

Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis

The Politics of Reform

Finland is often asked, “What’s your secret?” when it comes to education reform. Is it the teacher training? Is it the integrated curriculum? Is it the overarching education policy?

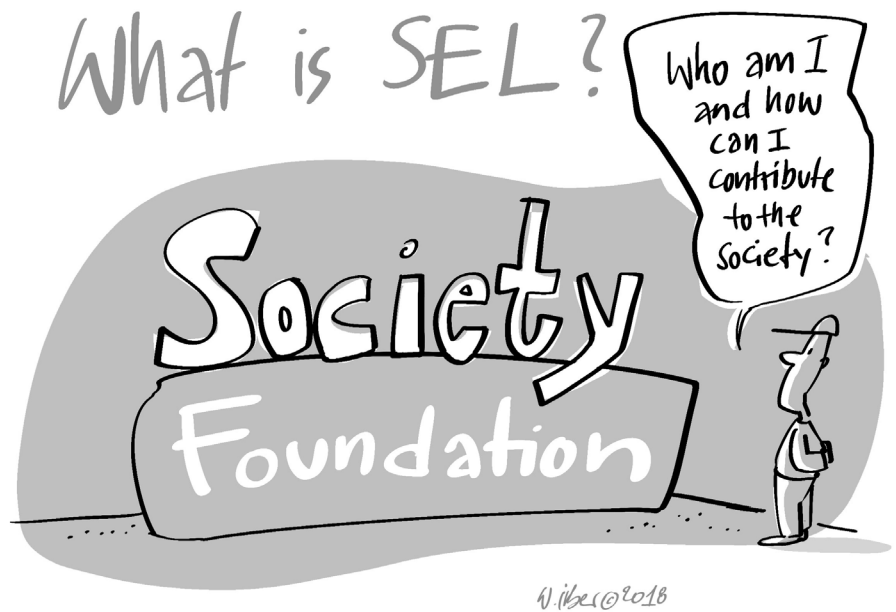
But as it was pointed out on the panel “SEL and the Politics of Education Reform,” there is no single secret ingredient. “We have many building blocks,” pointed out the Finnish panelist; combined, these blocks have built a successful education system, but these blocks are not easy to replicate wholesale in another country.

When testing and rolling out new programs, the following advice was given: “Start small, learn fast, and fail well.” Evidence collection, evaluation, and adaptation are all important prior to scaling up. But this approach was not deemed appropriate for all contexts, with another Fellow pointing out on Twitter: “Doesn’t work in an Indian context where the numbers are huge and contexts are diverse. Innovations in education have not traditionally scaled.”

Introducing the oxymoron for the day, one panelist urged SEL implementation should be “compulsorily voluntary,” i.e. everyone should do it, but *how* SEL is delivered should be determined by the local context.

Context matters. As another panelist added, “What works in one country might not work in another; what works in one school might not work in another; what works for one child might not work for another.” (After all, even McDonald’s, which prides itself on its global universal standards, adapts to local markets!)

With so many different actors involved in delivering SEL education reform – from individual teachers and schools to policymakers and politicians, researchers and other advocates – efforts need to be made to “network autonomous actors” and guide their direction. A key ingredient to achieving this networking and thus implementing successful education reform is trust. Trust needs to be developed at all levels, from the teachers to the ministry.



Creating Systems Transformation

Education policies are often introduced but then thrown out on the changing of administrations, political or otherwise. To avoid this, social and emotional learning (SEL) needs to be adopted at a systems level.

As experts from India, the US, New Zealand and Kenya explained on the first full day of *Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis*, integrating SEL at a systems level needs buy-in from all actors in the education system.

In schools, SEL should be encouraged not only for students, but also teachers and all other staff throughout the school. Outside of individual schools, buy-in is needed from the school districts and local education administration, such as having someone within the school district who is responsible and can advocate for SEL.

The buy-in of parents and students is also vital to ensuring the long-term support for and success of SEL. Oftentimes, parents complain that time spent on SEL programs is a “time-taker” from the more traditionally revered academic subjects, but evidence shows improved SEL can in fact be a “time-maker” as it enables students to better engage, pay attention, and process information, as well as work more collaboratively with their peers in

a more learning-conducive environment thanks to reduced anti-social behavior, such as classroom disruption or bullying.

Unable to travel to Salzburg but undeterred from sharing his innovative policy, Delhi education minister Manish Sisodia filmed a video that morning in a city classroom to introduce the “Happiness Class”. This program is a new addition to schools’ curriculum in the Indian capital and aims to improve students’ mindfulness and confidence, which in turn will have an impact on their attainment in their other academic subjects.

SEL does not have to be delivered as a separate course such as the Happiness Class (see back page), but can instead be integrated into other subject areas. Languages, literature and geography can help develop cultural awareness and empathy; history teaches critical thinking; and team-building can be developed through PE and drama, for example.

Achieving system-wide transformation thus needs both a top-down and a bottom-up approach, but bottom-up need not start only with the parents, teachers and students. High-ranking local officials, such as school superintendents in the US, can be powerful advocates in spreading change outward and upward.

Wolfgang Irber: Translating Complexity into Simplicity

As a self-confessed non-expert on SEL, graphic facilitator and business illustrator captures the “key messages” he’s hearing at *Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis*

With an academic background in geology and geochemistry and a previous career in telecommunications, business illustrator and Salzburg Global Fellow, Wolfgang Irber is not shy about admitting that he came to Salzburg this week knowing very little about Social and Emotional Learning.

But in his role as graphic facilitator for the program, he’s “translating” the complex ideas being presented by the expert Fellows into simple messages to help reach a non-expert audience.

What do you think? If you have opinions on his work or suggestions of other key messages that could be

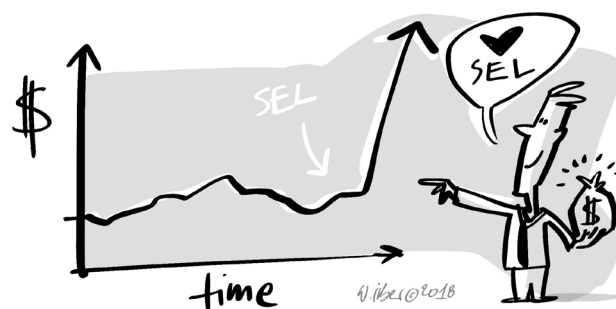
illustrated, Wolfgang is eager to hear from you! You can find him sketching in the corner of Parker Hall, as well attending all meals and coffee breaks.

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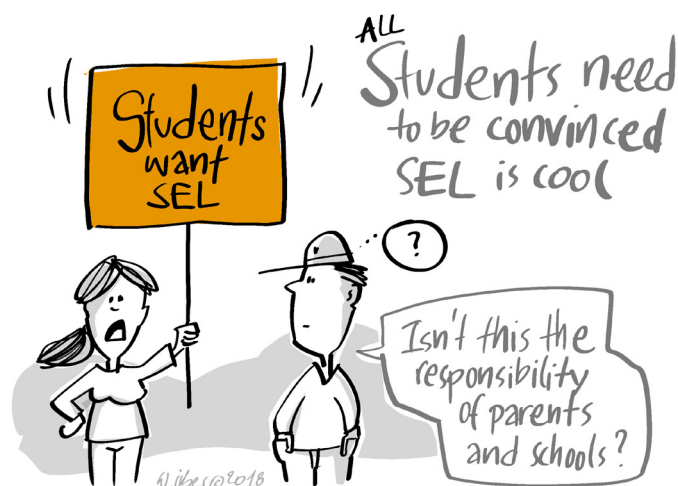
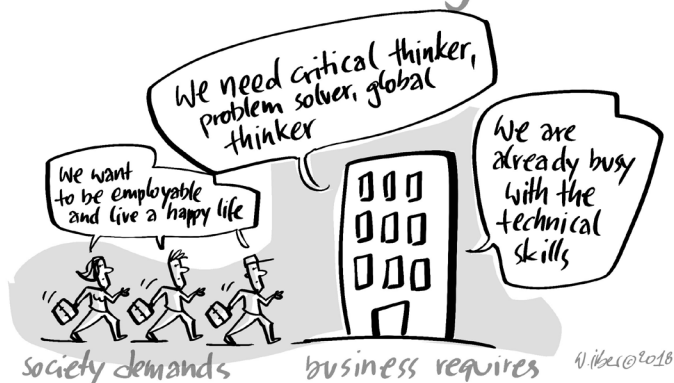
The business sector is the receiver of the educational sector



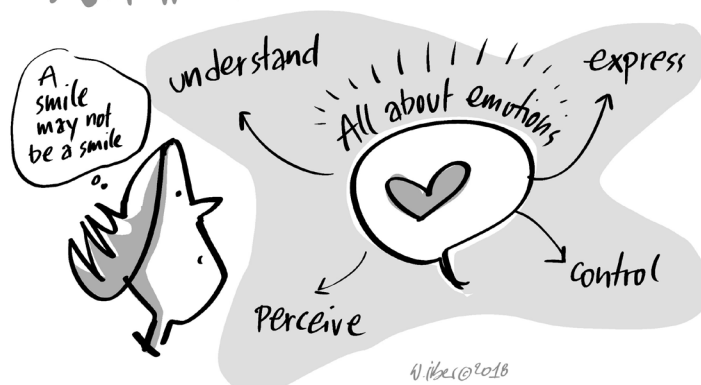
SEL will increase the value of business



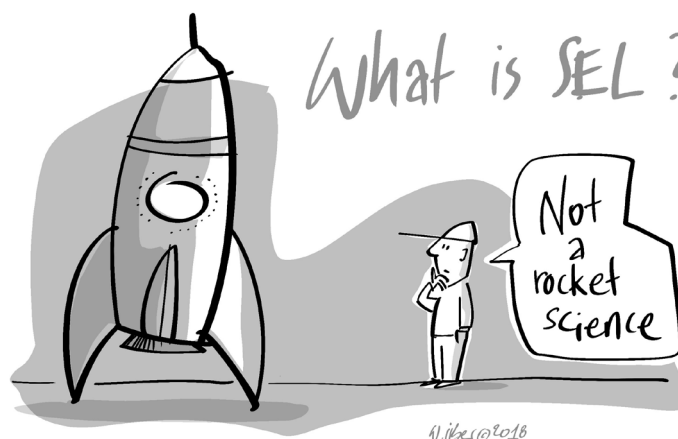
Who is demanding SEL?

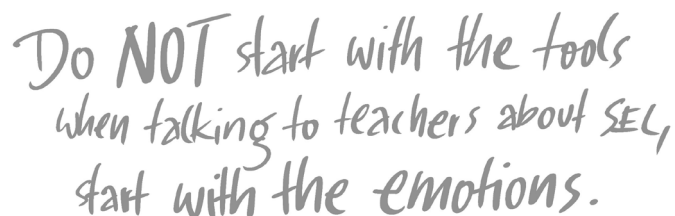


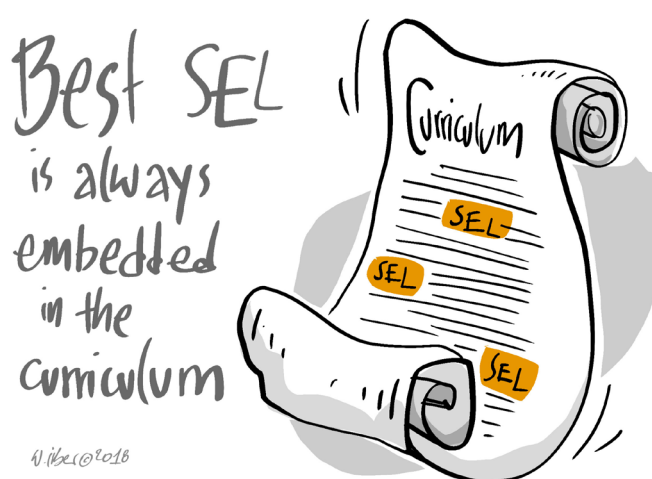
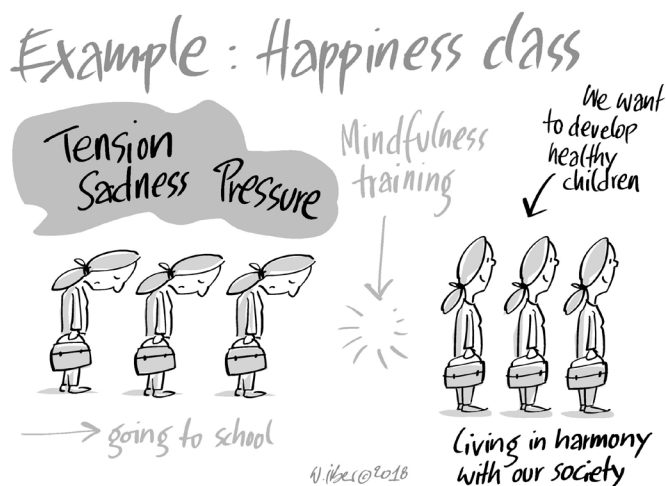
What is SEL? → skill



What is SEL?







HOT TOPIC: Should SEL Be Integrated or Should It Stand Alone?

Anna Rawe

My take on [whether to integrate SEL or not] is in the early years of learning, it should be integrated into other learning areas because you also don't want to provide a lot of content in the learning areas, or take it as a standalone subject because there isn't a whole lot you want to tell little children... After mid-level, I think my take is that it should be integrated. We should only look for host subjects that can comfortably accommodate. In the senior level, then you can treat it as separate discipline, and that's what we are doing in Kenya."

Grace Maina

Curriculum Specialist, Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development

"To me SEL is about humanity and everything we do, so therefore it cannot be separated. For me it's got to flip the other way, where SEL is the baseline and then content areas need to be slotted into SEL. So when I'm designing learning or when I'm working with countries and they're designing learning, we are talking about real life situations that require strong SEL tools and processes, and then what are the content areas that align themselves to learn through that."

Joanne McEachen

*Global New Measures Director,
New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, USA*

"It needs to be both, and the reason for that... [is] if we have an explicit topic that sits alone that's a positive step forward, because it prescribes, basically this is the minimum standard that we will actually focus on Social and Emotional Learning, but of course it's not sufficient. It's important, but not sufficient. Really we need to do that and make sure we've embedded those learnings in rich ways with rich curriculum and content – what disposition are we trying to create here, what skill-set are we trying to create? – and then finding content that supports that notion, as opposed to the old traditional model of schooling, which is: what's the content we need to teach?"

Louka Parry

*Director of Academy and Training,
Education Changemakers, Australia*

"I believe it's both, I don't take a position on either, I think that it is really critical... Reading has its own subject area and you can't do social studies, or science or math without knowing how to read, so reading is integrated into all subjects, and I think SEL should be integrated into all subjects. But I also think that it deserves its own place in terms of children's knowledge development, skill development... I do believe that from pre-school all the way up, that children should get a formal education in social and emotional skills and that it should be aligned with their social and cognitive development. But at the same time I

think there's a perfect opportunity to integrate this into every subject area"

Marc Brackett

Director, Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence, USA

"It has to start as a standalone exercise, but gradually it should be integrated into other subjects because the whole purpose of learning is: If you learn maths, you learn calculations, but how do you apply it in your life? If you are learning science and you become a doctor, how would you use your medical practice ethically? ... So as a result this exercise – Social and Emotional Learning – needs to be integrated with the school curriculum... Maybe if we are beginning, it is possible that you can introduce [SEL] as a matter of practice so that the teachers get more acquainted with the methodology. But, as we move on, the idea, at least in Delhi, is: whatever subject you are teaching, apply the learning of the process that you learned while transacting your happiness class into teaching the subject that you are teaching."

Shailendra Sharma

*Principal Advisor to the Director of Education,
Delhi City Government, India*

Have an opinion on our HOT TOPIC?

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