

HUNDRED RESEARCH REPORT #026

Policy Report: Social & Emotional Learning

Report

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

The **LEGO** Foundation



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POLICY REPORT: SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING

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Conclusions and recommendations from HundrED reports
represent the author's own views.

The **LEGO** Foundation

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals.

Executive Summary

Social and emotional skills are crucial for all of us to thrive in today's unpredictable world. Thus, social and emotional learning (SEL) has become a top priority on the agendas of education stakeholders in many countries. From an equity perspective, ensuring that every child has access to SEL requires a systemic approach and a strong commitment from those responsible for formulating educational policies.

This policy report is aimed at policymakers eager to widen their understanding, address the challenges and increase the opportunities for social emotional learning in their education system. The report is a joint effort by HundrED and the LEGO Foundation to highlight relevant research, share key challenges and showcase successful solutions implemented across the world.

We want to put particular emphasis on practical solutions, so this report presents thirteen impactful and scalable SEL innovations established in ten countries. Each innovator shares their recommendations for policymakers and their vision for the future of social emotional learning. The report is organised alphabetically by country: Bangladesh, Colombia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Spain, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela.

Findings from this report indicate that national contexts matter in how SEL is understood, framed, and implemented at the classroom level. From our selected innovators, we learnt that the initial motivation to develop SEL programmes varies

according to the local needs of the context in which these innovations originated. Culture, religion, political history, crises, and social diversity are factors that have influenced the way in which SEL was developed in each context. In all of the countries featured, public-private partnerships play a key role in supporting SEL innovations. For nearly all of our innovators, support was found in both the public and private sector, especially from philanthropic foundations with a commitment to supporting students' social and emotional wellbeing.

We understand that governments cannot improve education on their own. Close collaboration between different education stakeholders, such as teachers, administrators, families and policymakers, is needed in order to ensure the effective design and implementation of SEL programmes. Because school leaders and decision makers are looking for documented evidence of the impact of SEL innovations on students' learning outcomes, partnering with researchers at universities is an important way that these innovators have demonstrated the results of their innovations.

The 13 education solutions showcased in this report were selected through the HundrED Review Process, based on their evidence of impact and scalability. Gathering insights from these 13 innovations, we recommend 8 practical tips for policymakers looking to implement SEL innovations. Our hope is that this report will inspire policymakers as they work to support SEL education at scale.

Key Findings:

8 implementation tips for policymakers

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT SOLUTIONS TO INCREASE THE QUALITY OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Ample evidence from successful innovations suggests that fostering social and emotional learning leads to numerous benefits for students, families, communities and societies. In interviews conducted for this report, the 13 selected innovators shared suggestions on how to best implement SEL at scale. Their suggestions can be summarised as follows:

1

EMBRACE TRIAL AND ERROR

Educational innovation and scaling is a process of trial and error in different contexts over time. Therefore, it is also important that innovators and policymakers engage in continuous discussions based on the knowledge of implementing SEL innovations with children, teachers and in schools.

2

REFERENCE SEL EXPLICITLY

SEL should be explicitly mentioned in the national and local curricula. The explicit articulation of social and emotional learning as a necessary part of schooling helps innovators to find an entry point into conversations with school leaders, and also encourages school leaders to seek out innovations to develop their SEL curricula.

3

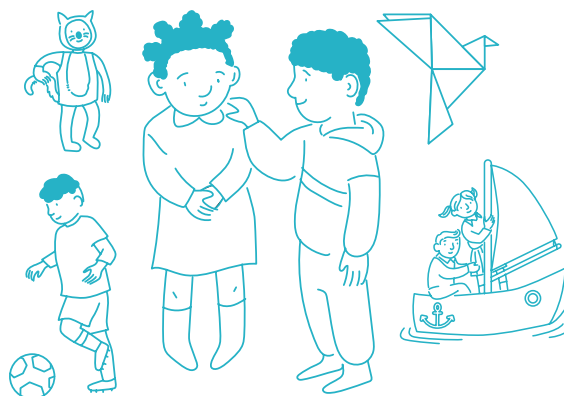
MAKE SEL CONTEXT-RELEVANT

Adapt social and emotional learning programmes to the local situations and conditions of the students' lives, including language translations and context-appropriate materials.

4

TAKE A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH

When SEL is taken at a school-wide level and supported by school leaders and administrators, it can be easier for teachers to get the resources they need to implement SEL innovations effectively, including time and materials.



5

EMPOWER TEACHERS

When teachers have the tools to make informed decisions about which innovative SEL pedagogical practises to adopt into their daily routines, SEL is more likely to be implemented well. For this, teachers need support to develop their own social and emotional competence, reflect on their interactions with students and their knowledge of their students' individual circumstances. More resources need to be directed into integrating SEL in teacher education, both for pre-service and in-service teachers.

6

ENGAGE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The different communities surrounding children play an important role in developing SEL. Effective SEL requires that the wider education community understand its importance and are engaged in the process.

7

COLLABORATE WITH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS AND RESEARCHERS

In order to create systemic change and impact, the implementation of SEL should and must be the result of a co-design process shared by education professionals, such as teachers and school administrators, policymakers and education decision-makers, as well as academics, including researchers and teacher educators.

8

INCORPORATE PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

Psychologists and trained staff can support schools as they implement SEL programmes by creating relevant tools, guiding teacher practises and supporting students' mental health.

Overview

Things to consider when implementing SEL programmes at scale

THE BENEFITS OF STRONG SEL POLICY

Our definition of social and emotional learning (SEL) is informed by the work of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). According to CASEL,

SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.¹

Our message is
clear, investing
in SEL today
means
investing in a
brighter future.

Students' social and emotional competence is related to their academic achievement and long-term outcomes. However, questions remain about the best methods of developing students' SEL competencies, and how to create systems reform to take these innovations to scale. This report aims to provide policymakers with a better understanding of why SEL is important, using the examples of thirteen of the most impactful and scalable SEL innovations around the world.

First, this report helps policymakers understand the why of SEL. Our innovators share why SEL is important and what policymakers need to understand about taking SEL innovations to scale.

Second, this report introduces the evidence base that our innovators are producing through the research, evaluations and implementation of their programmes.

Third, this report helps policymakers understand the connection between SEL and other learning outcomes, such as academic achievement and relational competences, as well as the broader social and economic implications of SEL.

This report aligns with The LEGO Foundation mission of building a future where learning through play empowers children to become creative, engaged,

lifelong learners. Its work is about re-defining play and re-imagining learning. In collaboration with thought leaders, influencers, educators and parents, The LEGO Foundation aims to equip, inspire and activate champions for learning through play.

In consonance with HundrED's mission of helping every child flourish in life and The LEGO Foundation's commitment to develop children's social and emotional learning through play, this report is an answer to the necessity to provide decision-makers and policy leaders with concrete and inspiring examples of the importance of SEL policies for strategic implementation at scale. This is a call to action for policymakers to create positive change in education systems. Our message is clear, investing in SEL today means investing in a brighter future.

Start by addressing the 5 barriers to social and emotional learning

Policymakers play a key role in creating an enabling environment for implementing new solutions and practises in education systems. But where should they start if they want to improve education about social and emotional skills? According to researchers Simmons, Brackett and Adler, there are five barriers that hinder access to a high-quality SEL education: (1) poverty, (2) exclusionary discipline practises and policies in school, (3) lack of trauma-informed practises in school, (4) implicit bias in school staff, and (5) educator stress and burnout.²

1. **Poverty:** Poverty defines children's lives, especially of students with historically marginalised backgrounds, for a lifetime of disadvantage. Access to quality education, social services, stable housing, healthcare, and necessary social and economic resources are limited when children are exposed to poverty. Therefore, children living under these conditions lack opportunities to build nurturing and healthy relationships across diverse contexts.
2. **Exclusionary discipline practises and policies in school:** School discipline practises such as suspension, expulsion and other types of punitive policies are still a norm in many schools across countries. These experiences of exclusionary discipline can affect students' self-image and narrow their life opportunities.
3. **Lack of trauma-informed school practises:** Children can be exposed to different types of violence (bullying, abuse, social crises, etc.) and school structures are not always prepared to address the traumas generated by these experiences. Being exposed to adverse events can affect students' mental health and schools often lack specialised staff that can attend to the social and emotional needs of these students.
4. **Implicit bias in school staff:** School staffs' implicit bias towards students from marginalised groups can contribute to low academic expectations and negatively influence student academic achievement.
5. **Educators' stress and burnout:** Many teachers experience stress and burnout when they are at the limit of dealing with their work's daily challenges. When teachers are stressed it is more likely that conflicts at the classroom level are not addressed properly. A common complaint of teachers is that they do not have time to implement SEL, as the majority of schools are not structured in a way that social and emotional learning can be integrated organically.

HOW TO DRIVE CHANGE?

Education policy refers to the national, regional, or municipal laws and documents produced by governments to guide how public schools and school districts operate. In the case of policy for SEL, these documents state how SEL should be included in, for example, the school curricula, teacher practises and operational decisions. Government policies also inform the types of activities that schools and districts incorporate into their budgeted expenditures, in terms of teacher training and materials for SEL. Depending on how SEL is understood in a given context, the relevant government policies may also come from other sectors besides education, for example health, social welfare or labour policy. When understood as part of national or local governance, SEL policy is a matter for elected and appointed policymakers in shaping education systems reform.

At the same time, education policy can also be thought of in a wider scope, as the politics of decision-making about resource allocation. Taking a wider view of SEL policy allows us to see that there are various actors whose decisions affect not only resource allocation, but also the international discourse shaping education system reform. This includes the mandates of international governance organisations, as well as the commitments of corporations, foundations and philanthropic organisations. Mandates and commitments from these organisations determine what types of

SEL innovations receive financial support to develop and spread their innovations in schools.

When governments partner with innovators and researchers, it is possible to create the evidence base that can lead to systems change. Some school and district leaders are eager to participate in innovations at the pilot stage, others would like to see evidence that the innovations have been successful in similar schools. In this section, we present some of the learnings from 13 innovations that have been successfully implemented in their respective education systems.

NATIONAL CONTEXT IS KEY WHEN IMPLEMENTING NEW SEL INNOVATIONS

The selected innovators from the United States expressed their initial motivation for developing SEL as a response to local needs: significant gaps in student learning, working with low-income & high-trauma communities, poverty and its relation to caregiving, and limited school resources. This is reflective of the wider social and educational situation in the United States, where the poverty rate is among the highest of OECD countries; 16% or nearly 12 million children live in poverty, and the poverty rates are disproportionately high for Black (28%), American Indian (25%) and Latino (23%) children.³



In the United Kingdom, the SEL innovations are equally concerned with social inclusion and representation, particularly for developing the SEL skills of students with disabilities and those living in poverty. This is relevant in the UK context, where under-funding of education has disproportionately affected students with disabilities, particularly those living in poverty.⁴

In both South Africa and Nigeria, the innovators' motivations to promote SEL policy are connected to the wider conversation about the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and the need for education that produces socially and emotionally competent graduates who are employable in the changing African economy. SEL is also connected to concerns with developing children's basic literacy, including a more holistic approach to literacy development, as well as concerns for students' health and wellbeing.^{5,6}

In contexts where social policy has been designed to protect against the effects of societal violence, such as in Venezuela and Colombia, where there has been an ongoing humanitarian crisis and violent political unrest, the policy conversation about social and emotional learning also touches on the need for schools to be a safe place where children will not be subjected to violence from teachers or peers. In these contexts, SEL comes as a policy initiative related to health and wellbeing, aimed at orienting children towards a culture of peace and non-violence. The hope is that SEL would give students the skills to build a brighter future and find productive ways of interacting now in school and later in society and the economy.

In Bangladesh and India, innovators are also working to change education for students living in poverty, particularly for refugee and orphan children. In these contexts, in addition to working to support the adults, SEL is promoted in order to boost the children's sense of self-worth and explore one's own emotional journey, for example through mindfulness and mindful practise. In Spain, SEL is connected also to interpersonal communication and relationships, especially in training adults to become aware of their own ways of interacting with students.

In many cases, SEL is supported in policy and practise as a way to help children cope with the ill effects of poverty. In connecting SEL policies with decisions about mental health services, family support, violence reduction and alleviating the effects of poverty, SEL is promoted as having a ripple effect on violence reduction in schools.⁷ The evidence base for this connection, however, from the perspective of SEL innovation, is shown primarily through impact evaluations of the individual programmes. Programme evaluation is a positive development because more evidence from practitioners implementing SEL innovations is needed to better understand how SEL is changing outcomes for students.⁸

LEVERAGE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN FUNDING SEL PROGRAMMES

Funding opportunities and knowledge partnerships are significant for bringing these innovations to scale, and for assisting them in evaluating impact. The commitments embedded in the mission statements, and strategies of foundations and international organisations related to social and emotional learning guide these partnerships as they develop. Likewise, education policies at the national and regional levels facilitate the implementation of SEL innovations by creating space in the curriculum and teacher training for SEL to be specifically addressed.

For many of these innovations, incubators and accelerators play an important role in moving the innovators from having a great idea to having a scalable innovation. Accelerator programmes bring together and build communities of education innovators to learn from each other, with resources including mentorship, networking and direct investment. The accelerator model supports education innovations through rapid adaptation as cohorts of education innovators together to refine their ideas.

IMPLEMENTING SEL INNOVATIONS IS AN ITERATIVE PROCESS

The relationship between innovation and SEL systems reform through policy change is neither simply top-down nor bottom-up. It is the result of a cycle of iteration and expansion of SEL programming, research, and policy discussions over time, and financial support from corporate philanthropic organisations and international governance bodies. In the past decades, SEL has entered into this policy conversation on education more directly, and local education, health and wellbeing policies in many countries reflect this change. This change, in turn, supports innovators in spreading their innovations to more schools, gathering more evidence of impact, and also iterating the innovations to be contextualised in new schools and communities.

For policymakers, this means being attentive to the work that innovators are doing on the ground, including the research that is being done on these innovations.

Country Profiles

Policies for social and emotional learning are primarily directives developed at the national and local level to guide the work of educators and education administrators. In the case of these SEL innovations, national policies about the structure and organisation of educational provision and priorities frame their work. In addition, each innovation situates their work in response to locally defined needs and educational culture.

In the following section, we present the national contexts where each of the selected innovations was established. We look at what policies and mandates have influenced these innovations, and how the innovations have spread. Through these profiles, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of how SEL is relevant to the national and international education in different countries. We asked the innovators what advice they have for policymakers, and what they see for the future of their innovations.



Bangladesh

Over the past ten years, Bangladesh has accomplished great success in improving access to quality primary education. Between 2009 and 2019, the enrollment rate increased from 90% to 97%. In addition, Bangladesh has significantly reduced the dropout rate, improved the student-teacher ratio, increased teacher recruitment, increased the cycle completion rate and survival, and improved the ratio of boys to girls. However, the pandemic has disrupted education progress and created multiple waves of challenges. The main challenge since the pandemic has been to continue core academic activities to keep the students engaged. To support students learning at home, the Ministry started broadcasting online classes on television, gathering teachers from different parts of the country to record these classes. However, only about half of the households in the country have a television. In order to mitigate this problem, the Ministry provided radio via mobile phones. Teachers were also encouraged to be in contact with mothers via mobile phone and give them homework, in order to motivate the mothers to look after their children in the home.⁹

“Bangladesh sees that education is a cooperative endeavour, which requires the collaboration of all actors doing their part to support quality education.” - The Honourable Mr. Akram Al Hossain, former Senior Secretary of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education¹⁰

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“If we teach our children and enhance their social and emotional competencies, they will not only be able to face all of the world’s challenges, they will have the emotional intelligence to thrive when they grow up.”

- Danielle De La Fuente,
Founder & CEO, Amal Alliance

Engaging local organisations as implementing partners

CASE STUDY: COLORS OF KINDNESS

WHAT PARTNERSHIPS AND POLICIES HAVE HELPED THIS INNOVATION SCALE?

Colors of Kindness is an initiative of The Amal Alliance, an international NGO that provides displaced and disenfranchised children worldwide with education programmes to help them cope with the scars of trauma, giving them the learning fundamentals needed to succeed.¹¹ The Amal Alliance partners with Friendship NGO in Bangladesh through their Global Dignity partners. Friendship NGO is an international Social Purpose Organisation guided by the vision of a world where people – especially the hard-to-reach and unaddressed – have equal opportunities to live with dignity and hope, with a key commitment towards empowerment through education.

In early June 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees partnered with the EdTech Hub, Education Alliance, Global Innovation Exchange, and

Education Cannot Wait to open a specific window for refugees to apply to their recent EdTech call. EdTech Hub is an 8-year global EdTech research initiative of the [World Bank](#), the United Kingdom's former DFID (now [FCDO](#)), and the [Gates Foundation](#). Education Cannot Wait has been guided in its investment strategy by The World Humanitarian Summit's [Agenda for Humanity](#).¹² The Agenda is designed to usher in a more collaborative approach, ensuring that relief and development partners join forces to achieve quality education outcomes. These investments aim to uphold the commitments of the [Grand Bargain](#), which is an agreement between some of the world's largest donors and humanitarian organisations. Through the Grand Bargain, these donors have committed to getting more resources into the hands of people in need and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.¹³

From over 80 applicants, The Amal Alliance was selected as one of three finalists to receive additional funding and mentorship support to design an education in emergencies prototype. Amal Alliance was then invited to join the Humanitarian Education Accelerator's Rapid Response COVID-19 Cohort and participate in an intensive week-long virtual boot camp in July 2020, focused on strengthening solutions in different refugee-hosting environments. During this boot camp, the innovators also met [Ustad Mobile](#), the virtual team behind the technological component of Colors of Kindness, who they coordinated with via WhatsApp and Zoom.¹⁴

HOW HAS THIS INNOVATION ENGAGED LOCAL PARTNERS?

The Amal Alliance makes its programmes sustainable by engaging local organisations as implementing partners. They provide training and prioritise working with Bangladeshi locals and Rohingya translators. Feedback from the local partners is incorporated into the design, implementation, and analysis of the programme. Contents are localised to be culturally appropriate. The innovators attribute the effectiveness of the programme to these community partnerships, which help localise, refine, and adapt the programme to fit the needs of the local community.

HOW DOES THIS INNOVATION EMPOWER CHILDREN AMID SOCIETAL DISRUPTION AND VIOLENCE?

In the midst of societal disruption, Colors of Kindness provides children with social and emotional competencies that are fundamental to peacebuilding and social cohesion. Social and emotional learning is a critical component of individual

and communal wellbeing, allowing children to navigate their emotions as well as cultivate meaningful relationships that lead to more peaceful societies. The innovation introduces skills like empathy and self-efficacy that not only promote social cohesion but also build a child's resilience, which is central to their development within challenging environments. Through an inclusive hybrid approach to instruction, the innovation aims to help students cope with the effects of protracted crises while simultaneously aiming to preserve their right to education, play, and peace.

HOW DOES THIS INNOVATION DEVELOP THE CAPACITY OF TEACHERS AND OTHER SUPPORTING ADULTS?

The training looks at wellbeing, asking the caregiver to check in on their own wellbeing, as it transmits to the children. Their introductory episode was created specifically for the instructor or caregiver and includes instruction guided towards the caregiver. Prior to the introduction episode, Colors of Kindness addressed self-care and wellbeing through training. Their weekly challenges were also designed to be taken home to engage the family, which is why family feedback is also included in the post-evaluation of the programme.



WHAT CHALLENGES WERE OVERCOME IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COLORS OF KINDNESS?

Danielle de la Fuente, Founder and CEO of the Amal Alliance, says that developing a programme can be likened to putting together a puzzle. "Each piece possesses certain angles and edges that connect precisely with another. If the pieces don't align perfectly, it makes it very difficult to form the whole. When working with children, especially those from displaced populations that have endured tremendous trauma, ensuring these pieces are placed in a thoughtful and meaningful manner becomes even more important. Language considerations, local infrastructure and customs, building trust with the teachers, and more practical monitoring and evaluating protocol all come into play. For example, when working within social and emotional learning, literal translations of complex terminology lose the nuances of the concepts themselves. Therefore, it is critical to find strong translation partners that not only understand the content but can descriptively bring it to life in another language. Since the Rohingya dialect does not have a written script, we first had to translate the English into Bangla, which in turn would be recorded into Rohingya audio files. Multiple translations posed a stronger threat of concept dilution, and thus required numerous cross-checks. In addition, the numerous COVID-19 precautions required that we role-play the games and activities to ensure that social distancing could be maintained."¹⁵

She goes on to say, "Implementing at a distance requires a higher level of patience than what is needed in person. Communication is key, but vocalising your needs becomes even more integral when non-verbal cues can't be seen. Furthermore, communicating with team members, colleagues, and partners across numerous time zones in various countries requires extra planning and coordination. It can often lead to meetings at odd hours of the early morning or late evening, bypassing traditional office hours. Flexibility and being accommodating make for a more pleasant work experience."¹⁶



DANIELLE DE LA FUENTE
Founder & CEO, Amal Alliance

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

"Policymakers and administrators need to understand that investing in social and emotional learning for our youth is really investing in our future. We are investing in brighter futures, curiosity, creativity and the skills that are the life skills that employers are seeking but also the skills that are going to make children thrive and excel not only in school but in life."
- Danielle De La Fuente, Founder & CEO, Amal Alliance

WHERE DO YOU SEE COLORS OF KINDNESS IN FIVE YEARS?

"In five years, we see Colors of Kindness growing tremendously. Social and emotional learning needs to be a basic human right in education for children. Not just a luxury or something that's available. We really see Colors of Kindness bridging that gap for children that are out of school and for children with learning barriers. Perhaps they are dealing with anxiety or with trauma. Colors of Kindness will help them accelerate their learning process in a way that will not only achieve learning outcomes, but will be more holistic in nature. In order to do so, we see Colors of Kindness partnering with governments and with schools. We want to see it in every classroom, no matter which country or location, wherever the learner is, no matter their circumstances." - Danielle De La Fuente



Navegar Seguro

Colombia

In 2016, the Education Division of Bogota's government started an initiative called 'Emociones para la Vida' (Emotions for Life), which consists of an SEL curriculum for primary and secondary schools that aims to guide teachers and adults in their journey of supporting children's social and emotional development.

Emotions for Life is a result of the Bogota government's commitment to foster peace-building activities for the consolidation of a democratic society.¹⁷ The initiative was framed within 'Bogotá Mejor para Todos' (Bogota Better for All), a District Development Plan intended to promote the full development and potential of the citizens of Bogota to achieve the happiness of all individuals, members of the families and society. With this plan, the government aimed to recover citizens' self-esteem and transform the city into a place for common wellbeing and better life.¹⁸ The programme was framed based on the [Incheon Declaration](#) and the [UNESCO Education 2030 Agenda](#), acknowledging that "relevant learning outcomes must be well defined in cognitive and non-cognitive domains, and continually assessed as an integral part of the teaching and learning process."¹⁹

The [Emotions for Life](#) curriculum is adapted to different levels of education and it encourages dialogue on the importance of education for building a culture of peace in schools, cities and countries.²⁰ This material was adapted from the Escuela Amiga del Perú programme by the World Bank.²¹

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“Investing in SEL innovations is a contribution to the building of a more equitable society, in which everyone can empower themselves to transform their own reality.”

- María Fernanda Beltrán Rico,
Social and Emotional Development Professional at
Alianza Educativa

Strengthening public education by sharing practises

CASE STUDY: NAVEGAR SEGURO

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TEACH SEL IN COLOMBIA?

Social and emotional learning has a profound impact on students' current and future wellbeing. Numerous studies have shown that sustained SEL programmes have benefits in the improvement of academic learning, increased prosocial behaviours, positive attitudes towards themselves and others, and professional success. The past two years have been challenging for people's mental health, but skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, positive communication, determination and responsible decision making have helped students find the strengths within themselves, their families, and their communities to overcome adversities and contribute to the building of a positive, democratic, and equitable society.

WHAT WAS GOING ON IN COLOMBIA BEFORE THE NAVEGAR SEGURO INITIATIVE?

Alianza Educativa is a non-profit organisation established in 2000 by 4 leading private educational institutions in the education sector in Bogota, Colombia: Universidad de los Andes, a research university; Colegio Los Nogales, a PK-12 bilingual school; Colegio San Carlos - an all-male, bilingual (English and Spanish) school; and Gymnasium La Montaña de Bogotá a co-educational Catholic school. Alianza Educativa aims to contribute to the transformation of education in Colombia, and in particular to closing equity gaps in education. They currently manage eleven charter schools in some of Bogotá's most marginalised communities, where the 11,000 students face social and emotional risks such as poverty, violence, micro-trafficking, and teenage pregnancy.²²

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION START?

The idea for Navegar Seguro arose 18 years ago when the leaders of Alianza Educativa decided to contribute to strengthening public education by sharing their experiences, knowledge, and good practises. The initiative is currently being implemented in 11 public schools in Bogota Colombia, located in vulnerable areas. Navegar Seguro was developed to better address the social and emotional learning needs of children and help students manage life challenges, build positive relationships, and develop their life projects.

Navegar Seguro has been adapted from the World Bank's Step by Step Toolkit that aims to equip teachers with resources that can help their students better understand and manage their emotions, thoughts, impulses and behaviours, form and sustain positive relationships, and make the most out of life by making responsible decisions and pursuing meaningful goals.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS THIS INNOVATION TAKES TO DEVELOP THE CAPACITY OF TEACHERS AND OTHER SUPPORTING ADULTS?

Alianza Educativa establishes four weeks of mandatory training for school staff: two weeks before the beginning of the school year, one week during summer break, and one week after the end of the school year. Among other topics, teachers, psychologists, and social workers learn how to better foster social and emotional skills in students with the help of the Navegar Seguro guidebook and other resources. Additionally, all newcomers must take an introductory course to understand our SEL framework and strategy. Lastly, Alianza Educativa hosts four

schools for families every year. These consist of meetings between the school staff and the students' families to acquire tools to help their children face relevant problems in their community.

HOW DID THE INNOVATION RESPOND TO THE COVID-19 LEARNING CRISIS?

Due to school closures, the social and emotional programme has continued online. More efforts were invested in creating groups of support for students and families in order to foster their wellbeing. In addition to the implementation of social and emotional learning activities, Alianza Educativa offered support to 537 cases of biopsychosocial risks and 592 situations associated with isolation. They also identified and supported 665 families with economic difficulties through orientation, activation of community networks and aid management with strategic alliances.²³

HOW HAS THIS INNOVATION ENGAGED COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS SOLUTION?

In 2021, Colombia experienced a social crisis in the midst of massive protests against the government. Alianza Educativa schools are located in some of the localities that have faced the most severe violence during this crisis, which worried teachers, parents, and students alike. To address this situation, Navegar Seguro designed a school for families, in which parents learned how to talk to their children about the current situation, using active listening and assertiveness, and identified actions to take care of themselves and their families.



Navegar Seguro also created an in-class activity where students use music to express their emotions and come up with transformative actions in which they can use their generation of options skills to enact the change they want to see in their communities. These actions were complemented with internal and external resources for emotional regulation, frustration tolerance, and conflict management. This has allowed school staff and families to feel more confident to address the situation and establish conversations with their children that they had been afraid to have.

WHAT CHALLENGES WERE OVERCOME IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NAVEGAR SEGURO?

As Navegar Seguro has adapted its implementation since the pandemic, several key learnings have been shown. First, it is important to designate a leadership team that meets at least once a week to define priorities, determine the next steps and take action. Second, teachers need to be given guidelines about how to design new learning materials. It is also important to create a system for daily monitoring to keep track of students' situation, especially their health and psychosocial risks, and emotional wellbeing.²⁴



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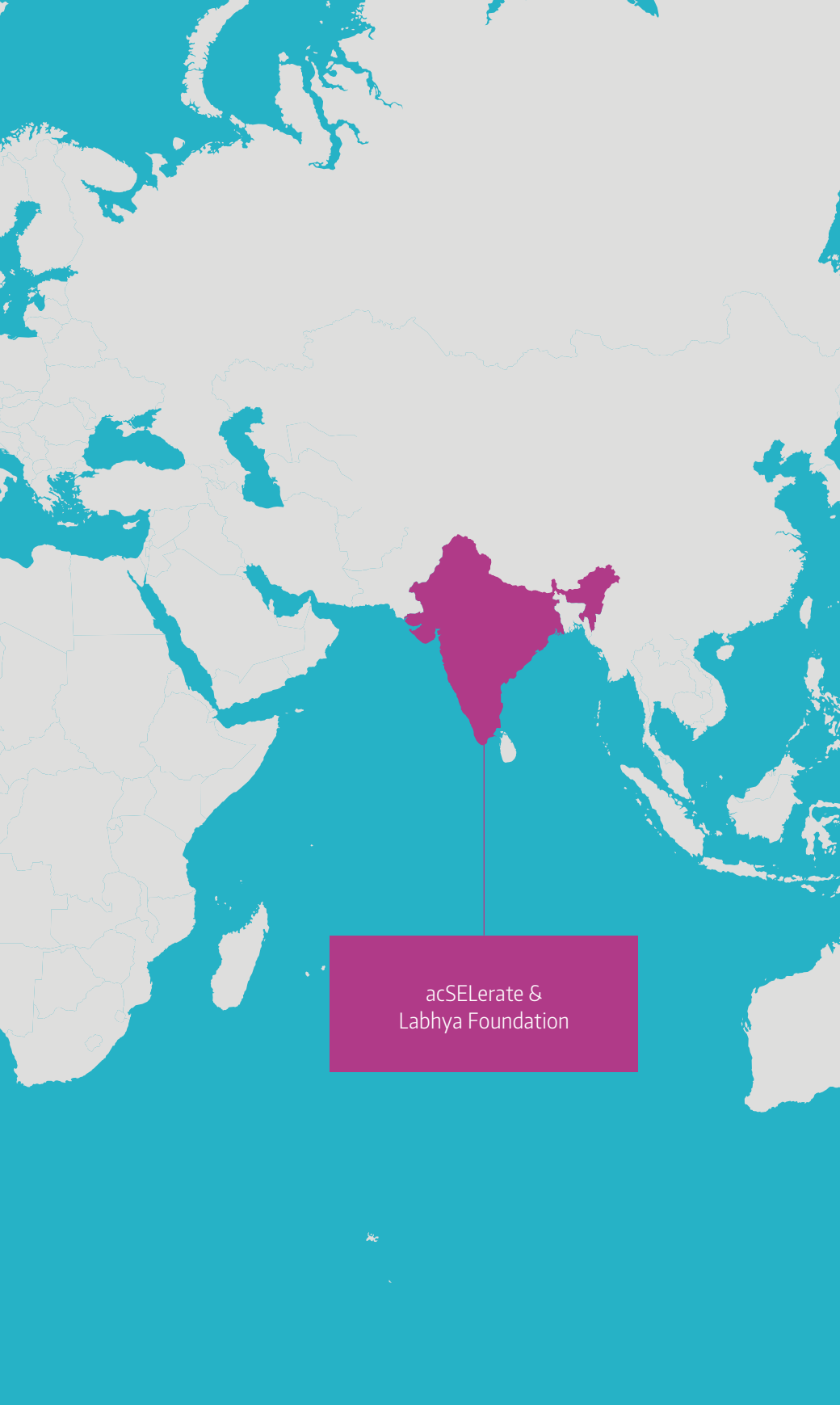
WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

"Although students' learning is our ultimate goal, investing in SEL does not only benefit students, but also their families, communities, and society as a whole. Studies have shown that SEL produced benefits in professional success, which leads to upward social mobility and more opportunities in life. Additionally, students are fundamental actors in social-emotional education because they have the power to impact their peers and families, who are in turn able to affect their own contexts. This is why investing in SEL innovations is a contribution to the building of a more equitable society, in which everyone can empower themselves to transform their own reality." - María Fernanda Beltrán Rico, Social and Emotional Development Professional, Alianza Educativa

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR NAVEGAR SEGURO IN FIVE YEARS?

"Students have come very far since the most recent version of Navegar Seguro was launched in 2020, and so have we. But there are still plenty of things to do to achieve our ultimate goal of supporting the Social-emotional learning of all children. With this in mind, our team at Alianza Educativa is directing its efforts towards the creation of a comprehensive schoolwide strategy that fosters a social and emotional learning environment for the whole community. By 2026, we strive to explicitly integrate social and emotional skills into all institutional spaces, including the academic areas. Moreover, we hope to reduce the cases of students at psychosocial risk from kindergarten to eleventh grade. Lastly, we want to continue to be a benchmark in social and emotional learning for other schools and organisations in Colombia and Latin America." - María Fernanda Beltrán Rico



acSElerate &
Labhya Foundation

India

India's National Education Policy 2020 emphasises social and emotional learning as an important facet of education. The 2020 Education Policy states that education is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive skills such as literacy, numeracy, and higher order capacities such as critical thinking and problem-solving, but also social, ethical, and emotional skills. The policy encourages teachers to focus on social and emotional learning – “a critical aspect of any student's holistic development”.²⁵

In the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2019), a nationwide household survey that provides data on children's schooling and learning from a representative sample of children across rural India, released by the Pratham Education Foundation in New Delhi, Social and Emotional Development is a priority. UNESCO and UNICEF have also been important partners in the development of the SEL policy agenda in India. The UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development in New Delhi is UNESCO's category 1 Research Institute that focuses on Sustainable Development Goal 4.7, towards education for building peaceful and sustainable societies across the world. In line with its vision of 'Transforming Education for Humanity', the Institute employs the whole-brain approach to education, with programmes that are designed to mainstream social and emotional learning in education systems.²⁶

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“When we take a systemic approach to SEL, we create equitable learning conditions that allow students to learn, model, and practise the competencies that are foundational for student success.”

- Subbu Parameswaran,
Co-Founder, Learning Curve Foundation

Cost-effective and replicable models for teacher development

CASE STUDY: acSELeRate

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TEACH SEL IN INDIA?

Every child, regardless of socio-economic status, has the right to realise their own potential as a human being. acSELeRate particularly cares about children from under-resourced and vulnerable backgrounds, and their ability to thrive and adapt to a fast-changing world. acSELeRate's mission is to empower children from under-resourced and vulnerable environments to have access to equitable adulthood outcomes. The innovation affects this through an approach to social and emotional development for the children, their teachers and the learning environment.²⁷

WHAT WAS GOING ON IN INDIA BEFORE THIS INITIATIVE?

acSELeRate is an initiative of the Learning Curve Foundation. Learning Curve Life is a not-for-profit organisation based in Hyderabad, India, rooted in the belief that social and emotional learning (SEL) is a core component of a child's growth, particularly in under-resourced environments, that can greatly enable equitable adulthood and eventually life outcomes. Learning Curve Foundation's mission is to enable State education systems in India to adopt, implement and assess social and emotional learning in K-10 public schools.²⁸

WHAT SUPPORT WAS RECEIVED IN DEVELOPING THIS INNOVATION?

The Learning Curve Foundation has been supported by partners at Salesforce, Think Equal, Axis Energy Group and Central Square Foundation. Central Square Foundation is a non-profit organisation that seeks to achieve systemic education reform in India through grants that support innovation, education-related research and advocacy to inform public policy, with a mission to ensure quality education for all children.

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION COME TO BE?

The Learning Curve Foundation was founded in 2016. The idea started with Co-Founder Subbu Parameswaran's own experience working in a shelter home for orphaned girls in Hyderabad. "We had been going there every Sunday but not even scratching the surface. We decided to have a deeper check with the caregivers and try to understand what was really happening with these girls." The stories from the caregivers were chilling for Parameswaran and his team. The girls were traumatised by violence, abuse, and abandonment. "When that happens to children, particularly in that age between 6 and 14, it does a lot to them. Essentially they've lost their sense of self-worth." That sense of worthlessness manifests as aggression to protect themselves against further harm, which also makes it difficult for the girls to build relationships. "We said, 'Wow. If that's happened to them, then why are we teaching them physics?'" Parameswaran and his team put the books aside. His focus changed to the girls' social and emotional wellbeing, "Let's understand how to be mentors to them, how to be friends with them and how to get them to relate. And That's what we did. And honestly, that's all we did. Every Sunday for a year."²⁹

WHAT RESULTS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED?

The results of acSELeRate's impact report show an increase in teachers' SEL competencies and an increase in SEL environmental indicators among affordable private schools. 65% of participating students have shown a one-level increase in their SEL competencies after participating in the programme. 90% of the participating affordable private schools have allocated resources for capacity building.³⁰

WHICH STAKEHOLDERS ARE SUPPORTED BY THIS INNOVATION?

The primary stakeholders in this innovation are schools, teachers, parents, and students. The aim of the programme is to impact teachers to become role models and have a growth mindset, to enable students to show enhanced social and emotional skills, to develop schools' systems and processes to implement and measure student SEL and to facilitate schools and parents to actively engage with each other.³¹



HOW DOES THIS INNOVATION SUPPORT TEACHERS?

The Learning Curve Journey begins with teacher wellbeing. Teachers undergo a journey of self-discovery, personal growth, and creative expression. They are learning together and working together throughout the year. acSELeRate teachers bring their learnings to the class through the 'Ready for the World' toolkit. During the Learning Curve period, feelings matter, being appreciated matters, and free expression is welcome. This improves relationships between teachers, peers and parents, as students feel valued and find their voice.³²

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEY LEARNINGS FROM THIS INNOVATION?

The adoption of the innovation varied based on the organisational structure of the schools. High adoption rates and clear evidence of impact in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya residential schools for minority girls indicate a scale pathway in well-resourced networks for public schools. The low adoption rates in Mandal Parishad Primary Schools and Zilla Parishad High School government schools indicate the need for a different programme model and stronger partnership with the government to show impact in this segment. Consistent impact and investment of resources from Army Public Schools, private schools for the children of military personnel, indicates an opportunity to introduce innovation.

HOW CAN EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEL IN SCHOOLS?

One of the key challenges is to get the general public to support social and emotional learning. There is a great need to develop an identity for social and emotional learning in schools as well as at homes. One of the ways is for people to really dig deep into their own social and emotional journeys. Everything you develop technically only gets you to a certain point. People need to understand their own journeys and embrace children's individuality.³³



SUBBU PARAMESWARAN
Co-Founder, Learning Curve Foundation

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

"Firstly, we need policymakers and administrators to align on the fact that SEL is based on neuroscience. Social, emotional and cognitive capabilities are all deeply intertwined in the brain and are central to learning. Secondly, when we take a systemic approach to SEL, it creates equitable learning conditions that allow students to learn, model and practise competencies that are foundational for student success. It also strengthens and transforms relationships between teachers, school administrators and parents - all key stakeholders in child development." - Subbu Parameswaran, Co-Founder & CEO, Learning Curve Foundation

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR ACSELERATE IN FIVE YEARS?

"We believe in scale - however, for us, the definition of scale goes beyond numbers. For us, scale is about cost-effective and replicable models that sustain long after we're gone. In the next five years, our mission is to partner with at least 5 states in India to enable the adoption and effective implementation of acSELeRate, strengthen the programme further and pave the way for acSELeRate to play a larger role in the education system. Long term, we wish to see acSELeRate being the DNA of every school in India. And this would require tremendous resources - in the form of partnerships, advocacy, research and of course funding. We truly believe that all of these will be essential for us to take acSELeRate to the next level, and more importantly, give SEL its due in the education system." - Subbu Parameswaran

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“It is essential for policymakers and administrators to now seriously start thinking about social and emotional learning as an essential component of education and invest resources in SEL programmes.”

- Richa Gupta,
Co-founder, Labhya Foundation

Systemic and localised implementation of SEL programmes

CASE STUDY: LABHYA FOUNDATION

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TEACH SEL IN INDIA?

The Labhya Foundation's goal is to create and implement a series of state-based localised, fully implemented social and emotional learning programmes throughout public schools in India. In India, internal inequalities stifle the opportunities of children based on their caste, religion, gender and poverty. These disadvantaged children are over-represented in the public education system of India. Currently, there are 128 million children in the Indian public school system, many of whom come from families and backgrounds that are disadvantaged, even relative to Indian standards. These children are multidimensionally poor and for most of

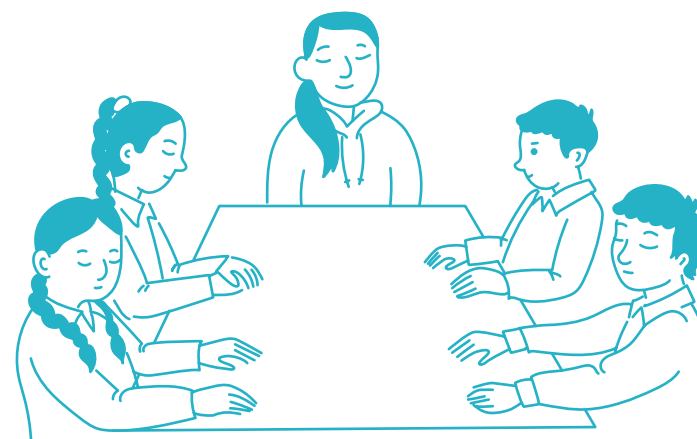
them, public schools are their only chance at overcoming poverty. These factors have made it pivotal for public schools in India to have programmes that cater to the unique needs of vulnerable children enrolled in public schools. Yet, the Indian public education system has been unable to meet this challenge due to a lack of understanding and expertise. The core effects of poverty are targeted by social and emotional learning. SEL encompasses essential skills like emotion regulation, reflection, critical thinking and perseverance. It is considered one of the most powerful tools for social change and poverty reduction as it has an extremely high return on investment value across educational practises, with every \$1 invested in SEL programmes yielding \$11 in lifelong gains in education, health, and employment.

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION COME TO BE?

Richa Shivangi Gupta, Co-Founder of the Labhya Foundation, describes the inception of the Foundation as a testament to how to engage with governments. Her journey started with children in at-risk and refugee communities in India. She quickly realised that although there are many high-quality interventions for children, some key things were not being addressed, including the child's perception of themselves, their resilience, and the way children think about their potential. "I thought that we should dive into that a little bit more, and that's how I started my research on social and emotional learning," Gupta explains. She studied other great organisations working in social and emotional learning, but all of them were working in the US or in the UK. "That's when I realised that people in India need to start talking about social and emotional learning," Gupta says. Together with her three co-founders, Gupta began the journey to promote SEL at a small school in Delhi. "We were shot down in 79 schools for 2 years. And that is when we proposed our solution to the government of Delhi, luckily they were interested in doing something like this and we got selected and that's when our journey began."³⁴

WHAT PARTNERS HAVE HELPED THIS INNOVATION TO SCALE?

The Labhya Foundation has partnered with a number of organisations, including BreakThrough Trust, Om Foundation, Teach For India, Project Laali, Head Held High Foundation, and the United Nations Development Program.³⁵ The Foundation also supported the Annual Status of Education Report 2019 Team in the development of a social and emotional learning evaluation tool for children between the ages of 4 to 8. The Foundation has also been involved in producing research on SEL. They co-authored a study with Prof. Poornima Gupta of Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurgaon and 180 Degrees Consulting, SRCC, to understand the effect of social and emotional skills such as reflection and self-awareness in becoming employable.



WHAT IS THE HAPPINESS CURRICULUM?

The Happiness Curriculum is a social and emotional learning programme co-created in partnership with the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi. This programme has paved the way for social and emotional learning in India. The Happiness Curriculum runs as a daily intensive class for students from preschool through grade 8. Working in close collaboration with the government from creation through implementation, the Labhya Foundation has been running the programme in all 1000+ government-run schools of Delhi since 2018.³⁶

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE LEARNINGS FROM THIS INNOVATION?

A key learning for the innovators has been about how to engage with the government and strengthening the relationship-building between education stakeholders. “We talk a lot about relationship building at the student level and how it is important to have relationship skills and self-awareness, but it is also important to use those skills as an entrepreneur working with the government and engaging with various education stakeholders,” says Richa Gupta. “Each education officer, each education minister to really understand where they are coming from and better engage with the system.”³⁷



RICHA GUPTA
Co-founder, Labhya Foundation

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

“It is essential for policymakers and administrators to now seriously start thinking about social and emotional learning as an essential component of education and invest resources in SEL programmes as well. Why we can tell you this is because the Labhya Foundation has been working with three state governments for the past four years and we have seen tremendous results and successes in introducing social and emotional learning in a systematic environment. Our state government partners have invested resources and finances in our programmes to ensure that our children who are now compassionate and reflective learners as it is, become compassionate and reflective and responsible global citizens as we grow up. We work with 2.4 million children today and it is possible for us to take this programme to all children across India and also the world to ensure that our children become lifelong learners and responsible global citizens.”

- Richa Gupta, Co-founder, Labhya Foundation

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR YOUR INNOVATION IN FIVE YEARS?

“In five years, we believe we will be able to impact 20 million children. We will be able to ensure that more and more state governments in India and other developing countries see the need and the success of introducing Social Emotional Learning to public schools and will be able to invest resources in our programmes as well. We believe that this is the right time for our government's administrators and everyone to come together at the same table and start advocating for social and emotional learning not just in schools but also in other areas where young people and children thrive.”

- Richa Gupta

Implementation Story

Four main takeaways from a conversation between a policymaker, an education innovator, and a student; all of them stakeholders of the Happiness Curriculum in Delhi, India.



MANISH SISODIA
Deputy Chief Minister and Education
Minister of Delhi



RICHA GUPTA
Co-founder,
Labhya Foundation

[→ Watch full conversation here](#)



SCALING HAPPINESS THROUGH A DAILY 30-MINUTE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING CLASS

Manish Sisodia is the person who imagined the Happiness Curriculum, a daily mandated 30-minute class running across all public schools in Delhi, which is dedicated to children's emotional wellbeing. The programme launched in 2018, and today runs across all +1,000 public schools of Delhi, impacting more than 1.8 million children. This initiative puts happiness at the centre of child development and is considered as important as other courses such as science, mathematics, language, history, or geography. In Sisodia's words, "this principle comes from the idea that happiness is common in all of us, and thus it is a common requirement that must be taught at the school level."

MINDFULNESS, MEDITATION AND STORYTELLING AS KEY INFLUENCING PRACTISES TO UNDERSTAND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Sisodia explains that his interest in social and emotional learning stemmed from his parents teaching him how to practise meditation as a child. This practise helped him find his inner strengths, and the energy to understand himself and his own mind. When he became an Education Minister, Sisodia says he realised that every child should receive a similar experience at school, practising mindfulness to develop social and emotional skills. For Arzoo, a student currently enrolled in the programme, storytelling is her favourite activity from the Happiness Curriculum. Through stories with different characters, Arzoo and other children learn about emotions and develop skills such as empathy and compassion.

ASSESSING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

From Sisodia's perspective, social and emotional learning cannot be assessed by standardised tests forcing students to sit in 3-hour long exams. The COVID-19 crisis served as a test to see how much students benefited from the Happiness Curriculum in times of uncertainty. "In times of the COVID pandemic, when children sat alone at home, undergoing lots of stress; how did they behave at that time? How did they get out of their anxiety? How did they cope in their home environment? This was their real test and I am proud to say that the children who started the Happiness class, those kids behaved very well in their families in a mature way, in a sensible way. It was a real test and I see that our kids passed by default," says Sisodia.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETIES

The development of social and emotional skills is important, not only for the wellbeing of individuals but also for wider communities and societies as a whole. Sisodia explains that humanity has advanced significantly thanks to technology and science, bringing a vast range of benefits to our lives. However, this is not enough for the development of societies. Social and emotional wellbeing is essential for the peaceful coexistence of all human beings. In the words of Sisodia, "Happiness is something that is needed for everyone. From a politician to a labourer, to an officer, to the President, the Prime Minister. Everyone. To a CEO, to a worker. Everybody needs to be happy. If we are not able to deliver that happiness mindset at the school level, I think as a society, as human beings we will all fail."



Mexico

The Mexican Federal Administration of 2012–2018 implemented a major educational reform in 2013 aiming to transform the Mexican education system. This new structure is guided by principles of quality and equity, and focuses on developing students' 21st-century skills. The national curriculum included in the reform provides a robust social and emotional learning syllabus as an essential subject to be taught from preschool education to 12th grade.³⁸ The curriculum is founded on the importance of teaching SEL, based on the principle that education should contribute to the development of the whole child, particularly cultivating skills associated with 'learning to be' and 'learning to live together.'

However, in April 2019 the Chamber of Deputies voted to overturn the reform, originally established by former President Enrique Peña Nieto in 2013. Consequently, the current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador announced a new reform, emphasising his intention to modify the national curriculum.³⁹

"[The 2013] curriculum acknowledges that identifying and regulating one's emotions can be taught and learned. They are no longer considered personality traits, and the curriculum highlights the role of schools in educating emotionally healthy individuals. The SEL syllabus is organised in five dimensions: self-knowledge, self-regulation, autonomy, empathy and collaboration." – Elisa Bonilla Rius, Director General of Curriculum Development, Mexico⁴⁰

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“I see social and emotional learning as a glue that holds together and consolidates other learnings. When you invest in social and emotional education, you invest in the foundation for everything else.”

- Daniela Labra,
Director at AtentaMente,
developer and senior instructor for EW

Building capacity with multidisciplinary professionals

CASE STUDY: EDUCATING FOR WELLBEING

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TEACH SEL IN MEXICO?

Social and emotional skills are for life. No matter the stage of life, profession, or country, SEL always contributes to one's wellbeing. Schools, in collaboration with the children's parents, can provide the consistency and continuity children need. So the benefits of learning social and emotional skills have a long-term impact on students' own lives, their communities, and the world. The pandemic has shown us just how important it is to have these necessary skills to support us in navigating difficult situations, caring for our own mental health, and truly flourishing. SEL prepares us both for today and tomorrow.

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION COME TO BE?

Educating for Wellbeing is an initiative of AtentaMente, a group of multidisciplinary professionals specialising in mental and socio-emotional training, with extensive experience in working with groups of children, adolescents, teachers, parents, workers, and professionals and the general public. AtentaMente was born in 2012 with one goal: to provide wellness tools. The focus of their work has been helping people of all ages find a most useful, realistic and constructive way of relating with themselves and with the world. Being able to create habits of healthy mental health that brings us closer to wellbeing that depends so much on what happens outside, if not it becomes a way of being with which to navigate the ups and downs of life with greater calm, awareness, kindness, clarity and direction.⁴¹ In Mexico, schools did not include socioemotional education on their agenda until it was explicitly required by the national curriculum. While that was a great first step, it wasn't enough because schools didn't have the understanding, training, or tools to make this a reality. AtentaMente was born from the need to transform the policy into concrete actions supporting teachers and principals in the field.

HOW DOES THIS INNOVATION WORK IN PRACTICE?

Educating for Wellbeing, AtentaMente's proprietary curriculum, consists of three components. First, a rigorous professional development programme that uses a blended learning approach to train educators to understand and practise social and emotional competencies in their lives and classrooms and improve their own wellbeing. Second, an SEL curriculum for students, which embeds both explicit instruction and the practice of targeted skills into daily activities. Third, leadership training that builds local capacity to ensure culturally and contextually relevant SEL implementation that enacts long-term systemic change.

HOW HAS EDUCATING FOR WELLBEING EXPANDED ITS IMPLEMENTATION?

AtentaMente received funding from the W.K.Kellogg Foundation to strengthen social-emotional learning in indigenous communities of the Yucatan Peninsula. It seeks to provide professional development for teachers and directors of preschools and train them to transfer these skills to students. In this two-year project, the four components of the programme will be implemented in preschools in Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo. In order to take the innovation to these communities, some adaptations will consider the linguistic-cultural relevance of the Mayan communities.

AtentaMente has also carried out a pre-pilot in Calakmul and Hopelchén, two municipalities of Campeche. The innovators work with education experts indigenous people to adapt the materials and sessions so that they respond to the needs and linguistic-cultural relevance of that population. With these adaptations, AtentaMente started a pilot in January 2021 with 380 educators in Campeche and in August of the same year worked with educators from Yucatan and Quintana Roo.⁴²

WHAT RESULTS HAS THE INNOVATION ACHIEVED?

Educating for Wellbeing has proven effective in improving outcomes for both educators and students. Results from pilot studies show positive changes in teachers' social and emotional competencies, stress and burnout, as well as improved students' socio-emotional outcomes.

WHAT ENABLED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATION?

General Director of AtentaMente Daniela Labra says, "In order to effectively incorporate socio-emotional learning into an education system, it requires two simultaneous pathways. On one hand, a top-down approach that includes the active involvement of education authorities at all levels is essential to integrate social and emotional learning into the system. On the other hand, it also requires a bottom-up approach, making sure that all adults (educators, administrators, and families) that work day-to-day in the schools have the tools, training, support, and enthusiasm to adapt, implement, and sustain these strategies. Precisely for this reason, Educating for Wellbeing proposes a systemic, scalable, sustainable,



and evidence-based approach that integrates these two necessary aspects into its design and implementation. Working hand in hand with all stakeholders in education has allowed a successful implementation of the innovation.”

WHO DOES THE INNOVATION TARGET AS PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS?

In order to foster students’ social and emotional skills, AtentaMente prioritises the social and emotional wellbeing of adults. Therefore, AtentaMente is targeted primarily at teachers, principals, and policymakers, allowing them to engage in a dialogue about policy and practise capturing the different voices involved in the implementation of SEL at scale. Engaging in this dialogue influences public policy and fosters collaboration with authorities and international organisations.

HOW CAN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORT THIS INNOVATION?

Partnerships between public institutions and civil society organisations, like AtentaMente, can facilitate change and innovation in education systems. It is important to capture different voices and build from the expertise of different sectors, making education a shared responsibility for societies.



DANIELA LABRA
Director at AtentaMente,
developer and senior instructor for EW

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

“The evidence is clear - investing in the wellbeing of our students and teachers is the best way to decrease poverty, inequality, and violence! And not only that, it is a great investment as every dollar that a government invests today in social and emotional learning yields a total value of eleven dollars for society by the time they become adults.” - Daniela Labra, Director at AtentaMente, developer and senior instructor for EW

WHY IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL EDUCATION SO VITAL?

“I see social and emotional learning as a glue that holds together and consolidates other learnings. When you invest in social and emotional education, you invest in the foundation for everything else.” - Daniela Labra

Implementation Story

Four main takeaways from a conversation between a policymaker and an education innovator working together to implement a social and emotional learning programme at scale in the State of Nuevo Leon in Mexico



DR. SOFIALETICIA MORALES GARZA
Secretary of Education of the State of Nuevo Leon, Mexico



DANIELA LABRA
Director, AtentaMente & Senior Instructor, Educating for Wellbeing

[→ Watch full conversation here](#)



BUILDING RESILIENCE FROM EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES TO SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Sofialeticia and Daniela introduce their conversation by talking about the earthquake that took place in Mexico on the 19th of September 2017 and caused great damage to Mexican society. In addition to hundreds of casualties and material losses, school infrastructure across the country was badly affected by this natural disaster. The first response from the education sector was to restore school infrastructure and bring access to education back to every child in the region.

After the earthquake, only 3% of the schools in the region were operational. Three months later, 95% of the schools were open and functioning normally. At that moment, right after the first response to the crisis, it was essential to set a new strategy to move from education in emergencies to a more sustainable solution that would allow children to thrive in their academic and personal lives, explains Sofialeticia. It became clear to the government that integrating social and emotional learning into the national curriculum would relieve some of the stress caused by this crisis and would help cope with future ones. "After a catastrophe, we have mental wounds that we must pay attention to. Social and emotional learning plays a fundamental role in overcoming the grief caused by a catastrophe," says Sofialeticia.

New crises have impacted the education system in Mexico after the earthquake. A clear example is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused school closures, teachers shortages and a lack of human interaction globally. Both Sofialeticia and Daniela agree that social and emotional skills have proven to be essential competencies to develop social resilience during these times of uncertainty.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING BEGINS WITH ADULTS

Adults play an important role in facilitating safe and nurturing learning environments that help children develop their social and emotional skills. Both Sofialeticia and Daniela agree that in order to implement successful SEL strategies for children, the social and emotional skills of adults need to be prioritised. "From the beginning, it was clear to us at AtentaMente that we had to work on SEL not only with children but also with their teachers; since our theory of change is based on the adult as a model for children," explains Daniela. Sofialeticia agrees and adds that teachers are interacting with children daily so they know what the needs of their students are. This shared principle about prioritising teachers' social and emotional wellbeing and their professional development has been key to the success of their partnership unifying efforts to achieve a common goal: to develop social and emotional competencies in teachers, students and communities to transform society.

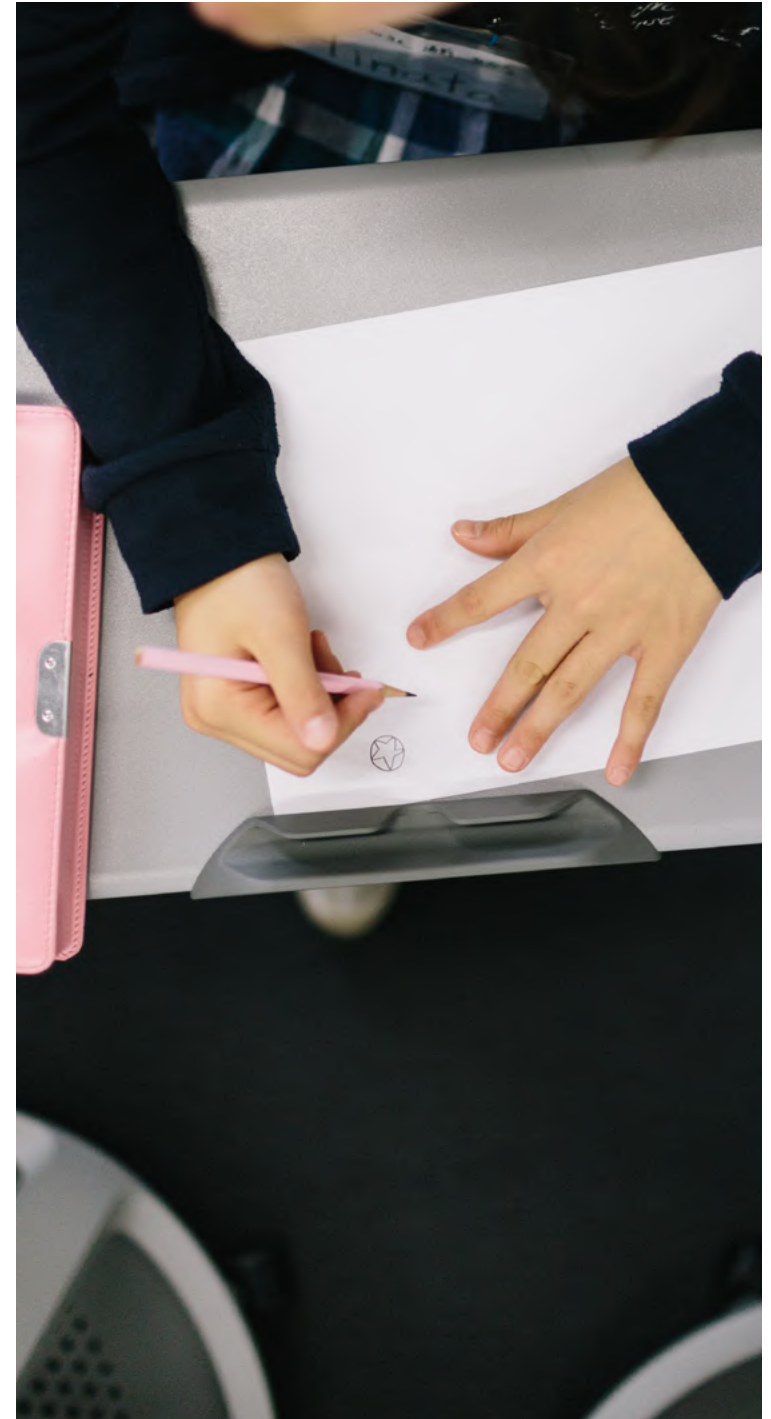
THE VALUE OF A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The collaboration between Sofialeticia and Daniela is an inspiring story of a partnership between a government and a civil society organisation. In this conversation, Daniela points out the great openness of Sofialeticia's government to different NGOs, businesses and civil society organisations that promote education innovation. This indicates that the involvement of different voices in the education system is an important aspect to transform education. Sofialeticia explains that it is important to work closely with other organisations in the local context that have expertise in different areas of education. Or as Daniela puts it, "Education is for all, and ultimately we all educate." Governments that are open to partnering with evidence-based education organisations foster a culture of collaboration and social innovation. We hope this implementation story inspires other policymakers and education leaders to prioritise SEL in their context and facilitate more partnerships between governments and education innovators.

PUBLIC POLICIES ARE NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT SEL AT SCALE

From this conversation, it becomes evident that building a society that is socially and emotionally competent does not only depend on the goodwill of teachers or parents to take good care of the mental wellbeing of their children and students. SEL must be implemented at scale through public policies that support teachers in receiving the required training and provide schools with the resources to implement SEL programmes at the classroom level. Policymakers need to answer questions related to how many hours a week should be dedicated to SEL or how resources are allocated so that SEL implementation is effective and sustainable. In Daniela's words, "Teachers are at the centre of developing SEL in children, however, all education stakeholders at different levels are crucial to make this happen. Teachers need the support of leaders and policymakers that can give them resources, time and space for their own professional development, their own wellbeing, and the implementation of SEL at the classroom level."

Building a society that is socially and emotionally competent does not only depend on the goodwill of the teachers. SEL must be implemented at scale through public policies.





Nigerian Social and Emotional
Learning Project

Nigeria

In August 2021, the Federal Ministry of Education published the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools In Nigeria in collaboration with the Nigerian Education in Emergencies working group, including international partners Plan International, Norad, Save the Children, UNICEF and Victims Support Fund. This policy indicates social and emotional learning as a specific measure to address violence in school settings. The policy suggests that the ministry introduce teaching aimed at “infusing conflict resolution programmes into the relevant subjects in the curriculum, from Primary 4 to SS 3, in order to develop such skills as empathy, self-regulation, tolerance, mediation and peacebuilding. From early childhood care and development to Primary 3, the focus should be on social and emotional aspects of learning, with particular attention on understanding and managing feelings.”⁴³ Social and Emotional learning in Nigeria has also been advocated by USAID⁴⁴, IRC, UKaid, and [Fhi360](#).

“As a state party, Nigeria guarantees the right of all learners, teachers and other school users to receive education in safe and secure learning environments. The present administration has a responsibility to provide inclusive, equitable and high-quality education for learners in Nigeria which is not hampered by insecurity, lack of safety, violence or abuse. It is my sincere hope, therefore, that the implementation of this policy will help us avoid all incidences of violence, insecurity and lack of safety in schools.” – Malam Adamu Adamu, Honourable Minister of Education of Nigeria

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“The core of our message as teachers and educators must be to teach the children to have the character that is demanded or enabled by being lettered. That character, that value, that becoming, is only taught through SEL.”

- Mmanti Umoh,
Project Lead, Nigerian Social and Emotional
Learning Project

Building leadership skills in public school settings

CASE STUDY: NIGERIAN SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROJECT

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TEACH SEL IN NIGERIA?

Social and emotional learning benefits not only the individual but society as a whole. As project lead for NELPRO, Mmanti Umoh has worked through many schools in Nigeria and her experience with teachers and students has shown her that a core part of education has been taken out of the learning - the social and emotional aspects of learning. “No child that is said to be educated is one that is only lettered,” says Umoh, “but also one that is well-mannered. It has never been more important in the lifetime of society than now to teach individuals how, not just to maintain peace, but how to add character integrity to the values that aid and grow societies into stronger economies and stronger nations.”

HOW SHOULD SEL BE INTEGRATED INTO THE EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM REFORM?

Social and emotional learning is not just about the themes of the curriculum, but about the way that teaching is served and how students receive the teaching. Social awareness, self-awareness, and responsible decision-making and relationship skills are all key for students, especially for their future work. “The inclusion of social and emotional learning is supposed to be a priority in the way people are taught,” says Mmanti Umoh. “We have a lot of people that are looking for jobs, but we also have a huge percentage, forty-one percent, of those people that are looking for jobs, that are practically unemployable.” Umoh sees that developing social and emotional skills prepares young people to be involved in changing their communities and participating more fully in the economy.⁴⁵

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION START?

Nigerian Emotional Learning Project (NELPRO) is an initiative of TeenNation™, an independent international organisation protecting and promoting the rights and inclusion of teenagers in Africa. TeenNation™ supports public schools through their #RAISEAware programming to increase the labour-market value of young people from underserved communities. TeenNation™ leads multiple initiatives and produces high-quality resources to advance and implement SEL practises and policies.

School violence and bullying including cyberbullying are widespread in public schools in Nigeria. Every school term, 1 to 5 students are killed. School violence is an infringement of children and adolescents’ rights to education and to health and wellbeing. Bullying in schools deprives millions of children and young people of their fundamental rights.

HOW HAS THE SUCCESS OF THE INNOVATION BEEN MEASURED?

SEL interventions that address NELPRO’s five core competencies increased students’ academic performance by eleven percentage points, compared to students who did not participate in such SEL programs. Students participating in SEL programs also showed improved classroom behaviour, an increased ability to manage stress and depression, and better attitudes about themselves, others, and school.⁴⁶

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE’S SEL DEVELOPMENT?

Public-private partnerships play a key role in transforming education, especially in providing young people with mentorship. TeenNation™ has called for organisations to provide five percent of their opportunities for young people while they are still in school. These work opportunities provide young people with an inclusive experience being part of social and corporate communities. Umoh says, “Gone are the days when we asked people to have ten years of work experience and did not allow them to go into the factories, did not allow them to come into our organisations to serve.” NELPRO’s commitment is to better education in Nigeria, Umoh says. “With NELPRO, we have gone into schools and we have changed the narrative.”⁴⁷

WHAT STAKEHOLDERS ARE INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING THE INNOVATION?

NELPRO’s development approach to education in emergencies entails close partnerships with governments, humanitarian agencies, and the international development Community. NELPRO is also strongly focused on building the skills of its volunteers and the teams working in public school settings and is also committed to strengthening its teams’ on-the-ground presence in the communities affected by fragility, conflict and violence. Teenation management fully commits to supporting these teams as often they are compelled to take risks and provide extraordinary support to the NELPRO operations.



HOW DOES NELPRO EMPOWER CHILDREN AMID SOCIETAL DISRUPTION AND VIOLENCE?

School violence disrupts learning and can have long-term physical and emotional effects on everyone in the community. Unfortunately, there's no silver bullet to eliminate it, but the positive Social Emotional Learning (SEL) impact on school violence makes it a tool worth considering.

To attend to the crisis, NELPRO's approach to education in fragility, conflict and violence contexts starts with (1) programmes that prevent their occurrence, (2) continue by remaining engaged in crises through SEL support, (3) help rebuild more resilient systems in post-conflict situations and (4) address the needs of communities, public schools and population groups impacted by the crises through forced school closure or exclusion and inequity.



MMANTI UMOH

Project Lead, Nigerian Social and Emotional Learning Project

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

"Every policymaker that is interested in raising a sustainable nation in Nigeria needs to come to the table and have conversations on how social and emotional learning can be integrated, not just at the grassroots, but at the inception of the child's education and at the start of the school curriculum for every child. Every child that will be raised responsibly has a place to learn, not just at home but through their curriculum, what it means to be stable social and emotional Learners and to be people in their communities. It would take policymakers in Nigeria consciously accepting that the social and emotional learning projects is not to take away the concept of the context of the curriculum, but it is to raise people and learners that are able to understand the work that is done in the curriculum and to implement that in society. And that will give a whole change to education in Nigeria." -Mmanti Umoh, Project Lead, Nigerian Social and Emotional Learning Project

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF SEL AND EDUCATION POLICY IN NIGERIA OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

"In five years, with government approval, support and the signing in of a bill in education that enables social-emotional learning to become a key part of the foundational learning of every child or every individual in Nigeria, we see that social and emotional learning will become a key stakeholder in building our nation into a sustainable country, in creating the balance in professionalism and expertise. We see social and emotional learning becoming a conversation from federal to local levels, we see it at the grassroots level. We see it becoming the foundation of raising leaders and nominating leaders and decision-makers. We see it becoming the core of children learning. We also see it becoming the core of choosing how our society is run, grown, conflict managed, and who we will become as a people in Nigeria." – Mmanti Umoh



Grassroot Soccer: SKILLZ Core

South Africa

The Department of Higher Education and Training has identified three major challenges in South Africa: poverty, inequality and unemployment. From this background, a strong case can be made for the importance of implementing social and emotional learning skills interventions for improving the learning environment and assisting young people to become more future-oriented. As South African researcher Gloria Marsay writes in the *African Journal of Career Development*, the young people in South Africa need to be more aware of looking for opportunities to earn a sustainable livelihood rather than making 'career' decisions.⁴⁸

"The traditional concept of 'career' is fragmenting at a rapid pace in the Fourth Industrial Revolution and is not always relevant in the South African context of adversity, where unemployment is rated as one of the highest in the world. Instead, youth need to be employable, self-empowered and confident enough to find opportunities to earn a sustainable livelihood. This means that they should be equipped with workplace and advanced human skills, such as self-awareness, social awareness, interpersonal relationships and effective communication skills."

Marsay adds that students are not just future workers, but future adults, parents, role models, citizens and decision-makers. The implementation of SEL programmes can provide the skills young people need and empower and enable them to make a successful transition from school to adulthood.⁴⁹

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“Our approach has a lot to do with play and curiosity. These can be powerful in helping young people develop social and emotional skills - discussing thoughts, feelings, and actions in a non-judgemental way.”

– Chris Barkley,
Technical Consultant, Grassroot Soccer

Leveraging community structures and stakeholders

CASE STUDY: GRASSROOT SOCCER

WHY TEACH SEL IN SOUTH AFRICA?

It is important to teach SEL in schools because it enables learners to better understand their thoughts and emotions. Students become more self-aware and empathetic towards themselves, towards others, and their communities at large. SEL enables students to be more efficient in their learning process and, on top of developing their self-awareness, they become socially-aware citizens inside and outside their classrooms. Behaviours learned through social and emotional learning have a positive impact and lead to socially responsible decisions.

WHAT WAS GOING ON IN SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE THIS INNOVATION?

Grassroot Soccer (GRS) was initially founded in 2002. Their work has been evolving to broaden support for young people, and since 2018 a goal in South Africa has been to integrate emerging adolescent health topics and new interventions into existing programmes and existing and future research, specifically related to mental health. Building on resiliency research, the GRS committed to piloting mindfulness micro-interventions and wellbeing questionnaires in South Africa.⁵⁰

WHAT CHALLENGES DOES THIS INNOVATION TACKLE?

Grassroot Soccer is an adolescent health organisation that was founded by American paediatrician Tommy Clark. It is an independent, locally registered non-profit organisation that leverages the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilise youth in developing countries to overcome their greatest health challenges, live healthier, more productive lives, and be agents for change in their communities.

There are more adolescents in the world than ever before, 1.8 billion, and they face unprecedented social, economic, and health challenges. Young people in sub-Saharan Africa face the most acute combination of health issues of any population in the world. HIV, unwanted pregnancy, and gender-based violence are undermining a population that is projected to double by 2050. While childhood mortality has improved 80% in the past 50 years, adolescent mortality has not budged. As the future depends on young people having the tools to lead healthy and productive lives, Grassroot Soccer was established as an answer to this challenge, engaging adolescents through proven soccer-based curricula, caring mentor coaches, and a culture that encourages safe spaces for vital conversation.⁵¹

HOW DOES THIS INNOVATION EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE?

Using soccer as the hook, GRS engages adolescents in making healthy decisions through the Three C's - Curriculum (an adolescent-friendly and evidence-based health curriculum), Coaches (the supportive influence of local mentors and role model coaches), Culture (fun, inclusive, and positive culture). Grassroot Soccer promotes a comprehensive approach that recognises youth as actors in their own personal development and emphasises the need for programs to holistically approach youth development within the social web of relationships, influential actors, norms, and systems.

HOW IS GRASSROOT SOCCER MEASURING ITS SUCCESS AND IMPACT?

GRS collaborates with research institutions and has conducted 17 research studies and formal evaluations, including three complex randomised-controlled trials, to measure the impact, adaptability, and potential for the scale of their programs. GRS measures its programming against key performance indicators aligned to its 3A Impact model (ASSETS, ACCESS, ADHERENCE), steering towards global health goals established by organisations including the World Health Organisation, the United Nations, USAID, and national governments where they work.

Additional research goals aim to gain a deeper understanding of the complex issues GRS seeks to address, inform the organisational development, establish credibility for Grassroot Soccer's efforts, and contribute more broadly to existing evidence of effective adolescent health interventions. *GRS reports*⁵² demonstrate the ways in which Grassroot Soccer is standing beside youth on HIV, AIDS, malaria prevention, positive youth development, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence. The impact of Grassroot Soccer can be summarised in three main dimensions: assets, including increased health knowledge and the confidence to use it, access, including increased uptake of high-quality health services, and adherence, meaning adherence to medical treatment, therapy, and healthy behaviours.

HOW DID THEY TURN THE SOLUTION INTO PRACTISE?

Strong relationships with partners form the bedrock of GRS success. Leveraging networks to share key learnings, challenges, and best practises with one another maximise its impact on adolescent health. In addition, GRS strategically implements



SKILLZ programmes in schools through collaborations with government ministries, enabling the impact to reach a larger scale.

WHICH STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATION?

GRS works with youth mentors, teachers and school staff to cultivate a supportive, youth-friendly environment through mainstreamed meaningful youth engagement approaches. For example, GRS capacitates teachers and other youth-serving adults on essential skills to engage youth in its SKILLZ Core intervention, including how to give effective power praise, build personal connections, facilitate vital conversations, create safe space, and accurately communicate key health concepts.

HOW CAN COMMUNITY PARTNERS SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATION?

To support an enabling environment for young people and to sustain adolescent health outcomes, GRS partners with various community stakeholders including health clinics, youth clubs, churches, traditional leaders, parent groups, police forces, schools, and social services. GRS leverages these community structures as unique service delivery points to sensitise communities to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights through a sport-based platform, and facilitate access to services in non-traditional community settings.



HANNAH WOLFSON
Business Development Manager, Grassroot Soccer Inc.



HAPPY NCUBE
Programs Manager, Grassroot Soccer Zimbabwe

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

“Policymakers should be channelling resources towards innovation for SEL at the classroom level because it is the cornerstone foundation for student wellbeing. There is evidence that proves that it improves classroom performance and it has a positive impact on social behaviours. GRS has observed positive impacts in terms of improved grades and learning outcomes, as well as minimum emotional distress for students that go through an SEL forecasting activity.”
- Happy Ncube, Programs Manager, Grassroot Soccer Zimbabwe

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR GRASSROOTS SOCCER IN FIVE YEARS?

“Over the next five years, Grassroot Soccer will continue to strengthen our relationships with partners. Partnerships with other youth-serving organisations as well as with young people themselves are key for us across community, provincial, national and global levels to advance social and emotional learning among young people as a whole. We also strategically roll out SKILLZ programs in schools through collaborations with Government Ministries, which enables us to ultimately achieve greater scale. Throughout the next few years, we hope to further embed our SKILLZ innovations within existing, sustainable community structures and health systems to increase impact and create a sustainable model for youth social and emotional learning.” - Hannah Wolfson, Business Development Manager, Grassroot Soccer Inc.



Spain

Spain's 2006 Organic Law of Education emphasises social and emotional learning. The preamble states that education is the most appropriate way to help students "develop their abilities to the maximum, to shape their own personal identity and to contribute to their understanding of reality, integrating the cognitive, affective and axiological dimension." The aim, therefore, is for education to ensure all citizens the opportunity to "achieve the maximum development of all their capacities: individual and social, intellectual, cultural and emotional, for what they need to receive a quality education adapted to their needs."

Additionally, article 71 states that "educational administrations shall provide the necessary means for all students to achieve maximum personal, intellectual, social and emotional development, as well as the objectives established in general terms in this Law." Because the educational system in Spain is decentralised, autonomous governments have a certain degree of autonomy for concretizing and extending national policies. In this sense, and in the case of social and emotional learning, each autonomous community has marked its own statements, within the margins allowed by central administrations.⁵³

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“SEL should not be done in a truncated way, but should address school coexistence and violence prevention in a holistic way, including with educators and families, who are childrens’ main models.”

– Pax Dettoni Serrano,
Founder and Director, Asociación Teatro de Conciencia
and Creator of the Method “In Their Shoes”

Partnering with the ministry of education and research

CASE STUDY: IN THEIR SHOES

WHY TEACH SEL?

In Their Shoes is a programme that promotes empathy and compassion in coexistence among all. Any child can potentially attack another child or receive aggression. Therefore it is important to care for all children by equipping them with social and emotional skills. This should not be done in a truncated way, but as part of their education, addressing school coexistence and violence prevention in a holistic way, including with educators and families, who are childrens’ main models. Therefore, In Their Shoes offers basic and practical tools for the entire school community to promote emotional literacy, emotional management, active empathy and positive conflict resolution in order to prevent violence from emerging by facilitating the creation of climates of harmonious coexistence.⁵⁴

HOW WAS THIS INNOVATION BORN?

In Their Shoes is a programme created by the Teatro de Conciencia (Theatre of Conscience). The increase in school violence and bullying prompted founder Pax Dettoni to create and pilot “In Their Shoes: a space for active empathy” in the 2016-2017 academic year in Torrejón de Ardoz, Madrid. The following school year, the Teatro de Conciencia Association, with the support of the National Centre for Educational Innovation and Research under the Ministry of Education extended the programme to five centres in the Community of Madrid and Extremadura. These centres were very heterogeneous, which allowed In Their Shoes to generate a replicable and scalable cross-sectional model for different contexts. At the start of the 2021-2022 school year, the innovation made an agreement with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the Institute for Convivència i l'Èxit Escolar so that In Their Shoes will reach ten public schools in the Balearic Islands.⁵⁵

WHAT ARE THE STEPS YOUR INNOVATION TAKES TO PUT THE CHILD AT THE CENTRE?

In Their Shoes: a space of Active Empathy does take the students to the centre in many ways, although their own experiences and challenges are particularly in the centre when:

1. They perform their experiences in the theatre plays they create.

Based on their methodology, students create theatre plays that represent their own experiences and challenges as well as their emotional consequences. The goal is to learn social and emotional skills from real situations in order to learn how to manage them from an emotional perspective. These theatre plays are performed to motivate collective reflection within the classroom. By the end of the programme, students also performed for younger peers aiming to share with them their learnings in terms of SEL.

2. They talk openly and trustily in the circles of expression when the sessions are being opened.

All In Their Shoes' weekly sessions are opened with a dynamic where all the students are seated in a circle to share their feelings, their experiences during the week and how they have managed their social and emotional challenges. This is a very important part of our methodology since they consider it the first step to building a Space of Active Empathy, which is the goal to improve coexistence in the classrooms.

HOW IS THE IMPACT OF THIS INNOVATION MEASURED?

Since the inception of the programme, In Their Shoes has had annual evaluations in the implementing schools. These evaluations have been performed in partnership with Tomillo Foundation, Spain. Last school year 2019-2020, an external evaluation of the whole programme was carried out by experts from the Carlos III University of Madrid, in collaboration with the Utrecht University of The Netherlands, the Ministry of Education of Spain and the Tomillo Foundation. This evaluation has been undertaken in 23 public schools in the Autonomous Region of Madrid, reaching out to more than 2,400 people (adults and children).⁵⁶

WHAT KIND OF RESULTS HAS THIS INNOVATION HAD?

All the members of the school community, teachers, families, students, and non-teaching staff, have recognized that they feel better at school. The communication among adults has improved, as has adults' empathy towards students. One of the most remarkable examples of the programme is the fact that the families have significantly reduced the use of punishment as a method of conflict resolution at home.



WHAT ENABLES OR HINDERS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATION?

The main challenges are limitations of time in relation to the demands of the programme. There are also organisational elements that hinder the application of the innovation, such as sufficient time and adequate spaces to run the sessions in schools. In Their Shoes has developed strong partnerships which have also allowed them not only to collect systematic data about the implementation of the programme but have helped with the implementation in various schools.⁵⁷

WHAT ARE THE KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE EVALUATION OF THE INNOVATION?

The findings from the evaluation show that the innovation has been well received; more than seventy percent of the teachers would recommend the programme, as well as one hundred percent of the families and non-teaching staff who participated in the evaluation survey. The adults in particular benefit from the programme, including teachers and parents, who show improvement in their reflective practises and communication.⁵⁸



PAX DETTONI SERRANO

Founder and Director, Asociación Teatro de Conciencia
and Creator of the Method "In Their Shoes"

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

"It is imperative to integrate SEL into the very core of education. To do it effectively, public policies need to take measures in two directions. First, integrate SEL into the teachers' education. Secondly, integrate SEL into the students' curricula, not just as a subject but rather as a transformation of the schools' culture. In their Shoes can help with both." - Pax Dettoni Serrano, Founder, In Their Shoes

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR IN THEIR SHOES IN FIVE YEARS?

"In Their Shoes is ready to be scaled up and get international. We have developed online learning platforms, and the entire methodology has been systematised, validated and externally evaluated. To be able to scale up, we need to build on agreements and synergies with the public administrations or institutions that are interested in implementing In their Shoes in other regions. I imagine that In their Shoes can contribute to SEL in many countries and educational contexts, such as schools, but also in refugee camps, with migrants and other populations in vulnerable situations. I imagine In Their Shoes doing more and better in the next five years." - Pax Dettoni Serrano



United Kingdom

Social and emotional learning has been a part of the national education policies in the United Kingdom for nearly two decades.⁵⁹ The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme was developed as part of the National Strategies 1997-2011, which provides professional development and support for teachers to drive improvement and manage changes in education in the United Kingdom.⁶⁰ The SEAL programme was launched and implemented in two waves, between 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, the second including a high school SEL curriculum.⁶¹

At the national level, various education policies address aspects of SEL. In England, the Character Education policy develops students' positive character traits and virtues.⁶² In Wales, the Personal, social and health education in the Curriculum for Wales 2022⁶³ as well as the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship⁶⁴ address aspects of SEL such as relationships and values. In Northern Ireland, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment 2020 has developed the Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027, which focuses on developing students' SEL competencies, such as self-management, relationships and wellbeing. In Scotland, the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, Scotland is Getting it Right for Every Child focuses on students' wellbeing and SEL competencies, such as responsibility, making friends, social problem solving and independence.⁶⁵

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“Social and emotional learning is so important for wellbeing, for resilience, and for children’s relationships, both with their friends, but also their wider networks.”

– Dr. Elinor Brett,
Educational Psychologist, Director Play Included C.I.C.

Using and developing evidence-based models

CASE STUDY: THE BRICK-BY-BRICK® PROGRAMME

WHY TEACH SEL?

Developing social and emotional learning is important for children that need support with social communication, friendships or language. The Brick-by-Brick® programme gives children a unique and playful learning opportunity to have positive social experiences, develop collaboration, and make friends.

WHAT WAS GOING ON BEFORE THIS INITIATIVE?

The Brick-by-Brick® programme, an initiative of Play Included C.I.C., is founded on the methodology of what was formerly known as LEGO® based therapy, using collaborative play with LEGO® bricks to create engaging social learning

opportunities for children on the autism spectrum or who need extra support with social communication.

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION START?

Dr. Gina Gómez de la Cuesta founded Play Included C.I.C. in 2018, supported by the Cambridge Social Ventures incubator programme at the University of Cambridge. Gina developed training and resources in the Brick-by-Brick® programme having studied LEGO® based therapy for her PhD at Cambridge University Autism Research Centre. She is a co-author of the LEGO® based therapy manual.⁶⁶ This guide to LEGO® Therapy contains everything one needs to know in order to set up and run a LEGO® Club for children with autism spectrum disorders or related social communication difficulties and anxiety conditions. This framework is the foundation of the Brick-by-Brick® programme.

HOW DOES THIS INNOVATION CENTRE THE STUDENTS' OWN EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES?

In the Brick-by-Brick® Programme, children build Lego models collaboratively in a team, which means they have to work together to get the Lego model complete. Children take it in turns to build in different roles and have different jobs as part of the building. In this way, the children have to communicate, problem-solve together and work as a team, all whilst having fun learning through play.

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE BEHIND THE BRICK-BY-BRICK® PROGRAMME?

We know from research that play is fundamental for children's positive development. Research studies have shown that LEGO-based therapy, on which the Brick-by-Brick® programme is founded, has a positive impact on social communication and emotional wellbeing in young people on the autism spectrum.

Play Included Director, Dr. Elinor Brett, is a Child and Educational Psychologist registered with the Health and Care Professions Council. She conducted research into the Brick-by-Brick® programme, known at the time as LEGO®Based Therapy, as part of her doctorate, in which she explored outcomes for children participating in the programme in schools. The team has been involved in the first large scale randomised controlled trial (called the I-SOCIALISE trial) that was completed in 2021 in the UK. Researchers are looking at the impact on social skills and cost-effectiveness.⁶⁷

HOW HAS EVIDENCE BEEN USED TO IMPROVE AND VALIDATE THE PROGRAMME?

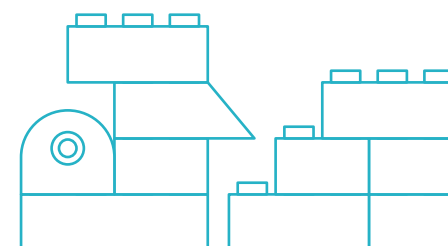
Play Included has been working with the evidence-based methodology behind the Brick-by-Brick® Programme since 2004. Since then, Play Included has trained facilitators in 40 countries and has developed a facilitator manual that is now available in six languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Polish and Italian. The results of the I-SOCIALISE trial have shown that the programme is a cost-effective way to develop the joint attention, sharing, communication and group problem-solving of children.⁶⁸

WHAT CHALLENGES HAS THE INNOVATION FACED WHEN DEVELOPING THE PROGRAMME OR INCREASING ITS AVAILABILITY TO CHILDREN?

At the moment, Brick-by-Brick® is scaling up the programme internationally, and considering how to with as much quality as possible. While the aim is to make it widely available to more children and families, the innovators recognise it is also important to make sure it's done well and with high quality. In the past year, the innovators have been coming up with a strategy and working with some consultants on a strategy for scaling. Brick-by-Brick® is thinking about online training and face-to-face training. Yet while online training has boomed since the start of the pandemic, the experiential learning that happens in the face-to-face programme has been difficult to replicate online.⁶⁹

WHERE ARE YOU HOPING TO EXPAND THE INNOVATION?

Brick-by-Brick® is considering expanding to the United States and Mexico, Denmark and other countries in Europe. There are already trainers in Hong Kong, Greece, Ireland, the UK and New Zealand. The innovators also want to think not just about high-income countries, but other countries as well. Brick-by-Brick® is mindful of the need for cultural adaptations in very different countries and different setups in the UK. As Dr. Gina Gómez de la Cuesta says, "that's a really interesting challenge."⁷⁰



WHAT PARTNERSHIPS ARE HELPING YOU DEVELOP YOUR INNOVATION?

In 2021, Brick-by-Brick® launched a partnership with The LEGO Foundation. The leaders at Brick-by-Brick® are big believers in teamwork and are lucky to work with some of the leading experts and organisations to help us develop and test our materials. As a new organisation, Brick-by-Brick® is in the process of developing a full, neurodiverse, advisory board in the coming year.⁷¹ Other partners include the National Autistic Society, Cambridge Social Ventures, and Hatchlings London.

HOW ARE YOU DEVELOPING YOUR IMPACT METRICS?

Developing impact metrics is critical, and is something that the innovators are currently working on, according to Dr. Gina Gómez de la Cuesta. Currently, Brick-by-Brick® measures the number of facilitators they have trained in each country, estimating the number at 2,000 practitioners in 40 countries. To gauge roughly the number of children reached, the innovators use a proxy estimate of five to ten children per facilitator per year. “In the future,” de la Cuesta says, “we’re going to set up an annual registration of facilitators so they can tell us how many children that they’ve worked with so we can get slightly more accurate data.”⁷²



DR. GINA GOMEZ DE LA CUESTA
Clinical Psychologist, Founder & Director,
The Brick-by-Brick® Programme



DR. ELINOR BRETT
Child & Educational Psychologist, Director,
The Brick-by-Brick® Programme

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

“Social and emotional learning has always been really important, but it is more important now than ever with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Children have been socially isolated and they’ve not been in school, so they’ve had fewer opportunities to interact with their peers. We know from research that there’s been a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing; and children are experiencing poor mental health outcomes following lockdowns. We feel now really is the time to shift the focus towards Social and Emotional wellbeing. We need policymakers, governments and educational systems to put an emphasis on social and emotional learning. It’s so important for wellbeing, for resilience, and for children’s relationships, both with their friends, but also with their wider networks.” – Dr. Elinor Brett, Educational Psychologist, Director Play Included C.I.C.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE BRICK-BY-BRICK® PROGRAMME IN FIVE YEARS?

“In five years’ time, we’re really hopeful that more children around the world will have access to high-quality Brick Clubs, where they can have fun and socialise together building LEGO models collaboratively. To get to that point, we want to give more professionals access to high-quality training and support. We’re currently working on developing our online training and face to face experiential workshops, for professionals in how to deliver the clubs. We also want parents to be able to find the clubs if they want their child to attend, so they can look at our register of facilitators and find a club for their child. In five years’ time, we hope to be in maybe ten countries around the world, including both high and low-income countries, so that young people can access the clubs where they live.” – Dr. Gina Gomez de la Cuesta, Clinical Psychologist, Director Play Included, C.I.C.



VISIT THE WEBSITE



“We have to really see SEL as our daily practise. Social and emotional learning is the bedrock of all learning.”

– Kate Shelley,
CEO & Founder, Tales Toolkit

Partnering with researchers to validate methods

CASE STUDY: TALES TOOLKIT

WHY TEACH SEL IN THE UK?

Tales Toolkit founder Kate Shelley sees social and emotional learning as key to the art of effective group communication. “Being creative as a group is difficult, it can be ego-bruising or frustrating, anxiety-inducing, or downright scary.” At the same time, the capacity to be imaginative and to share ideas with confidence, to be accepting of the ideas of others openly and with enthusiasm, and the ability to gracefully and empathetically let go of our own control of a narrative is foundational for success in life.

“This is how we as a society achieve collective goals, collaborate across cultures, and support relationships whether they be at home, at school, at work or in the community,” the Tales Toolkit founder Shelley affirms.

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION START?

Tales Toolkit was developed in response to experience working with Early Years with children with high levels of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), English as an Additional Language (EAL) and pupil premium funding.

HOW DOES THE INNOVATION CENTRE THE STUDENTS' OWN EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES?

Tales Toolkit provides interactive, child-led resources all using easy to remember symbols to represent story structure. The kits give children the independence to create stories around their interests using familiar and abstract items to hand; spoon, photo of Mum, favourite toy, anything! Tales Toolkit storytelling is a powerful tool for young people to understand and contextualise their experiences. Children and practitioners are encouraged to centre their own experiences, interests, questions or anxieties in playful, imaginative stories where anything can happen and lots of solutions can be explored. Tales Toolkit encourages social problem-solving. It provides children with the opportunity to think about all kinds of problematic situations and find solutions in an open and discursive way. Children are encouraged to think about the emotional and social consequences of their suggestions, all while having a good giggle. Tales Toolkit believes everybody has a story.

HOW HAS EVIDENCE BEEN USED TO IMPROVE AND VALIDATE THE PROGRAMME?

Tales Toolkit works closely with [Goldsmiths University of London](#) to research the innovation's impact. Two separate trials have been conducted as part of this research partnership, an [OVO Foundation](#)-funded parent training and a [Mercers](#)-funded trial in schools across London. School trials focused on the impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special educational needs and disabilities.⁷³

The results of the Goldsmith research suggest that the Tales Toolkit group made greater progress (with differences represented by medium effect sizes) on all seven early years foundation stage areas of learning than did comparison children whose schools had not yet had Tales Toolkit training. The research also examined whether a child's sex had any additional influence on the outcomes. For Literacy, boys who attended a Tales Toolkit school showed more catch-up to girls' scores than boys not in settings using Tales Toolkit.⁷⁴

HOW HAS THE INNOVATION IMPACTED CHILDREN?

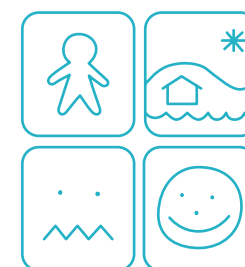
An [independent study](#) by Goldsmiths, University of London⁷⁵ conducted in 2018 found that Tales Toolkit had a positive impact on social and emotional development in early years across all three key areas: making relationships, self-confidence, and self-awareness and managing feelings and behaviour. It was also proven to positively impact the characteristics of effective learning, which are so key to further learning and development.

WHAT SUPPORTS HAVE HELPED THE INNOVATION TO SCALE?

In 2021, Tales Toolkit was awarded a grant under the Mercers' Company's Early Years Special Initiative, funded by the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington. This means being able to offer the Tales Toolkit programme to selected schools at a heavily subsidised price, supporting organisations that positively nurture children's futures all through Early Years.

WHAT ARE THE KEY LEARNINGS? WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

A practical point of consideration was the training method. The ability to train all members of staff using the online system was also reported to be helpful for schools managing limited budgets. The training was described as being easy, with one person only needing to be designated a leader to get the materials ready. The ability to see sessions online and to share ideas about practise appealed to



practitioners who felt that these aspects were particularly important to those less experienced, or requiring a bit of extra support in doing guided play-based activities. The online resources (webinars and Facebook group) posttraining were also reported to be useful to teachers, allowing sharing of good practice.⁷⁶



KATE SHELLEY
CEO & Founder, Tales Toolkit



RHYS BEVAN
Deputy Boss of Everything, Tales Toolkit

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

“In terms of social and emotional learning, and getting that into every school, I think we have to really see it as our daily practise. Social and Emotional Learning is the bedrock of all learning. What you want from the person you work alongside at work, and the person that’s caring for your parent in the care home, or the doctor that you deal with is empathy and communication skills and an ability to problem-solve, and a drive to want to make positive change. In terms of Tales Toolkit, it’s not an extra burden in terms of workload, it becomes a

way of thinking. Tales Toolkit has recently been used in a children’s hospice. I don’t think it would take a lot to get Tales Toolkit out there in a big way to a lot of schools. The boroughs that do support us have very quickly rolled out Tales Toolkit across most of their borough. The training is online and once the teachers understand how it works and they’ve had that initial training, and they have the basic kit, then you can pick up anything, anywhere to create a story. For us, it’s important that we get it out to the whole school, and that everyone is supported and working together so when we give Tales Toolkit to a school, it’s for the whole school, every member of staff accesses it.” – Kate Shelley, CEO & Founder, Tales Toolkit

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR TALES TOOLKIT IN FIVE YEARS?

“Who knows where it’s going to go in five years, I couldn’t have imagined where it’s gone in the last five years. We’ve won awards, we’re working with international schools, and we’re talking with a research centre in Russia who is translating the kits to get them into schools over there.

“Definitely lots more focus in terms of working with parents, that’s something we’re working on now. Finding funding to work with children from disadvantaged areas, and from disadvantaged schools. Working with schools and children in war-torn areas and crisis zones. I just think the sky’s the limit in terms of where this could go. We’ve been approached also by companies looking to develop Tales Toolkit in terms of storytelling for their employees.

“In terms of Tales Toolkit and scaling up, we don’t need a huge amount, to be honest. We haven’t got huge manufacturing costs, to fund the next steps it’s about getting the word out and getting this to more schools. We’ve got lots of plans and ideas and things that we’d like to do, but ultimately, at the heart of it has got to be the research and making sure that we’re still making a difference, and making sure that those quality interactions, and those social interactions, and that Social and Emotional Learning is really kept at the heart of everything that we do.” – Kate Shelley



GiveThx &
SEL Kernels of Practice

The United States

Education in the United States is organised according to each states' education standards. The standards are policy documents that guide instruction, curricula, assessment and teacher preparation.⁷⁷ In both California and Massachusetts, the two states where our selected innovations were initially established, social and emotional competencies are included in the state education standards. At the national level, support for Social and emotional learning (SEL) has been expressed by the office of the president, including the recognition of International Social Emotional Learning Day on March 11, 2022.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is based in Chicago and is supported by national corporate and philanthropic donors. In 2016, CASEL launched the Collaborating States Initiative, which aimed at creating the conditions to implement systemic social and emotional learning.⁷⁸ In 2017, the California Department of Education created California's Social and emotional learning Guiding Principles, which provide guidance for SEL programmes.⁷⁹ These principles suggest schools adopt whole child development as the goal of education, commit to equity, build capacity, partner with families and community, and learn and improve.⁸⁰ In Massachusetts, SEL forms one of the five key pillars of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's strategic plan.⁸¹ Like California, Massachusetts has adopted the CASEL framework to develop its SEL guidelines.

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“We know these interventions make a difference. They improve children’s experiences of wellbeing, their academic outcomes, and life outcomes all the way into adulthood.”

– Dr. Stephanie Jones,
Founder of SEL Kernels of Practice, Professor of
Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Researching and refining SEL implementation

CASE STUDY: SEL KERNELS OF PRACTICE

HOW TO DRIVE POSITIVE RESULTS FROM SEL PROGRAMS?

Years of research demonstrate that social and emotional learning programmes produce positive outcomes for students. The gains are often the largest for the most vulnerable students. Research has also shown a relationship between effective programme implementation and the adaptability of SEL programmes. However, the majority of evidence-based interventions review adaptation as undermining fidelity and impact. SEL Kernels of Practice recognise that comprehensive programmes are hard to implement as intended for a variety of reasons, including their complexity and cost. Their response to these challenges is the Kernels approach. Strategies are designed to be personalised to individual classrooms and school-specific needs and easy to implement outside the context of comprehensive programmes.⁸²

WHAT WAS GOING ON BEFORE THIS INITIATIVE?

SEL Kernels of Practice is an innovation of the Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory, led by Dr. Stephanie Jones of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Dr. Jones' previous research studied the connection between poverty, parenting, and children's social and emotional development.

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION START?

SEL Kernels of Practice started with a notion that there were lots of powerful, impactful evidence-based SEL programmes. These are the programmes upon which the research base about SEL has been built. In reality, however, not all places that adopt evidence-based SEL programmes can implement them in alignment with how they were studied originally. Many of the programmes are great, and many places can adopt and implement them, but only if they have the resources.

The researchers founding SEL Kernels of Practice listened to partner schools and education institutions. They concluded that teachers and educators were seeking something that would allow them to integrate all the SEL work together. Sticking to the evidence, the researchers began deconstructing 25 evidence-based SEL programmes, looking for common denominators of practise. They broke social and emotional learning into five big categories of skills and competencies: cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, character, and mindset. SEL Kernels of Practice set the goal of designing and testing pedagogical practises that fit and target skills in each of the five categories.⁸³

WHAT FEEDBACK HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM PARTICIPANTS?

Researchers Christine Park and Thelma Ramirez shared with HundrED about their work on the Kernels Project at the EASEL Lab. Christine says, "What I love about the work is hearing firsthand from teachers about the positive changes they see in their students' attitudes, their ability to express emotions, or stronger relationships with each other in general." Thelma adds that the projects intentionally centre educators, providing them with an opportunity to develop a deep understanding of their own social and emotional development. "We noticed that as teachers took time to reflect on their own skills, they naturally connected what they were learning to their interactions with students in the classroom."

WHICH STAKEHOLDERS FIND THIS INNOVATION INTERESTING AND WHY?

SEL Kernels of Practice has collaborated with local educators, parents and caregivers, ministry of education officials, humanitarian agencies, and others to refine SEL Kernels for multiple age groups and cultural contexts.

WHAT DRIVES THE IMPLEMENTATION AND UPTAKE OF SEL KERNELS OF PRACTICE?

From the implementation of Kernels in different contexts, some reflections and responses from the field have revealed important insights about implementation. The first is the importance of the teachers' agency and choice in the what, when and where of implementation of the Kernels. The second learning is the need for teachers to have the flexibility to adapt and to know what not to change. Finally, up-take is driven by the do-ability and simplicity of the kernels. This does not mean that they are simplistic, but that there is simplicity in the design.⁸⁴



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTING THE SEL KERNELS IN SCHOOLS?

SEL Kernels has been adapted for teachers in a programme that focuses on strategies to support culturally responsive teaching and to help teachers address equity concerns in the classroom. Through that programme, the innovators learned that it is possible to adapt and localise the approach in ways that are responsive to the specific needs and interests. “Kernels can be designed for adults and adult practice as well as for building childrens’ skills,” says Thelma Ramirez, Research Assistant for the CZI Kernels Project at the EASEL Lab. In another implementation of the innovation in British Columbia with Elementary School teachers, the Covid-19 pandemic required the rapid adaptation of the innovation for remote learning at home. “We learned that teachers were still able to implement the Kernels seamlessly into their classrooms, integrate them into their instructional plan and that the approach is highly flexible and adapted to changing and challenging circumstances,” Christine Park, Project Coordinator for the CZI Kernels Project at the EASEL Lab explains.⁸⁵

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR RESEARCH ON SEL KERNELS?

In order for an innovation to scale, it has to be simple. Not simplistic, but simple to understand and to do. It is easier for educators to implement the SEL Kernels innovation if they are provided with a small and standard set of four or five Kernels. In addition to this, teachers are given a catalogue of Kernels to choose from, based on what they observe in the classroom. SEL Kernels innovator Dr. Stephanie Jones emphasises that the presentation of the Kernels “has to be captivating and the teacher has to be able to read it and understand it quite easily.”



DR. STEPHANIE JONES

Founder of SEL Kernels of Practice,
Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of
Education

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

“The primary reason why policymakers and administrators should be directing resources towards innovations focused on SEL is that we know these interventions make a difference. They improve childrens’ social and emotional outcomes and their experiences of wellbeing. They improve their academic outcomes and their learning outcomes. And they improve life outcomes for children well beyond the period of any kind of intervention all the way into adulthood.” – Dr. Stephanie Jones, Founder, SEL Kernels of Practice

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

“Our hope is that over the coming five years we’ll continue to try the Kernels intervention in different settings. We’re learning a lot every time we work in a new context with new partners about the variation in SEL, the variation in the norms and practices that support the development of social and emotional skills, and what it means to be well in different communities for different children and adults. We need strategies like Kernels that can really be scaled and used across many different populations and contexts. We also need to keep learning about what that looks like in different places so that we can keep supporting adults and families and children in the ways that are most important and most meaningful for them.”
– Dr. Rebecca Bailey, Assistant Director, EASEL Lab, Harvard Graduate School of Education



VISIT THE WEBSITE



“GiveThx has put the voices and experiences of the most-often marginalised at the centre of the digital gratitude practises. The result? The use of technology can provide significant potential to increase equity.”

– Michael Fauteux,
Co-Founder & Executive Director, GiveThx

Developing and testing digital tools for community belonging

CASE STUDY: GIVETHX

WHY IS BELONGING IMPORTANT?

Everyone knows what it is like to struggle socially and worry if they feel like they don't belong. At the core, all people have a deep need to feel seen, appreciated, and connected. This is particularly true for children, who struggle to grow personally or academically without belonging and wellbeing. That's why social and emotional skills are so critical. They knit communities together, whether they be schools, places of work, or countries.

WHAT WAS GOING ON BEFORE THIS INITIATIVE?

In 2011, the Greater Good Science Center, in collaboration with Robert Emmons of the University of California, Davis, launched Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude, a multi-year project funded by the John Templeton Foundation.⁸⁶ Character and Virtue development, including the development of gratitude, is one of their key funding areas.⁸⁷ The Youth Gratitude Project, headed by Giacomo Bono at California State University is part of the larger Expanding Gratitude Project by the Greater Good Science Center at Berkeley.

In 2017, GiveThx founder Michael Fauteux collaborated with Giacomo Bono, professor of psychology and expert on gratitude, to research how pairing a gratitude curriculum with the GiveThx digital tool would both provide teachers with a structure to teach about gratitude and give students a safe and easy way to practise it.⁸⁸

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION START?

GiveThx was developed in 2017 for and with students in low-income, high-trauma communities. At the time, GiveThx founder Mike Fauteux was a high school maths classroom teacher at Leadership Public Schools, a public charter school supported by the New Schools Venture Fund. Looking to support students who were significantly behind and struggling to catch up, he asked students three key questions: What do you need to feel safe? What do you need to feel like you belong? What do you need to feel like you can succeed? From their answers, the GiveThx programme was born.

WHAT SUPPORTS ENABLED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATION?

GiveThx was one of eight social and emotional learning companies accepted in the 2020 AT&T Aspire Accelerator. AT&T Aspire is a philanthropic social responsibility initiative that prioritises driving innovation in education to promote student success in school and beyond.

In 2019, GiveThx was chosen as one of ten members of the 2019 NewSchools Venture Fund Expanded Definition of Student Success cohort.⁸⁹ With more than \$1.5 million available to fund ed tech innovators, NewSchools Venture Fund was looking for technology-enabled products that enhance academic and social and emotional learning, while supporting nurturing school and classroom environments.

HOW STAKEHOLDERS HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN DEVELOPING THIS INNOVATION?

GiveThx was designed with its target users: high-potential, high-need students with historically marginalised experiences and voices. This co-design relationship is currently continued with a group of schools in California to provide candid and critical thought partnership to ensure equitable access and programme improvement.

WHAT PROVEN IMPACT DOES THIS INNOVATION HAVE?

An independent research study conducted in 2017 by California State University and published in The Journal of Positive Psychology shows that GiveThx has a strong impact after just 6 weeks of use. Students' mental health improved, their ability to express gratitude increased, and they showed higher levels of life and friendship satisfaction. Use of GiveThx also decreased anxiety, negativity, depression, and stress for high school students.⁹⁰



HOW ARE THE STUDENTS' NEEDS HEARD?

GiveThx was designed with and for students to ensure the practise of gratitude was safe, effective, and meaningful for learners of all identities, with an explicit focus on traditionally marginalised voices. The programme takes intentional steps to include student experiences and priorities in its implementation. Students and educators define what social and emotional behaviours they value and wish to include in the system to tag their thank you notes with. Students have the agency to thank who they wish, own their own data, and reflect to make meaning and guide their own growth. They thank others in a one-to-one manner via software to help navigate the social challenges of public expression, creating an identity-safe way to connect. Choice, voice, and safe access centre the work on students.

WHAT ARE THE SURPRISING RESULTS?

A critical goal of SEL is to produce healthy individual and group behaviours in face-to-face contexts. However, for two years, GiveThx has been testing whether the use of technology can increase equity in SEL practises. Thus, GiveThx has put the voices and experiences of the most often marginalised at the centre of digital gratitude practices. The result? The use of technology can provide significant potential to increase equity.⁹¹



MICHAEL FAUTEUX

Co-Founder & Executive Director, GiveThx



AMARA HUMPHRY

Co-Founder, GiveThx

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

"Policymakers need to direct resources to SEL programs because they are critical to improving school, work, and civic communities. They also need to provide attention to programs that develop SEL equitably. This includes proactively addressing rising trends towards divisiveness, exclusion, and conflict. Policymakers should also consider the equity dimension of SEL. Race, class, gender, academic confidence, and popularity are a few parts of one's identity that can create obstacles to accessing SEL and its benefits. For example, young men in my school felt unsafe expressing gratitude to other young men out of fear of not being seen as masculine. And students of one race or language preference often felt uncomfortable expressing themselves to peers of another race or language preference." – Amara Humphry, Co-Founder, GiveThx.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR GIVETHX IN FIVE YEARS?

"Healthier connections, productive social skills, constructive civic discourse - the world needs these now more than ever. We see GiveThx growing internationally to serve schools everywhere, helping them create safe, equitable, and inclusive communities. We seek additional funding and creative ways to offer the programme to grow our capacity and bring GiveThx to scale. Partnerships with and support from organisations focused on education, youth wellness, and civic health will be our focus." – Michael Fauteux, Co-Founder, GiveThx.



Aulas de Paz –
Peace Classrooms

Venezuela

Venezuela has experienced prolonged humanitarian crises, which have had a profound impact on the material and social wellbeing of the population. Policymakers in Venezuela are aware that adequate protection measures need to be in place to mitigate the effects of prolonged exposure to a disaster or conflict. The effects of conflict can be detrimental to physical and mental health, especially for children and adolescents, who need guidance and support from adults to cope with prolonged social conflict. During the COVID-19 pandemic, preventive measures such as quarantine, physical distancing, and the temporary closure of schools have had an impact on learning. The full effect of these measures on the development, protection, and wellbeing of children remains unknown. Amid these ongoing political, social, health, and welfare crises, education innovators and policymakers in Venezuela are working to support children.

“The answers to prolonged exposure to a disaster or conflict are not punctual and isolated assistance, but rather a multicomponent and multilevel task. This will involve promoting protected learning spaces, preparing and encouraging teachers to support the psychosocial wellbeing of students, and strengthening the capacity of educational institutions to provide support to children and adolescents experiencing psychosocial difficulties or of mental health.”⁹² – Aristóbulo Isturiz, Former Minister of Education (MPPE), Venezuela

VISIT THE WEBSITE



“It’s necessary that the State and the Ministry of Education of Venezuela would understand and assume social and emotional education as a mandatory component in the educational transformation.”

– María Carolina Orsini, President, ASEINC

Building a culture of peace and non-violence

CASE STUDY: AULAS DE PAZ - PEACE CLASSROOMS

WHY IS SEL NEEDED IN VENEZUELA?

During the last years, the Venezuelan socio-economic crisis has increased the vulnerability of less benefited communities. Lack of access to food, and stable basic services such as electricity, water, and connectivity are exacerbating challenges to coexist, and even more during the lockdown. There is a need for more SEL initiatives to provide children with tools to manage emotions in their school context and ultimately in their wider communities.

HOW DID THIS INNOVATION START?

Aulas de Paz - Peace Classrooms was born from the need to build a culture of peace and non-violence in the school population of educational institutions located in vulnerable and rural areas. It seeks to extend the action of the classroom to the family and social nucleus. ASEINC identified the urgent need to include topics like child protection, family conflict, and managing emotions in children, parents and caregivers in any education or community programmes, especially after the COVID-19 lockdown.

WHAT PARTNERSHIPS HAVE HELPED THIS INNOVATION TO SCALE?

Aulas de Paz is an initiative by ASEINC (Association for the Development of Comprehensive Education and Communities), a non-profit civil association created in 2009 with the purpose of identifying, designing, implementing, and evaluating educational programmes with a psychosocial approach aimed at boys, girls, adolescents, teachers, and their surroundings in the most vulnerable sectors. ASEINC establishes alliances with public and private entities, national or international, and with multilateral organisations to design and carry out original programs that meet the requested objectives. ASEINC operates with the support of key socially responsible partners such as [Chevron](#), the European Union, Education Cannot Wait, [UNICEF](#), and [Global Education Cluster](#).

WHAT POLICIES OR EDUCATION MANDATES ARE RELEVANT TO THIS INNOVATION?

The pandemic has brought the topic of Social and emotional learning to the centre of the conversation about education.⁹³ The Venezuelan Ministry of Education has recently focused on wellbeing, especially the emotional wellbeing of families during the pandemic.⁹⁴ International actors like UNICEF⁹⁵ and UNESCO, Venezuela Education Cluster and [Save the Children](#) have all been active in nurturing the conversation about social and emotional learning in Venezuela. In April of 2020, national, international, and specialised organisations met in a second virtual seminar Mental Health, Support Psychosocial and Socioemotional Learning: actions common before the COVID-19, to discuss their interventions and create a report to guide education stakeholders.

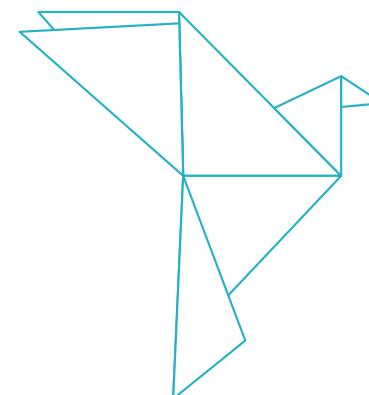
HOW DOES THIS INNOVATION EMPOWER CHILDREN AMID SOCIETAL DISRUPTION AND VIOLENCE?

Aulas de Paz works with the recognition, expression, and respect of one's own emotions. Through the dynamics suggested in the First Module of the Aulas de Paz Manual, in a total of twelve sessions, the work is completed with the elaboration of origami. In each fold, the children write or draw what they felt, what they liked the most, or what they learned from the experience lived in each session. This same experience is repeated in the three modules: the first being the origami of a dove, the second a crane and the third a lotus flower. All are related to the theme of peace, coexistence and love for the other. In the Second Module, also with twelve sessions, the emotions of the other are worked on, with the aim of promoting empathy, tolerance, respect, solidarity, and recognition. Finally, in the last twelve sessions, conflict resolution and coexistence are worked on, with the aim of promoting healthy and non-violent interpersonal and group relationships.

WHAT CHANGES HAVE HAPPENED IN THE COMMUNITY AS A RESULT OF THE INNOVATION?

Aulas de Paz has observed significant behavioural changes in the students during the implementation of the programmes. One example is witnessing children reflecting on and apologising for hurting others. These changes in student behaviour inspire Aulas de Paz to continue encouraging students to discover other positive aspects of their identities, and to contribute to school coexistence and society in general.

Although teachers and community leaders have reported a reduction in violence,



the situation is not yet solved. In 2019 the programmes reached more than 4300 individuals. Since 2020, the programme has been incorporated as a complement to all Aseinc's education programmes, such as Aula20 and Nos Vemos en la Escuela. They have reached over 420 schools, 179,780 children, 5,400 teachers and Community Facilitators and 737,514 individuals.

WHAT STRATEGIES SUPPORTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INNOVATION?

Aulas de Paz applies strategies where personal and group values transcend the collective. Skills are provided for students to recognize themselves as part of the group and adopt a better way of relating to each other. In the implementation of the programmes, dynamics are established for the student to recognize the relationship between their actions and consequences, to make more conscious decisions that favour their environment and for the students to value themselves as an individual. This benefits their self-esteem and enables them to create effective relationships in their school and family environment.



MARÍA CAROLINA ORSINI
President, ASEINC

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO KNOW

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EDUCATION POLICYMAKERS?

"In ASEINC, we see two things as necessary: that the State and the Ministry of Education of our country (Venezuela) would understand and assume social and emotional education as a mandatory component in the development of the educational transformation necessary for the new world that we must build. This happens by assuming it as public policy, from the institutions that train teachers to schools at all levels. The only way to achieve this is by considering this component to be a transversal axis in the curricular design of all levels of the system. It is crucial to incorporate this in teacher-training universities: to privilege the development of the person, emotional intelligence, self-knowledge, self-control, and the ability to work in a team and to be proactive in the face of the realities we face. Not turning it into a subject, but rather developing it as competencies that the individual needs in order to know how to relate, develop and transform their environment."

– María Carolina Orsini, President, ASEINC

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR AULAS DE PAZ IN FIVE YEARS?

"Our vision is that in five years ASEINC can achieve the sponsorship of new donors. With the relationship with the entity in charge, the Ministry of Popular Power for Education, we can reach at least 20 percent of the schools in our country, and promote in ASEINC work tables to incorporate social and emotional education in the curricular field, as a necessary response to the new educational context that the COVID-19 pandemic has left us."

– María Carolina Orsini



How were the innovations selected for this report?

This policy report is a continuation of our work on social and emotional learning. HundrED and The LEGO Foundation launched a Spotlight project on Social and Emotional Learning in April 2021 to identify impactful and scalable education innovations that develop children's social and emotional skills. Over 300 innovators from 58 different countries submitted their SEL initiative to this Spotlight. After a rigorous selection process, which included the participation of an international Advisory Board made of 65 experts in education, 13 innovations were selected as the most impactful and scalable solutions globally that ensure safe learning environments, foster caring and nurturing relationships, are responsive to learners' needs, and integrate socio-cultural contexts. [The HundrED Spotlight Report on Social and Emotional Learning can be found here.](#)⁹⁶

The work of the 13 innovators highlighted in the HundrED Spotlight on SEL demonstrates the feasibility of implementing social and emotional learning initiatives in schools, as well as the efficacy of such interventions to make a substantive difference in the lives and the learning outcomes of students in varied contexts globally. Our aim in the present report is to share how the insights we have gained from the HundrED SEL innovators can inform educational policy.

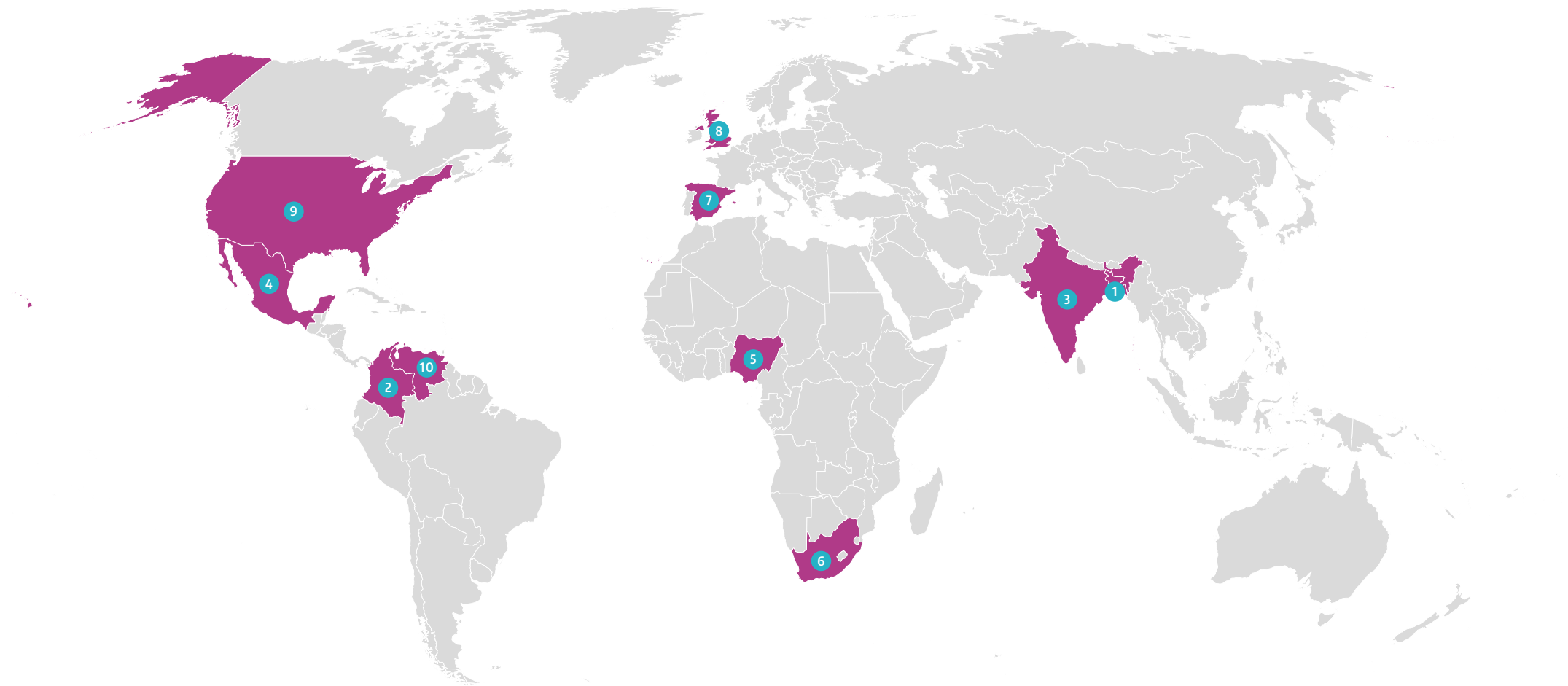
As primary sources for this report, we have conducted interviews with innovators and referred to their HundrED innovation pages; as secondary sources, we have gathered data from their websites, including annual reports, impact reports, presentations, podcasts, videos, and social media. We have also included background research drawing on national and international policy documents, as well as academic research and news media.

CASEL FRAMEWORK

We have used the CASEL 5 domain framework to inform the selection criteria for the HundrED Spotlight on SEL. Social and emotional learning can be grouped according to the following categories:⁹⁷

- **Self-Awareness:** The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behaviour across contexts.
- **Self-Management:** The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.
- **Social Awareness:** The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathise with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
- **Relationship Skills:** The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.
- **Responsible Decision Making:** The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behaviour and social interactions across diverse situations.

INNOVATIONS ON A MAP



1 BANGLADESH, COLORS OF KINDNESS
2 COLOMBIA, NAVEGAR SEGURO
3 INDIA, ACSELERATE
+ LABHYA FOUNDATION
4 MEXICO, EDUCATING FOR WELLBEING

5 NIGERIA, NIGERIAN SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING PROJECT
6 SOUTH AFRICA, GRASSROOT SOCCER:
SKILLZ CORE
7 SPAIN, IN THEIR SHOES

8 UNITED KINGDOM, TALES TOOLKIT
+ THE BRICK-BY-BRICK® PROGRAMME
9 UNITED STATES, GIVETHX
+ SEL KERNELS OF PRACTICE
10 VENEZUELA, AULAS DE PAZ – PEACE CLASSROOMS

Endnotes

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A group of children are gathered around a smartphone, looking at the screen with interest. One child in the foreground is wearing a colorful patterned shirt. Another child in the background is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. The scene is set outdoors, with a blurred background of trees and foliage. The lighting is natural, suggesting daylight.

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