017).

8 <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/802891479741343030/MELQO-quick-guide-Sept19-2016.pdf>

9 <http://gaml.uis.unesco.org/dashboard/>

Reliability and validity are, however, a major issue in the non-cognitive domain. Reliability and validity in well researched high-income contexts do not necessarily mean reliability and validity in LMIC contexts (see Chatterjee, 2019). Most studies are carried out in Western countries and often with a narrow subgroup of the population, namely university students. The transfer of concepts to other cultures must be undertaken with caution, as noted by Matthew Jukes and by Jisun Jeong and others earlier in this volume. As Laajaj et al. (2018) have found: 'Recent work from Kenya... highlighted some of the challenges of collecting reliable and valid data for a set of commonly used skills measures... Non-cognitive skills measures (captured through a Big Five personality traits inventory) were rife with measurement error.' The need to adapt measurement tools to each particular setting is emphasized in the brief by Nikhit D'Sa, drawing on experience from Save the Children worldwide, who highlights the time and expense involved in designing new tools as well as the need for careful contextualization of existing tools.

Measuring 'non-cognitive effects' (hereafter 'SEL', for convenience) raises questions, such as:

- How to define what to measure? How to balance international concepts with national culture and social-emotional or values priorities?
- What might be the social desirability response bias and how can it be counteracted?
- How reliable and focused are measurements in the non-cognitive domain? How well do they align with what was intended to be taught?
- Are self-reporting or observation instruments more reliable and valid? Can they be combined? What about focus groups?
- What are the merits of sample measurement by trained evaluators (as used for EGRA) and focus groups versus universal measurements?

- How is SEL reliably measured in pre-primary education and the early grades of primary education when reading proficiency is weak?
- Which student rights are impacted by such measurement, including the risks of measurement being abused (e.g. screening for ‘tendency to violence’ or other personal characteristics)?
- What impact does SEL measurement have on teaching, including the potential distortion of teaching and learning?

LMICs often face additional challenges, such as:

- Practical and technical constraints given classroom sizes and school settings;
- Lack of research and technical expertise, and budgets;
- Problems of transferring and adapting concepts and measures across very diverse cultures;
- Strong social response bias, coupled with well-founded suspicions that responses will remain confidential and
- Localized, national or cross-border crisis, conflict and insecurity, with high levels of child and adult trauma. International agencies have given attention to addressing social and emotional development of children in fragile, refugee and post-conflict settings, where trauma and fast changing situations will affect the relevance and reproducibility of SEL measures; cultural aspects will often differ from those in which psychological measures were developed, and there may be differences in SEL priorities as an effect of trauma and instability. the relevance of measuring SEL in different settings is also an issue.<sup>10</sup>

Measurement and evaluation of SEL interventions—whether in high- or low-income countries—has usually focused on standalone programs, for reasons outlined in Sections Five and Six. However,

10 As examples of early research on these areas see, for example, Torrente et al.’s initial research on Learning in Healing Classrooms in DRC: [https://archive.nyu.edu/bitstream/2451/39654/2/JEiE.V1N1.Torrente.School\\_Interactions\\_and\\_WB\\_Congo.Oct2015.pdf](https://archive.nyu.edu/bitstream/2451/39654/2/JEiE.V1N1.Torrente.School_Interactions_and_WB_Congo.Oct2015.pdf); and the study by Tubbs and Weiss-Yagoda (2016) in Lebanon.

NISSEM promotes embedding SEL approaches *within* the formal curriculum and educational materials, which has unexplored implications for measurement and assessment and is therefore an important area for research and development. Besides the analysis of materials—showing what is in principle presented to the student and how—the research would benefit initially from EGRA-style sample interviews with students and teachers designed to elicit information about the use of these materials and their cognitive and ‘non-cognitive’ responses.

### The impact of crisis and trauma

The psychosocial impact of crisis and trauma on children has received much attention in recent years. Here the measurement of social and emotional wellbeing or its absence draws on many psychological measures of Western origin that demand adaptation to local contexts and attention to validity and reliability. The purpose of these measurements in crisis situations is primarily to guide remedial action, often through NGO-led projects. Remedial action may include referring badly traumatized students to specialists, where available, and encouraging community-based activities to lessen psychosocial trauma. At school level, the special measures include a supportive school climate and many elements found in SEL programs (Falk et al., 2019). In crisis situations, however, the measurement of impact often focuses on measures of mental health, which relate to recovery from trauma and the building of resilience. See, for example, Wolf et al., 2015 (DRC), and Tubbs Dolan & Weiss-Yagoda, 2016 (Lebanon). The tools being trialed under the program led by INEE, New York University’s Global TIES for Children program and the International Rescue Committee, may not all be relevant to textbook development. However, this program provides an excellent model of academic/practitioner collaboration (see Diazgranados Ferráns).

## Ways forward: measuring, monitoring and assessing Target 4.7 themes and SEL at national and individual levels

As the authors of the briefs in this section clearly convey, the range of measurement and monitoring issues is vast. However, a few starting points for research, requiring modest levels of funding, stand out. The points that follow may be viewed in conjunction with earlier discussions (in Sections One and Two) of the interrelated nature of Target 4.7 and SEL learning domains, and of the need for country-based contextualization, including the awareness of cultural specificities. Below we briefly examine issues relating to design processes, measuring system inputs, measuring student learning and measuring impact.

### The process of deciding which 4.7 and SEL themes to embed in materials is important

In developing Target 4.7- and SEL-related programs, the first essential step involves identifying the key, context-specific messages, skills and values that will help students achieve wellbeing and promote peace and sustainable development. Key questions to monitor are whether there has been in-depth analysis and wide stakeholder consultation regarding what is to be taught and learned. This analysis and consultation should take into account system constraints as well as the national context and cultural expectations. Textbooks can then be designed to optimize the teaching and learning of these core elements; to some extent, also, assessment can be designed to measure learning outcomes. Besides widespread consultation with experts, teachers, youth and women's groups, among others, the process should consider how to include training and support for textbook writers, with trialing and feedback and scope for updating messages as conditions change. The process of monitoring can be undertaken by national academic experts and may involve sub-regional discussions.

## Monitoring the presence and absence of Target 4.7 and SEL content and pedagogy in materials

Among other things, this volume emphasizes the importance of determining which 4.7 and SEL topics, messages, skills and values are present in textbooks (and other educational materials), and how they are embedded in terms of pedagogical principles and country context. (See, for example, the model proposed in the overview to Section Six.) Documenting gaps in the coverage of 4.7 and SEL topics in existing materials is critical for moving forward. It can help create a groundswell of support for revision and reform. Likewise, when writers prepare a new set of materials aimed at covering the prioritized topics, often for different subjects and grades, the same type of analysis can show up gaps and problems of 'progression' (learning sequences) that can arise when teams of writers are working simultaneously. Analysis may include student materials, teacher support materials and materials used for teacher training, together with analysis of past national examination papers.

### Measuring outcomes and impact in the realm of 4.7 themes and SEL

Key issues to consider in these areas include the following.

- a *Aligning assessment design to purpose.* For example, is our aim:
  - To find out what young people in general know and feel, to determine whether this is the result of intended learning in school or non-formal learning experiences outside school? This could guide curriculum and materials development, as well as wider education options such as the use of mass media.
  - To assess the impact of a particular in-school study unit or units, in which case the assessment would perhaps include elements specific to these units?
- b *Use of sample measurements for national purposes.* The impact of EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) on governments and donors was very much due to the use of high-quality



independent testing of a small sample of students, which demonstrated learning gaps in a way that normal school examinations could not. For exploring the learning of 4.7 topics and SEL themes, including cognitive, social-emotional and behavioral dimensions, this type of high-quality sample approach will provide useful feedback to policymakers and writers. For attitudinal issues, the use of mixed methods including individual interviews and focus groups with students and with teachers is likely to yield a rich harvest of insights.

- c *Identifying cognitive, social-emotional and behavioral elements of learning in SDG Target 4.7 priority areas and SEL.* This is a core challenge, since the factual and conceptual elements regarding the environment or health or civic processes can be tested in familiar ways while the internalization of the desired attitudes and values, related to the factual knowledge, is very difficult to test, especially in contexts of a strong social desirability bias in teacher or student responses.
- d *Measuring behavioral impact.* Guidance on program effectiveness may also be derived from data on behaviors of students and ex-students. Self-reporting may be biased as might be the responses of teachers and parents. Other difficulties include data availability and quality (e.g. teachers in some schools may record reduced student fighting less after anti-bullying or conflict resolution course units, but this data may be rather subjective). Long-term effects on earnings or on anti-social or pro-social behavior present problems of keeping track of or tracing ex-students, and indeed relate to education programs which may have changed.

## Conclusion

The measurement and monitoring of Target 4.7 themes and SEL raise many questions, which deserve to be addressed with clarity and nuance. Which 4.7 themes and SEL domains have been

prioritized and actually integrated into textbooks and pedagogical practice in LMIC settings, and how have they been contextualized? Which cognitive, social and emotional, and even behavioral learning outcomes are affected by the mainstreaming of 4.7/SEL content in educational materials? What broader community or societal impacts may gain ground in the longer term as a result of such educational interventions and reforms? Systematic explorations of these key questions, and others like them, in low-resourced and conflict-affected settings will require fitting the *design* of the measurement or monitoring strategy to its *purpose*. If we are to gain insight into the individual and social outcomes of embedding 4.7/SEL into textbooks, we need greater understanding of the contexts involved and the underlying assumptions of the research conducted.

For the stewards of national education systems and the designers of international learning assessments, what is measured is assumed to be a useful indication of what has been taught and learned. They expect the intended and implemented curriculum to be more or less aligned, thereby leaving an indelible mark on student learning. Measures of student learning need to be reliable (the results obtained today will be similar to the results obtained with the same respondent tomorrow) and valid (elements being measured are a valid indication of what has been learned). And yet, as we have seen, these twin issues of reliability and validity are particularly problematic when measuring 4.7 themes and SEL, and determining their impact in LMIC settings.

Given the clear need for further work in this area, the editors of this volume call on ministries and donors to allocate additional resources to the conduct of high-quality research in this area, the fruits of which should be shared broadly with all interested parties.

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## Working towards a common framework for assessing 21st-century skills

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### ABSTRACT

In the context of a global shift in learning goals to include a breadth of skills, countries which are widely recognized for high quality education outcomes are confronting many of the same issues as countries which are struggling to meet acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy among their youth. The reflection of 21st-century competencies in formal education systems has been a long time coming, and has emerged as a response both to global statements drawing attention to concepts of citizenship and humanity for the future, and to calls from commerce and the world of work to equip our youth with these competencies. Countries worldwide are engaging with the changes implied by these new learning goals, and experiencing multiple challenges. Foremost among these is a lack of appreciation of the implications of the changes within education systems. The challenges impact on the capacity of systems to contribute to the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals insofar as these aspire to the holistic development of the individual.

### KEYWORDS

21st-century skills, assessment, education reform, learning progressions

## Global shift in learning goals

Notions of 21st-century skills or competencies are as old as this century, and older, but are still sometimes described as a fad (eg <https://fcpp.org/2018/05/01/teachers-unions-should-resist-education-fads/>), despite robust evidence to the contrary. The term is subject to many definitions, varying from ‘a wide range of competencies, habits of mind, and attributes considered important for citizenship in the 21st Century’ (Ercikan & Oliveri, 2016, p.310) to more specific identification of cognitive skills, intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, and technical skills (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009). The terms ‘transferable’ or ‘transversal’ (National Research Council, 2012; UNESCO, 2014) have also increasingly appeared in reference to these skills, alluding to their application across multiple situations and in response to variable demands, as distinct from technical vocational skills, which are specific to particular occupations. 21st-century skills, particularly in the formal education context, generally include competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, problem-solving, and digital literacy. These competencies are thought to be essential for our youth and young adults to function effectively in a dynamic world.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, global organizations increasingly attended to consideration of policy formulation for education in the 21st century. The Delors Report (UNESCO, 1996) outlined a vision for reflecting on the nature of society, the citizenry that would inhabit it, and education policy that would support it. The Report’s humanistic perspective, which included four pillars of learning—to know, to do, to be, and to live together—stimulated a discussion that we might see as culminating in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) for education. SDG 4 not only values literacy and numeracy but extends to technical and vocational skills, and education that will equip citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development and global citizenship..



Industry and the corporate world have also been calling for development of employability skills for recruits into the world of work. Their calls are frequently based on addressing changes in economies related to technology and production, but extend beyond this to concerns that education is not equipping students to navigate the future work world successfully.

We see education systems worldwide acknowledging the same needs and dissatisfaction with education outcomes, and accordingly shifting their education policies to reflect new learning goals. Late in 2018, Mr Ong Ye Kung, Singapore's Minister for Education, drew attention to a possible tension between 'rigour and joy', as the system maintains its focus on high standards but recognizes the negative consequences of a competitive system which needs to take all students' needs into consideration (<https://www.moe.gov.sg/news/speeches/opening-address-by-mr-ong-ye-kung--minister-for-education--at-the-schools-work-plan-seminar>). Singapore was an early adopter of a 21st-century skills agenda, symbolized by its 'Swiss roll' depiction of valued competencies and characteristics (<https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-system/21st-century-competencies>), but has nonetheless focussed primarily on the development of cognitive over social skills. In January 2019, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared at South Africa's 2019 Session of the Basic Education Lekgotla, 'Emergent knowledge and 21st-century skills have to be included in the curriculum at all education levels... Our education system must aim to create complete human beings. In this regard, greater attention must be given to life skills and psycho-social support for learners... As we pursue the goal of equipping learners with knowledge and [skills for a changing world](#), we seek to do so in safe learning environments.' In very different countries, there is strong agreement when it comes to the intentions of their education systems.

It's not just Singapore and South Africa that are shifting their policies—there is a significant movement globally. How do we know this is a major shift? A study undertaken at the Brookings Institution (Care, Anderson & Kim, 2016; Care, Kim, Vista,

& Anderson 2019) to explore the phenomenon, found that 76% of the more than 150 countries surveyed had identified competencies such as communication, creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving (noted here in descending order), as part of their learning agenda—in national policy documents, mission and vision statements, national education plans, and curricula. Patterns across the documentation suggest that these aspirations to equip students with a wide range of skills needed for success are not being met universally by the integration of skills into curricula. Additional studies demonstrate similar lack of integration of skills into classroom and national assessment practices (eg, Care & Luo, 2016; UNESCO, 2019a). Notwithstanding concerns about how to implement the changes, there is little doubt of the consensus across many national systems concerning identification of the broad range of transferable skills needed by youth and young adults. This is good news from the perspective of SDG Target 4.7 aspirations.

## Challenges to implementation

Monitoring however requires not only common goals, but common understandings and definitions, and implementation that reflects these. Findings from several regional studies in Asia and Africa have informed this issue of implementation of 21st-century skills learning goals. Since 2014, two research networks hosted by UNESCO Education Bureau for the Asia-Pacific have been exploring the advent of 'transversal competencies', a term used to describe sets of skills that others might describe as 21st-century skills.

ERI-Net<sup>1</sup>, hosted by UNESCO, first explored in 2013 (UNESCO, 2013) how different countries and economies in the Asia-Pacific define and apply 'non-academic' skills in their education policies, practices, and curriculum. The study identified that these skills were referred to in the education policies of all ten participating countries. The study also identified three types of challenges to implementation: *definitional*, *operational* and *systemic*. These

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1 Education Research Institutes Networks in the Asia-Pacific



three challenges were reflected in the fourth study in the series, coordinated by NEQMAP<sup>2</sup>, on *assessment* of transversal competencies (Care & Luo; 2016).

Definitional challenges refer to lack of clarity about the nature and scope of transversal competencies. This translates into difficulties in their implementation as an integral part of teaching and learning. Operational challenges refer to the logistics of implementation: that is, human and physical resources. Systemic challenges refer to systemwide issues that include cultural, historical, and philosophical perspectives about education. Of the three challenges, it is the definitional that impacts on everything else—they are ‘blockers.’ If there is no common understanding of what the skills ‘look like’ and how learners might demonstrate them at different levels of competence and quality, then teaching and assessment will not be well aligned with the actual nature of the learning goals associated with 21st-century skills. Notwithstanding the logic of this assumption, it remains to be established.

Analysis of the paths that countries are taking to integrate 21st-century skills demonstrates that most prioritize curriculum reform. Although this could reasonably be seen as a first step, it appears that some countries might not be moving strategically or deliberately to other required steps—namely to review pedagogical and assessment approaches that might best support competencies development, and to consider the cultural or philosophical issues associated with the shift. This lack of alignment is not confined to countries in LMICs, and so presents a global challenge to SDG monitoring.

Table 1 represents a qualitative snapshot of selected countries across income levels which are engaging in the global shift. The snapshot takes into consideration curricular reform, delivery of pedagogical support and resources to teachers, and innovations in assessment aligned with the nature of 21st-century skills learning goals. All the selected countries have moved on curricular reform

2 Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific

	Australia	Chile	Finland	Kenya	Philippines	Singapore
Pedagogical support	➔			➔		✓
Curriculum reform	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assessment innovation	➔			➔	✓	➔

**Table 1:** Qualitative snapshot of 21st-century skills factors across selected countries

over the last decade. The degree to which 21st-century skills are explicitly embedded in their new or revised curricula varies somewhat, but each makes reference to these competencies. Developing and delivering support to teachers has received less attention. As indicated by the arrows in the table, denoting progress, Australia and Kenya are both moving explicitly on teacher support: Australia through provision of comprehensive online resources and Kenya through cascade-model training<sup>3</sup> for teachers in the pilot of their new curriculum for early grades. Similarly there is movement on the assessment front in Australia, Kenya and Singapore<sup>4</sup> at central levels. The Philippines stands out for its integration of a limited selection of 21st-century skills

3 Note there are concerns about this approach to professional development: eg, Bett, H. K., & Boylan, M. (2016). The cascade model of teachers’ continuing professional development in Kenya: A time for change? *Journal of Cogent Education*, 3(1). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1139439>

4 For example, in Australia by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, in Kenya by the Kenya National Examinations Council, and in Singapore by the Ministry of Education.

in its national assessment program<sup>5</sup>. The majority of assessment initiatives are directed toward national assessment rather than focussed on 21st-century skills-specific classroom assessment.

## **Paths to implementation: progressions as facilitating factors**

A key issue is how to move from aspiration to implementation. Without evidence of implementation, it is difficult for those focussed on SDG4 monitoring to identify opportunities for capture of comparable data across nations. Apart from logistics and resourcing factors, implementation relies on understanding the nature of 21st-century skills, how they are demonstrated, and how they develop and progress. From the Brookings study mentioned above (Care et al., 2016; Care et al., 2019), it is clear that few countries have integrated 21st-century skills learning progressions into their curricula. Lack of such guidelines is a problem. Without knowing the natural developmental pathways of competencies, curriculum developers and teachers are left without guidance about what can be expected of students in different grade levels. What is a reasonable expectation of a student aged 5, 8, or 13 in terms of their communication skills, for example? To address this issue, we need to understand the developmental pathways of critical thinking, collaboration, or other 21st-century skills. Use of learning progressions is well accepted for literacy and numeracy skills and many other areas of learning. What is needed are learning progressions for those 21st-century skills that are reasonably amenable to such dissection, for use to underpin curriculum through descriptions of the gradual development and mastery of the skills. The points at which particular levels of competence are aspired to should be identified at appropriate points within curricular topics, taking into consideration both the cognitive demands of the subject or topic areas, as well as the

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5 The National Achievement Test, developed by the Department of Education's Bureau of Educational Assessment

cognitive and social demands of the skills, and at increasing levels of complexity for higher age-groups. The degree to which all those skills to which national systems aspire (Care, Anderson & Kim, 2016) lend themselves to universal definition will vary. In particular, social skills may elude such definition due to cultural, values, and religious factors.

Among the several options being discussed by UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) for monitoring of the education targets identified by the SDGs is the concept of global reporting scales for reading and numeracy. Developing such scales is intended to facilitate reporting by countries against education targets. The scale will also confirm the typicality of progression in these competencies and will gain general acceptance of the notion that such progression can inform curriculum development worldwide. Accordingly, as education systems shift to include new learning goals, progressions for which are not currently available, the potential for such development, notably of 21st-century skills, should not be ignored. Of course, the increasing visibility of international large-scale programs such as PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS have to a large degree softened the landing for acceptance of global scales through their language, mathematics and science studies, while also stimulating considerable critical reflection by countries and researchers. As organisations such as the OECD and IEA increasingly look to other competencies such as problem solving, civics and citizenship, and information literacy, further bases are being laid for identification of near-universal structures and progressions in such competencies, as well as regional and cultural differences.

For UIS, the approach to drafting reporting scales that describe and quantify learning progress 'involved first formulating a conceptual growth framework informed by both the literature on how children learn, but also how the curricula of countries are structured. Thereafter, items from existing cross-national and a few national assessments were examined by specialists, using established procedures to combine the judgements of the experts, so that the difficulty of items could be ranked and they could be

understood in terms of the growth framework' (UNESCOb, UiS, 2019, p. 43). Although the primary purpose of developing such scales is to support monitoring of learning goals, they naturally serve the function of describing learning pathways. Similar pathways need to be established for 21st-century skills in order to support curriculum development. As well, what remains to be established is evidence of the alignment of these learning pathways with adult demonstrations of the skills in the workplace and in life. Once curricula represents common understandings of student developmental pathways, assessment can provide the opportunity to measure achievement in ways that can contribute to monitoring. So how do we assess these new learning goals?

### **Paths to implementation: alignment**

A critical factor in implementation lies in how we assess what we learn. We learn in a multiplicity of ways. Some things we memorize, other things we learn by doing, and for yet other things, we use multiple methods. Different learning goals can require different learning approaches. Mathematics is not taught or learnt in the same way as drama; science cannot be taught in the same way as a sport. Different learning domains demand different modes of assessment—some can be assessed using pen and paper tests, while others require different types of assessment that focus on behavioural modes other than written. Accordingly, when the goals of education are changed to reflect different learning domains, it is not only the curriculum that needs to be considered, but also pedagogical and assessment methods. The degree to which this reality is well understood in many national education systems is unclear.

For assessment, alignment can be considered in two ways. First, assessment should reflect what is valued by the curriculum (Care et al., 2019), and mirror the methods and approaches used for its teaching. In principle, this would ensure an education delivery system in which stakeholders across curriculum development,

curriculum delivery (through teaching services) and assessment and monitoring espouse the same goals. Also to be considered however is the evidence that different methods of curriculum delivery may benefit students differentially. The work of Zuzovsky (2013) and more recently an IEA study on associations between instructional factors and achievement (Benavot & Romero-Celis, 2019) have identified that different instructional strategies may benefit students across low- and high-achieving countries and classrooms differentially. Second, and most importantly, assessment needs to reflect consistent goals and approaches across classroom to national or international levels. Such alignment sends a clear message to the teacher and student about what is valued. Assessment is frequently viewed negatively, due to its functions of providing or withholding credentials, as well as its role in identifying system inadequacies. However, its contribution to teaching and learning, particularly through formative applications and in the development of learning progressions, is significant.

In moving to monitoring progress of education systems toward the goals of Targets 4.4 ('relevant skills... for employment') and 4.7 ('global citizenship education and... education for sustainable development'), we have a problem. These areas are newly explicit in education systems, a 'curriculum' for skills is not yet well-developed globally, and methods for assessing skills are not widely understood. In order for global reporting scales to be developed, we need clear definitions and descriptions of skills, learning progressions against which classroom teaching can be tagged, and assessment tools that reflect these from classroom to national level.

### **Implications and suggestions**

The chicken and egg issue is alive and well in the context of assessment and monitoring of student development aligned with the more holistic aspirations for education referred to in the SDGs. There is no doubt that these notions are strongly based on 21st-century skills, and combined with knowledge, attitudes

and values. The challenges posed by assessing this mix of human competencies or characteristics have not been well elucidated in public fora. Instead, we have seen traditional psychology measurement approaches applied to attitudes and values, and to some skills areas—primarily through self-report methods and more recently through increased use of anchoring vignettes. And we have seen large-scale studies entering into assessment of global competence and global citizenship but in fact focussing on subsets of these, subsets which bear primarily on the knowledge components of the constructs.

So, how can countries move from aspiration to implementation in the realm of assessment? The most direct way in which assessment can support student learning is through classroom-based assessment tasks that provide both an indication of student competence as well as demonstrating ways of thinking that are consistent with the various 21st-century skills. From classroom-based assessment, systems would be able to draw on tasks that lend themselves most readily to large-scale assessment—ensuring consistency across the approach to assessment at each level of use.

The Brookings Optimizing Assessment for All (OAA) project (<https://www.brookings.edu/product/optimizing-assessment-for-all/>) is supporting countries with the challenges of integrating 21st-century skills into their teaching and learning. The project has focussed specifically on classroom-based assessment through collaborating with clusters of countries in Asia and Africa. From agreeing on definitions and descriptions of selected skills, to hypothesizing progressions and developing assessment tools, national project teams across six countries are increasingly identifying the implications of adopting a 21st-century skills learning agenda for next steps. OAA has adopted a focus on assessment precisely due to its capacity to help build learning progressions, while simultaneously producing practical assessment tasks that teachers can use in the classroom to facilitate student skills acquisition. Although just one step toward developing more comprehensive progressions, or reporting scales, the project has

benefited from the demonstrated capacity of small clusters of countries to work together, taking into consideration common goals but different curricula.

In order to support the teaching and learning of the competencies to which we aspire for our youth, larger-scale initiatives that are both research- and practice-driven are needed now. The many forays into this arena are disparate, disconnected, and not informed by best practice. OAA has demonstrated that (1) with the support of regional networks, more countries are understanding the implications of adopting new learning goals, and (2) countries with different curricula and different languages can work together to develop approaches to assessment in the classroom. These achievements are just one step toward larger-scale work across more grades and subject levels in order to build robust learning progressions which can support learning and teaching. And for global monitoring, synthesis of skills definitions such as those in OAA needs deeper and broader effort, accompanied by pragmatism about what competencies can reasonably be measured in the classroom.

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## The OECD study on social and emotional skills

### OECD

#### ABSTRACT

The OECD initiated the Study on Social and Emotional Skills to gather empirical evidence on the social and emotional skills of young people in school and to provide relevant information for policymakers and educators about conditions and practices that can help develop students' social and emotional skills. The Study draws on the 'Big Five' framework to represent the different social and emotional skills that are assessed. The Main Study of the project will be conducted at the end of 2019 and results will be published around September 2020.

#### KEYWORDS

OECD, social and emotional skill assessment, Big Five model, international assessments, cross-cultural research

### Introduction

Empirical evidence shows that social and emotional skills influence many important life outcomes as well as cognitive skills. The relevance of social and emotional skills in these areas as well as their growing value in increasingly complex and challenging environments have attracted renewed interest in this topic from policy makers and researchers.

However, despite growing interest, existing research on the development of these skills in school-aged children and assessment of these skills in cross-cultural settings is still limited. Other OECD studies, such as the [Programme of International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](#) and the [Survey of Adult Skills \(PIAAC\)](#) mainly

assess cognitive skills and have recently covered a growing range of social and emotional skills.<sup>1</sup> The OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) aims to expand this work further. The SSES developed a comprehensive set of measurement instruments around social and emotional skills and is one of the first international assessments of social and emotional skills<sup>2</sup>.

The goal of the study is to gather empirical evidence on social and emotional skills of school-aged children in two different cohorts: 10 and 15 years old. Additionally, the Study aims to provide relevant information for policy makers and educators about the conditions and practices that foster or hinder the development of social and emotional skills in schools and other environments, by collecting a comprehensive set of information on student, family, school and community learning contexts.

The study addresses the following questions, which are considered important for policy makers, teachers, school administrators and parents:

- Which social and emotional skills relate to children's outcomes in the areas of education, active citizenship and civic participation, social connectedness, health, personal and wider societal well-being outcomes?
- Which factors in family contexts, such as parenting styles and learning resources available at home, relate to children's social and emotional development?
- Which factors in school contexts, such as teaching methods or school curriculums, extra-curricular activities or specific practices, relate to children's social and emotional development?

- 1 The OECD defines skills in the SES Study as '...individual capacities that can be (a) manifested in consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviours, (b) developed through formal and informal learning experiences, and (c) important drivers of socio-economic outcomes throughout the individual's life'. See [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-for-social-progress\\_9789264226159-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-for-social-progress_9789264226159-en#page1) for further information.
- 2 For additional information about the study and background material please visit: <https://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/thestudyonsocialandemotionalskills.htm>

- Which factors in peer and community contexts, such as relationships with friends and participation in activities, relate to children’s social and emotional development?
- How do the factors that influence social and emotional skills and the predictive value of social emotional skills for life outcomes vary across different cultures and educational systems?
- How do the factors that influence social and emotional skills and the predictive value of social emotional skills for life outcomes vary across the two different cohorts?

## Instruments

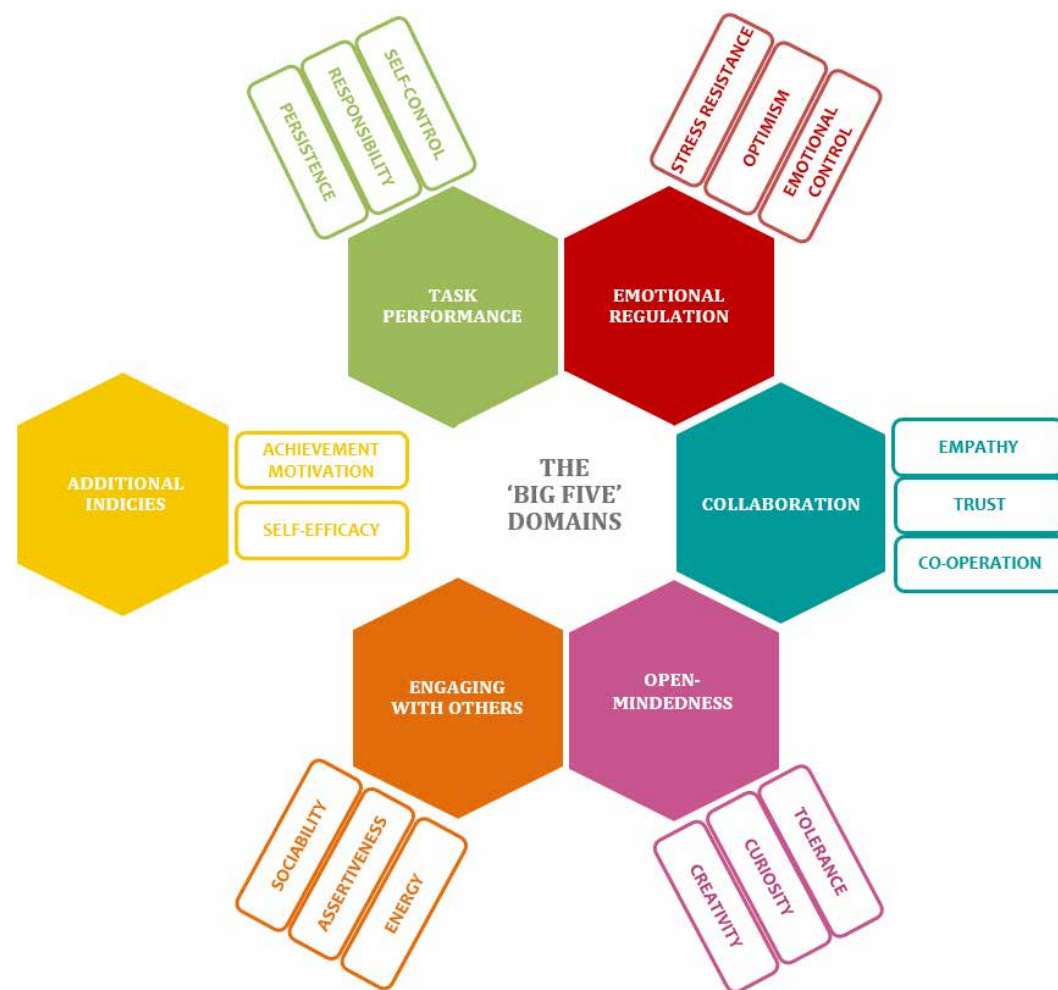
### Assessment of social and emotional skills

The study draws on an established framework in the area of social and emotional skills known as the ‘Big Five’ model<sup>3</sup>. The five broad domains of this model that represent social and emotional skills are:

- 1 Collaboration (i.e., agreeableness)
- 2 Emotional regulation (i.e., emotional stability)
- 3 Engaging with others (i.e., extraversion)
- 4 Open-mindedness (i.e., openness to experience)
- 5 Task performance (i.e., conscientiousness)

These five broad domains are split into more specific social and emotional skills. In total, fifteen social and emotional skills were selected for inclusion in the main study, which will be conducted in October-November 2019. In addition to the fifteen skills, two indices will be created based on the items in these skills: self-efficacy and achievement motivation. The items are measured on a Likert-type scale with 5 response options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The final selection of the social and emotional skills is shown in Figure 1 below.

<sup>3</sup> See OECD Working Paper no. 173 for more information about the ‘Big Five’ model.



**Figure 1:** Selected skills for the Main Study

## Contextual questionnaires

The study collects a comprehensive set of information about students' learning environments—at home, in school and within the wider community—from multiple sources, including from students, teachers, principals and parents. This information helps us to understand which environmental characteristics could potentially help improve students' social and emotional development.<sup>4</sup>

The contextual information included in the study can be divided into five broad groups:

- Social-demographic background
- Family environment
- School environment
- Peer environment
- Wider community environment

The study aims to collect information that is most relevant for students' social and emotional skills development and includes questions on characteristics of the environment that are responsive to changes in policy and teaching methods. The collected characteristics should also be measured validly and reliably and have a strong foundation in empirical research or theory.

## Behavioral indicators

The study also asks students, teachers and parents to report on students' behaviors. These indicators are relevant for policy makers as they are concrete manifestations of students' social and emotional skills and can be influenced directly. These indicators complement the student, parent and teacher assessments of students' social and emotional skills and include questions on classroom behavior, absenteeism, disruptive behavior, behavior with peers and parents and health-related behavior.

4 Please see the forthcoming publication on the [SSES website](#) about the assessment framework.

## Anchoring vignettes

Anchoring vignettes are a set of questions designed to account for reference bias, which is one of the sources of cross-country incomparability of self-reported measures. The study includes these types of questions in order to enhance the cross-country comparability of the results. These items ask respondents to reflect on concrete situations or behaviors that are constructed in a way to be understandable to all participants, based on empirical findings from previous cross-cultural research using anchoring vignettes. When people exhibit reference bias, they answer the same question using different reference points. For example, respondents answer the question 'I see myself as someone who tends to be lazy' differently, depending on the respondents' reference point of what it means to be lazy. Therefore, anchoring vignettes are designed to identify a respondent's reference point when answering the survey questions. Based on the responses to the anchoring vignettes, the respondent's answers to the survey questions are adjusted to account for these reference

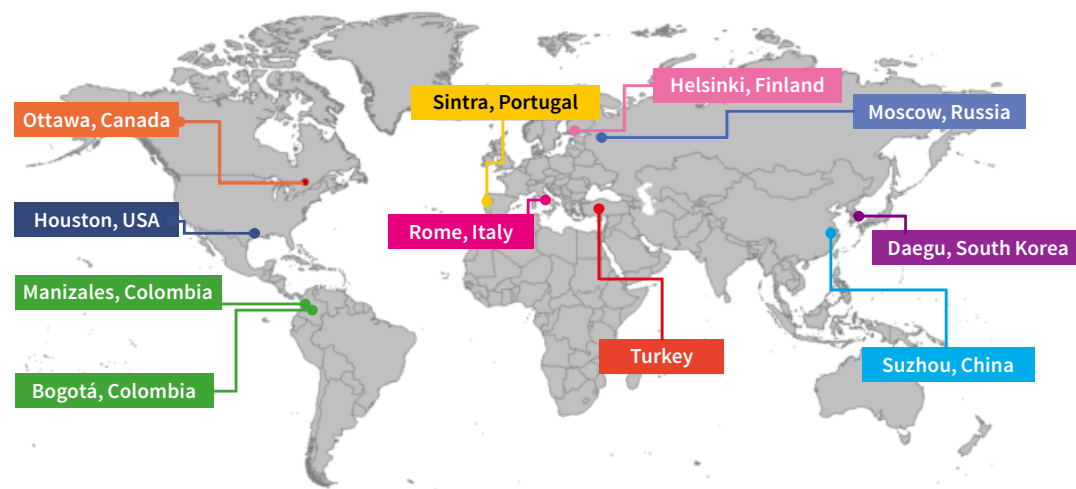


Figure 2: Participating sites

points. This could help reduce the possible reference bias due to respondents' different reference points from different countries when answering the same survey questions.

## Methodology

### Sampling design

The study targets 10-year-old and 15-year-old students. Three thousand students per cohort in each site will participate in the upcoming main study. There are currently 11 different cities and countries participating in the study, which means that the main study will collect information on 66,000 students in 11 different cities and countries. The SSES project has a flexible approach regarding participation so that both cities and countries that are interested in participating can participate. Policy implications will be limited to the sample of students that participates in the study. That is, if a city chooses to participate the policy implications will be limited to that city and not the entire country.

The sites that participate in the first round of the SES Study are shown in Figure 2. The study uses a two-stage stratified sampling model. In the first stage, a random sample of schools is selected. A random sample of individual students within the selected schools is selected in the second stage.

### Assessment mode

The most frequently used response format in educational and psychological assessment is the Likert agree/disagree scale with either four or five options. Many response formats are possible (e.g. dichotomous, frequency, forced-choice, etc.). This study uses a five-point agree/disagree Likert scale that allows for alignment between our instruments and most of the existing measures designed for assessing social and emotional skills and related psychological constructs. There is also a large amount of empirical evidence about its psychometric properties. Another important aspect of

this response scale is that it is familiar to survey respondents of different ages, backgrounds and nationalities. In addition, a scale with five response options increases the information per question (compared to dichotomous or 3- and 4-point scales) thereby reducing the response burden and improves the efficiency of the assessment instruments.

### Triangulation<sup>5</sup>

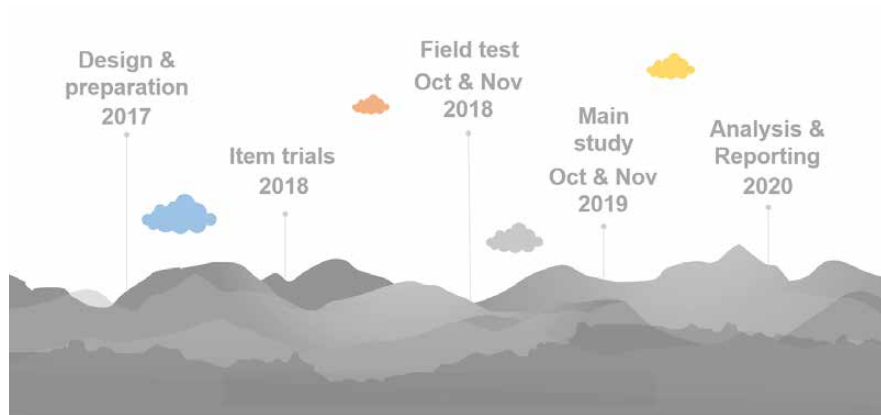
The study assesses students' social and emotional skills using three sources: students (direct assessment), parents and teachers (indirect assessment). In this way, the shortcomings of students' self-reports can be improved by using the information obtained from parent and teacher assessments and vice versa. This allows the skill estimates to be validated across different sources.

Triangulation of students' social and emotional skills assessment is an important part of the study for several reasons. First, the two indirect assessments increase the content validity of the assessment of students' social and emotional skills by providing information on student behaviours across different contexts. As students may behave differently in different settings, collecting information on their behaviors from multiple sources and across multiple contexts improves the representation and understanding of how students behave in the most important contexts for school-age students. Additionally, obtaining information from parents and teachers allows us to control for measurement error in self-reports, such as social desirability and unrealistic self-perceptions.

In addition, parents and teachers are valuable sources of information on students' behaviors. Parents have long-term and close relationships with their children and have been able to observe them across a wide variety of contexts. They have first-hand knowledge of their children's life situations, preferences and practices. Teachers can provide a reasonably objective

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<sup>5</sup> Please keep an eye on the [SES website](#) for a forthcoming working paper on triangulation of assessment methods.



**Figure 3:** Timeline of the Study

assessment of students' social and emotional skills in a different context. Furthermore, teachers' assessments are especially valuable because they have rich experience in dealing with 10- and 15-year-old students.

### Timeline

Figure 3 shows the timeline for the first round of the study. The field test of the study took place in October and November 2018. Based on the results,<sup>6</sup> the instruments are being adjusted and finalized in preparation for the main study in October and November of 2019. The main study's results will be published as a report in the second half of 2020.

#### NOTE

The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the OECD or of the governments of its member countries.

<sup>6</sup> Results of the field test will be published on the [SSES website](#) in the coming months.



## Measuring social-emotional learning outcomes for children in crisis: An education in emergencies open-source measurement library

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### ABSTRACT

We advocate for the need to collect high quality data about social and emotional learning (SEL) in conflict and crisis contexts to inform policy and practice. We outline the numerous challenges involved in collecting such data, including limited methods currently available for assessing SEL, lack of evidence of reliability and validity, and a pervasive low awareness of the numerous, complex decisions needed to use assessments in sound ways that are fit for purpose. Finally, we discuss the work of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and New York University's Global TIES for Children (Transforming Intervention Effectiveness and Scale, or TIES/NYU) in leading the Education in Emergencies: Evidence for Action Measurement and Metrics Initiative. This initiative convened a consortium of eight research-practice partnerships

in the Middle East/North Africa and Turkey (MENAT) to develop, adapt and test a set of measurement tools to gauge children's learning and holistic outcomes, including key SEL competencies and the processes that promote these outcomes by measuring program implementation quality. The measurement library will be hosted by the Inter-Agency Network of Education in Emergencies (INEE) and will include evidence of validity and reliability of the measures, along with a variety of guidance materials to help users select, adjust and employ the tools effectively in crisis and conflict settings.

### KEYWORDS

social and emotional learning, measurement, assessment, measurement library, education in emergencies, MENAT, learning outcomes, education in emergencies, conflict and crisis

Children across the globe are falling behind in their education. In a 2017 study, UNESCO found that globally, six in 10 children and youth at primary and lower secondary age level are failing to achieve minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. This learning crisis is especially pronounced in countries destabilized by conflict and natural disaster, where children and young people have suffered multiple, prolonged adversities that can cause them to experience a toxic stress response, inhibiting their brain development and negatively affecting their behaviors, relationships and ability to learn. In conflict- and crisis-affected settings, people are approaching adulthood carrying the weight of their trauma while lacking foundational literacy, numeracy and social emotional skills necessary to lead healthy and productive lives. Without effective support, these children are at risk of becoming a global lost generation.

There is some cause for hope. Evidence from more stable societies tells us that incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) activities into school activities can improve academic outcomes and mitigate the negative effects of trauma (Durlak, et al., 2011). Unfortunately for the world's most vulnerable students, there has

not yet been sufficient research to determine whether the same is true for children living in conflict and crisis settings. Armed with this information, the education community would be able to determine how to best educate and support these young people in the most impactful and cost-effective ways possible. Without it, service providers and funders are at risk of essentially flying blind. And there are numerous obstacles to collecting the high-quality data about SEL programming that we need, including:

- **We lack a variety of methods for assessing social-emotional learning.** We assess children’s skills in mathematics, reading, and fine motor control using tasks that require them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. The great majority of tools used to assess children’s social-emotional learning, however, are self-report surveys. Self-report surveys do provide valuable information about children’s perceptions of their abilities, which have been shown to predict behaviors and later outcomes. However, the reports are often biased estimates of competence, given that people frequently overestimate or underestimate their performance and provide answers they think others will approve of. Given that many SEL skills are difficult to capture through self-reporting instruments, a greater diversity of assessment methods is needed to understand how children’s SEL skills are developing, including observation protocols of children’s skills and behaviors as well as performance-based assessments and social-network measures.
- **There are few SEL measures with evidence of validity and reliability.** Very few SEL instruments demonstrate adequate psychometric properties that can be used for rigorous research and impact evaluations. In their review of SEL measures, Halle and Darling-Churchill (2016) identified 75 existing measures of SEL, out of which only six showed good evidence of validity and reliability, the majority of which had been done in high- or middle-income and stable societies. In contexts of conflict and crisis, even fewer SEL tools have been tested, with results

infrequently reported. This is symptomatic of both resource and time constraints as well as of a common assumption that because measures have demonstrated reliability and validity in one context—most frequently, high- or middle-income and stable contexts—they can be used to provide meaningful and accurate information in a different context. Given that SEL skills are defined, prioritized, and operationalized in greatly different ways across and within contexts, this is a major assumption that can lead to misunderstandings and confusion in the field.

- **Assessment users often disregard the limitations of assessment tools and the multi-step processes required to produce high quality data for decision-making:** A tool is just a tool. In order to produce data to effectively inform programs and policies, assessment users need to make sound decisions in a complex multi-step process. And yet, in contexts of conflict and crisis, there is little awareness and information about the limitations of existing tools or the processes required to select, adjust, test and use the tools in ways that are fit for purpose. There is little awareness of the fact that different tools are designed for different purposes, and cannot always be used to meet assessment needs for which they were not designed. For example, instruments developed for the purposes of program evaluation and research cannot always be used for screening purposes because they may not be sensitive enough to identify all individuals who are in need of services, or specific enough to correctly identify those who do not require supports. Similarly, tools that may be used for the purposes of assessing children’s social-emotional skills and identifying needs at national or subnational levels may not meet the needs of researchers conducting impact evaluation of programs, and vice versa. While the latter require tools that capture fine-grained variations and changes in performance, which are not always needed in national or subnational assessments, the former require tools that have been developed and benchmarked with large and representative samples. And while most stakeholders have

multiple purposes or uses for the data they generate from measures, each measure has its limitations and may not be suitable for all purposes.

- **SEL measures lack user-centered design and clear training materials.** In order to provide good data, SEL measures should be accompanied by high-quality training materials. In contexts of conflict and crisis, teams measuring SEL often do not have the time or the resources to create the materials needed for high-quality training.
- **SEL measures, training materials and lessons learned are not widely shared or disseminated on an accessible platform.** Often, organizations do not share their SEL measures or make them available on an open-source platform. This inhibits wider uptake and use, and makes it more difficult for the Education in Emergencies sector to learn and improve programs for children and youth.

## **The Inter-Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) measurement library**

As part of the Education in Emergencies: Evidence for Action initiative, the IRC and Global TIES/NYU convened a consortium of eight research–practice partnerships in MENAT (Middle East, North Africa and Turkey) to develop, adapt and test a set of measurement tools to assess critical dimensions of children’s learning and holistic development (CHILD) and program implementation quality (PIQ) in crisis contexts, including measures of social-emotional learning. In November 2019, the project will launch a dynamic measurement library that addresses each of the issues outlined above. Specifically, the measurement library will include:

- Innovative measures that use diverse assessment methods: The measurement library will include measures that use a variety of methods for screening, program evaluation and monitoring of

children’s SEL outcomes, such as performance-based tasks and scenario-based items, as well as program implementation quality measures such as observation protocols to capture processes that promote students’ learning (such as the classroom environment and teachers’ instructional practices). We expect that in the near future, the measurement library will grow to include measurement tools that can be used for other purposes such as identifying children’s levels of SEL competence at national or subnational levels, as well as tools that will capture children’s SEL performance through other methods such as peer nomination and social-network assessments.

- Evidence of reliability and validity: The measurement library will include evidence of reliability—internal and, when relevant, inter-rater reliability—of the measures, as well as evidence of their validity, including convergent and divergent validity, predictive validity, etc.
- A decision-making tree to guide assessment users as they consider the construct they want to assess, the purpose for which they want to use the tool, the population they want to target, and the available evidence of validity and reliability, signaling multiple pathways they may take in the process of selecting, adjusting, testing and using the tools included in the measurement library.
- Training materials for enumerators and data analysts for use in crisis and conflict contexts.
- INEE’s open-source platform will host the measurement library, which will be updated during upcoming phases of the project, with the aim of expanding the number, types of measures and geographic regions included.

We expect that these measures, guidance, and training materials will help diverse stakeholders in conflict- and crisis-affected settings to build an evidence base about the effects of social-emotional programming on children’s learning and development.

Ultimately, the collection and sharing of trustworthy data is a critical first step to improve the ability of funders, implementers and policymakers to make informed decisions about how and where to invest scarce time and resources in order to benefit the greatest number of crisis-affected children.

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## Adopt, contextualize, or adapt? Understanding the complexities of modifying or developing a measure of children’s social and emotional competencies

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### ABSTRACT

The burgeoning focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in low-resource and conflict settings has raised interest in measuring SEL competencies there. The extensive library of SEL measures from high-resource contexts and the growing compendium from low-resource and conflict settings raises questions about which tool to use, when, and how. In this brief, I provide responses to three recurring questions: (1) How should we decide on whether to modify or develop an SEL measure? (2) What steps can we take in developing an SEL measure? (3) How can we contextualize or adapt an existing measure? I draw on experience with developing and validating the International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA) to discuss the trade-offs when measuring SEL in low-resource and conflict settings. Key lessons learned from developing ISELA deal with: (a) balancing time and resource constraints with the competencies we want to measure and the type of tool we want to use, (b) avoiding using an SEL measure to screen/diagnose children when the tool was not developed for that purpose, and (c) being cautious about the myth of the ‘off the shelf’, ready-to-use SEL measure.

### KEYWORDS

Save the Children, social and emotional learning assessments, education in emergencies, assessment tools in low-resource countries

Recent developments in neuropsychology have highlighted that children who are exposed to violence and adversity have a physiological stress response that can alter the way in which their brains process information, affecting their ability to learn and thrive (Anda et al, 2011; Shonkoff et al, 2012). There are numerous reports that have charted the adversity that children experience in humanitarian emergencies (example: McDonald, Buswell, Khush, & Brophy, 2017). Yet there is also growing evidence that children who experience adversity can display remarkable psychosocial resilience and academic achievement when provided with opportunities that include social-emotional learning (SEL) supports to reduce the negative effects of adversity and stress (Ungar, Connelly, Liebenberg, & Theron, 2017; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). This has resulted in a proliferation of programs in low-resource contexts and emergencies that have focused on SEL—that is, on children’s ability to understand and manage emotions, feel and show empathy for others, and establish and maintain positive relationships (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2015).

The focus on SEL programming in low-resource contexts and emergencies has raised questions about the effects of these programs. Which SEL programs are the most effective in different contexts? What competencies do different programs affect, and how? Are changes in competencies, to the extent they occur, sustainable over time? Are there strong relationships between SEL programming and academic outcomes for children in different contexts? Which children benefit the most/least from SEL programs? To answer these questions we need robust measures that are context- and program-sensitive. Although in high-resource contexts there exists a plethora of SEL measures for evaluating



the impact of in-school and after school programs for elementary and middle school aged children (Denham, Ji, & Hamre, 2010; Haggerty, Elgin, Woolley, Ed, & Woolley, 2010), there is a dearth of validated measures in low-resource and conflict-affected contexts. In deciding on whether or not to use an existing SEL measure there are a few important questions to consider. Below, I provide a brief response to these important questions, using Save the Children's experience developing an SEL measure—the International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA) –as a case study.

### **Should I adopt, contextualize, adapt, or develop a SEL measure?**

In deciding on an SEL measure to use, we first need to clarify the process we need to undertake in modifying or developing a tool. Clinical psychology offers helpful language (Dizon, Machingaidze, & Grimmer, 2016) for us to articulate and communicate about the spectrum of modification and development:

- 1 Adopt: This process entails using a measure 'off the shelf', with the exact wording, structure, and scoring that is already available.
- 2 Contextualize: If you do not have a tool that can be immediately adopted, we generally resort to the next process: contextualizing an available tool. This process may require not only translating a tool into a different language but also changing the wording of items and modifying examples, stories, or pictures to reflect the lived experience of the participants.
- 3 Adapt: While there is no clear delineation between contextualization and adaptation, the latter refers to a deeper and more significant contextualization process that results in a change in the items, structure, sequencing, or response options in the tool. This may mean removing items that are inappropriate and including items that more clearly capture dimensions of the skill being measured in that specific context.

- 4 Develop: If there is no appropriate tool that can be adopted, contextualized, or adapted, it is necessary to embark on the process of designing and testing a new tool.

While there is a growing body of SEL measures for primary school-aged children that can be used in low-resource and emergency contexts, we are still far from a compendium of translated tools that can be adopted across different low-resource and emergency contexts. As the sector contextualizes, adapts, and develops more tools in more contexts and in different languages, we will grow this library of tools. From our experience developing ISELA, we have come to realize that the decision on whether to adopt, contextualize, adapt, or develop an SEL measure is dependent on two key criteria.

The first criterion rests on the question of whether the existing SEL measure was designed for the purpose for which we intend to use it and for a sufficiently similar cultural setting. Using an SEL measure that was not designed for screening children as a tool to track children into different levels or intensities of programs can be troublesome, since there is a high probability of false negatives and false positives; children who could actually use a more intensive program may be wrongly placed in a low intensity program and vice versa. On the other hand, using a screening tool for program monitoring and evaluation can be equally troublesome. For example, during the development of ISELA, several colleagues approached us about using the Moods and Feelings Questionnaire in impact evaluations. The short form of this tool was designed as a screening tool for depressive symptomology among adolescents in the United States (Angold et al, 1995). This means that when it is used in the United States, it is generally followed by programming and referral options for children and adolescents who demonstrate depressive symptomology. This kind of follow-up does not often exist in program evaluations, so using this screening tool as part of an evaluation could actually put children at additional risk, since the questions could trigger physiological or psychological

reactions that require additional referrals, which may not even be practicable in crisis settings.

The second question we have to ask is, ‘Do we have sufficient time and resources (both financial and operational) to adopt, contextualize, adapt, or develop a SEL measure?’ As is likely evident from the description of the spectrum above, the cost in terms of time and resources increase as we move from tool adoption to tool development. In situations where we are pressed for time and have very limited resources, adoption of a tool becomes an attractive proposition. This is especially true in programs in crisis and conflict affected contexts, where there is often a severe shortage of time and resources. While adoption of an existing tool does provide information quickly, the information gathered in this manner may have limited validity and reliability; in other words, we may be making programmatic decisions based on data that has marked levels of structured bias, affecting the applicability of the decisions we make that affect children’s lives.

Additionally, tools that are not sufficiently contextualized or adapted for emergencies could include questions that may put children at risk or even harm them. For example, in a recent ISELA training, the team from the Palestine pointed out that asking very young adolescent females about who they sought help from outside the home may be construed as inappropriate. These questions are part of a suite of items that try to understand children’s social networks. However, young adolescent girls responding to questions about speaking to adults outside the home could result in them being stigmatized in their community. We decided to change the question to ask children who they sought help from when at school. Not going through the process of systematically contextualizing or adapting an SEL measure could violate a central tenet of our ethical responsibility to do no harm to children during research. This is why we built a flexible process of adaptation into ISELA and how it needs to be administered.

## What do I need to do if I decide to develop an SEL measure?

In 2015, Save the Children was looking for tools that could be used to measure primary school- aged children’s SEL competencies in programs in low-resource and emergency contexts. However, a review of existing measures, primarily developed for use in high-resource contexts, raised several issues. First, several of the tools used stories, pictures, scenarios, and examples that were hard to quickly translate and contextualize, Given the variety of logistical and geographic constraints in low-resource and emergency contexts, we needed tools that were easy to contextualize or were flexible to adapt. Second, several of the tools required levels of literacy that were above what was present in Save the Children’s programming for the most marginalized children. Third, many of the tools had restrictive copyright conditions or high user fees that made the materials inaccessible. Fourth, the actual skills that were being measured by some of the tools (like negative affect or emotion attribution accuracy) were hard to translate into active programming, as it was unclear what programmatic recommendations one could make based on the data.

To address these challenges, we embarked on the process of developing a measure of children’s SEL competencies that could meet Save the Children’s diverse programmatic and contextual needs. We started with a review not only of the compendium of measures from high-resource contexts but also of Save the Children’s programs, meta-reviews of competency requirements from different countries (example: UNICEF, 2012), and the extant literature (albeit focused on high-resource contexts) regarding children’s social and emotional development. This led to us identifying the competencies that we thought were important to measure like self-concept, stress management, perseverance, empathy, and conflict resolution. We then tested several different types and modalities of questions for children–vignette-based, performance based, Likert-type questions, and visual analogue

scales—in several different countries and programs. Reflecting on the psychometric properties of these measures and the feasibility of adapting and administering the items led to the current version of the International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA).

ISELA helps us understand the development of self-concept, stress management, perseverance, empathy, and conflict resolution in children between 6-12 years, and whether this development differs by key equity factors: age, gender, socioeconomic status, displacement status, language-minority status, exposure to adversity, and interpersonal threats in the environment around the child. ISELA is designed to be cost-free, feasible, and adaptable for different cultural and social contexts. It does not rely heavily on Likert-type scales; instead, it uses vignettes and performance-based measures to understand the identified SEL competencies in children. ISELA was not designed for diagnosing or screening children; rather, it was designed as a tool that could be used in programmatic and national monitoring and evaluation efforts. ISELA or modules from the tool have been tested, adapted, and used in a dozen program contexts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Haiti, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, South Sudan, Tanzania, Syria, Thailand, and Uganda. Save the Children has conducted iterative studies on the psychometric validity and reliability of ISELA, with each round of analysis helping to improve the tool. The most recent rounds of analysis have demonstrated strong inter-rater reliability (kappa of >0.85), internal consistency reliability (alpha of >0.7), and predictive validity by age.

## **How should I go about contextualizing or adapting an existing SEL measure?**

Save the Children's experience with ISELA has highlighted that the focus on contextualization and adaptation needs to be at the forefront. The expression of SEL competencies is normative; it is affected by cultural norms, social processes, and the context within

which individuals are attempting to process social information (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Denham & Brown, 2010). The expression of SEL competencies that are measured by the broad array of SEL measures could likely change within communities as the contexts within these communities changes. This is especially important in situations of crisis and conflict where the context around children can change rapidly.

Early in the process of designing ISELA, we realized that we had to ensure that the tool could flexibly incorporate an array of contextual norms that affect the manifestation of social and emotional skills in children and the varying low-resource and emergency contexts where Save the Children works. Drawing on experience from Save the Children's International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA), ISELA was developed so that the response options for the vignettes and performance-based items could be designed and changed in each context where the tool is used. For example, when asking children to describe what they would do to help a child who is crying, the response options may differ by context; these options can be designed and changed via a multi-step local consultation and pre-testing process every time the tool is used in a new context.

On the spectrum from adoption to development, this ISELA process sits between contextualization and a full adaptation, allowing teams to make necessary changes without having to modify the entire tool. The steps in this process, which are aligned with the extant literature on contextualization and adaptation (Gjersing, Caplehorn, & Clausen, 2010), are described below:

- Step 1 Review by team: Field and program staff review ISELA to ensure it assesses skills that are meaningful in their context.
- Step 2 Translation into program language: A professional translator (preferably with a background in education or child development) translates ISELA into the appropriate assessment/program language.

- Step 3 Back translation: A different professional translator who has not reviewed the English version of ISELA re-translates the translated and adapted version of ISELA back into English. This back-translated version of ISELA is reviewed by the principal investigator.
- Step 4 Review by assessors: During the training, assessors review each item to ensure that the language that is used is appropriate and child-friendly.
- Step 5 Develop response options: During the training, the assessor team develops item responses that are appropriate and inappropriate, given their cultural and social context.
- Step 6 Pre-testing assessment: Team conducts a 1-2-day pre-test in non-sampled schools/centers with children in target grades/ages to establish inter-rater reliability and field-test response options. The debrief at the end of this pre-testing process ensures that (a) assessors agree on how to score all response options, and (b) issues with administration (for example, children misunderstanding a question) can be addressed.
- Step 7 Finalization: The assessment tool is revised and finalized based on pre-test data and feedback.

As the uses of ISELA have grown, one factor in the adaptation process that has proven increasingly important is how carefully the steps that occur during the assessor training (steps 4–6 described above) are followed. This has been true not only for ISELA but also for other tools that Save the Children has used to understand the learning and development of children. The reliability and validity of the results that we get from the tools are strongly associated with how well we are able to train assessors. For example, the first time we tested some ISELA questions in Mexico, we had very limited time to train assessors. Most of the training was done remotely with only a one-day assessor meeting in the program area. This resulted in some assessors scoring the response options for one

of the stories (which we no longer use in ISELA) incorrectly. We only discovered this issue while analyzing the data. However, by the time the problem was discovered, we could not identify which assessors had scored the story incorrectly and which had used the right scoring rubric. This made the data from that story unusable. A robust assessor training—about three days—along with a pre-test, has helped improve the reliability of the competencies that we measure using ISELA.

## What are the key take-home points?

From the process of developing ISELA, there are three main lessons: First, limits on time and resources are important factors to consider when deciding whether to adopt, contextualize, adapt, or develop an SEL measure. However, you should also find out whether the tool has been used in a similar regional or cultural context, whether it measures the competencies you are interested in, and whether it provides data that you can use to make programmatic decisions or evaluation judgments. Second, using an SEL measure to screen or diagnose children when the tool was not developed for such purposes can put children at risk. Contact the original designer of the tool before you go down this road and tread carefully. Third, at present, the existence of the ‘off the shelf’ SEL measure that can be adopted is more of a myth than a reality. Invest the time and resources from the outset to contextualize or adapt the tool you decide to use, especially in assessor training, and be prepared to iterate as many times as it takes before you get it ‘right’.

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# SECTION NINE

## Strategic measures

## Section Nine overview: Strategic measures

COLETTE CHABBOTT

MARGARET SINCLAIR

Gathering over forty Global Briefs on educating for the social, the emotional and the sustainable is not an academic exercise. Nor is the focus on SDG Target 4.7 simply an outgrowth of country commitments to an idealistic education agenda, which will end in 2030. Rather, many authors approach Target 4.7 as a platform to mobilize support, nationally and internationally, for education that promotes humanistic, social and environmental values that enhance individual wellbeing, strengthen social cohesion, support non-violent pathways to end conflict and contribute to the health of the planet. Many actions can be taken in support of these concrete activities, some of which are featured in this volume. Teacher professional development around Target 4.7 and SEL is hugely relevant, though historically difficult to fund and conduct on a national scale. So, too, is renewing the content and pedagogical principles found in core textbooks and educational materials in ways that support Target 4.7 themes and SEL, which is the focus of the present volume.

In moving from commitment to implementation, this collection of briefs articulates an impressive array of steps and strategic approaches that can be taken to address the many opportunities afforded by Target 4.7 in the coming years. Consider, for example, the following key points:

- A growing number of national and local stakeholders recognize the intrinsic value of Target 4.7 themes and SEL and are finding contextually sensitive ways to embed them into curricular policies and textbooks (Section One).

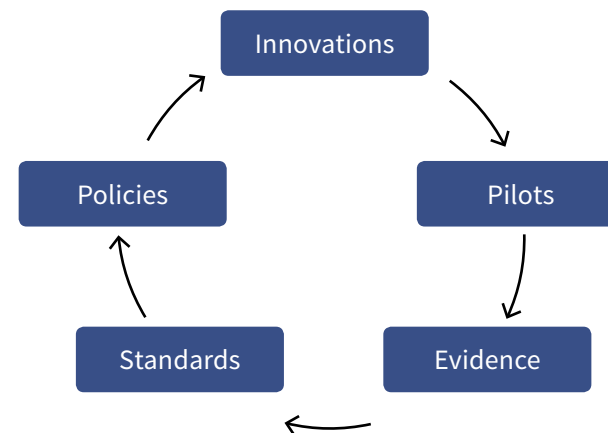
- The themes and values of Target 4.7 and SEL take on diverse forms and have different priorities in different countries, cultures and settings (Section Two).
- Neuroscience points to the constant interplay of cognitive and social-emotional elements of brain activity as individuals mature and engage in learning activities. SEL thus supports student achievement in school as well as individual wellbeing (Section Three).
- School textbooks traditionally reflect hidden or overt biases that favor dominant economic, political and cultural groups. Transitioning towards respect for all and creating more inclusive and multifaceted identities are societal goals that need to be adapted and embraced locally, nationally and globally. (Section Four).
- There are many practical as well as political considerations in moving forward with innovative content in LMICs and in situations of crisis and post-conflict. Space, funds and time will be needed to build support for and to develop motivational and contextualized materials integrating Target 4.7 themes and SEL (Section Five).
- Textbook writers can incorporate Target 4.7 themes and SEL through cross-cutting content, embedded pedagogy and, where feasible, teacher materials and development. Work in this area has tended to be in isolation. More collaboration to develop professional guidance is desirable, both globally and at national level (Section Six).
- Reading materials for learners of all ages represent an avenue where entry is less inhibited by politics (at least for young learners) than other subjects, but scalability and sustainability continue to constitute immense challenges (Section Seven).
- Assessment can be harnessed to support research and implementation and to guide strategy. Examination boards influence what lessons actually get taught, so their representatives should participate in all discussions of embedding Target 4.7 themes and SEL in textbooks (Section Eight).

As noted in the introduction to this volume, evidence is strong for some elements of the strategy (e.g. SEL packages in the US improving student wellbeing, academic achievement and life trajectory, and some pilot projects supporting SEL through early grade reading materials). What is also clear is that if strong 4.7 and SEL content is NOT placed before the student, especially in LMIC settings where other sources of information are lacking for many, then the content will NOT reach the student. This is the basis on which the international community suggested a primary global indicator for SDG Target 4.7, namely the presence of 4.7 content in national policies, curriculum documents, teacher training, and assessment.

## Drivers of innovation

Our thinking is derived in part from a close study of prior global initiatives in education as well as those in other sectors that have been deemed more ‘successful’ in achieving global goals than Education for All and its manifestation in the MDGs and SDGs have to date. Colette Chabbott’s brief develops the following model of drivers in policy and practice change at the global and national level, especially in donor-dependent countries, drawing on her earlier comparative studies of global/local innovation in the health and education sectors (Chabbott, 2015).

The theory of change here is that adding fuel to any of these drivers, by national or international actors, can potentially lead to more and better educational materials, better deployed. For example, in some countries, policy drivers such as laws/strategies/directives may already be written to reform the curriculum consistent with Target 4.7, perhaps even citing cognitive/behavioral/social-emotional approaches. But training for national curriculum developers and/or textbook writers and national examination board personnel consistent with those directives may well be insufficient or absent. In such a situation, training for curriculum, textbook and examination question writers may



**Figure 1:** Drivers in the change of policy and practice

constitute an innovation in support of this policy. As such, the first examples of focused training of this kind in committed countries should constitute internationally recognized pilots and should be studied and evaluated as such. The results of these pilots may demand several adaptations before an effective training curriculum can be established.

The materials produced by those writers will also constitute an innovation. Its early implementation should therefore also be treated as a pilot, with its effects on teachers and children measured (to the degree possible) and with adaptation of content and approach over several years. The resulting evidence of what is effective and, ideally, cost-effective, will influence the content standards for textbooks and examination questions, and—later—teacher training. New policies consistent with that evidence will be formulated, to enable scaling up and continued assessment of impact.

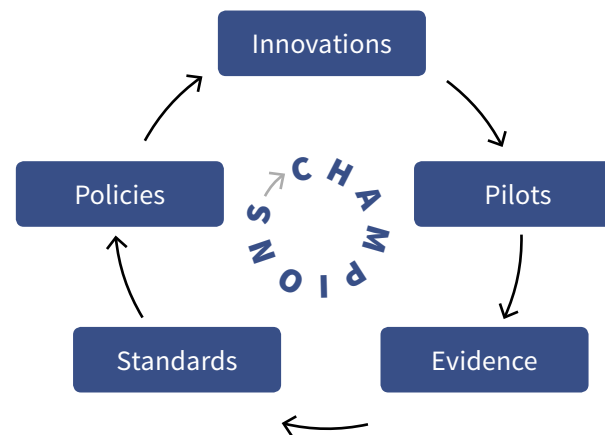
The above model is an ‘ideal-type’. It represents a rational standard that may never be fully and consistently implemented in the ‘real’ world. Moreover, the diagram makes it look too sequential; all too often, under political pressure, policy is made with little reference to systematic evidence or to professional

standards. Furthermore, many promising but under-tested innovations are scaled up so that policymakers can claim they are doing ‘something’, only to have the innovation fail spectacularly, leaving behind a residual antipathy towards anything that looks or sounds similar to that innovation in the future.

Introducing contextualized Target 4.7 content and SEL into national textbooks also has to fit in with the ‘textbook cycle’. In some countries, textbooks are revised every five years or longer, while elsewhere the revision may depend on political change. If new textbooks have just been issued, evidence collection may begin with academics and NGOs analyzing the extent of Target 4.7 and SEL content in the materials and embedded teacher support; it may then proceed to study the knowledge, attitudes and engagement of teachers with this content and its impact on students. In contrast, if a national textbook revision process is imminent, the development and testing of pilot materials incorporating contextualized Target 4.7 and SEL content will be urgent, in order to provide writers of different school subjects with examples of how to integrate this new content in a way that will impact students. Practical responses to the present volume will depend on the situation of any given country in its textbook cycle. (See also IIEP (2015) for some practical notes on the different stages of this work.)

## The importance of champions

The model thus suggests potential entry points for education ministry staff, reform-minded academics and international development and crisis response staff, depending on the phase of textbook development and prospective renewal. The extent of national concern over the themes cited in Target 4.7/SEL may be low, however, while some topics may be highly sensitive. Thus, champions who have communications and/or political savvy are needed to raise awareness and increase demand for fully implementing the government’s commitments to Target 4.7-type policies, including funding pilots and spreading evidence and standards.



**Figure 2:** Drivers in the change of policy and practice, with champions

In the 1980s, UNICEF attempted to persuade heads of state to make universal child immunization part of their own campaign promises and to be featured vaccinating children on prime-time television. Vaccination, of course, was a well-tested and ‘scientific’ innovation by that point in time. In contrast, education can be politically sensitive, and positive change agents may need to use more discreet tactics of inclusive stakeholder engagement to build support so that the innovation is sustainable and not discarded with the next change of government.

Thus, highly respected individuals or organizations can ‘champion’ education initiatives by pushing for funds to carry out pilots, to showcase important evidence and to make clear to the public and policymakers the need for well-tested innovation. For example, Nobel Prize-winning economist James J. Heckman has used his prize money and fame to champion early childhood education.<sup>1</sup> Champions, however, are needed not just for issues, but for solutions. Once an innovation has proven viable, sustainable and scalable, champions may be needed to raise awareness among the public and policymakers of the importance of fully

1 <https://heckmanequation.org>

implementing the model or, where necessary, adapting and testing the innovation in more than one context. Champions are also needed in international organizations (see the discussion on ‘sovereignty’ below).

## **The role of NGOs and networks**

One stumbling block for this model is that local, national and even international NGOs are usually better positioned than local and national governments to produce innovations and pilots, especially in difficult contexts. But unless government is somehow involved in the innovation and piloting process, government may not buy into evidence and standards produced by NGOs. This is a bigger problem in education than in some other sectors, such as health, where it is easier to make science the arbiter of differences. The types of research currently being carried out in education—even randomized controlled trials—are rarely so decisive as in health, though work in early reading, with its early grades reading assessment (EGRA), has been moving in that direction. In Afghanistan, the Assessment of Learning Outcomes and Social Effects (ALSE) in community schools operated by CARE and CRS has done exemplary work involving local officials in research, including publishing their research in easy-to-digest briefs and also training government officials to become funders and users of action-oriented research. But up until now, this sort of collaboration tends to be the exception, rather than the rule.

A second and hugely important issue is that NGO- and donor-funded pilot projects that champion reform tend to be small in scale, well-resourced and very carefully supervised by their sponsors and managers. Frequent visits from the agency mean that attendance and diligence on the part of school staff is increased. Additionally, the concerned parties feel ‘special’ (the Hawthorne effect). Scaling up such interventions often fails, the more so in LMIC settings where there are so many constraints. It is critical to design pilots for national textbook content in ways that are specifically designed to enable scaling up.

National and international NGO-based networks can help create as well as support national champions. This is illustrated in Jennifer Batton’s brief, which describes the Anti-Harassment Intimidation and Bullying Initiatives Advisory group, Ohio State, USA and the GPPAC Peace Education Working Group, which has helped sustain work in Target 4.7 areas through NGO members in a range of countries, working with champions from their respective education ministries. The brief illustrates how networks connect and motivate like-minded institutions and individuals, helping those individuals to communicate with a larger audience, allowing for peer exchanges, cooperation and professional development, and enhancing their collective influence on policy and politics. The brief from Rachel Snape illustrates professional networking by a primary school principal who is a champion for SEL.

World conferences and international workshops can help create as well as support national champions. Most recently, the Salzburg Global Seminar held workshops on SEL and is following up by establishing an international network. The recently-formed Conflict and Education Learning Lab (CELL) likewise held workshops in 2018 and 2019 on removal of divisive stereotypes from textbooks, with the intention of launching networking and standards development in this area (see their brief). CELL has established partnerships with the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, UNESCO, University College Maastricht, ECCN/USAID and the School of Writing (Karachi). NISSEM and CELL are working together on the theme ‘From divisive stereotypes to inclusive identities.’

The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) has in recent years convened workshops and guidance materials on psychosocial response and SEL in crisis situations, and is now leading a collaboration with New York University, the International Rescue Committee and eight academic-practitioner consortia on SEL assessment in the MENA region and Turkey, as described by Diazgranados Ferráns.



NISSEM was formed in 2018 following three international workshops and a half-dozen other ad hoc activities, to help create and support champions for the innovations discussed in this volume: to utilize textbooks and other materials as a channel to empower and motivate students through contextualized Target 4.7 and SEL content, supported by embedded pedagogy suited for low resource environments. (See Section Ten and the [Position Paper](#) for a summary of NISSEM’s strategy).

## The role of donors

As noted by Bush and Saltarelli (2000), education in ethnic conflict has two faces, either escalating violence or promoting peace. Education improvement in general is a double-edged sword unless issues of content for ‘people and planet’ (GEM Report, 2016) are addressed, promoting ideas for a peaceful and prosperous twenty-first century. At the simplest: science education can make it possible to wilfully prepare improvised explosive devices or to help people through improvising new methods of flood control. Focusing on the positive, therefore, has a lot to do with both the prosocial elements of SEL and their application in personal life and society. Educators are well aware of the global problems of insecurity, environmental destruction, public health threats and more, but children trusting their school texts to provide ‘education’ may be in the dark about these threats and unaware that they themselves can work towards a better future through the approaches listed in Target 4.7.

Until donors fund seminars and scalable pilot projects on translating SEL and Target 4.7 themes into educational materials for students and for teachers, both national and international communities may be losing an important opportunity to achieve the goals set out in Target 4.7. Curriculum and materials writers need space to sit with national constituencies—including *young people*—to develop ways of nuancing the materials to inform and motivate, both for the prevention of harm and the inspiration for positive action in support of individual, national and natural (environmental) wellbeing.

Much innovation in LMICs is stimulated by donor interest. Donor engagement in textbooks for schools or teacher training, however, is sometimes seen as challenging national sovereignty. Donor pressures on gender issues, however, have continued unabated for years, influencing countries where a male-dominated ministry of education has no endogenous motivation to innovate, despite general commitment to Target 4.7. What has happened is that gender champions have made their policy and innovation requirements clearer than is yet the case for other Target 4.7 themes.

## MOEs are the gatekeepers for access to donors

If champions cannot be identified within the MOE, then internal and external funding of an innovation will be problematic. For example, if MOEs do not include the type of innovations discussed above in their proposal to donor agencies, there may be no specific budget for training writers and others to develop contextualized gender equity or respect for diversity or environmental sustainability content for textbook revision or supplementation. In such cases, donors need to support would-be champions in the MOEs and curriculum centers by requiring that all proposals integrate gender equity and other activities to address broader Target 4.7 and SEL themes throughout.

Sovereignty can be ensured by empowering nationals to design contextualized content that reflects national concerns, positive youth development and cultural diversity. Likewise, removing divisive stereotypes and providing ‘inclusive’ models of identity can be ensured, within the bounds of sovereignty, by establishing a representative committee of national stakeholders, including fair representation of experts from minority groups, to approve nationally generated content and ensure space for locally generated content. The World Bank previously included this approach in its review of education for social cohesion (Roberts-Schweitzer et al., 2006) and hopefully will take a leadership role in this regard, given that the sustainable development it seeks to promote is predicated upon peace.

## Situations of crisis and conflict

The professional inspiration for many contributors to and readers of this volume is education that can help prevent and reduce the impact of violent conflict or its recurrence and mitigate environmental disasters. Why doesn't crisis appear more prominently in these more than forty briefs?

Crises are generally not good times to revise textbooks. The revision process is often lengthy and contentious, requiring technical expertise and wide stakeholder consultations. Alexandra Lewis reports that teachers in Somaliland are dissatisfied with peace-oriented content in as presented in their textbooks; for them, the content seems remote and 'foreign-influenced', far removed from their life situations and/or too difficult for themselves or their students. Vikki Pendry's brief on textbook development in South Sudan illustrates the heroic efforts being made by educators there during an ongoing conflict. In Iraq after the 2003 invasion, old textbooks remained in use, albeit modified with pairs of scissors and magic markers. In Yemen, textbooks have not been revised for twenty years. Insecurity, multiple indigenous languages and limited capacities of many teachers and students in the language of instruction for higher grades (English): all these present huge difficulties to those engaged in textbook design. Thus, in many crisis situations, old textbooks continue to be used and renewal is postponed until there is peace.

Nonetheless, drawing on her recent study for UNESCO, Tina Robiolle concludes that good work can be done in situations of crisis and conflict where there is strong commitment from governments or agencies. This conclusion was also reached in an earlier set of briefs focused on education for conflict-affected populations assembled by one of the co-editors of this volume (Sinclair, 2013).<sup>2</sup>

In the case of refugees displaced to a neighboring country,

2 <https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/LEARNING%20TO%20LIVE%20TOGETHER.pdf>

UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA and other humanitarian agencies normally recommend that refugee schools use host country curricula and textbooks. Internally displaced students are expected to follow their own national curriculum. In such crisis settings, with vulnerable and often traumatized young people, we would hope that they would be studying from textbooks that actively encourage empathy, tolerance, inclusion, gender equality, conflict resolution and environmental care. They will, however, be learning from the existing textbooks in that setting which may or may not have reached this stage. For those concerned with education in emergencies, integrating quality content aligned to Target 4.7 values and themes as part of textbooks and educational materials is thus an urgent undertaking in fragile countries and potential countries of refuge.

There is an increasing need for schools to ensure student safety everywhere, including in high income countries. The epidemic of gun violence and mass shootings, including in schools, in the US and an increase in bullying and school-based violence in more countries cry out for highly visible, broadly respected champions to galvanize public opinion and advocate for effective action. In addition, the threats of large-scale population displacement by climate change grow more worrisome with each day's news bulletin.

In the past two decades, international agency staff specializing in education in crisis situations and those working to promote 'development' have been forced to work together more closely. There are different degrees and types of crisis (insecurity, displacement, environmental) in many countries of concern to international donors. 'Post-conflict' situations are often insecure, with a strong risk of conflict recurrence. Thus, it is in the interest of donors that their budgets for 'humanitarian' and 'development' assistance include or at least do not exclude support for textbook reform that is preventive in nature. As has been seen in recent times, even 'stable' regimes can face serious problems and some may face armed conflict or a massive influx of refugees, while

environmental disasters may overwhelm even those governments who have prepared well for them. Ensuring that a new generation of textbooks embeds SEL and 4.7 concerns can constitute a nexus for bridging the humanitarian–development divide.

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## Institutionalizing children's right to education: Getting organized

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### ABSTRACT

Formally adopting global goals like SDG 4 and Target 4.7 is the work of national governments and intergovernmental organizations. Formulating such global goals in widely supportable terms and subsequent operationalization and realization is, however, the work of many different types of organizations. This paper traces the origins of such global goals to efforts to realize the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by breaking those rights into sector-specific components. The feasibility of achieving the sector-specific goals is often demonstrated by NGOs and others through pilot activities, although there may be problems of expanding such models to national scale. Selective approaches in health such as the Child Survival initiative paved the way for more selective approaches in education such as Early Grade Reading. National champions play an essential role in promoting contextualised innovations such as nationally prioritised Target 4.7 sub-topics and supporting social and emotional learning (SEL). The potential for a selective innovation using textbooks and other education materials as a channel to support wide outreach for Target 4.7 messages in low- and middle-income countries and post-conflict is discussed in the context of these earlier efforts.

### KEYWORDS

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Education for All (EFA), world conferences, MDGs, SDGs, Target 4.7, social and emotional learning, global goals, sociology of organizations, diffusion of innovations, NGOs

## Strategy in perspective

The SDGs are the latest product of 70 years of international efforts to transform the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), including Article 26, the right to basic education for children and adults, currently summarized in SDG 4, into international practice and law.

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26

- 1 Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- 2 Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- 3 Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Understanding the evolution of efforts to universalize access and add positive content to education over the past 80 years<sup>1</sup> provides valuable context for the strategies that NISSEM and other organizations are currently pursuing to promote SDG 4 in general and Target 4.7 specifically, along with SEL.

- 1 The International Bureau of Education began sponsoring annual International Conferences of Education for diplomats in Geneva, Switzerland in 1931, which, between 1934 and 2008, issued more than 80 recommendations on specific education subtopics, eg the raising of the school leaving age, professional training of elementary teachers, school inspection, etc.

The history of the transformation of the UDHR into international law is one of divide and conquer. Eighteen years after its acclamation, the UDHR was split into two binding international Covenants: one on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including education, and a second on Political and Civil Rights. By the mid-1970s, both had been adopted and ratified by most countries but implementation was patchy. Beginning in the 1970s, therefore, international non-governmental organizations and UN agencies began organizing World Conferences around narrower subsets of human rights, often attempting to strengthen their legitimacy by linking them to new scientific data or research. Among the subsets pursued through World Conferences were the Human Environment (1972), Food (1974), Women (1975, 1980, 1985, 1995), Water (1976), Human Settlements (1977), Primary Health Care (1978) and, eventually, Education (1990, 2000). Over time, these conferences began standardizing a process for converting the initial enthusiasm of conference participants into binding or soft international law. That protocol loosely consisted of:

- In advance: drafting global, non-binding Declarations and Frameworks for Action with some input from regional workshops attended by government representatives from a significant number of countries;
- During the 2–3-day conference: introducing and encouraging participating countries to adopt the Declarations and Frameworks for Action; and
- After the conference: setting up monitoring committees and/or reports to track progress on the number of countries that were
  - developing National Frameworks for Action based on the Declaration;
  - introducing the National Framework or other policy document, framework, international declaration or treaty in national legislatures;
  - increasing foreign aid commitments to support National Frameworks for Action; and/or
  - regularly national reporting on progress on the initiative.

## Strategy: From comprehensive to selective<sup>2</sup>

Although national governments were the focus of most of this activity, non-governmental organizations and networks of professionals in governmental and non-governmental organizations played pivotal roles in almost all world conferences, beginning long before the UDHR, during the tenure of the League of Nations. The World Conference on Primary Health Care for All (HFA, 1978) is instructive. Although the health community had achieved the eradication of smallpox by the early 1970s, large-scale, expensive eradication campaigns for many other major killer diseases, such as malaria, polio and cholera, were proving trickier. By the 1970s, however, missionaries (often precursors to secular humanitarian and development international NGOs) experimenting with ‘community health’ programs in Asia and Africa were demonstrating great success in controlling these and many other diseases through much lower-cost, apparently sustainable, grassroots-based prevention approaches. WHO staff who had spent time in the Third World became convinced of the efficacy of these programs and their potential for improving health outcomes in places beyond the reach of Western-oriented hospitals—at that time, most of the world. In the context of the Cold War, the Soviet Union also wanted to showcase its ‘great success’ in socialized medicine and offered to host a world health conference in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan.

The Declarations and plans that came out of the HFA conference envisioned WHO staff working intensively in each country to develop a plan for community health tailored to the specifics of that country. The HFA approach would have required decades to transform the organization of the health sector in most countries, without many dramatic, quick outcomes, and international fundraising soon became a challenge. In the early

<sup>2</sup> These sections summarize evidence and arguments documented more fully in Chabbott, C. (2015). *Institutionalizing Education and Health for All: Global Goals, Innovations, and Scaling Up*. New York: Teachers College.



1980s, Save the Children and, eventually, UNICEF, championed a less comprehensive, more selective approach to improving health outcomes in the Third World, more in line with the two organizations' principal target group: children in disadvantaged areas and emergencies. Instead of establishing community health centers in every village, UNICEF's Executive Director James P. Grant lobbied countries to commit to providing three to five low-cost interventions that could be adapted relatively easily to each country context, delivered relatively cheaply and, within three to five years, increase the survival rate of a highly photogenic target group: in this case, children under five.

UNICEF's pre-existing input delivery capacity in some of the most difficult countries and backing from the largest aid donor at the time—USAID—for at least two interventions—vaccinations and oral rehydration—meant it could quickly show progress towards its goal to halve the mortality rate for children under five years old in most countries by 2000. By 1995, the Child Survival Revolution, as UNICEF styled this effort, had met that goal in much of the world and became a model for later global health campaigns such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI) and the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). On the other hand, critics of these programs say the focus on short-term campaigns targeting a few, selected diseases has siphoned off most funding for international health programs. More than 40 years after the HFA conference, basic, low-cost sustainable health programs have yet to be established in many, perhaps most, communities in the Third World.

The right to free elementary and fundamental education was first specified in Article 26 of the UDHR (above). The Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA, 1990) took its name from the more comprehensive HFA conference but funding patterns following the WCEFA suggest several large donors always intended a more selective approach. Like the move from Health for All to Child Survival, the World Bank and USAID did not support

Education for All—toddlers, children, youth, adults, the aged—rather they focused on Universal Primary Education (UPE) for children. The education sector, however, lacked the sort of off-the-shelf, low-cost, stand-alone interventions that had made the Child Survival approach 'do-able.' So, at WCEFA and in the years that followed, UNICEF tried to capture the imaginations of these donors with several relatively low-cost interventions for underserved areas, especially two models for basic education for rural children: Escuela Nueva multi-grade classrooms and the BRAC one-room school model. However, each of these innovations demanded much longer term, multi-faceted, expensive support than vaccinations or breastfeeding campaigns. In addition, the education sector lacked the sort of compelling, easily measured, quantitative outcome measures, such as morbidity (infection rates) or, even more riveting, mortality (death rates) which Child Survival projects used to demonstrate progress in less than 12 months. So, at a time when 'effectiveness' and 'cost-effectiveness' were appearing more consistently in donor agency discourse, the more selective focus on children's education was handicapped by a lack of quantitative data on two key components of effectiveness: namely, learning outcomes and cost. Moreover, success in access and quality of schooling would increase the demand for future education expenditure (more students, staying longer in school) rather than reduce it, as with vaccination and healthcare. Nonetheless, UNESCO began monitoring the progress of National Frameworks for Action in the 155 countries that participated in EFA, including endorsement of the Declaration of EFA by national elected bodies.

In the decade following the WCEFA, the strategy for operationalizing human rights through world conferences expanded to include the incorporation of articles from earlier world conference declarations into new ones. Hence, several articles from the Jomtien Declaration of EFA were incorporated or even expanded in the Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit (1992); the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), which was followed by a Decade for Human Rights Education (1994-2004); the

World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994); the Beijing Declaration of the 4th World Conference on Women (1995) and the Program of Action for a Culture of Peace (1999). All of this formalization and institutionalization of education goals at the global level did not, however, succeed in raising more funds for the sector, even for the UPE Approach favored by the larger Western donors.

By the early 2000s, more than a dozen world conferences had produced a plethora of sector-specific declarations and goals, each with its own framework for action and deadlines. In response, from a collection of programs for action circulating at the time of the 2000 World Conference on Development, several senior UN officials compiled what seemed to them to be the most achievable goals for several sectors and packaged them together as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be accomplished by 2015. The goal selected for education—universal primary education—was not popular with many education experts. Many in the education community rightly perceived that without massive new funding for both infrastructure and teachers, the MDG for education would exacerbate overcrowding in existing schools and would likely lower already low levels of learning achievement.

### **Strategy: NGOs and more selective approaches**

Throughout these world conferences and summits, national non-governmental organizations, local civil society organizations and international non-governmental organizations (collectively, NGOs) played critical and some leading roles.<sup>3</sup> NGOs designed education innovations and measurement, tested them on a small scale, raised public awareness of their government's responsibility to follow

3 Some NGOs have also succeeded in influencing international law independent of the World Conference/Summit process and the global goals they generate. For example, six NGOs launched the International Campaign to Ban Landmines in 1992 and managed to push through an International Land Mine Ban (ILMB) treaty in 1997, which entered into force in 1999. As of that time, the ILMB included at least 1400 organizations in 90 countries.

through on commitments made in international conferences and National Frameworks for Action, drafted legislation and wording for declarations and, as the internet created free real-time international communication, networked and strategized internationally.

The work of NGOs in developing health and education innovations was particularly important because since the 1950s, Cold War politics resulted in very small budgets for WHO and UNESCO, leaving those organizations little funding for experimentation and innovation. By 2015, formal and informal networks of professionals in both international governmental organizations and NGOs had formed around selective parts of Article 26: early childhood care and education (WG-ECCD), emergency education (INEE), girls' education (UNGEI) and special needs education. They shared best practices and occasionally advocated with one voice at regional and international meetings. These networks helped to ensure that when the time came to replace the unsatisfactory MDG for education, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for education would be more focused on learning.

Among them, an informal, largely non-governmental 'community of practice' (COP)<sup>4</sup>, most active between 2006 and 2016, played a particularly important role. The COP promoted a much more selective approach to education than UPE: early grade reading (EGR). To do this, members drew on the scientific legitimacy of cognitive neuroscience; they developed and promoted a simple way of measuring children's reading skills that could be used to impress upon politicians and large donors the dire state of learning in much of the world; they held major international meetings and made the rounds of regional and international conferences to showcase the results of their assessments and simple projects piloted by NGOs that were within the scope of the education systems that

4 The Global Reading Network (2014–19), funded by USAID, attempted to formalize and extend this COP but principally supported USAID's 2011 Education Strategy, which included early grade reading as one of its three goals.

needed them most; they developed ways to evaluate those projects that could stand up to scientific scrutiny and they published their results in scientific journals and books. The active support of champions at senior levels in key international organizations kept all this moving much faster than might otherwise have been the case. The EGR initiative shocked and offended many in the education community who had for decades been seeking support, without success, for a more comprehensive approach to education for children in the majority world, 'directed to the full development of the human personality.' But EGR also attracted billions of donor dollars into basic education projects and will provide one of the few metrics for meaningfully measuring the 'quality learning outcomes' promised in SDG Target 4.1 at the primary level for low- and middle-income countries.

However, although the education community is more satisfied with their SDG<sup>5</sup> than it was with the MDG, getting that SDG endorsed at the national level is only the first step in a long process of operationalizing its targets in the national education system and implementing them effectively at the school level. Logical next steps for SDG Target 4.7 themes might include

- Integrating SDG targets into the education system through an education law or strategy, or both;
- Based on the law or strategy, government curriculum developers in language, civics, social science and/or natural science must then modify the curriculum in order to incorporate Target 4.7 topics into appropriate grades. This is often difficult because the curricula already have too many topics, and constituencies exist for keeping every one of them. Moreover, if the curriculum is separate from the academic timetable, and that timetable does not designate more time for subjects that integrate Target

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5 SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and has seven targets and three means of implementation.

4.7 topics and, more importantly, those topics are not included in annual and school-leaving high-stakes assessments, the education SDG may not progress beyond words on a page.

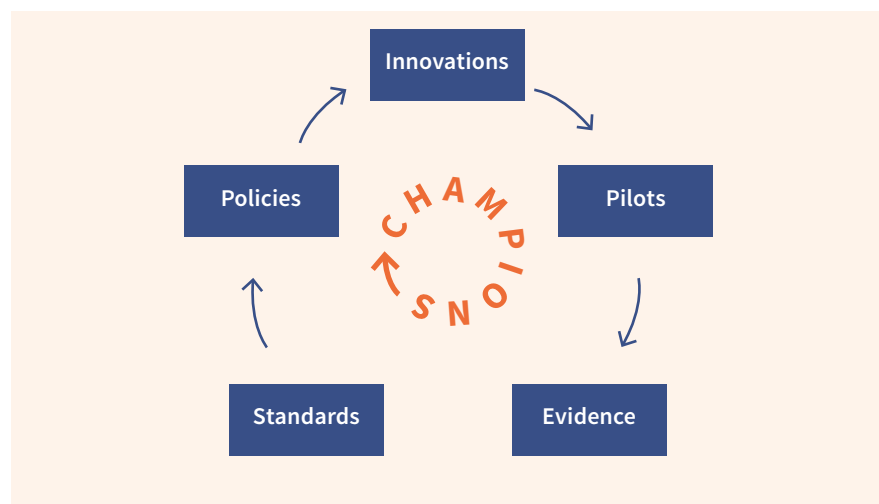
- Likewise, if the new curricula are written into new textbooks for specific subjects and grade levels, but without clear guidance for textbook writers concerning content and methods, the new material may not convey the necessary cogency and immediacy of the new topics to students;
- Also, if teachers are not supported by continuous professional development (CPD) and provided with teachers' guides that cover new Target 4.7 materials, the topics may not be given adequate coverage in a busy school day;
- Finally, if the material addressing Target 4.7 does not incorporate socio-emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning, the topics are unlikely to resonate with students and students are unlikely to develop any personal commitment to the SDGs, thereby making it unlikely they will carry through on Target 4.7 commitments.

At all these important junctures, NGOs, academics and independent educators play an important watchdog if not a direct role in curriculum and materials development and teacher professional development, particularly in marginalized areas where the government may be less active. Alternatively, they may help to generate grassroots demand for instruction consistent with global commitments that have not been operationalized beyond the policy or curriculum levels.

### **Strategy: Accelerating SDG 4 and Target 4.7 with SEL**

Now, almost one-third of the way through the period covered by the SDGs, where are the entry points for individual professionals, NGOs and networks to help accelerate the process of achieving SDG

4 or Target 4.7 specifically? In the overview to this section, I suggest that the drivers for achieving the education SDG and all its related targets include several things that networks such as NISSEM and other non-governmental entities can support. The diagram below implies that champions on the inside of key organizations may be able to move this process faster than professionals trying to push it along from the outside. Thus, in addition to generating innovations, pilots, evidence, standards and policies, promoters of SDG 4 need to put significant effort into recruiting and supporting national and local champions.



What else might organizations keep in mind, in this process? First, acknowledge that efforts by SDG planners to incorporate many disparate efforts in education over the past 20 or 30 years have contributed to a broad scope for Target 4.7, which can be seen as serving more of an umbrella function, bringing together related themes. Thus, many of the cases in the Global Briefs focus on just one or two components of Target 4.7. Moreover, not all components are equally ready to be shared; work on each of the components started at different points in time, with somewhat different configurations of organizations promoting them. At the same time,

definitions of GCED, ESD and peace education often included more than one of what are now the six Target 4.7 components. Therefore, different combinations of components of Target 4.7, defined in different ways, will advance at different speeds in different regions.

Additional to the actions represented in the briefs in this volume, champion organizations at international level include:

- UNESCO's International Bureau of Education which continues to promote education for global citizenship and sustainable development as part of its commitment to provide intellectual leadership on curriculum for the 21st century;
- The Asia Pacific Center for Education for International Understanding (APCEIU, f. 2000) was established as a UNESCO Category 2 center with support from the Korean government. In recent years, UNESCO and APCEIU declared Education for International Understanding as synonymous with Global Citizenship and APCEIU now supports the largest online clearinghouse for GCED materials, reports and organizations. The Center also hosts annual youth leadership workshops and global capacity-building workshops for teacher educators;
- The International Institute for Peace Education (IIPE, f. 1982) began with a focus on disarmament but has since evolved into an annual international program that brings together educators and advocates at a partner academic or non-governmental organization site to address education's role in peace and violence more holistically;
- Although UNICEF's Learning for Peace program formally ended in 2017, many reports of the pilots and evidence produced by that program are still available through INEE.
- The Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP, f. 2017), a UNESCO Category 1 center founded with support from the Government of India, focuses on social and emotional learning for children and youth in formal and non-formal settings, and promoting

digital learning. This year, MGIEP's annual international conference, TECH 2019, aims to showcase 'the role of digital technologies in enabling a shift from "transmissive pedagogies" to "transformative pedagogies" to create more peaceful and sustainable societies.' The conference invites proposals from individuals and organizations highlighting innovations, evaluations of pilots, evidence and efforts to draft standards and implement policies and constitutes a prime networking site for peace education and education for sustainable development. MGIEP also supports working papers and conducts research.

The existence of specialized international organizations plays a key role at different levels—global, regional and national—to bring innovations, results of pilots, evidence, and draft standards to bear on Target 4.7:

- At the global level, world conferences sometimes result in the creation of new UN organizations, e.g. the UN Environment Programme formed shortly after the UN Conference on the Human Environment (1972). However, like WHO and UNESCO, UNEP has a mandate much larger than its budget and depends on other organizations, often NGOs, to adapt, implement and champion its recommendations in target settings.
- Alternatively, until the UN forms or fully funds a multilateral organization, NGOs may step into the breach and seek formal standing to advise more general purpose UN agencies. For example, in 2011, the UN issued a Declaration on Human Rights Education but annual International Human Rights Education Conferences (IHREC f. 2010) continue to be sponsored by INGOs, with some support from the UN Office for Human Rights. At the same time, a network based in Geneva, the Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, comprised of more than 50 NGOs, 'aims to ensure NGO participation in the processes of global policy making on human rights education in relation to UN institutions, principally the UN Human Rights Council.'

- At the national and local level, NGOs and universities may band together in networks to sponsor national or regional conferences on education issues previously neglected by ministries of education, e.g. mainstreaming special needs education or Early Childhood Education. In countries where specialized professional journals at the national or regional levels are scarce or non-existent, these conferences can showcase pilots and research that might otherwise not be available outside the organizations that implemented them. These may receive support from UN organizations but operate relatively independently.

As [The Development Set](#) suggested as early as 1976, many of the international meetings and conferences described above generated far more talk and reports than effective action. Although global talk is useful, to the extent that it rationalizes and legitimates external funding for more effective policies and interventions to address Target 4.7 and SEL in low income and post-conflict settings, talk can only move the agenda so far. Internationally legitimated models and standards must be adapted to local contexts, piloted, evaluated, improved and, when successful, scaled up. Local adaptations are particularly important in marginalized areas, where the approach that works for the majority is failing. This calls for organizations that are already embedded in those contexts and preferably have experience delivering human services with a modicum of success, as the difficulty of delivering good quality education consistently in marginalized areas has much to do with logistics. Needless to say, such organizations are rarely government bureaucracies. They may be a consortium of private schools or, in a decentralized education system, public schools in a remote area with a superintendent who is willing to experiment. In the innovation research, such schools are called innovators or early adopters.

Most implementing organizations can produce one-off proof-of-concept studies but scaling up effectively may require expanded and longer-term funding and some longitudinal research. This sort of research will require partnerships with universities or individual



researchers that have the capacity to carry out not just classroom-based education research but also credible human services delivery research in the target areas or similar ones. This research should also take into account that successful scaling-up, even within the same context, will likely require a simpler model that does not require as much effort and resources as early adopters might have been willing to put in. Where such organizations and university partnerships do not exist, international organizations and professionals should do what they can to promote them. Serious research is necessary to underpin evidence-based standards and policies prerequisite to scale up adapted innovations. The examples of academic/practitioner partnerships being trialled for SEL assessment in the Middle East region and Turkey (Diazgranados, section 9) are a valuable example here.

Finally, research on the diffusion of innovations<sup>6</sup>—and anything that is not business-as-ineffective-as-usual classifies as an innovation—talks about innovators and early adopters because these two groups are the most likely to launch or participate in initial pilots. However, they constitute a minority in most settings; according to one estimate, 85% of community members tend to be neutral or opposed to innovation just on principle. Behavior change communications targeted at this 85%, therefore, must be a part of effective scaling-up of an innovation. Champions—popular, effective communicators—can play an important role in convincing the policymakers and the majority to trial and, if successful, adopt some innovation and undertake advocacy throughout the innovation and scaling-up processes at all levels: global, national, local and school. Well-positioned champions can get reluctant stakeholders to the table, can shake loose funding from new and old sources, can help the public stay the course when promising experiments initially fail but could benefit from tweaking, can

6 Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). New York: Free Press.; Strand, D., & Meyer, J. W. (2009 (1993)). Diffusion: Institutional conditions for diffusion. In G. Krucken & G. Drori (Eds.), *World society: the writing of John W. Meyer* (pp.136–155). Oxford: Oxford University.

increase public demand for a given service or innovation, and can mobilize the masses to participate in new campaigns. From the center of society, they can speed up the process of reaching Target 4.7 and integrating SEL.

Since the 1950s, UNICEF has mobilized international film, music and sports stars such as Danny Kaye, Audrey Hepburn, Youssou N'Dour and David Beckham to travel the world and meet with heads of state and local media to encourage a short list of interventions including: child vaccination, breast feeding, oral rehydration and girls' schooling. Retired statesmen like Nelson Mandela and Jimmy Carter have also lent gravitas to human rights and fair elections campaigns, and at least one (Bill Clinton) has lowered his gravitas enough to advocate for HIV/AIDS concerns alongside internationally recognized Sesame Street puppets. At the national level, Nobel prize winners, popular authors, radio personalities, sports heroes, cartoon characters and elected officials may be willing to participate in face-to-face campaigns or on public service announcements. The messages of these campaigns may be extremely simple, e.g. encouraging parents to send their children to school every day for the full day and to ask their children to tell them what they are learning in school.

### **NISSEM'S selective strategy: Moving Target 4.7 and SEL into educational materials**

NISSEM's efforts are situated within this interpretation of the process of institutionalizing global initiatives at the world, national and local level. Focusing on 4.7 themes and SEL within textbooks and education materials in low and middle income as well as post-conflict settings, NISSEM's approach derives from the analysis of innovation described above:

- Identifying a topic that will appeal to rights-based advocates as a necessary if not sufficient component of the quality basic education which is a human right for all children;

- Appealing to donors who are more moved by human capital development and preventing violent extremism than by human rights;
- Avoiding fads at the global level and focusing instead on needs that members have identified first-hand in a wide variety of conflict, post-conflict and low-income settings, over more than four decades;
- Framing SEL in a growing scientific literature, linking it to cognitive achievement as a student and to success as an adult;
- Focusing on the quality of teaching and learning in conflict, post-conflict and resource-poor settings, where often the only teaching and learning materials consistently present are textbooks that do not incorporate Target 4.7 or, worse, actually include material that may fan the flames of conflict;
- Supporting teachers in conflict and post-conflict settings, from which professional teachers may have fled, leaving behind volunteers who, in the absence of teachers' guides, follow whatever textbooks are available;
- Wherever possible, supporting both teachers and students by embedding pedagogy in textbooks since teachers' guides are often ineffective, mislaid, not reprinted or reach the wrong teachers;
- Focusing on what most countries have already agreed to do in principle, but which many post-conflict and low- or middle-income countries are struggling to operationalize; and
- Keeping costs low and impact measurable relative to many other education interventions.

NISSEM's work to date addresses several of the drivers of change in global and national practice:

- **Innovation:** highlighted in many of the briefs in this publication.
- **Pilots:** ongoing NISSEM negotiations around piloting workshops

for curriculum developers, teaching and learning materials writers and policy makers. Featuring the pilots of others in briefs and blogs on the website.

- **Evidence:** a UNESCO-funded study which was the key resource for the Global Forum on Education for Sustainable Citizenship and Education for Global Citizenship in Hanoi, July, 2019 that analyzes the presence of GCED, ECD and dimensions of learning (cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioral) in the policies and grade- and subject-specific curricula of countries already committed to Target 4.7. Concept papers and working bibliography on NISSEM's website. Seeking funding to assemble teams to carry out original research on the Target 4.7 and SEL content of teaching and learning materials to address those gaps.
- **Standards:** NISSEM's 2018 position paper is a brief statement that practitioners are welcome to use and adapt. Where it is not already being done by other organizations, NISSEM makes relevant documents, reports and statements readily available through NISSEM's bibliography, global briefs, blogs and in presentations and workshops at international conferences. NISSEM is building a network of experts among the community of scholars, practitioners and students interested in Target 4.7 and SEL in low- and middle-income and post-conflict settings through organizing and participating in workshops and meetings to identify and publish good practices and standards.
- **Policies:** Both the UNESCO paper and the Global Briefs provide materials to many donor organizations, practitioner organizations and governments that will be useful for raising funds, advocating for and developing context-appropriate policies. [https://www.nissem.org/sites/default/files/nissem\\_position\\_paper.pdf](https://www.nissem.org/sites/default/files/nissem_position_paper.pdf)

## Narrating our violent pasts in curricula and textbooks

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### ABSTRACT

Societies around the world struggle with violent pasts and with the legacies of atrocity crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes. A lack of acknowledgement and acceptance of violent pasts and related traumas may fracture social cohesion and leave persistent grievances and divisive stereotypes unchecked. Education plays a key role in the process of coming to terms with violent pasts and in reducing divisive stereotypes and forming positive identities. It encourages young people to reflect critically upon the dynamics and processes that led to past violence and conflict and equips them with the abilities, skills, values, and attitudes to interpret or process divergent interpretations of the past as well as their present implications. Education also strengthens the capacity of young people to learn from the violent pasts of their societies and to face the ethical and equitable issues of the present and future.

### KEYWORDS

textbooks, education, divisive stereotypes (reduce), conflict, violent pasts, contested history, research, international agreement

Textbooks and curricula in history, social studies and geography often narrate a society's past stories and portray its identities. It is no surprise, therefore, that textbooks and curricula are subject to political controversy. In extreme cases, they may become vectors of conflict and prejudice, or contribute to the complete marginalization of a people from history. Conversely, textbooks may promote reconciliation, inclusion and peace. In this sense, textbooks and curricula can, for better or worse, become part of larger processes of negotiating and shaping conflict and crisis. Ensuring that such educational materials enable a constructive engagement with the past, and do not exacerbate divisions, is therefore crucial.

### The role of Conflict and Education Learning Laboratory

Official school textbooks provide a rich source of material for those seeking to understand the greater social effects of schooling and the larger social and political context of education. Textbooks provide the official knowledge a society wants its children to acquire—facts, figures, dates, and seminal events—and frame these within a larger, though generally implicit, narrative that describes how things were, what happened, and how the past has led to the way things are now. (Williams, 2014)

Textbooks also communicate the identity that a society wants its children to assume. They are a tool for nation-building. A society's representation of its past reveals who 'we' were and are (and who we are *not*) as well as who 'they' are.

Analysis of textbooks provides a lens to examine what might be called a nation's deeper or hidden social and political curriculum. Comparative and longitudinal analyses provide a better understanding of variations and continuities in these 'curricula' over time and across national contexts. Moreover, analysis of the implicit pedagogy of teaching and learning in textbooks provides insight into the relationship envisioned between the student and history. Is history presented as an interpretation of events that are socially

understood, constructed, and contested, and in which the individual has both individual and social agency, or is it a set of fixed, unitary, and unassailable historical and social facts to be memorized? Do students have a role in constructing history, or is it external to them? How is history presented when that history is recent and contested? (Williams, 2014)

We must aim at material 're-building' whilst maintaining basic standards in textbooks and other educational materials. This involves the eradication of hate speech and adversary stereotypes, particularly in history textbooks. These measures should lead to the revising of curricula, textbooks and teacher training in countries with violent pasts or in conflict. Building on these measures requires a *long-term multifaceted strategy* of not only revising the content and methods of instruction, but also implementing it to safeguard an education that actively strives to overcome rifts in the past, to build trust between former 'enemies' and to help pupils develop positive expectations for the future.

There is a need for a wider approach to textbook analysis, most importantly in the construction of group identity. We have conducted research on conflict and controversies related to divisive textbook representations, including divisive omissions, within history and social studies education from countries across the world. Although contested historical issues are sometimes discussed openly in public or in the home, pupils learn little to nothing about them when reading their textbooks. Teachers, too, receive little guidance on how to foster healthy discussions and debate on these issues within their classrooms. On the contrary, some teachers are actively discouraged from covering topics or answering students' questions related to their contested or violent pasts.

History textbooks, in particular, contain a perception of *self-image* that may be no less stereotyped than the perceptions they contain of countries other than their own or of ethnic groups and minorities. This self-image may be directly identifiable, but it may also be that it is discovered through the images and portrayals of others. Anyone who engages in this type of analysis will find that

stereotypes and prejudices tend to be related to the need of a society to find points of orientation in its own development process. This circumstance perhaps reveals the weakest point in the traditional approach to combating prejudice, namely adding more 'accurate' knowledge—the idea that simply supplying the right facts or additional data will help to 'correct' a 'wrong' image.

We already know that this approach does not suffice to change someone's mindset. Textbooks as educational tools offer greater opportunities and can do much more than merely convey facts. They should provide points of references for students whose behavioral and cognitive patterns are being formed. Readers should strive to find out the key points of reference in a given text and to examine the degree to which *the concept of oneself*, embedded in history, geography or social studies textbooks, is also *open to other identities*.

In sum, divisive stereotypes are negative perceptions of others that lead to prejudice and set the stage for conflict and violence. They should have no place in school textbooks or other educational media. Yet they do. Millions of children across the globe are being exposed. At the Conflict and Education Learning Laboratory (CELL), we work with students, educators, researchers, policymakers and practitioners from diverse fields to build an information hive on divisive stereotypes in educational media. We engage a broad array of actors to foster open discussion and debate on how to tackle the scourge of divisive stereotypes.

CELL's ultimate goal is to reduce divisive content in primary and secondary school textbooks and other educational media in at least three ways. First, by supporting and publishing scholarly analysis of divisive stereotypes as they appear in educational materials in a wide range of countries, in order to raise awareness of the widespread presence of divisive stereotypes in those materials. Second, by forming alliances among key stakeholders who can develop minimum standards for educational content; and, third, by working towards international agreements that will make it harder in the future for divisive stereotypes to be included in educational

materials.

In this regard, CELL is developing a multi-pronged strategic platform including a Research Lab to aggregate, curate, and create scientific evidence and expertise on divisive educational content and its relationship to conflict. The fundamental goal of the Research Lab is to support CELL's work, in close cooperation with its partners, to lobby for an international agreement to reduce divisive stereotypes in primary and secondary school textbooks and educational media— particularly history, geography, social studies and religion textbooks. As part of such an international agreement, CELL is lobbying for standardized criteria against which all textbooks should be evaluated. Furthermore, such an agreement would include a forum wherein divisive stereotypes found in textbooks could be identified and discussed by all affected parties. The fields of education and conflict alleviation have long recognized that textbook revision has the strongest potential to create effective institutional change. In fact, it is considered the most important intervention, eclipsing the reform of teaching practices and curricula, and the development of new educational technologies and non-formal education programs. International efforts to tackle negative or harmful content in textbooks, or in educational media, have not dealt effectively hence directly with divisive stereotypes. Instead, they have advocated for less controversial—and less impactful—issues, such as mutual understanding, inclusiveness and equity in education.

Another aim of this research is to design and develop an app that will become the basis for a dictionary of divisive stereotype content in textbooks. The design of this app has been guided by questions such as: *Is it possible to have an algorithm or methodology to identify and record divisive content? Is it possible to have a database or dictionary with examples of divisive content from textbooks? Could this database be backed up with research? How can this evidence be used to lobby for international policy in the future?* Thus, the main work towards the app is focused on textbook research and analysis of history and social studies textbooks, specifically looking at periods

of violent pasts and contested history, in order to identify instances of divisive content.

In turn, this app and other research at CELL will be the basis of informing and leveraging discussions with key education stakeholders such as UNESCO, the Georg Eckert Institute and other international forums. CELL is also collaborating with University College Maastricht (UCM) to provide students with the opportunity to work with CELL's team for a full semester to carry out research and policy engagement activities, as part of UCM's Applied Research and Internship (ARI) Project. In another partnership with the South East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo, North Macedonia, CELL will work with their faculty and doctoral candidates to conduct research on educational materials and curricula in the region to identify divisive content and its link to past conflicts.

The first cohort of students began work during the fall 2018 semester and have produced research papers in the following three areas:

### **1 Contested narratives of war and history – The case of Serbia: A comparative study of the narration of the Bosnian War in history textbooks used in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia**

Andela Draganić worked on how divisive stereotypes are culturally inherited social cognitions that convey negative and discriminatory perceptions and beliefs towards a certain group. Her research aims to detect and analyze divisive stereotypes in the narration of the Bosnian war in history textbooks used for the eighth grade of primary education in Serbia, by comparing history textbooks with those used in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The narration of the Bosnian War is evaluated through two historical components: first, the narration of Operation Storm, and the events in Vukovar and Srebrenica; and second, the narration of the leaders of the independence movements in Serbia and Croatia—Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman respectively. Andela's research is



exploratory and employs a qualitative comparative methodology through discourse analysis. Besides textual analysis, the research also collected and carried out thematic analysis of four semi-structured interviews: three Serbian historians and a Serbian history teacher. Three themes emerged from the analyses: 'Victims versus aggressors', 'Protectors of the regime versus the opponents', and 'Ethnic cleansings.' This study argues that the six textbooks examined are similar in perpetuating divisive stereotypes by 1) justifying the action of their respective state; 2) reinforcing the distinction between the Self and the Other; and 3) omitting information about certain actors in the war and perspectives of other ethnic groups. However, the textbooks differ in political labelling of the events of the Bosnian War and identifying victims, aggressors, protectors of the regime and opponents to it. Lastly, the research provides some insight into the implications of such divisive narration for Serbian society and the Balkan region and proposes possible avenues for educational improvement.

## 2 Narrating the Dutch colonial past:

### Have textbooks been decolonized?

Luka Fleuren examines how the Dutch colonial past is narrated in Dutch history textbooks for secondary education. Her study explores the presence of divisive or colonized content as well as good practices of historical narration. Through performing a thematic analysis, this study identifies three overarching themes: taking responsibility, shifting the burden, and excluding the colonized. The theme of taking responsibility illustrates that various good practices exist. Textbooks openly acknowledge the role of the Dutch as a colonizer, discuss the experiences of the colonized, and teach students to reflect critically. The themes shifting the burden and excluding the colonized highlight that there is room for improvement. Through 'Europeanizing' and relativizing Dutch actions, the role of the Dutch may be masked or downplayed. In this way, a gap in students' historical

consciousness may be created. Moreover, by excluding the colonized through various omissions, some of the students' sense of belonging may be harmed.

Moving forward, this study suggests taking a hybrid approach to education, incorporating the experiences and perspectives of different groups of people, as Merryfield and Subedi (2014) have proposed. To establish the appropriate way forward, future research should examine how to fill the existing gaps in Dutch textbooks' historical narration and explore the effects of using certain language. Moreover, future research should investigate different levels and years of education to increase the generalizability of this study's findings. Ultimately, this study should stimulate textbook studies in other countries, so that an international move towards decolonized, non-divisive textbooks can be made.

## 3 Looking at what content does rather than what it says: Research on the impact of historical textbook content on students' intercultural sensitivity

Arthur Bribosia's research is a novel approach to the field of textbook revision, seeking to evaluate the influence of textbook content on students' behavior. Specifically, he looks at how the Belgian history textbook *Construire l'Histoire* and its coverage of Belgium's colonial history influences students' intercultural sensitivity. This stems from existing research indicating the failure of textbooks to present colonialism as an intercultural encounter as well as from the identified potential of interculturalism in meeting the challenges of our globalizing world. Arthur's research is the first attempt to measure the impact of textbook content on students' intercultural sensitivity from an empirical stance. The quantitative data collected through a social experiment with 58 high school students suggest that the textbook content impacts students' intercultural sensitivity by fostering a national identity among them. This is further supported and explained by the qualitative data generated by a focus-group discussion with 21 high school

students. By successfully evaluating a textbook based on what it does rather than what it says, this research provides support for the relevance of this new approach to textbook revision.

To evaluate the impact of the content on students, this research developed an experimental design through which the effect of reading textbook material on students' attitude could be observed. Fifty-eight students were asked to react to twelve statements using a five-point Likert scale after reading a text. The sample was divided into two groups—the control and the treatment group—and both groups were given a different text to read. The treatment group read the textbook content on colonialism while the control group was given a placebo text unrelated to colonialism. The data was then analyzed by comparing the means between both groups. In addition to the quantitative data produced by the survey, a focus-group discussion was held with 21 students in order to enable a deep understanding of the relationship between students, textbook content and (Belgian) colonialism. By combining both methods of data collection and analysis, the research was able to distinguish a pattern and observe a quantifiable impact of the textbook content on students' attitude. Indeed, the findings suggest that reading the textbook content fosters the development of a nationalistic identity among students by emphasizing their roles as Belgian citizens.

Although the limited scope and scale of the research requires that all findings and conclusions be considered cautiously, the findings confirm the research hypothesis that the content on Belgian colonialism in the textbook *Construire l'Histoire* has an impact on students' intercultural sensitivity. This in turn strengthens this paper's call for greater focus in the field of textbook revision on what textbook content does to students rather than just what it says.

This paper included a brief review of the relevant existing literature and research within the field of textbook revision. Subsequently, the concept of intercultural sensitivity was developed in the theoretical framework, followed by a substantial background

on the Belgian education system, focusing on history education in the French-speaking community. Afterwards, a detailed account of the methodology was given before presenting the quantitative and qualitative findings. Lastly a discussion and conclusion presented the implication of this research and the need for taking such approaches to textbook revision further.

NOTE: The authors are thankful to cite Dr. James H. Williams, CELL, Principal, North America, for his work in this complex domain of divisive content, textbooks, identity and conflict.

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## The global to local impact of networks for social emotional learning, peace, and conflict resolution education

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### ABSTRACT

This brief provides examples of an international and a state network of civil society and governmental organizations, coordinated around social emotional learning, and education for peace, conflict resolution and related topics such as bullying prevention. These networks illustrate how governmental and non-governmental champions can support change in education globally, in regions and countries as well as locally in states in the USA. Examples include impact on policy creation, enhancement, textbook creation/revision, curriculum development/revision, and teacher training in the Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, the USA, Armenia, Serbia/Montenegro, Colombia, Ukraine and Moldova/Transnistria. The networks described comprise the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)'s Peace Education Working Group and Ohio's Anti-Harassment Intimidation and Bullying Initiatives Advisory.

### KEYWORDS

peace education, social emotional learning, violent conflict, conflict resolution education

This brief provides examples of an international and a state network, each comprising groups of civil society and governmental organizations, coordinated around the central theme of social and

emotional learning and education for peace, conflict resolution and related topics such as bullying prevention. The impact of these networks is made possible through the strength of their collaboration between and among governmental and non-governmental champions at varying levels, horizontally and vertically, to effect change in education at scale globally, in regions and countries and more locally as in states in the USA. Examples include impact on policy creation, enhancement, textbook creation/revision, curriculum development/revisions, and teacher training. The organizations include the Peace Education Working Group (PEWG) of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) based in The Hague, Netherlands, and Ohio's Anti-Harassment Intimidation and Bullying Initiatives Advisory, in Ohio, USA.

### The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC): Peace Education Working Group

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) comprises hundreds of civil society organizations dedicated to conflict prevention and peacebuilding with a mission to promote a shift in how armed conflict is dealt with, from reaction to prevention. GPPAC is comprised of 15 regional networks, with priorities and agendas specific to their environment. Its main focus is on human security, gender, peace education, youth empowerment, dialog and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

GPPAC emerged from regional and international consultations which led to a 2005 conference at the UN with a goal of further collaboration between the UN and civil society as they worked toward peace. At this conference, more than 1000 attendees from a variety of organizations across all of the world's regions were able to select the working group that best fit their goals and interests. One of the working groups was dedicated to the role of education

in preventing and addressing conflict, specifically education for conflict resolution and peace. This was the largest working group and the only one with voluntary participation from all of the world's regions. Following this conference, as GPPAC developed and determined its format for conflict prevention at scale, longer-term working groups were created. As education for peace and conflict resolution was a priority for all regions, GPPAC developed a Peace Education Working Group (PEWG) which has been in existence since 2005. GPPAC's format for furthering conflict prevention work at scale includes not only the PEWG, but also other working groups made up of national, regional, and international experts on conflict prevention topics including improving practice, enabling collaboration and preventing violent extremism. For the purpose of this brief, we will focus on the PEWG: its members, strategic priorities, methodology and impact.

## Peace education

The PEWG uses the term 'peace education' broadly. At country level, the terminology differs. For example, in the USA, 'peace and conflict studies' or related topics are studied at university level, while the focus at primary and secondary level may be on 'social emotional learning (SEL)', 'anti-harassment and bullying prevention' and/or 'school safety'. The terms used in Kyrgyzstan are 'multicultural education' at the primary and secondary level and 'diversity' in colleges and universities. Similar content is integrated into the equivalent of 'civics and multicultural education' courses in the Ukraine, in a course of study called 'A Culture of Good Neighborhood'. In Armenia and the Philippines, the term 'peace education' is utilized in primary and secondary schools and in universities. In the current brief, 'peace education' includes efforts at building safer, more supportive learning environments for all children and their families, with a focus on developing the knowledge, skills and abilities for peaceful living and wellbeing as a long-term goal. The range of PEWG concerns corresponds to the

SDG Target 4.7 themes, which emphasize education for a culture of peace, global (and local) citizenship, gender equality, respect for diversity and human rights, as well as sustainable development.

## PEWG members and membership

The working group consists of, and convenes, civil society, teachers, academia (university faculty, staff, administrators) and representatives of ministries of education or relevant government agencies, in a global multi-stakeholder platform. It is the only working group within GPPAC that includes government or related strategic education counterparts on a regular basis, and has done so from its inception. This membership composition reflects the understanding that if the goal is to effect change at scale in countries or regions, with an impact on policy creation and development as well as implementation, GPPAC must work in collaboration with those whose responsibility it is to do this work outside civil society.

Civil society organization (CSO) representatives in the working group represent 15 regions who work for organizations in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, specifically and/or in education. PEWG members have the knowledge, skills and experience to support ministries of education and other state authorities. They tend to be recognized leaders in their own countries, regions and/or internationally who have experience taking related efforts to scale, such as from an individual school to all schools in a region or country. Almost all of these members have already worked with, or for, strategic education partners (governmental organizations or national education bodies) in their countries on related topics before becoming members of the PEWG. GPPAC regions frequently include, as unofficial members, representatives from their ministries of education or other strategic national/regional education partners. Since 2006, the PEWG has worked with national governmental agency partners to help develop or enhance policies in the formal education sector (primary

and secondary schools and universities, particularly teacher preparation) and in the informal education sector (community organizations, working with parents, and youth clubs). The PEWG supports their strategic education partners by developing or refining policies, training, curriculum and other forms of institutional infrastructure.

## The goals of the PEWG

- Build the capacity of CSOs working on education to support the integration of peace education in their countries through policy development at regional/national/state scale, enhancing teacher preparation, curriculum and youth engagement by serving as advocates, connectors and resource partners to schools and state agencies as well as local communities;
- Build the capacity of countrywide/regional education organizations (governmental and non-governmental) working on education to support the integration of peace education in their countries while enhancing the institutional infrastructure needed to support these initiatives at scale;
- Build the capacity of educators and teachers to provide their young people with the knowledge, skills and abilities to peacefully coexist with the help of SEL, multi-cultural understanding and conflict-management skills;
- Share good practices in capacity-building in countries and regions.

## Strategies adopted

Over the past 14 years, the PEWG found that achieving meaningful and widespread impact requires working toward transformation at the broader system level, strategically and structurally. The greater the ability to integrate these skills and concepts throughout educational systems (teacher training, curriculum integration, integration into the curriculum requirements /standards beyond one subject and state/regional policies), the better they can

withstand political changes and the impact of challenges in the broader environment. This is why GPPAC members engage with a broad range of changemakers, to build understanding of peace and conflict resolution education and how to work in difficult and changing contexts, with a priority of bringing together CSOs, government and academics.

To achieve the PEWG goals, one of the main methods—which has consistently been a part of the formal strategic plan, and will continue to be so—is to convene teams of policymakers and CSOs from countries and regions with a goal of examining best practices in developing institutional infrastructure. Each team develops actions plan to move stated policies to practice on a national/state scale in core areas such as better articulation of policy, teacher preparation, curriculum, and youth engagement. These are frequently hosted in collaboration with other ministries of education or larger international, government or non-governmental organizations. Working group meetings have taken place annually since 2005. Below are some examples of where and when these meetings or summits have taken place:

- 2005 (*New York, USA*) Co-hosts: European Center for Conflict Prevention (which became GPPAC) and the United Nations;
- 2007 (*Ohio, USA*) Co-hosts: Organization of American States (OAS), United Nations Development Program, GPPAC;
- 2009 (*Ohio, USA*) Co-hosts: OAS, GPPAC and the Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning (CASEL);
- 2010 (*Heredia, Costa Rica*) Co-hosts: Ministry of Education of Costa Rica, OAS, GPPAC;
- 2019 (*Bogota, Colombia*) Co-hosts: Ministry of Justice and Law of Colombia, University of Los Andes, Educapaz and GPPAC.

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Through these strategic meetings, the PEWG helped support the integration of core concepts and skills into curriculum



requirements (Serbia, Montenegro, Australia, Kyrgyzstan, USA, Afghanistan), teacher training (USA, Philippines, Ukraine, Moldova, Transnistria), and curriculum development for use across countries and regions (Ghana/West Africa, USA, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan).

In addition to these annual meetings/summits, the strategies for capacity-building at scale include:

- Focusing on teacher training within teacher training colleges/universities;
- Replicating programs and models in other countries in the region;
- Partnering with ministries of education and other national or regional education partners to garner support for initiatives at scale in their country;
- Advocating for a comprehensive approach in schools, including student programming, curriculum integration, pedagogy, and administrator/parent/community/support staff initiatives;
- Linking school and community efforts to reduce violence;
- Developing textbooks to enhance the consistency of teaching and learning of important core content related to PEWG concerns;
- Empowering youth as agents of positive change in their communities.

## 1 Focusing on teacher training within teacher training colleges/universities

*Example:* National success of teacher trainings in the Philippines

The Philippines has a long history of civil conflict, with multiple armed groups, including Muslim separatists, communists, clan militias and criminal groups escalating conflict in the country. In 2006, the then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo issued Presidential Executive Order 570 on the Institutionalization of Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education. This states that peace education should be taught in in-service as well as teacher training institutions. It promotes peace education in public and private elementary and high schools. As happens around

the world in many countries, this was an unfunded mandate with no organization or set of organizations designated to take responsibility for ensuring it was operationalized.

PEWG members based at Miriam College have been working to operationalize this executive order since it was instituted. This has been achieved by focusing on capacity building in teacher training in colleges for future teachers. To date, more than 100 college of education students have been reached and trained by a Philippines-based PEWG member. Once these students become teachers they will be sent to one of the 59,282 schools (elementary and secondary, both public and private) around the Philippines, impacting an average of 9120 students during their careers. In addition, the PEWG member, in collaboration with Mindanao State University, worked to develop a three-credit class on 'Fundamentals of Peace Education', which all students at the university are required to take as part of the general curriculum as of 2018.

## 2 Replicating programs and models in other countries in the region

*Example:* Ukrainian educational model focusing on different cultural groups is adapted in Moldova and Transnistria

In countries like Ukraine, the gap is widening between different segments of society, and these divisions have negative consequences. PEWG members have been working in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, school administrators, and teachers across the country to integrate a 'Culture of Good Neighbourhood' to help build understanding between the various cultural groups and communities. This work was so well received in Ukraine that the same model has been adapted in Moldova and the self-proclaimed territory of Transnistria, where for the first time in 25 years, educators from both sides of the border have come together to develop a common curriculum (in Russian and Romanian). This curriculum is being used in more than 60 schools on both sides.

### 3 Partnering with ministries of education and other national or regional education partners to garner support for initiatives at scale in their country

*Example:* Serbia/Montenegro Civil Society collaboration with Ministry of Education and the English Language Teacher's Association

The Western Balkans is a post-conflict situation and is an example of how to pursue efforts for inclusive education even after war and violence have ended. For PEWG members in the Western Balkans, peace education has been a regional priority since 2006, with national and regional efforts contributing to peaceful schools and peaceful communities in the region. Advocacy efforts of member organizations from Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia led to partnerships with ministries of education, which made it possible for peace education to be included in the official school curricula. They were also successful in establishing preventive programs and exchanges at the regional level. These efforts resulted in the adoption of a joint agreement between the ministries of education of Serbia and Montenegro on integrating peace education into their education systems.

The joint declaration was the foundation for cooperation between the two ministries of education, teachers and practitioners from both countries. This influenced policies in their countries, such as the Ministry of Education in Montenegro, which, in their statute under Article 9, recommends school mediation as a conflict resolution tool. In Serbia, The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development adopted a rule book, of which one of the recommendations is to address and prevent conflicts through the use of school mediation. In 2009, a declaration of collaboration between the ministries of education in Montenegro and Serbia on Peace Education was signed. The General Law on Education in Montenegro, with special emphasis on Article 9b, proposing school mediation as an alternative dispute resolution tool from 2010, reflects one of the eight recommendations adopted in the

Declaration on Collaboration between ministries of education in Montenegro and Serbia on Peace Education, which was signed in 2009. Since then, these teams of CSO and government representatives from the ministries engage in regular annual meetings as part of the regional GPPAC activities, financially supported by GPPAC.

While this was an excellent first step, additional efforts to implement this declaration and similar policies are necessary; in both countries a rise of radicalization and violent extremism has resulted in an increase in the number of youth expressing violent and extreme behavior. Recent frequent incidents of youth violence in Serbia have triggered greater state and society engagement in the prevention of violent and extreme behavior. GPPAC's in-country partners, the Nansen Dialogue Centre (NDC) Serbia and the English Language Teachers' Association of Montenegro (ELTAM), have been actively fighting against these negative trends. Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC) Montenegro, ELTAM, NDC Serbia and teachers in schools developed a practice book/methodology book, *Education for Peace, Experiences from Practice*, and developed a national curriculum based on it in collaboration with ministry representatives and practitioners working in schools. Due to the success of the curriculum, it has been used by other GPPAC regions. Additionally, NDC Serbia and ELTAM are active in facilitating teacher and student/peer mediation trainings throughout the Balkans, training more than 1000 students.

#### *Results as of 2018:*

Peer Mediation Clubs in Serbia have been established in:

- 10 schools (6 primary schools in the multi-ethnic province of Vojvodina and 4 schools in Bujanovac municipality);
- Four schools in South Serbia (2 primary and 2 secondary schools).

Peer Mediation Clubs in Montenegro have been established in:

- 4 schools, reaching around 400 students.

- In Serbia and Montenegro combined, around 1000 students were trained as peer mediators.

#### 4 Advocating for a comprehensive approach in schools, including student programming, curriculum integration, pedagogy and administrator/parent/community/support staff initiatives

*Example:* Armenia: School-wide peace education initiatives, a comprehensive approach

There is currently no law on peace education in Armenia, which since 1988 has had an ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno Karabakh region. Nevertheless, there is a desire among many people, particularly educators, to work toward peace.

To support peace education, the PEWG representative in Armenia, Women for Development NGO, has provided training for teachers and exchanged best practices with peace education centers in various schools to enhance learning between and amongst educators. A positive result of these exchanges was the publication of the 'Peace Bridges' newsletter that informs parents and educators about good practices, what the students are learning, and highlights students' achievements. Also, to build on schoolchildren's knowledge and development skills, creative activities/outlets (theaters, peace camps, and annual drawing contests) are provided for students during and after school hours.

##### *Results as of 2018:*

- At least 62% (850) of Armenia's 1364 schools are involved in the peace education project;
- Over 5000 teachers were trained in those 850 schools in peace education;
- Nearly 100,000 schoolchildren participated in peace education lessons;

- Conflicts with violent outcomes at schools who are part of the peace education efforts through Women for Development NGO have diminished by 70%;
- Three methodological handbooks, a guidebook for teachers, and an evaluation report on the impact of peace education on schoolchildren were published.

#### 5 Linking school and community efforts to reduce violence

*Example:* Colombian Cross-Generational School-Community Dialogues

Colombian society has suffered greatly from the horrific conflict between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army (FARC-EP), which lasted more than 50 years. After the signing of the peace agreement in 2016, it is important to educate the youth on how to sustain and strengthen peace.

The PEWG member in Colombia, La Paz Querida (LPQ), developed intergenerational dialogs for a culture of peace in Colombia to support Law 1732 of 2014, which mandates the implementation of a Peace Subject in all educational institutions. LPQ engages with the educational community, high school teachers and principals. To date, 34 intergenerational dialogs have taken place in 14 different regions highly affected by the internal armed conflict. What is noteworthy about these dialogs is that they bring together rural and urban communities, which rarely interacted during the conflict.

##### *Results as of 2018:*

- 34 inter-generational dialogues took place in 14 regions of the country highly affected by the internal armed conflict;
- 3557 people participated in the intergenerational dialogs, among which 854 became agents of change in their communities.

## 6 Developing textbooks to enhance the consistency of teaching and learning of important core content

*Example:* Kyrgyzstan textbook development to address and reduce xenophobia

After the tragic inter-ethnic clashes in the south of the country in 2010, which led to great social instability, there is a continuing need for peace education. In 2014, countrywide research conducted in Kyrgyzstan showed that almost 66% of young people engaged in physical fights on a regular basis, and more than 45% of young people were involved in school gangs. The number of young people who prefer to solve their differences using violence is now at epidemic levels. Emerging xenophobia and extreme nationalism are factors that lead to an increase of intolerance and reduced levels of civic participation by young people in Kyrgyzstan, which is a multi-ethnic society. The most severe nationalism is still targeted at Uzbek ethnic groups in the south of the country. In addition, the Tajik people are the target of frequent nationalistic attitudes because of border issues with neighboring Tajikistan and territorial arguments. In general, there is still a fear of discussing ethnic and cultural diversity at an official level. At the same time the Ministry of Education initiated, in February 2019, an 'Anti-discrimination and Gender Expertise' textbook and recommend that this theme be integrated into all teaching and learning materials. While Kyrgyzstan currently has no specific recommendation or policy requirement on peace education, the development of this textbook is a promising step toward peace education. A GPPAC PEWG member is one of the authors of this textbook.

*Results as of 2019:*

- A new course, 'Unity in Diversity', for teachers and students of pedagogical universities and colleges was developed;
- Over 3000 students in three pedagogical universities in the south of the country (in the post-conflict areas of Osh and Jalalabat, as well in the Batken region, which has a high risk of

conflict) participated in the course through formal learning and extra-curricular activities.

## 7 Empowering youth as agents of positive change in their communities.

*Example:* Kyrgyzstan's Cameras in Hand Project

GPPAC has been very active in Kyrgyzstan due to the strong network there and work with the PEWG representative, the Center for Social Integration Policy. One of the projects that GPPAC is currently carrying out in the country is 'Cameras in Hand: transformation and empowerment of Kyrgyzstani girls and boys.' Since February 2018, the project has had a strong impact on the Kyrgyzstani community. The objective of the project is to teach multi-ethnic schoolchildren to work together and use video-making to highlight the social problems that impact their communities. The resulting videos are shown in the communities to adults and key leaders.

### Ohio's State Advisory, USA

In the field of education in particular, it is not unusual to have networks, often referred to as advisories in the USA, to help operationalize current policies and/or to coordinate statewide efforts for developing and supporting related recommendations or requirements. With funding for education initiatives frequently being inadequate to accomplish the goals at scale, and the sheer quantity of key players that are impacted or should be included in the implementation of the initiatives, this collaboration is critical to success. The State of Ohio has such an advisory made up of government agencies and CSOs which at first glance appears to be focused on the topic of bullying prevention; however, the advisory takes into account all the various related components and organizations that contribute to creating the conditions for prevention, intervention and response for safer, more supportive



learning environments including Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and conflict resolution methods and programs such as restorative practices.

### **Ohio's Anti-Harassment Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) initiatives**

As of 2019, approximately 11.72 million people live in the state of Ohio. According to *Facts and Figures: Ohio's Education Landscape (2016–17)*<sup>1</sup>, the state had 3592 schools (divided into 612 school districts), with 1.674 million children enrolled and 134,053 educators (including administrators and classroom teachers). The student ethnic and racial demographics were approximately 17% Black, 6% Hispanic, 70% White, 5% Multi-racial and 2% Asian/Pacific Islander. Of these students, 51% were considered economically disadvantaged, 1% were homeless, 4% were English Language Learners, and 15% had disabilities.

In 2007, House Bill 276 (HB 276) required that the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) work with state governmental and non-governmental education agencies to develop a model policy to assist all school districts in developing their own policies to prohibit harassment, intimidation and bullying. As a result, the ODE in partnership with several state governmental and statewide agencies formed the Ohio Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Initiative (HIB). The advisory, coordinated by the ODE, includes agencies such as the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation, the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Center for Autism and content experts such as a representative from GPPAC's Peace Education Working Group from Ohio and from colleges/universities such as Miami University (Ohio).

In addition, HB 276 required that ODE develop a safety and violence prevention curriculum to enhance elementary school professionals abilities to detect child abuse. In 2009, the requirement was extended to middle and high school students.

1 Retrieved July 1, 2019 from <http://education.ohio.gov/Media/Facts-and-Figures>

The four hours of content that must be covered every five years, by educators and school personnel in Ohio's schools, includes child abuse detection, violence and substance abuse, positive youth development, and detection of human trafficking (added in 2013).

The Anti-HIB advisory's most recent five-year plan includes the following goals, advocating for a comprehensive approach in schools, including student programming, curriculum integration, pedagogy, and administrator/parent/community/support staff initiatives:

- *Goal 1:* Utilize statewide data to improve policy implementation, Anti HIB primary prevention activities and capacity building;
- *Goal 2:* Build school districts, community professionals and parent's capacity to implement Ohio's Anti-HIB policy;
- *Goal 3:* Identify, develop and disseminate primary prevention information regarding Anti-HIB behavior.

The strategies to help better operationalize the goals include:

#### **1 Raising awareness of the policies themselves through statewide conferences and offering regional professional development to help clarify what is expected and good practices available**

- 2012–13 school year: A statewide Anti-HIB professional development day for 200 educators (teachers, school counselors, administrators, other school staff) who work in the schools and community to share Ohio's Anti-Harassment Intimidation and Bullying policy and best practices for policy implementation;
- 2015–16 school year: Hosted the 2016 Ohio Safe and Violence Free Schools Conference;
- 2016–17 school year: Ohio's Safe and Violence-Free Schools conference provided strength-based asset development approaches to 150 participants who work with students to create safe and violence-free schools. Conference workshops and events included opportunities to explore tools for systems change to



create safe and violence-free schools, as well as opportunities to work on strategic planning to help identify critical needs, partners and processes to create local safe and violence-free schools;

- Annually, ODE staff and Anti-HIB advisory members provide presentations at conferences and as a part of staff development for school and community partners on Ohio's model policy and best practices for policy implementation.

## 2 Developing policy guidance documents and resources

- 2015–16 school year: Developed a strategic plan and the following policy guidance: [Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Guidance](#), [Plan for Schoolwide Safety](#), [Guidance for Student Action Planning](#);
- 2017–18: Developed Anti-HIB Resources: ODE and Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Fact Sheets [Strategies for Addressing HIB Behavior for Principals, Parents, and Students](#);
- 2018–19: Developing Prevention Education guidance for program identification, implementation and sustainability.

## 3 Developing a standard curriculum to enhance the consistency of teaching and learning of important core content

- *Example:* 2016–17: Updated the statewide required [Safety and Violence Prevention Training Curriculum](#)

### Reflections

Some of the barriers to embedding peace education, social emotional learning or other related topics that the GPPAC PEWG and the Anti-HIB Advisory have encountered in broader educational and social structures include:

- the limited understanding of concepts, and at times, the actual current recommendations and policies by administrators,

teachers, and those whose job it is to implement the standards, policies or laws;

- the need to develop trust and political will to work collaboratively to change the status quo;
- limited understanding and knowledge of systems design to take education to scale.

This systems design is a skillset that very few have and is not regularly taught in colleges/universities or in professional development settings in education for government, nor CSOs. Addressing the various barriers requires action at multiple levels:

- Heightening the awareness of politicians and decision-makers about gaps in educational systems, especially those with decision-making power, on how to allocate funds and how through collaboration the gaps can be addressed, and the benefits to them personally of addressing these gaps;
- Creating the right incentives to bring about government education agencies' willingness to address education gaps together with civil society;
- Ensuring different actors have the capacity (knowledge, skills, and abilities) to address problems together;
- Supporting ministries of education and government education agencies in operationalizing their policies. When a government education agency agrees to do something, GPPAC members as well as the non-profit education agencies and/or colleges and universities such as those represented on the Ohio Anti-HIB advisory, are able to follow up with support, assisting each other in holding one another accountable and monitoring implementation;
- Linking peace education/SEL to existing policies and showing government education agencies and schools how peace and conflict resolution education or SEL can contribute to addressing the challenges they are already working to address versus seeing peace, conflict education or SEL as add-ons.

One of the reasons that the GPPAC PEWG has seen such change at scale in so many of the countries and regions, in addition to the individual expertise and skills of the CSO liaisons in each region, is the focus on the strong and lasting collaboration between CSOs and ministries of education or other government/national strategic education partners. The Anti-HIB advisory has similar strong partnerships between government, colleges and universities, and what is called the non-profit sector in the USA, or civil society education organizations such as regional educational service centers<sup>2</sup>. This is achieved through various methods including:

- Collaborating with higher education (universities) and CSOs that will be there when governments change. In many countries and states in the USA, staff changes occur frequently in government, or with each new administration. Including CSOs and universities as part of the larger implementation effort helps it continue beyond the life of a particular government administration, particularly if it can be embedded into teacher education requirements, such as in the Philippines, some required courses in Ohio colleges and universities, and in in-service education requirements such as in Ohio with the statewide Safety and Violence Prevention Training required of all Ohio K-12 Professionals;
- Involving Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs), ministries/ government education agencies and CSOs in peace/conflict resolution/SEL education activities: their design and implementation and keeping communication between and among both groups consistent at all stages;
- Giving credit to all who have worked to bring about the initiatives is also key, as one organization alone is not able to fully operationalize and implement those policies;

2 Educational Service Centers are local education agencies governed by a publicly elected board, providing support services to Ohio's school districts, chartered nonpublic schools, community schools, and STEM schools. <https://www.oesca.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/ESCs%7CAbout%20ESCs>

- Including programs or initiatives as part of a broader systematic response and in context. Neither the Ohio Anti-HIB nor the GPPAC PEWG sell or promote one specific program over another. The PEWG and the Anti-HIB focus on integrating or linking this content to what the organization, state, or country is already prioritizing, such as school violence prevention/safety policies (Serbia), social emotional learning standards (USA), addressing the need for more effective classroom management training for future teachers (USA), or multicultural education standards (Kyrgyzstan). Content should be integrated into what already has to be done (curriculum standards/courses that already exist) instead of an 'add-on due mostly to time constraints.
- Working across issues and being flexible: whether it is peace or conflict resolution education initiatives, these issues in schools are multi-layered and link to school safety initiatives, anti-bullying prevention policies, multicultural and diversity initiatives, more effective teacher-training strategies, etc. Many countries have worked on addressing bullying prevention or school safety;
- Using and being familiar with governmental language, political climate, and processes in order to navigate opportune timing, linkages and strategic partners. Fluency in processes/ government procedures impacts expectations regarding what is needed to accomplish the task and what are realistic deadlines; including staff with direct experience of working in schools as an educator is also important as they have an understanding of how schools operate and an understanding of the way the curriculum works.

Of the many strategies used by both the global (GPPAC) and statewide (Anti-HIB) networks, the greatest successes in terms of taking initiatives to scale have been due in large part to the strong positive relationship between and among the governmental and non-governmental organizations working collaboratively over the years. This has enabled the development of larger policies, as

well as the various levels of implementation needed to scale this work at district, state, country or regional level through primarily pedagogical training (pre-service and in-service professional development for educators) and curriculum development (textbooks and training materials for educators). The Anti-HIB advisory has been effective in determining a mechanism to operationalize the requirements at scale, such as the four-hour required school violence prevention training for all educators in the state. While this is not the optimal quantity of training for transfer of good practices through a master trainer model, it is a promising structure that is tied to policy. While GPPAC PEWG members have linked more to the development of teachers before they have their own classrooms in some countries, the master trainer model has not been adopted as frequently as opposed to the less impactful cascade approach to training. This is due in part to constraints with funding needed for this master trainer approach and lack of regional structures already existing in the countries to support this model, such as with organizations for which this task would be a natural part of their current job description as it is with the Educational Service Centers in Ohio. Both the global and state networks could benefit from enhanced work in teacher preparation including theory and practical skill-building through which requirements in colleges/universities or other education mechanism would allow for greater individual educator capacity-building. Allocating money solely to a conference or meeting, without a structured time to work on specific skill-building and action-planning, while building awareness, does not support the desired capacity-building that leads to changes. The opportunity for networking, however, has been helpful in building relationships supporting exchanges of staff to be trained in varied models across districts, states, regions, and countries.

Both the GPPAC PEWG (approximately 25,000 euros budget annually) and the Anti-HIB (no specific funds allocated to this network) operate with minimal funding. However, each has a designated staff person or volunteer member responsible for

coordinating the work who has been with the networks since the beginning and still provides the leadership. Having a dedicated staff person with historical memory is critical to seeing the quantity and scale of accomplishments from both organizations. The work accomplished and supportive funding are achieved primarily by partnering with other agencies who see this work as part of their current mission. When additional funding is needed, particularly in GPPAC's PEWG, the organization applies for funding from outside foundations—such as the UN, USAID, and other governmental development agencies—leveraging their strategic education partner relationships.

To achieve the GPPAC PEWG and the Anti-HIB goals at such a large scale, implementing good practices requires continuous effort. Like the work of a gardener, there is, and will always be, more to do, and committed champions play a vital role. Both groups have seen successes, in part because the majority of individuals who represent the agencies that make up the networks see this work as worth their extra unpaid time and effort, believing that in the long term it benefits children, families, and the local and global communities where each member lives. A common belief ties the majority of them together: that this work is bigger than themselves; that together, they are able to change educational structures, resulting in safer and more peaceful local and global communities.

## Related resources

### Sample resources from GPPAC's Peace Education Working Group

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### Sample of Ohio's Anti-HIB guidance documents

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## Promotion and implementation of Global Citizenship Education in crisis situations

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### ABSTRACT

In the face of protracted conflicts or refugee crises and with the rise of political and ideological extremism, many countries are struggling to learn to live together and embrace the cultural diversity of their societies. It is becoming increasingly important to ensure our societies and national education systems transmit values of solidarity beyond national borders, empathy, and a sense of belonging to a common humanity—which are core elements promoted through Global Citizenship Education (GCED). GCED is a powerful approach to education that can empower people to recover from crises and transform their communities into peaceful and sustainable societies.

A desk study was commissioned by UNESCO to review existing research on the promotion and implementation of GCED and related programs in countries affected by crisis situations, with particular attention to initiatives benefiting the refugee population. It unveils the key challenges these programs encounter in such contexts, as well as the promising practices that can guide the design and implementation of future GCED in crisis situations. This brief is a synthesis of the desk study and supports the evidence that, after analyzing the context and the available means, GCED and related programs can and should be systematically adapted and implemented in crisis situations, including in response to refugee crises.

### KEYWORDS

civic education, crisis situations, curriculum, educational environment, educational strategies, global citizenship education, human rights education, peace education, refugee education, war-devastated countries, teaching practice

### Introduction

In September 2012, on the margins of the 67th session of the UN General Assembly, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the UN Global Education First initiative, which placed the promotion of global citizenship as one of its top three priorities. Since then, global citizenship education (GCED) has gained more traction and attention from the international community. The Education 2030 Framework for Action, at the heart of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in September 2015 (United Nations General Assembly, 2015), depicts education as ‘inclusive and as crucial in promoting democracy and human rights and enhancing global citizenship, tolerance and civic engagement as well as sustainable development.’ (United Nations, 2015, pp.9–10)

One of the key areas of work of UNESCO is to support Member States, including those affected by crisis situations, in achieving progress towards SDG Target 4.7. UNESCO promotes national efforts to integrate GCED in education systems and educational practices. This includes other specific approaches that provide effective entry points for promoting GCED, such as education for international understanding, peace and human rights education, which are longstanding areas of work of UNESCO.

In this context, UNESCO commissioned a study (Robiolle, 2017) to review research on the promotion and implementation of GCED and related programs in countries affected by crisis situations, with particular attention to initiatives benefiting refugee populations and internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>1</sup> In an effort to offer a

1 The full study, including the presentation of the methodology and detailed findings, is available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000252771>



**Table 1: Projects selected for the study:**

Location	Project
<b>Afghanistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school-based Peace Education Program conducted by Help the Afghan Children (HTAC) in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE) of Afghanistan (Robiolle, 2016; Sadeed, 2012)</li> </ul>
<b>Burundi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Responsible Citizenship program conducted by the Foundation for the Refugee Education Trust (RET) in partnership with the MoE of Burundi (Servas, 2012)</li> </ul>
<b>Columbia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Youth Peace Builders Project initiated by Plan International and implemented with CINDE (International Centre for Education and Human Development / Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano in Spanish), in partnership with the MoE of Colombia (Nieto &amp; Luna, 2012)</li> <li>Juegos de Paz conducted by the University of the Andes and the MoE of Colombia (Diazgranados et al., 2014)</li> </ul>
<b>The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Healing Classrooms: Opportunities for Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education (OPEQ) project conducted by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) implemented with the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and The Institute of Human Development and Social Change (IHDSC) at New York University (NYU), in partnership with the national MoE of the DRC (International Rescue Committee, 2014; Wolf et al., 2015)</li> </ul>
<b>Iraq</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Distance Learning Project implemented by UNESCO Iraq Office in partnership with the MoE, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Culture and Youth, and the Ministry of Human Rights (UNESCO Iraq Office, 2011)</li> <li>Promoting Civic Values and Life Skills for Adolescents (12 to 19 years old) Through Education, a project led by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia in partnership with UNESCO Iraq Office and the United Nations Population Fund (UNESCWA, 2012)</li> </ul>

Location	Project
<b>Haiti</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and piloting of textbooks on sexual education, human rights and culture of peace (UNESCO Haiti, 2016)</li> </ul>
<b>Lebanon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better Together: A Youth-Led Approach to Peaceful Coexistence between Syrian Refugee and Lebanese Local Communities, a project led by Search for the Common Ground and implemented in partnership with the Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training and the Development for People and Nature Association (Ortmans, 2015)</li> </ul>
<b>Liberia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Education for Life Skills (YES), a project implemented by six different partners: Mercy Corps International, Action Aid Liberia, World Vision Liberia, Search for Common Ground, the National Adult Education Association of Liberia, and the Peace Building Resource Center (Hayden, 2007; Mercy Corps, 2007)</li> </ul>
<b>Myanmar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education for Peace and Development in Northern Rakhine State, a project implemented by UNESCO in partnership with the MoE of Myanmar and UNHCR (UNESCO, 2015a)</li> </ul>
<b>Nepal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration of peace, human rights and civic education into social studies curricula and textbooks, a project implemented by Save the Children, UNESCO, and UNICEF, in partnership with the MoE of Nepal (Smith, 2013, 2015; UNICEF, 2010)</li> <li>The Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) education program designed and implemented by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees in the five UNRWA Fields of Operation (Oguzertem &amp; McAdams, 2015; Pontefract, 2013; UNRWA, n.d.)</li> </ul>
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YRTEP), a program implemented by Management Systems International and World Vision (Hansen, 2002; Sommers, 2002)</li> </ul>

variety of contexts and geographic locations, the study selected 16 projects in countries that could be considered 'in crisis situations' at the time of the study. These included both formal and non-formal programs, with a variety of profiles of organizations implementing and participating in these interventions.

## Main findings

'Transformative education for local, national and global citizenship and peace CAN be implemented even under difficult conditions if there is a policy commitment to do so.'

(SINCLAIR, 2012, P.9)

GCED and related programs are even more critical in crisis situations. Indeed, such periods can offer a window of opportunity to address some of the root causes of a conflict (UNICEF, 2006, p.65), as well as the psychosocial needs of children and adolescents affected by trauma and displacement, the need to protect them from harm, the need to disseminate key messages such as how to avoid HIV/AIDS, landmine awareness, environmental education, and education for peace and citizenship. (Sinclair, 2001, p.1) Additionally, crisis situations can provide opportunities to reach previously excluded or marginalized groups by opening up systems for reform and development, mobilizing awareness of and funding, and generating changes in societal attitudes and behaviors. (Lloyd & Young, 2009) Nevertheless, reaching Target 4.7 requires improving our understanding of what promoting and implementing GCED programs in crisis situations involve. This desk review of existing research and case studies in crisis situations unveiled the key challenges these programs encounter in such contexts, as well as the promising practices that can guide the design and implementation of future GCED and related programs. While it underscores various challenges encountered in crisis situations, this study offered promising practices that support the evidence that GCED can and should be implemented in crisis situations, including in response to the current refugee crisis.

## Key challenges for the design and implementation of GCED in crisis situations

### Community and school environment (physical and social)

- The quality of teaching and students' learning is particularly affected in crisis situations (poor school infrastructure, lack of resources, lack of safety, widespread human rights violations, or deteriorated living conditions);
- Surrounding acts of violence challenge the development of personal non-violent conflict management skills.

### Policies

- A lack of political will on the part of donors and governments can be explained by a lack of prioritization of GCED within education programs for various reasons;
- Local authorities and community members who have not already been introduced to the content of the GCED program and have not been involved in the design of the program can be suspicious and resist the promotion and implementation of the program.

### Curriculum

- Because GCED can be defined and interpreted in different ways, its nature can be confusing for implementation in the field, and its placement within the curriculum can be challenging;
- Teachers may be uncomfortable facilitating class discussions on particular topics, and the content of what is taught can raise suspicions and generate resistance from different groups;
- If the curriculum content is disconnected from the cultural context or does not integrate specific issues that participants encounter, it can represent serious obstacles for the credibility and success of GCED programs.

### Teachers and teaching practices

- There may be a lack of qualified teachers because of the inadequacy of policies for recruitment, training, upgrading

qualifications, and terms and conditions of employment (including non- and/or low payment). Insufficient teacher training and complex new pedagogy and materials also represent obstacles;

- A lack of safety and psychological trauma also affect teachers' morale and motivation.

### **Target the right populations and reach the un-reached**

- Reaching marginalized groups is even more challenging in crisis situations where access to education services is even tougher.

### **Research and knowledge**

- The unstable context, the complexity of GCED, the lack of adapted tools, and the lack of funding dedicated to serious monitoring and evaluation challenge the provision of rigorous impact evaluation, which, in turn, creates a lack of long-term funding for such programs.

## **Promising practices for the design and implementation of GCED in crisis situations**

### **Community and school environments**

- A safe and supportive community and school environment that do not contradict the messages received by learners are essential: a school climate that respects all students and staff; democratic processes in class and school; working with parents and the community; service activities in school and community; peer mediation and anti-bullying measures; and use of multiple channels.
- Building a school climate that respects all students and staff: for instance, the Youth Peace Builders Project in Colombia influenced schools' pedagogic and management strategies, had them develop codes of conduct and adopt measures to strengthen and support the work of student government bodies.

- Democratic processes in class and school or other activities that can be modeled in class, such as sharing of tasks by rotation, pairwork or small group work, which give students a chance to speak. Democratic structures for school governance such as student parliaments have been in operation for many years in schools operated by UNRWA for Palestine refugees. UNICEF children's parliament initiative in various countries has also been a key method for ensuring that children have a voice in decisions that affect them.
- Working with parents and the community: providing them with good briefings and inviting them to participate in consultations on elements of GCED helps avoid a disconnect between what students learn in school and what they are told at home. HTAC's efforts in Afghanistan include this process with success. Similarly, the Youth Peace Builders Project in Colombia actively encouraged Parent Councils/Associations to foster and model democratic decision spaces within the schools, and design activities to train a wider number of parents in citizenship and peace values. International Alert's peace education in Syria, Lebanon and Turkey recommends developing complementary adult peace education programming, which would help support a positive and enabling environment within the home and family networks to encourage sustainability of change beyond individual children.
- Service activities in school and community can reinforce citizenship learning, provided they motivate the students and help them to build mutually beneficial relationships and skills (e.g., cooperation, communication, and advocacy). The Youth Peace Builders Project in Colombia supported the creation of youth organizations that provided a 'real life' platform for the exercise of leadership skills and citizenship competencies, and reinforced positive youth identities.
- Peer mediation and anti-bullying measures can help improve the school climate and for students trained as peer mediators to

practice what they have learned. For instance, the Youth Peace Builders Project in Colombia gave students the opportunity to propose and implement initiatives aimed at improving peaceful coexistence and acceptance of diversity within schools.

- Use of multiple channels can also help reinforce school learning through radio/TV, printed matter, and in some settings web-based programs and social media. These channels can also contribute to opening the minds of adults with whom children interact. Radio broadcasts have been used to complement the RET programming for Responsible Citizenship in schools in Burundi. Similarly, the outreach of the Youth Education for Life Skills program in Liberia was extended through media tools that included jingles, spot messages, radio programs, and soap operas.

## Policy

- Reviewing curriculum and identifying policy options with national experts with an interest in this topic, together with regional and international expertise to conduct a curriculum review and identify policy options. Interactive workshops help curriculum officials, education faculty of national universities and teacher colleges, and textbook writers to understand the challenges of education that promotes development of values and behavior change in relation to citizenship, and to draft policy options. Such workshops often lead to beneficial longer-term cooperation and were critical for the success of the integration of peace, human rights and civic education into social studies curricula and textbooks in Nepal and for UNRWA's Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance education program dedicated to Palestinian refugees.
- Adopting a policy reform with stakeholders' buy-in and sustainable high-level support: program design, implementation, and monitoring in consultation with communities and the active participation of young people in particular is key to ensuring the relevance of programs to local realities and long-term sustainability. A successful policy will have the support from

senior MoE management (not just a single champion) so that they commit to implementing the reform. Involving MoE staff from early stages ensures smooth phasing and handing over from foreign NGOs to local agencies. This practice contributed to the success of several projects studied for this report, in particular HTAC's program in Afghanistan or the RET's program in Burundi. In the case of Nepal, multi-year agreements between the education ministry and external agencies helped cement sustainable high-level support on both sides through memoranda of understanding. Developing a handover plan to the MoE and/or other national organizations is also key for the sustainability of the program.

- Advocacy and community mobilization: initial advocacy efforts play a significant role in the success of the implementation phase. For instance, in Myanmar, UNESCO conducted continuous advocacy and consultations with the MoE on developing conflict-sensitive life skills and peace education curriculum. All government stakeholders in Rakhine state as well as non-government service providers and development partners became fully supportive of the project and endorsed its implementation in project target areas, as well as in other areas of Rakhine state and Myanmar as a whole.
- Capacity-building for a strong and inclusive national team that comprises full-time curriculum staff, together with other educators having an interest in or responsibility for GCED greatly supports the effectiveness, conflict-sensitivity, and sustainability of the program. The program's budget should integrate this step to avoid budget constraints once donor inputs are reduced. In Nepal, the collaboration between the MoE Curriculum Development Centre, the National Centre for Education Development, Save the Children, UNICEF, and UNESCO, through a multi-year agreement on education for human rights, peace and civics, provides a great example of such efforts. In this case, the program team has extended the inclusiveness to representatives of marginalized minority ethnic/linguistic

groups and include them in the consultative and curriculum-writing process. As a result, the process was conflict-sensitive as it was not dominated by the linguistic/cultural/religious/political and economic elites who often dominate government, NGO and other civil society organizations.

- Another major decision for the program's policy strategy is deciding between impact and coverage. Should a government or agency focus on a small population group and use available financial and human resources to have a strong impact ('intensive programs') and/or design a program that will attempt to reach all students but may have less impact on each one ('less intensive methods' or 'wide coverage' approaches)? The level of teacher competencies in the country, the scope for training large numbers of teachers, geographic and logistical issues often influence this decision.
- 'Intensive methods' include school-based programs using participatory pedagogy based on varied stimulus activities followed by skillfully facilitated discussion, which requires well-trained and supported teachers and may be more practicable for NGOs in a limited geographic area. This is the type of successful approach employed by the RET in a group of secondary schools in Burundi receiving returning refugees, or by HTAC in schools in Afghanistan. In another example of intensive approach, NGOs work with youth, using multiple activities to change the mindset of young people and engage them in constructive activities to help their peers, schools or communities. This approach was employed successfully in the Youth Peace Builders Project in Colombia and in Liberia through the Youth Education for Life Skills (YES) program.
- 'Less intensive methods' or 'wide coverage' approaches include the integration of new content into a national textbook with suggestions for teacher use, with some modest training of teachers on the new material if possible. This method was selected both in Nepal and in Haiti where UNESCO supports the

MoE in the integration of sexual education, human rights and culture of peace in the national curriculum. Additionally, using radio broadcasts is another 'less intensive method' with a broad outreach in principle; however, there is no certainty as to who will listen or how they will interpret the messages. For instance, radio and animated TV clips for promoting peace, human rights, gender equality, right to education, health care, and noble values were produced and broadcasted in Iraq for UNESCO's Distance Learning Project. Considering initiatives implemented in the field, particularly in crisis situations, a phased approach that includes both *intensive* and *less intensive* elements is the most adequate.

- Ensuring long-term funding and support is essential in order to significantly impact students' behavior in the short, medium, and longer term. While most donors cannot promise money for a decade, they should draw up strategies based on perspective planning at least for the medium term in conjunction with national actors. IRC's Healing Classrooms program in the DRC benefited from a longer funding timeframe, which helped increase its chances of successful impacting on students as well as its evaluation possibilities.

## Curriculum

- *Program content*: adopting a holistic approach, developing a relevant content adapted to different age groups, cultural context and traditions, and which covers local, national, and global dimensions, is key. For instance, International Alert's work on peace education with Syrian civil society organizations in Syria, Lebanon, and Turkey highlighted the degradation of education infrastructure and opportunities to learn as a key vulnerability, and underlined the central role of quality, holistic education in reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience. Indeed, in times of crisis, many students as well as teachers may suffer from the psychological effects of trauma and loss or separation



from family members, and other stressful circumstances. This International Alert initiative demonstrated how providing psychosocial support, safe spaces, supportive and positive adult role models, and value-based lessons in non-violence, human rights and self-care helps young people to navigate and cope with the impact of crisis and war. The project team also recommended exploring ways to further refine peace education modules and consider how to address the gender dimensions of vulnerability for children and young people: this would include refining culturally sensitive modules, which address the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, early marriage, and child labor. These modules should be developed and tested with communities to ensure appropriateness and relevance.

- *Placement within the curriculum for formal programs:* GCED content and competencies are often integrated into an existing curriculum (such as civics or citizenship education, environmental studies, geography or culture). When the competencies for GCED align with those required for other subjects, this integration can work well: for example, in Colombia, the alignment of citizenship building and comprehensive sexuality education initiatives enabled participants to better understand their universal rights to health and well-being, and to develop competencies to claim these rights. A combination of highly focused study through separate subjects, supplemented by attempted ‘infusion’ of the same ideas in existing subjects, is recommended when possible.

## Teachers and teaching practices

*Teaching practices* that favor successful GCED programs include:

- culturally-sensitive and accessible educational material: this method has been particularly successful for UNICEF's program in South Sudan and HTAC's peace education program in Afghanistan. Both projects used cultural and religious references such as traditional sayings and stories that strategically connect

the curriculum with the society around the students. Similarly, INEE's peace education program uses peace-oriented proverbs from Somalia and other countries as stimulus activities;

- game-like activities or skits oriented to citizenship and peace can make a stronger connection with the student than simply reading a book or listening to a teacher. However, while they can be very effective, such learning activities require good training of and support for teachers. The RET has used these types of stimulus activity extensively in its Responsible Citizenship program in Burundi to introduce skills and concepts such as inclusion, two-way communication, emotional awareness and control, empathy, bias, stereotyping, cooperation, assertiveness, problem-solving, win-win solutions, and mediation;
- participative activities that relate to intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, emotional awareness, coping, and empathy;
- sports and expressive activities involving students' identities and emotions are encouraged as a teaching tool to support many citizenship and peace education objectives, as well as helping meet psychosocial needs after traumatic experiences. These activities were particularly central and useful to the Youth Peace Builders Project in Colombia and to the Better Together Project in Lebanon, creating resources and spaces to facilitate learning and reflection at school and community levels;
- training youth as peer educators and mediators can be powerful and cost-effective. Youth are able to reach marginalized groups who share a common youth language; this was a key dimension of Plan International's project in Colombia where young people were used in multiplier teams.

*Teacher training and support* should be provided by experienced trainers who know both the content and the methodology. It should also model the participative and inclusive approaches that teachers should ultimately use in the classroom. They should reflect on and find personal motivation to use these approaches.

A five-day intensive training workshop is a minimum, with more time if possible. Ongoing training and support by mobile trainers and mentors is critical. Fostering networks to support educators through resource sharing, trainings, and opportunities for peer sharing and learning can also improve this training process. For instance, HTAC's peace education program in Afghanistan offers teachers ongoing support through its local staff. When possible, using teachers dedicated specifically to GCED is preferable, which increases greatly the chances for staff with skills and motivation to give most or all of their time to this program.

One of the lessons learned from the design and implementation of Juegos de Paz, the peace education program launched in schools in Colombia by the MoE, was that transformative change requires a holistic approach for teacher training as well. In this case, a holistic approach meant taking an expansive view of the training content that went beyond curriculum and focused on interrelationships within and among teachers and learners. A traditional focus on knowledge and skills is insufficient; focusing on teachers' attitudes, feelings, behaviors, and relationships is also essential. Additionally, the vision of the training itself was expanded: the trainers sought to create a training space in which they acknowledged the central role and value of teachers' relationships to principals, local secretaries of education, community leaders, and families.

Importantly, teacher training needs to be complemented by structured teaching materials and mentoring which enable the teachers to move forward with these new approaches and subject matter in the classroom. Structured teacher guides with varied stimulus activities were part of the teaching materials developed by the RET in Burundi and by Save the Children, UNESCO, and UNICEF in Nepal. Moreover, ongoing mentoring and support are essential to help teachers master these new methods. Strong support from the headteacher, the school management committee or local authority, and policymakers and national leaders, contributes to the success of teachers' professional development. Fostering networks to support educators through resource sharing, training, and

opportunities for peer sharing and learning is another interesting way to improve this training process.

*Target the right populations and reaching the un-reached:*  
Targeting participants is strategic. A common pitfall is the targeting of community elites. This is simpler to accomplish but counterproductive as it strengthens existing inequities. Indeed, since training is a form of empowerment, identifying the most vulnerable youth, approaching and engaging them is key. Involving their parents and guardians in program activities is significant for the program's success.

Programs must make concerted efforts to reach marginalized and 'invisible' groups such as girls, adolescents and persons with disabilities. Indeed, crisis situations can provide windows of opportunity to reach previously excluded groups by opening up systems for reform and development, mobilizing awareness of and funding, and generating changes in societal attitudes and behaviors. Increasing women's and adolescent girls' access to these programs can be obtained by providing them with remedial learning and evening classes, as well as childcare for young mothers. For instance, the Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program in Sierra Leone empowered and helped female participants feel a greater sense of confidence, thinking of themselves more as community leaders and as having options, and, in essence, feeling less victimized. Additionally, thanks to the Youth Education for Life Skills project in Liberia, which also aimed to enhance women's self-esteem and voice their opinions on matters affecting their community, women were empowered to be more active and outspoken in the community, and many could also now write their names, count from one to hundred, and say their ABCs.

Conflict-sensitive programs that are inclusive of both refugee and host community youth are essential to avoid parallel service systems, which have been proven ineffective and have often led to inter-group hostilities. Approaches based on these encounters and collaboration proved successful in the Better Together Program

led by Search for Common Ground in Lebanon, between Syrian refugees and local Lebanese youth. Indeed, at the individual level, participants experienced positive changes in self-confidence, in how they responded to conflicts, in prejudices toward ‘the other’, and in influences on their families and communities. Formal school-based programs should find ways to be inclusive of school dropouts and out-of-school children. Several options can be considered including the use of mother tongue where needed and practicable. After-school clubs, vacation workshops, and youth clubs or study circles represent other ways of reaching children and young people.

### Research and knowledge

*Phased implementation with feedback and significant evaluation strategies:* for a subject such as GCED, where transformative teacher training is necessary, it is recommended to conduct a phased implementation with feedback that allows a training that is not based on ‘cascade’ methods. Monitoring and evaluation processes are of special importance but need to go beyond learners’ knowledge of facts to also include assessment of skills, values and attitudes. It can be conducted in different ways, taking into consideration different aspects such as the inputs (e.g. educators’ competencies, resources, tools, and learning environment), process (eg teaching practices, types of actions, and learners’ engagement) and outcomes (eg knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and impact on communities). Sometimes, new teaching materials are difficult to use, and some teachers may not be able to handle certain activities despite training. As a result, even the production of resource materials should be seen as an iterative activity, with revisions based on feedback. Such feedback loops were integrated in several of the projects studied, including HTAC’s project in Afghanistan, the RET’s project in Burundi, and the Youth Peace Builders Project in Colombia.

While optimal, a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators and evaluation tools is adopted by a limited number

of programs. More longitudinal studies are needed to develop an effective research and advocacy base on education for crisis-affected youth. These complex and expensive studies require partnerships among and between NGOs, governments, donors, academic institutions, and beneficiary communities, such as those developed for the Healing Classrooms program in DRC. Obtaining longer-term funding provided IRC with the opportunity to conduct serious impact evaluation. UNICEF’s Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) program also placed a particular importance on developing rigorous evaluation methods and tools for all its projects, including in South Sudan. The goal was to seriously assess the extent to which program outcomes were achieved and whether the program made identifiable contributions to peacebuilding, social cohesion, and/or resilience at the individual, community, institutional and/or systems levels. Evidence from its preliminary successes demonstrated that UNICEF should scale up these types of interventions to build on the gains achieved. When assessing the program’s impact, research and data collection efforts must also work to distinguish the many excluded female and male youth with age- and sex-disaggregated data that were not available for several of the projects studied for this report.

Assessing GCED program outcomes and impact is challenging due to the nature of these interventions, and even more so as there is no globally agreed indicator framework for monitoring GCED yet. A measurement framework may become available soon thanks to the inclusion of GCED within one of the targets of the Education 2030 development agenda. A Technical Advisory Group has developed a set of thematic indicators for education following a broad consultation process. However, greater efforts are needed at the national and global level to bridge gaps in measuring learning outcomes. Global progress towards Target 4.7 will be measured through a set of indicators that cover the extent to which GCED is integrated into national education policies, curriculum, teacher training and student assessment. In addition to the global monitoring framework, there is still a need to develop indicators

that assess the impact of GCED programs on learners' skills, attitudes, and behaviors.

## Key recommendations and conclusion

While there is no single approach to implementing GCED, experience suggests that certain factors contribute to its effective delivery. (UNESCO, 2015b, p.46) GCED needs to be structured enough to allow for effective evaluation, but also flexible enough to keep up with fast-changing realities in acute and post-crisis contexts. (Zeus & Chaffin, 2011, p.11) In particular, refugee programs should include procedures for rapid response to the needs of newly-arriving refugee children, adolescents and IDPs. (Sinclair, 2001, p.1)

### Five main recommendations for GCED in crisis situations

Based on the findings of this study, to be successful and obtain a sustainable impact GCED in crisis situations should:

- 1 Be contextualized/pragmatic:
  - Responding to local needs including through a needs' assessment
  - Taking into account realities and constraints due to the crisis situation
- 2 Be inclusive and participative (human rights-based):
  - Involving all stakeholders
  - Developed and sustained in collaboration with local communities
  - Reaching out with an increased attention to vulnerable groups
- 3 Be holistic/systemic:
  - Covering the local/national and global dimensions
  - Be integrated into various sub-topics
  - Be implemented in a whole-school approach

- 4 Be adjustable and based on feedback and evaluation:
  - Benefiting from feedback and evaluation processes to correct shortcomings
  - Include the provision for periodic review and renewal
- 5 Be backed by supportive and sustainable policies and strategies:
  - Embedded in policy with wide stakeholder buy-in
  - Supported by pre-service and continuing in-service teacher training
  - Backed by a resource mobilization strategy and long-term funding
  - Supported by monitoring/evaluation and research based on quantitative and qualitative indicators
  - Scalable with follow-up and quality education

Creating global citizens goes beyond education. Engagement across multiple sectors, actors and levels is required for long-lasting impact: 'It is not only the education sector that should work on this, it's everyone,' explains Mr. Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO. 'It is a joint effort of all stakeholders to make sure that the youth and the young generation can have the learning, so that they can have work and make a better future for tomorrow.' (UNESCO, 2014, p.41)

#### NOTE

Adapted by permission from the UNESCO report: Robiolle, T. (2017). 'Global Citizenship Education in Crisis Situations.' Paper commissioned by the UNESCO Education Sector. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000252771>

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## SECTION TEN

What does  
NISSEM propose?

## Section Ten: What does NISSEM propose?

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This set of reflections is based on past NISSEM discussions with diverse stakeholders, enhanced by the contributions to the present volume. It introduces NISSEM, describes its general proposals for action on advancing Target 4.7 themes supported by SEL, and touches upon implications for different actors in this area. Finally, it offers brief suggestions for actions in the period 2019–25.

### What is NISSEM?

Margaret Sinclair had initiated work on conflict-sensitive education at Education Above All (EAA), while Colette Chabbott was leading USAID's Education in Crisis and Conflict Network's (ECCN) Task Team on SEL. In March 2017, Margaret and Colette co-hosted a CIES pre-conference workshop on including SDG Target 4.7 themes and SEL in educational materials, with Jean Bernard of Spectacle Learning Media leading a discussion on SEL in early grade reading. Aaron Benavot was a keynote speaker, having recently returned to University at Albany-SUNY after three and a half years as Director of UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report, where he had overseen comparative work on textbooks and curricular policies in light of Target 4.7 themes and topics.

The vision put forward at CIES 2017 was that there are well-established ways to move issues to the top of the agenda in international development and humanitarian work (Chabbott, 2015<sup>1</sup>). Our collective experience in conflict-affected and low

1 Chabbott, C. (2015). *Institutionalizing Education and Health for All: Global Goals, Innovations, and Scaling Up*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

income settings had convinced us that getting educational materials that facilitate social and emotional learning into the hands of teachers and students in low- and middle-income and conflict settings could increase the quality of education for tens of millions of children at a feasible cost, with the potential for significant progress in less than ten years. In addition, SDG Target 4.7 provided an integrated view of how SEL could support the aims of conflict mitigation, social cohesion and gender equality.

During the spring and summer of 2017, ECCN began gathering names of workshop participants and others who had expressed interest in the workshop themes. Andy Smart, a UK-based education publishing expert with a record of textbook development and renewal, and a Board Member of the International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media (IARTEM) joined the initiative at this point. He and Margaret Sinclair represented this work at UKFIET 2017 and co-organized a related workshop at the UCL Institute of Education in London, in November 2017, hosted by Tejendra Pherali, who serves as lead for Education, Conflict and Peacebuilding in the Institute's Centre for Education and International Development.

By the fall, James Williams, holder of the UNESCO Chair in International Education for Development at George Washington University and the editor of three volumes of papers on identity and stereotypes in textbooks, offered support from the Chair to host planning meetings at GWU for a second CIES workshop. He assembled a group of international graduate students to prepare papers on key themes, which informed a two-day public workshop and two days of planning by conveners in February 2018. Grace Maina, Senior Assistant Director for Cross-Cutting Issues at the Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD), gave the keynote address.

In March 2018, *Networking to Integrate SDG Target 4.7 and SEL into Educational Materials* (NISSEM) was launched at a CIES pre-conference workshop attended by about 40 participants. Jordan Naidoo, Director of the Division for Education 2030 Support and

Coordination at UNESCO gave opening and closing remarks, while Karen Mundy, Chief Technical Officer at the Global Partnership for Education, served as discussant. In April 2018, Aaron Benavot and Garnett Russell, Assistant Professor at Teachers College, University of Columbia, co-hosted a meeting for visiting senior members of the Asia-Pacific Center of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), which is the UNESCO institute focused on global citizenship education.

At CIES 2019, NISSEM initiated a panel discussion under the bold title of ‘Quality education in low-income and fragile settings: What’s love got to do with it?’ Educators know that children and teachers must be emotionally engaged if they are to learn and teach up to their potential. SEL and SDG Target 4.7 are, partially, a corrective to overemphasis on getting butts on benches and on academic achievement and the corresponding neglect of behavioral and social and emotional learning, which are valuable for their own sakes as well as for their proven boost to academic learning.

Seven of the individuals mentioned above decided to cooperate as ‘co-convenors’ of NISSEM which was, and remains at the time of writing, an informal collaborative of specialists on development and humanitarian work in low- and middle-income, crisis and post-conflict settings, on integrating Target 4.7 themes in curriculum and educational materials, and on developing and revising textbooks with greater reference to SEL and contextualized Target 4.7 topics. NISSEM has at this point engaged with numerous experts in these fields globally, and aims to develop future relationships and partnerships that will link to the education and development community in all regions.

## Research

Early in 2018, Aaron Benavot of the University at Albany-SUNY proposed on behalf of NISSEM to undertake a UNESCO study on the emphasis on cognitive, social-emotional and behavioral learning in ESD and GCED at different levels of schooling in ten countries. Together with Marcia McKenzie, Director of the Sustainability

Education Policy Network at the University of Saskatchewan, this collaborative project examined more than 260 official policies and curricular documents (including subject syllabi) to see which learning dimensions were more or less emphasized in ESD- and GCED-related learning. In July 2019, Aaron and Marcia presented key findings of the study at the 2019 UNESCO Global Forum on ESD and GCED, held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, and led discussions with scholars, practitioners and policymakers from around the world.

## Resource development

Jean Bernard of Spectacle Learning Media led a preliminary contract on behalf of NISSEM to develop a user-friendly guide to introduce writers and illustrators of educational materials to SEL and Target 4.7 themes. This practitioner guide will shortly be ready for field review and trialing, if a government or agency is interested.

## Knowledge management

The NISSEM co-convenors and graduate students collaborated in 2018 to produce a bibliography and establish a first version of the website and a listserv for sharing updates. This 2019 volume of expert Global Briefs provides current insights and reflections on issues related to strengthening Target 4.7 themes and SEL in textbooks and educational materials. The NISSEM.org website will host this Open Access publication. In future, more resources of value to practitioners and others with an interest in this area will be placed on the website, which now also hosts a blog series.

## Convening, community-building and advocacy

NISSEM plans to continue with outreach activities in the coming period, including workshops and seminars as well as its listserv updates. The UNESCO study and publishing of the *Global Briefs* have provided an opportunity to collaborate with relevant international experts and organizations in different regions of the world, and we look forward to building on those relationships. This outreach to decision makers in education ministries, agencies and

donors will continue with the launch of the *Global Briefs* and follow-up actions.

### **NISSEM status and structure**

NISSEM has started informally, following the model set by INEE. Formal contracts or event-hosting are undertaken by co-convenors' universities or by the Spectacle Learning Media consultancy. Longer-term structural developments will depend on the availability of funding for expanding NISSEM's activities. Interested specialists are invited to propose co-hosting events and projects, with shared responsibilities, as well as other relevant initiatives. It is hoped that NISSEM can develop partnerships in different regions in future.

Experience suggests that a full-time lead—a young professional or doctoral candidate—is needed for an expanded network function. Funding is needed for this potential role within NISSEM and for its website development and maintenance. Task-specific funding is needed for substantive field workshops and activities as these are developed. To date, co-convenors have launched NISSEM with personal time and funds, including the website development and maintenance.

### **The NISSEM Position Paper and recommendations**

Drawing on the deliberations at workshops of specialists in relevant fields, the co-convenors put together a position paper, which was shared with the SDG Education 2030 Steering Committee in September 2018. The [paper](#) sets out the importance of textbooks and educational materials as a channel for innovation related to Target 4.7 and SEL in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and crisis-related contexts, and offers recommendations (see below). For justification of these recommendations, see the full text of the [Position Paper](#). Many of the briefs in the present volume amplify or provide context for the points raised in the 2018 Position Paper.

NISSEM co-convenors have wide interests in education for development and in crisis, and are aware of the multiple issues and areas for action. Most of us are especially interested in education for social cohesion, inclusion and peace, having worked with conflict-affected countries or populations, some of them badly affected by climate change. At this point, we have adopted the broad term 'Target 4.7 themes' to cover these issues in the run-up to 2030.

For now, we have adopted a 'selective strategy' of focusing on textbooks and educational materials, to explore needs and opportunities in this area in low- and middle-income countries and conflict-affected settings. National policies may be needed in each context.

Key recommendations from the 2018 Position Paper are:

**Recommendation 1:** In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, integrate SDG Target 4.7 themes into all education strategies.

All existing education laws, policies, curricula, textbooks and other instructional materials, teacher education, and student assessments should be evaluated and strengthened in order to support national and global SDG progress. Specific steps should be taken to incorporate messages for 'people and planet', including Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

**Recommendation 2:** Promote Target 4.7 themes through social and emotional learning (SEL).

Writers of textbooks and other educational materials should integrate and apply SEL in relation to Target 4.7 themes and topics in ways that are age-appropriate and contextually relevant.



**Recommendation 3:** Engage diverse stakeholders to develop locally relevant materials to promote Target 4.7 themes.

- a Consult with teachers, youth, community leaders, examination boards and other stakeholders, together with local writers to assess needs and to ensure that textbook content is appropriately contextualized.
- b Introduce and train textbook developers, including writers, editors, and illustrators, to Target 4.7 themes and SEL topics and how these themes and topics support each other. This training should also focus on how to ensure that these themes and topics reflect local capacities and priorities, resources, pedagogy and language skills.
- c Provide ongoing support to monitor and guide the inclusion of these topics as writers develop new educational materials. Draw on existing international guides to ensure that textbook illustrations promote gender equality and social inclusion.
- d Bring together writers and subject specialists at national examination boards to ensure that Target 4.7 themes are meaningfully reflected in national assessments and examinations.

**Recommendation 4:** Equip teachers to promote student engagement and agency in Target 4.7 by embedding structured pedagogy in student materials.

Embed structured pedagogy in textbooks to support the teaching of ‘people and planet’ and Target 4.7 themes through social-emotional learning. Specifically, design textbooks with pedagogical practices that support more active learning processes by girls and boys that build both knowledge and skills needed to support sustainable development, explicitly adapted, where necessary, for large and crowded classrooms.

**Recommendation 5:** Revise educational materials to foster inclusive national and global identities.

Revise textbooks and other educational materials to reflect the positive contributions of both dominant and marginalized or minority groups in society, including gender-balanced contributions.

**Recommendation 6:** Measure and monitor Target 4.7 learning in terms of attitudes, behavior, skills and content knowledge.

- a Encourage ministries of education and national researchers (i) to measure the impact of incorporating Target 4.7 themes and SEL in educational materials through learning assessments, classroom observation, focus group discussions and other forms of student and teacher responses and (ii) to revise materials to increase that impact.
- b Increase collaboration between various national, regional and international agencies to improve reporting of the curricular integration of Target 4.7 themes, as well as the measurement of relevant learning outcomes.

**Recommendation 7:** Invest in systematic trials of revised teaching and learning materials and use results to improve materials iteratively.

- a Allocate adequate funds to integrate and trial SEL and 4.7 themes in educational materials, and to fund research, feedback and revision. Funds are particularly essential for the training and ongoing support of writers of textbooks and other educational materials, specifically for the purpose of incorporating Target 4.7 themes and topics and to embed simple, engaging pedagogy for teachers and learners.
- b Encourage multi-year, multi-partner innovation by interested countries and share results widely.

**Recommendation 8:** Secure donor commitments to contextualize, revise, trial, and finalize Target 4.7 themes and SEL in educational materials.

- a In countries that express an interest in better integrating Target 4.7 themes and SEL into educational materials, donors should support developing and trialing of prototype writer-training workshops, creating improved and contextualised educational materials and sharing results nationally and internationally.
- b Donors should support the development of standard criteria and guidance regarding the inclusion of SEL and Target 4.7 thematic elements in educational materials.

**Recommendation 9:** In all SDG4/Education 2030 processes, include recommendations to the effect that:

- a In light of Target 4.7 themes and SEL, countries should devise effective strategies to contextualize these themes by reviewing, evaluating, revising, trialling and finalizing textbooks and educational materials in a timely manner, drawing on the best available guidance.
- b Training and funding should be provided for national teams of textbook and other educational materials writers and examiners in low-resourced, conflict-affected and post-conflict settings. Training should include guidance and support on integration of Target 4.7 themes and SEL in core school subject materials, with age-appropriate sequencing and contextualization as well as building supportive pedagogy into textbook design.

## **Considerations for different actors, emerging from this set of briefs and reflections**

### **Ministries of Education and education program managers**

Senior decision-makers often focus on *access* to and *completion* of schooling, and funding is often geared towards these ends—mainly through expanding infrastructure and meeting teachers' salaries. Yet, the students in LMIC settings often spend the school day reciting lessons and memorizing textbooks. When textbooks are lacking, the teacher may transcribe the text onto the chalkboard for students to copy. The content and methodology of the textbooks is thus of the utmost priority in nurturing and deepening learning and in supporting relevant behavioral goals for students—to expose them in age-appropriate fashion to topics identified as national priorities in supporting future peace and security, sustainable development, gender equality and inclusiveness, and avoidance of negative stereotyping and social division. The textbooks can also support SEL and the development of life skills, anti-bullying skills and agency for positive social action at the level of the individual young person.

It is critical that the ministry of education and others build a continuing program of textbook and other educational materials review and innovation in line with the 4.7 themes of most relevance to young people. National curriculum centers and textbook writers do not always have a loud voice. Senior MOE management are the gatekeepers to national and donor funding and can consider prioritizing modest and continuing funding to enable this vital work to take place in a professional, timely and effective manner.

### **Examination boards**

Given the strategic role of high stakes examinations, teachers and students often ignore content that is not required for the exams. Subject specialists from national examination boards can

participate in the innovative approaches described here and make public their intention to include related content in school leaving examinations. While national examinations may not reflect all the SEL aspects of a syllabus, they can be constructed in such a way that classwork is supportive of knowledge, concept and skill development needed for positive action.

### **Donors**

As members of the international community, committed to education for social cohesion, peace, gender equality and sustainable development, donors should formulate requirements for strong national efforts in creating motivational and effective textbook and supplementary content embedding national priority themes within Target 4.7 and SEL. National mechanisms should ensure that stakeholders from marginalized groups find the content inclusive. Gender equality is one of the 4.7 themes and is already stressed by donors, but other 4.7/SEL themes also need similar attention, with national education specialists and other stakeholders supported in identifying contextualized priority elements suited to each level of schooling.

### **NGOs**

Given that international and national NGOs are well placed to innovate, these organizations can move the agenda forward, hopefully in concert with a national curriculum framework for Target 4.7 and SEL. Ideally, NGOs should seek to develop innovations that are scalable and cost-effective. Experience has shown that with enough expenditure and supervision, NGO programs are able to reach high standards in any setting; however, such initiatives may not help in the development of workable and scalable materials that can be used elsewhere by hard-pressed teachers in large classes with marginalized students. NGOs can contribute greatly by developing new content suited to young people, with options that are realistically scalable.

### **Academics/researchers and graduate students**

New fields of study are opening up around the responses of students in LMICs and other contexts to citizenship, sustainability and life skills/SEL education in the context of textbooks and other educational materials. This work, which need not be complex or expensive, can be undertaken by researchers in each country as well as by researchers at the regional or international level. It can include or build upon analyses already undertaken on textbook content and impacts and their support for reducing divisive stereotypes, promoting gender equality and fostering environmental stewardship. Given that Target 4.7 aims to influence the behavior of adolescents and youth emerging from school, there will be a continuing need for feedback mechanisms such that social studies, science and humanities studies keep up with a rapidly changing national situation regarding social inclusion, the effects of climate change, and so on.

### **Moving forward**

NISSEM would like to collaborate with partners to advance this agenda. A vision of potential activities during the coming period (2019–25), subject to revision as new developments arise, is outlined below, with the implied request for foundation and agency support to help NISSEM and others to move this work forward:

#### **2019 onwards (NISSEM)**

- In-house NISSEM workshops with organizations and agencies active in this field. The aim is to reach a broader range of agency staff who may be able to incorporate elements of the NISSEM position paper and the above recommendations into their work.
- Further development of the NISSEM website, adding new content and links to related initiatives and digital resources (e.g. SEL Global Alliance proposed by Salzburg Global Seminar; Conflict and Education Learning Laboratory; INEE; as well as initiatives with a broader focus, such as the Global Digital Library and the Global Book Alliance).

- Promotion of youth outreach for textbook feedback in selected countries, possibly leading to a NISSEM collection of ‘global youth voices’ on textbooks, which would provide guidelines for collecting and analyzing feedback on textbook content and design.

### **2020–23 (NISSEM and/or others)**

- Technical workshop(s) at global, regional, sub-regional and/or national level to address the issues of Target 4.7 and SEL in textbooks and other educational materials. Raising these issues in related global discussions (assessment, publishing, teacher preparation etc.)
- Pilot projects with academic/practitioner partnerships at national level: to develop and test sample lesson materials covering prioritised Target 4.7 and SEL topics. These materials would incorporate the principles of readability and comprehension, motivational impact and contextual relevance, embedded context-related pedagogy, and general suitability to the range of school, student and teacher capacity in the majority of classrooms in the country. (NISSEM is interested in providing technical input to support this work in countries with committed governments and other partners.)

### **2024–25**

- Global inter-agency forum or workshop preferably hosted by major donors to assess progress and ask more governments to make commitments for action on embedding Target 4.7 themes, with SEL, into textbooks and other educational materials (including pre- and in-service resources for teacher training) well ahead of 2030.

## Contributors' biographical details

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**Alya Al Sager** is a Visiting Researcher at the Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience Lab at Brown University. One of her main projects during her research year at Brown was to examine the efficacy of We Love Reading on the executive functions and behavioral regulation of young children in Jordan.

**Dima Amso** is an Associate Professor of Cognitive, Linguistic, and Psychological Sciences at Brown University with an additional appointment to the Carney Institute for Brain Science and the Humanitarian Initiative at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. Dr Amso has made significant contributions to the science of the development of executive functions in infancy and childhood.

**Poonam Batra** is Professor of Education at the Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi, India. Her major areas of professional focus include public policy in education; curriculum and pedagogy; social psychology of education, teacher education and gender studies. Her recent research examines the relationship between poverty and quality education as constructed in an era of market-based reforms and its impact on the education of the poor; and the imperatives of comparative education from a South Asian perspective.

**Jennifer Batton** is the Chair of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict's Peace Education Working Group and serves on Ohio's Anti-Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Initiative Advisory. She has 23 years of experience in the field of conflict resolution education and peace studies, providing direct service to more than 73 colleges and universities, 600 primary and secondary schools, and hundreds of civil society and governmental organizations in 23 countries. She recently served as a Senior Consultant to UNESCO – IIEP and served on The Organization of American States (OAS) Advisory Board for the Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices. She is the former director of education programs for the Ohio state government's Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, where she was responsible for strategic planning to meet the needs of all of Ohio's schools (approximately 3,600) and universities (approximately 52 teacher training colleges).

**Aaron Benavot** is Professor of [Global Education Policy](#) at the University at Albany-SUNY. He recently served as a Fulbright Specialist in Viet Nam (2018) and a High-Level Expert at the East China Normal University in Shanghai (2019-2020). His [scholarship](#) has explored an array of educational issues from comparative, global and critical perspectives—most recently, the growth of learning assessments and global learning metrics; the monitoring of adult education and lifelong



learning; teacher enactment of mathematics curricula; the role of structured democratic voice in educational accountability and the mainstreaming of education for global citizenship and sustainable development. During 2014-2017 Aaron served as Director of the [Global Education Monitoring Report](#), an independent, evidence-based annual report published by UNESCO, which analyzes progress towards international education targets in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Aaron has also co-authored or co-edited five books, including *PISA, Power, and Policy* (with H-D Meyer) and *School Knowledge for the Masses* (with J. Meyer and Kamens). He is a co-convener of NISSEM and, through presentations and publications, has sought to highlight the transformative potential of mainstreaming target 4.7 in education policy and practice. [abenavot@albany.edu](mailto:abenavot@albany.edu)

**Jean Bernard** is a senior partner at [Spectacle Learning Media](#) and co-convener of NISSEM. Having spent most of her career as a classroom teacher, teacher trainer, textbook author, curriculum designer and educational video producer, she joined UNESCO in 2004 as Senior Programme Specialist in Textbook Revision. In this role, she coordinated several international research initiatives aimed at recognizing and eliminating negative stereotypes of the 'other' in teaching and learning media, including textbooks, supplementary reading materials and digital media. Since departing Paris in 2009, she has worked on curriculum and textbook quality improvement programs in both formal and nonformal education sectors in Kenya, Somalia, Viet Nam, Tajikistan, South Sudan, Trinidad and Tobago, Jordan, Yemen and Uganda. Jean holds a doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. [spectaclelearningmedia@gmail.com](mailto:spectaclelearningmedia@gmail.com)

**Katherine Pedersen Blanchard** is Program Manager for Leadership Development and International Programs at the Smithsonian Science Education Center (SSEC). She creates,

manages, and supports the implementation of professional development workshops, leadership institutes, and large-scale education transformation projects throughout the US and internationally. The main focus of her work and current research interest is on how community engagement—including the engagement of teachers, schools, businesses and parents—can support the growth of an educational program, and subsequently support the growth of students. Prior to coming to the SSEC, she worked for theater companies in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Belgrade, Serbia and completed a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship at the University of Belgrade. Katherine completed her master's degree in international education with a focus on national education policy from The George Washington University.

**Andrew Blum** joined the Kroc School of Peace Studies in 2016 as the executive director of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice. Blum is an expert in the monitoring and evaluation of peacebuilding and conflict resolution programming and has deep experience in helping organizations improve their monitoring, evaluation, and learning strategies. Prior to coming to the University of San Diego, he served on the senior leadership team at the United States Institute of Peace as the vice-president for planning, learning, and evaluation. In this role, he was charged with transforming USIP into a true learning organization. He started this work when he was appointed to be USIP's first director of learning and evaluation in February 2012. He joined USIP in September, 2008 as a program officer, for the Grant and Fellowship program, in which he oversaw grantmaking in Nigeria, Sudan, and South Sudan. In 2010, in partnership with the Alliance for Peacebuilding, Blum designed and launched the Peacebuilding Evaluation Project, an initiative designed to improve evaluation practice in the peacebuilding field as a whole. In 2016, he led efforts to establish RESOLVE (Researching Solutions to Violent Extremism), a global network

of local researchers focused on identifying effective strategies to address violent extremism. Prior to joining USIP, Blum was assistant director of the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management, where he was the director of the Project on International Communication and Negotiations Simulations (ICONS) and oversaw the undergraduate minor in conflict management. In the field, he has conducted research and worked on peacebuilding programs in Iraq, Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Guyana, and Turkey. He holds a PhD from the University of Southern California and a BA from the University of Virginia.

**Ayla Bonfiglio** is the Regional Coordinator/Manager of North Africa of the Mixed Migration Center at the Danish Refugee Council. For the past decade, she has worked on issues of forced migration and mobility, with a focus on refugee educational attainment. In 2016, she co-founded the Conflict and Education Learning Laboratory (CELL) in the Netherlands. Her doctoral research (UNU-MERIT/Maastricht University) examines how refugees and migrants who are pursuing tertiary education in asylum countries shape their forced displacement patterns in relation to higher education. In this role, she has conducted several hundred in-depth interviews with refugees and migrants in Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda. Ayla has held visiting researcher positions at the African Centre for Migration and Society at the University of the Witwatersrand, the African Migration and Development Policy Centre in Nairobi, and Makerere University, Uganda.

**Patricia Bromley** is an Assistant Professor of Education and (by courtesy) Sociology at Stanford University. Patricia's research spans a range of fields including comparative education, organization theory, sociology, and public administration. Her work focuses on the rise and globalization of a culture emphasizing rational, scientific thinking and expansive forms of rights.

**Geri Burkholder** is an organizational development specialist with 25 years of experience, 20 of which have been in Asia and Africa implementing and overseeing basic education and agriculture projects for USAID, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and collaborative partnerships with the World Bank, the World Food Program, and the United National Children's Fund. Ms Burkholder has a track record of facilitating organizational change through her technical leadership and management of public sector capacity building interventions in low- to middle-income countries, working with ministries of finance, education, agriculture and health in China, Indonesia, Malawi, Ghana, Uganda, Egypt, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. For the past five years, she has led the development of a gender-based violence response for the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, which is currently being piloted in 36 districts in Uganda and over 3500 schools with 1.3 million children. She is currently serving as Chief of Party (COP) for the US Agency for International Development (USAID)/Uganda Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity, implemented by RTI International.

**Esther Care** is a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. Working in the Global Economy and Development program, she is engaged with issues of education system reform, particularly in connection with the emergence of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills as a valued set of learning goals. Dr Care has undertaken extensive research not only in the substance of the education shift toward inclusion of generalizable skills in the curriculum, but also in the impediments to implementation, through qualitative approaches as well as large-scale mapping studies. With a particular focus on assessment, Dr Care leads projects such as Skills for a Changing World and Optimizing Assessment for All, focused on developing countries in Asia and Africa.

**Colette Chabbott** In an earlier life, Dr Chabbott was an economist and special projects officer for USAID in Bangladesh and Guinea, taught research methods in international education at Stanford and for three years directed the Board on International Comparative Studies in Education at the (US) National Research Council, where she co-edited *Understanding Others, Educating Ourselves: Getting More from International Comparative Studies in Education* (2003). In more recent years she has consulted for BRAC, CARE, CG-ECCD, Hewlett Foundation, RTI, Save the Children, UNICEF, USAID, and others to design and evaluate community-based schools, girls' education and early grades reading, particularly in fragile contexts. Her academic research explores the role of international organizations and science in promoting global agenda, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. Her latest book is *Institutionalizing Health and Education for All: Global Goals, Innovations, and Scaling Up* (2015, Teachers College Press). BA, Economics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; MPA, international development, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University; AM, Sociology, Stanford University; PhD, International and Comparative Education, Stanford University. She is a co-convenor of NISSEM. [chabbott@stanfordalumni.org](mailto:chabbott@stanfordalumni.org)

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International Institute for Education/Fulbright. Awarded the Jordan Star of Science by His Majesty King Abdullah II, Higher Education Reform Expert EU-TEMPUS, Jordan, founder service learning center, Hashemite University, speaker at TEDxDeadSea and TEDxPSUT, World Islamic Economic Forum 2012 and World Science Forum 2015; Synergos Arab World Social Innovators (AWSI) award, 2009; World Innovation Summit in Education (WISE) award, 2014; King Hussein Medal of Honor, 2014; Star Award, 2015; IDEO.org best refugee education program 2015; UNESCO International Literacy Prize, 2017; World Literacy Council Award, 2018; Jacobs Social Entrepreneurship award, 2018. Author of *Five scarves: Doing the impossible – If we can reverse cell fate why can't we redefine success?* (Nova Science Publisher, 2018)

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**Lauren Edwards** is a Senior Project Management Specialist at RTI International with over eight years' experience in project management, research and analysis, and international education. Since joining RTI International in 2014, she has focused her research on SRGBV, including contributing to literature reviews, a conceptual framework, and the development and piloting of the suite of measurement tools that measure SRGBV and its mediating factors, such as school climate, gender attitudes, and social and emotional learning. Ms Edwards has also facilitated SRGBV survey administrator trainings in preparation for data collections and has facilitated training-of-trainers workshops on SRGBV prevention and response. She holds a masters' degree in Education and Human Development (International Education) from The George Washington University.



**Danielle Falk** is a doctoral student in the International and Comparative Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research interests include the role and wellbeing of refugee teachers as well as the policies that affect educators in crisis and displacement contexts. Danielle has worked as a research assistant on various studies in crisis, conflict, and post-conflict contexts including a global education study for urban refugees, a study on refugee teacher identity and professional development, and research on the education sector in post-genocide Rwanda.

**Paul Frank** is the Executive Director of SIL LEAD, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people use their language to improve their quality of life. He has a PhD in linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania and is also an expert on the use of Bloom software for book creation, and the training of users and trainers for Bloom.

**Heidi Gibson** is the Director for the Global Schools First (GSF) Program at Childhood Education International. Inspired by the UN's Global Education First Initiative, GSF works with primary schools around the world to support and celebrate their global citizenship education efforts. Throughout her career, Heidi has partnered with students, educators, policymakers and other organizations to unleash the transformative potential of global citizenship education to create lasting and sustainable change. She is a former US diplomat and holds a master's degree in international education from The George Washington University. Heidi has also worked in civic education, education research, and international development.

**Nayla Khodr Hamadeh** is a founding member of the Lebanese Association for History (LAH), which aims to support history teachers and move history education towards a disciplinary approach. She is currently managing an extensive professional training program for history teachers, Developing History Teachers Capacity to Foster Historical Thinking, organized by

LAH. Since 2005, she has been facilitating teacher training workshops all over Lebanon on active teaching strategies. Recently, the focus of her work is on supporting History Education in Lebanon. Nayla has presented at the LAES conference on History education (Beirut 2011), Euroclio's 19th annual conference (Antalya 2012), and facilitated a round table at KAICIID Global Forum: Interreligious and Intercultural Education (Vienna 2013). From 1998 to 2013, she worked in the Educational Resources Center at International College (IC), Beirut, where she coordinated the curriculum guide project as well as teachers' professional development programs. During this period, she held a teaching position at IC's Middle School Social Studies Department. Between 2010 and 2013, she was the coordinator and trainer for the SPEC program, proposing a student-centered, problem-based, experiential and collaborative classroom model. Nayla holds a BA in Sociology from the American University of Beirut (1987) and an MA in Educational Foundations and Policy Studies from the American University of Beirut (1993). She was awarded the Randa Khoury Innovation in Teaching Award in 2010.

**Ulrike Hanemann** coordinated the literacy work at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) until May 2017 and is now an independent consultant. Dr Hanemann has worked in research and capacity development in the field of literacy and non-formal and adult education from a lifelong learning perspective in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Arab States. Before joining UNESCO in 2001, she worked for ten years as a lecturer and advisor at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN-León) in pre-service teacher formation and postgraduate programs.



**Susan Hirsch-Ayari** is the Director of Education Programs in the Middle East and Asia at Creative Associates International. She is also the director of USAID's Afghan Children Read Project. Susan has 30 years of teaching experience from primary school through university. She has expertise in teaching early grade literacy and numeracy and in developing and implementing interactive curriculum. She has worked with USAID in Yemen and Jordan as a Senior Education Advisor and Office Director respectively and served as the UNICEF-Jordan Chief of Education where she built the office's nascent education section—critically needed because of the impact of the Syrian crisis in Jordan. Susan holds an MA in TESOL Education, and a BA in Elementary Education.

**Mary Helen Immordino-Yang** is a Professor of Education, Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of Southern California. She studies the psychological and neurobiological development of emotion and self-awareness, and connections to social, cognitive and moral development in educational settings. She uses cross-cultural, interdisciplinary studies of narratives and feelings to uncover experience-dependent neural mechanisms contributing to identity, intrinsic motivation, deep learning, and generative, creative and abstract thought. Her work has a special focus on adolescents from low-SES communities, and she involves youths from these communities as junior scientists in her work.

A former urban public junior high-school science teacher, she earned her doctorate at Harvard University in 2005 in human development and psychology and completed her postdoctoral training in social-affective neuroscience with Antonio Damasio in 2008. Since then she has received numerous awards for her research and for her impact on education and society, among them an Honor Coin from the U.S. Army, a Commendation from the County of Los Angeles, a Cozzarelli Prize from the *Proceedings of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences* editorial board, and early career achievement awards from the AERA, the AAAS, the APS,

the International Mind, Brain and Education Society (IMBES), and the Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences Foundation (FABBS).

**Jisun Jeong** is in the Ph.D in Education program at George Washington University. She is interested in cultural relevance of global education programming in conflict-affected and low-income contexts in the Global South, particularly around gender and social and emotional learning. Previously, Jisun worked as a program manager at World Vision Korea and World Vision International, where she designed, managed, and evaluated education and multi-sectoral humanitarian and development programs in various countries, including Ghana, Jordan, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. She also consulted with Norwegian Refugee Council and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). Jisun holds a Master of Education (EdM) degree in International Educational Development from Teachers College, Columbia University; an MA in International Studies; and a BA in Education from Yonsei University.

**Matthew Jukes** is a Fellow and Senior Education Evaluation Specialist at RTI International. He has two decades of academic and professional experience in evaluating education projects, particularly in early-grade literacy interventions and the promotion of learning through better health. His current research addresses culturally relevant approaches to assessment and programming in social and emotional competencies in Tanzania; improving pedagogy through an understanding of the cultural basis of teacher-child interactions; frameworks to improve evidence-based decision-making; and methods to set reading proficiency benchmarks. He is Research Director of the Learning at Scale Project and is conducting research in Malawi and Tanzania aimed at improving the quality of pre-primary and primary education.

**Nihan Köseleci** is an education economist in the Education and Public Research Division at the European Investment Bank. She is leading the economic due-diligence and monitoring of large-scale investment projects in the education sector in a number of countries including Finland, France, Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia, Tunisia and Turkey. Before joining the Bank in 2018, she worked for over five years for UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report team and led several monitoring and thematic chapters of the Report including the monitoring of progress towards Target 4.7. During her time at UNESCO, Nihan led the publication of thematic policy papers including the importance of mother-tongue instruction in improving teaching and learning and the prevalence of Target.4.7 related topics in curriculum and textbooks. In her earlier positions in Turkey, she managed projects in vocational education and training, coordinating team members and external consultants in fieldwork, collecting and analyzing data, formulating policy recommendations, and drafting and editing publications. She also worked as a policy officer for four years in Understanding Children's Project, based in Rome. Besides reports on child labor and youth employment issues in different countries, one of the highlights in this previous assignment was to lead the first-ever census of begging children in Dakar. She has published various policy-oriented reports and journal articles on child labor, education inequality, language of instruction, refugee education, national learning assessments and the inclusion of SDG4.7 related topics into the curriculum and textbooks.

**Eva Kozma** is a literacy expert and an award-winning author of Arabic children's books. In 2016, she obtained a PhD in Education from Saint Joseph University in Beirut, Lebanon. Her area of research is Balanced Literacy Approach (phonology and reading comprehension) in the Arabic classroom and the reading attitudes of elementary school children toward Arabic as a mother tongue. Kozma holds a master's degree in educational psychology from the American University of Beirut, with a focus

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**Mary-Jo Land** is a Registered Psychotherapist based in Ontario, Canada, specializing in intrafamilial trauma, war trauma, attachment and adoption. Given that the child's primary attachment system creates the neural basis for resiliency or risk, Mary-Jo works to enhance parent-child relationships in early years and beyond, to optimize child brain development. She is co-author of the Journey of Peace Stories, author of the Journey of Peace Teachers' Manual and was facilitator of the peace education program in Afghanistan described here.

**Seungah S. Lee** is a doctoral candidate in at Stanford University. Her research spans a range of fields, including international comparative education, organizational theory, and higher education. Prior to her doctoral studies, Seungah worked on various education programs and conducted policy research in the Middle East.

**Alexandra Lewis** is author of *Security, Clans and Tribes: Unstable Governance in Somaliland, Yemen and the Gulf of Aden* (2014). She works as a researcher on peace, conflict and education, and is currently based at the UCL Institute of Education. Dr Lewis has worked at the Universities of York, Leeds and Exeter, and has carried out fieldwork in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jordan, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Russia, Somaliland and Yemen. Her research is on the intersection of education, security and youth violence.

**Mieke Lopes Cardozo** is assistant professor at the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research of the University of Amsterdam, and part of the Governance and Inclusive Development Research Group. Her academic research and teaching focuses on the role of education in processes of peacebuilding, social justice and transformation in the contexts of Myanmar, Aceh/Indonesia, Bolivia and Sri Lanka. Dr Lopes Cardozo recently co-directed the Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding in collaboration with the University of Sussex, Ulster University and UNICEF, and coordinated the Education and International Development Academy in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She was appointed as Advisor for the UN Security Council-mandated Progress Study on Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.

**Beth Maclin** is a mixed methods researcher and former journalist. In the past decade, her work has covered topics ranging from the stigmatization of survivors of sexual violence in eastern Congo and drivers of political violence in Bangladesh to the challenges of reintegration of former combatants in central Africa. Beth holds a MPH from Boston University, where she concentrated in epidemiology and a bachelor's degree in communications and political science from Simmons College. Her research interests include identifying the needs of those impacted by humanitarian crises through a gender-inclusive lens and potential points for intervention.

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**Yoko Mochizuki** has been involved in the global implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) throughout her career at the United Nations. Before joining UNESCO-MGIEP in 2015, she was a Programme Specialist at the ESD section, UNESCO, Paris. Her current work focuses on conducting policy, curriculum and literature reviews and working with national and local authorities to embed peace, sustainability and global citizenship in education systems in the context of the implementation of the SDGs, especially Target 4.7. She is co-secretary of the Global Education Assessment, a scientific assessment component of UNESCO's 'Futures of Education' process which will provide a follow-up to the 1996 Delors Report. Yoko has published many articles on ESD in the peer-reviewed journals and written book chapters for the edited volumes on [social learning for sustainability](#), [international educational](#)

cooperation, community learning centres (CLCs), and higher education for sustainable development. She holds an MA from the University of Chicago and a PhD in Comparative and International Education, with distinction, from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Columbia University in New York. She has taught at Teachers College Columbia University and Keio University in Tokyo as an adjunct faculty member. Her most recent book is *Education for Sustainability in Japan: Fostering Resilient Communities after the Triple Disaster* (Routledge, 2016, co-editor).

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**Bethany Mulimbi** is the Research Project Coordinator for the Botswana Educational Research Association (BERA). In this role, she supports Botswana's national educational research organization in partnership with the Ministry of Basic Education to develop and execute projects that improve learning outcomes in the public schools. Her personal research focuses on the interplay between how formal education systems, individual schools, and teachers address the needs of students of diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly in Southern Africa.

**Karen Murphy**, is the Director of International Strategy for Facing History and Ourselves, an international NGO. Karen leads Facing History's work outside North America, developing in-country programs and partnerships with a range of organizations.

Dr Murphy has worked in and done research and writing on a range of countries, including Bosnia, Colombia, Kenya, Rwanda, France, Northern Ireland and South Africa. She has a special interest in divided societies with identity-based conflicts that are emerging from mass violence and the critical role education plays in supporting peace, social reconstruction and stability.

**Julianne Norman** serves on the Teaching and Learning team in RTI International's international education division. Ms Norman provides project management support to projects in Tanzania and Liberia, and she serves as a technical advisor for RTI's SRGBV and SEL-related projects and research activities. Under USAID/Uganda's Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity, implemented by RTI, Ms Norman contributed to the creation of the Journeys Handbooks. These activity handbooks, a key aspect of the Uganda Journeys Program, focus on the roles that school community members, students, and teachers and school staff have in building a positive and supportive school climate and preventing SRGBV. Journeys has gained great momentum as it was fully endorsed by the Uganda Ministry of Education, which adopted it as policy and a mandatory program for all primary schools in Uganda. In 2017, Julianne won an RTI International Professional Development Award consisting of internal research funds to develop and pilot the use of audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) as a platform for collecting data on SRGBV experiences. Ms Norman served as the principal investigator for this study and her research illuminated the potential use of ACASI to reduce response bias and protect the confidentiality of respondents who disclose sensitive information regarding victimization. Ms Norman currently serves as a technical advisor on the USAID/Washington-funded Research for Effective Education Programming project, within which she and her team developed a manual to guide SRGBV survey administration, called the *Global SRGBV Measurement Toolkit*.



**Mario Novelli** is Professor of the Political Economy of Education & Director of the Centre for International Education (CIE) at the University of Sussex (<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cie/about>), a global leader in research on international development and education. He specializes in research on the relationship between education and conflict and has led research for a range of international organizations, including DFID, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNICEF, and UNESCO. Over the last two decades he has published widely on issues relating to globalization, education in conflict affected contexts, peacebuilding and reconciliation. He has taught at the Universities of Bristol, Amsterdam and Sussex. Email: [m.novelli@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:m.novelli@sussex.ac.uk)

**Carol O'Donnell** is the Director of the Smithsonian Science Education Center (SSEC), a unit of the Smithsonian Institution that is dedicated to transforming the learning and teaching of science throughout the nation and world. In this role, Carol is responsible for all operational activities and planning for the unit, including building awareness for K-12 science education reform among state and district leaders; conducting programs that support the professional growth of K-12 science teachers and school leaders; and, overseeing all research and curricular resource development, philanthropic development, and administration. In this capacity, Carol also serves as the US representative on the Global Council of the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) Science Education Programme (SEP), the global network of the science academies. Prior to joining the Smithsonian, Carol was a leader at the US Department of Education for nearly a decade, supporting states and districts as they built their capacity to implement and sustain education reforms and achieve continued improvement in student outcomes. A former K-12 teacher and curriculum developer, Dr O'Donnell is still in the classroom today, serving on the part-time faculty of the Physics Department at The George Washington University.

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**Elizabeth Randolph** is a Senior Education Research Analyst at RTI International with over 30 years in clinical practice and management, research, and institutional strengthening in the broad field of human development and learning, 25 of which have been in international development. Dr Randolph was the Director of RTI International's South Africa Regional Office in Pretoria from 2006 to 2010. For the past decade, her work has focused on programming and capacity-building related to gender-related research, gender-based violence prevention and response, school culture and climate, and social and emotional learning. Since 2014, she has been developing measurement tools and approaches to social change that will advance improvements in school climate, support programming in social and emotional learning (SEL) and help eliminate school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in low- and middle-income countries. Dr Randolph has led the development of a suite of instruments for measuring experiences of SRGBV, perceptions of school climate, gender attitudes, and social and emotional learning for children ages 8–18 and, where applicable, teachers and parents. Dr Randolph led the development of the Uganda Journeys Program, an integrated approach applying awareness-building social technologies to support teachers, students, and community members to build positive, violence-free schools and to strengthen students' social and emotional learning.

**Atif Rizvi** is the co-founder and Executive Director at the Conflict and Education Learning Laboratory (CELL), which works towards the reduction of divisive stereotypes in educational materials and examines the impact of educational content on conflict and crisis. He has worked for over two decades in strategic planning in tertiary education and institution building. He was educated at Harvard University and worked as a Senior Researcher in Education at the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID). Atif has worked on achievement assessment, educational access and equity, and basic education delivery in a number of conflict-affected areas.

**Tina Robiolle** is a scholar-practitioner with more than 15 years of experience in the field of conflict management and peacebuilding, with extensive country expertise in Afghanistan and Burundi. She holds a PhD from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Her doctoral dissertation focused on peace education in schools in fragile states. She has worked as an independent consultant for various organizations, including UNESCO, the Wilson Center, and the HD Center for Humanitarian Dialogue. In addition to research studies and evaluation missions, she develops and facilitates conflict transformation, capacity-building, and strategy development programs, particularly in the field of women, peace and security.

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**John Rutayisire** is an independent Education Development Consultant and was the first Director General of Rwanda Education Board (2011-2015). Before that, Dr Rutayisire was the Executive Secretary of Rwanda National Examinations Council (2005—11), Director of Rwanda National Curriculum Development Centre (2001—05), and Director of Higher Education (2000—01). Prior to coming to Rwanda, John was a senior lecturer in education at Tonota College of Education in Botswana, and a secondary school teacher in Lesotho and Uganda.

**Hosea Katende Sempa**, with over 20 years' professional experience in the education sector, is an enthusiastic and skilled professional teacher with great passion in child protection and cross-functional experience in gender mainstreaming in rural development, project management. Mr Sempa's passion is in integrating social-emotional learning programs in Uganda's primary schools. Since 2015, he has put this passion to service in his role of technical lead for the Journeys SEL program under the USAID/Uganda *Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity*. Mr Sempa has the ability to inspire teachers to apply their own special talents and opportunities to create school environments that support the wellbeing and safety of students. He is committed to inspire learning and knowledge transfer as well as new experiences through working collaboratively. He holds a Master's in Education from the London Metropolitan University.

**Margaret Sinclair** is an honorary Research Associate at the School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex. She retired from UNHCR where she headed the Education Unit (1993–98) and has also worked for UNESCO, as adviser on education planning and as consultant on education in emergencies, including technical support to the first coordinator of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies. She authored UNESCO IIEP's *Fundamentals of Education Planning Booklet 73, Planning education in and after emergencies* (2002). She helped establish the Education Above All Foundation, and served as acting director for its Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict unit. Her publications include *Education and Community in the Third World* (1980) which reviewed attempts to make schooling relevant to rural communities, and a series of later publications entitled *Learning to live together*, with varied sub-titles. This latter interest arose from UNHCR's life-skills-based Peace Education Program which she initiated in 1997 in Kenya's refugee camps, and which was positively evaluated in 2002 before funding was terminated in 2005. As a former education planner, she

now seeks ways to insert SDG Target 4.7 themes and SEL into textbooks, education materials and national examinations, as a practicable way to bring these messages to the school population. She is a co-convener of NISSEM. [ma.sinclair@gmail.com](mailto:ma.sinclair@gmail.com)

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**Alan Smith** is Professor and UNESCO Chair in Education for Pluralism, Human Rights and Democracy at Ulster University in Northern Ireland. He has over thirty years' experience in research with particular expertise in education, conflict and international development. He has completed research for the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Nuffield Foundation, as well as a range of NGO, government and UN organizations, including International Alert, Save the Children, DFID, EU, GIZ, Norad, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank.

**Rae Snape** has been the headteacher of the Spinney Primary School since 2007 and is a National Leader of Education. She is the director of the Kite Teaching School Alliance, Cambridge, and the Festival Designer of the Cambridgeshire Festival of Education. She is passionate about the transformation power of arts, creativity, culture and connection in young people's lives and co-initiated a Cultural Education Partnership for Cambridge

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