An Integrated Approach to Educating for Social and Emotional Learning, Gender Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the contribution that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) can make as an entry point to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), and Gender Education. The review focuses on the SEL evidence base in relation to positive outcomes in the areas of school performance, wellbeing and health, with a focus on outcomes related to mental health, and the prevention of gender-based violence and bullying. The literature review also highlights the areas of consistency between the fields of SEL, CSE, and Gender Education.

Common Areas of Focus Among SEL, Gender Education and CSE

School-based approaches to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Gender Education (GE) and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) have a common emphasis on fostering positive relationships. Each share a focus on promoting the values of respect and responsibility and emphasize the importance of developing relationship skills and responsible decision making. Effective educative approaches in each of these three areas also share a common reliance on the use of collaborative learning activities to prompt critical thinking, foster social skills, enhance peer connectedness and incorporate student voice within learning activities. CSE and Gender Education can be understood to be understood to contain significant areas of common focus with SEL. SEL emphasizes the core relational skills that are integral to advancing the intentions CSE and Gender Education. This because Gender Education places an emphasis on ways in which gender norms play out in relationships and influence health, employment and learning outcomes. It identifies the workings of gender at individual, institutional and macro levels. CSE additionally incorporates a focus on age and culturally appropriate education about human sexuality.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is a framework that brings together different disciplines, including citizenship, mental health promotion, bullying prevention and psychology. A number of large-scale meta-analyses and randomised control studies have demonstrated the impact of SEL on well-being, behaviour, academic achievement and employability. Research has also identified key elements that characterize effective SEL programs. These include:

1. Use of collaborative learning to evoke peer interaction and critical thinking.
2. Provision of explicit learning activities, as opposed to general descriptors of curriculum standards that require teachers to design the learning activities.
3. Fashioning culturally responsive adaptations to ensure program relevance and reach.
4. Facilitation of the learning activities by educators with an ongoing relationship with students, rather than by short term or external providers.

Meta-analyses conducted into the impact of SEL consistently identify three interrelated benefits found for students, including:

- **improved mental and physical well-being:** including reduced rates of anxiety by 2.3% (Wang et al., 2016), and reductions in alcohol and drugs use (Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, & Ben, 2012);
- **improved social behaviour:** including 20% to 23% reductions in bullying and harassment (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), and improvements in connectedness to school; and
- **increased academic attainment:** up to 11% gain in academic achievement score (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011) for students participating in SEL.

**Gender Education**

Gender Education involves the development of critical thinking skills and attitudes that support students to critically reflect on the ways that ideas about gender roles are formed and transferred, and to explore how these values and standards play out in relationships and institutional practices. Gender Education draws attention to the ways in which particular norms can sanction and perpetuate limiting or harmful practices, including gender-based violence. An inclusive approach to Gender Education can make a lasting positive contribution towards advancing respect for the rights of others, and in reduction of gender-based violence.

**Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) addresses the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality with the purpose of empowering young people “to realize their health, well-being and dignity, develop respectful social relationships, consider the well-being of others affected by their choices, and understand and act upon their rights throughout their lives” (UNESCO, 2017).

Evidence-informed CSE can delay sexual initiation, increase contraceptive use and reduce unwanted pregnancies and incidence of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV. The growing evidence base behind CSE has identified that effective interventions support students to identify and critically reflect on values and gender norms, and how they play out in relationships. Additionally, effective interventions support students to rehearse and develop the skills needed to express healthy sexual identities and experience healthy intimate relationships.
An Integrated Approach to Educating for Social and Emotional Learning, Gender Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education
Introduction

This research report offers a framework that maps the interconnections between Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Gender Education (GE) and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). The proposed framework is developed from a review of the literature, using an inductive analysis of text to conceptualise the relationships between different areas of school programming within SEL, GE and CSE. The review was conducted with a focus on (1) well-being, (2) respectful relationships, and (3) violence prevention, including gender-based forms of violence. Peer-reviewed articles published between 2000-2017 were identified using PsychINFO and the ProQuest Request Library databases. The search terms used included well-being, mental, health, social, emotional, comprehensive, sexual, respect, relationships, culture, gender, bully, citizen, rights and education. The Boolean operator ‘AND’ was also used to extend the scope of the review and avoid selective bias. The initial search results were reviewed for balance across the key topic areas relevant to the focus and scope of the commission directing this review, with 150 of the most relevant selected for inclusion. Where available, papers presenting meta-analyses and randomised control trial studies were included. Qualitative studies were also included to provide insight into young people’s experiences and perspectives.

Scope and Focus

There has been a long history of research into the effectiveness of sexuality education and violence prevention. The last decade has also seen rapid growth in the evidence base about effective approaches to SEL and Gender Education. Research in these fields has diversified and enriched current knowledge about social health, mental health, and respectful gender relationships, and as such is also relevant to CSE. Research in SEL and Gender Education also provide evidence about effective ways to bring work on values, identities and relationship skills into sexuality education. The aim of this review is to map and synthesise the findings of effective practices in these fields, so as to inform education systems considering what might comprise a comprehensive approach to relationship education.

There are large areas of shared interest in the fields of CSE, Gender Education and SEL. SEL supports the development of skills in self-awareness, emotional regulation, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Gender Education applies these skills to the context of gender rights and relationship dynamics and additionally looks at how gender identities and behaviours are learned and reinforced at individual, and institutional levels. CSE supports students to develop social and emotional skills and become aware of gender identities and power dynamics.
as related to the contexts of values, intimate relationships, sexual identities, and sexual experiences. CSE also aims to support students to understand biological, contraceptive, and legal considerations relating to reproductive health and decision-making within intimate relationships. While each of the three fields have a distinct focus, there are also areas of shared attention. They include:

- Advancing key **values** of respect and responsibility
- Enacting key **skills** for relationships and responsible decision-making

In addition to their common content areas and learning outcomes, SEL, Gender Education and CSE also share a set of key objectives through contributing to the empowerment of young people by assisting them to become:

- aware of the ways in which conditions influence their decisions;
- aware of how their behaviour affects others,
- skilled in making responsible choices,
- capable of enacting respectful gender relationships, and
- connected to supports available in their communities, education and health systems.

This literature review and the framework derived is designed to contribute to efforts to ensure that wellbeing education is informed by research into effective practice. It responds to calls to define what is meant by the ‘life skills’ components of wellbeing interventions, which can otherwise be vague and uncharted (Leach, Dunne, & Salvi, 2014). It aims to prevent the types of ‘issue’ segmentation that can lead to program competition and opportunity loss, advocating for comprehensive and integrated approaches to promoting wellbeing, inclusion and respect for all.
Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are concerned with advancing young people’s social, emotional and relational wellbeing. SEL programs focus on the processes through which students develop, extend and enhance the knowledge and skills necessary to understand, manage and communicate about their own emotions, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain helpful relationships, set and work towards their goals, draw on a repertoire of coping strategies, think critically about the influences on their choices, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2013; Frydenberg, 2010; Hromek & Roffey, 2009).

Social and emotional competencies, which are understood to be dynamic and interrelated, work to underpin the enactment of respectful relationships (Hromek & Roffey, 2009).

One of the most frequently cited SEL frameworks was developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). It identifies five core social and emotional learning competencies, including: a) **self-awareness** to recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, behaviors, values, strengths and weaknesses, b) **self-management** to utilize the skills and mindset to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts and behaviors in different settings, c) **social awareness** to empathize with diverse others, understand social and ethical norms, understand the influence one’s behavior has on others and develop respect for others, d) **relationship-skills** to establish and maintain healthy and positive relationships, negotiate conflicts and seek help when needed, and e) **responsible decision-making** to make constructive choices on the basis of ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms with due consideration for well-being of self and others.

Diagram 1.0  Domains of SEL (CASEL, 2017)

The CASEL framework provides a tool for conceptualising what constitutes a comprehensive SEL intervention. Use of this tool can help to guard against reductive or overly simplified approaches which can lead to targeting only select components of the framework. For example, a segmented approach can lead to programming which focuses on emotional awareness, stress management and positivity, but neglects an emphasis on relationship skills, decision-making and communication skills. Use of an
evidence-informed framework can support programmers to develop comprehensive interventions and to understand the importance of locating classroom interventions within supportive school and system climates.

**History of Research into SEL**

The last decade has seen significant growth in research into Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in primary and secondary school settings. Promising early findings in SEL research led to a large body of intervention designs, evaluations and meta-analyses which examined the contribution that integrated SEL in schools can make to student well-being and learning outcomes. These studies found that there is a direct correlation between participation in SEL and increased social and emotional competence (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012): students participating in evidence-informed and well-taught SEL improve in self-concept, capacity to resolve conflict, social connections and managing emotions (Puerta, Valerio, & Guitérrez, 2016; Roger P. Weissberg, Durlak, & Domitrovich, 2015).

SEL has now been researched in across a range of socioeconomic contexts and cultures, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including meta-analyses and Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) studies. The focus has been on investigating short, medium and long-term impacts of SEL (Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). These studies demonstrate that culturally responsive and evidence informed SEL can have significant long-term impacts on behaviour, health and academic outcomes, in both urban and remote/rural settings, and amongst ethnically homogenous or culturally diverse cohorts, regardless of family or guardian income. The strength of this research has drawn increased policy attention to this area of school programming, with the OECD (2015) advocating that all education systems provide this form of learning in schools.

The body of research into SEL has helped to raise awareness that when other wellbeing programs also encompass SEL, they are more effective, particularly within bullying prevention (Garrard & Lipsey, 2007; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007), and in programs aiming to reduce risky use of substances (Midford et al., 2017; Midford et al., 2015). Studies addressing harm-minimisation approaches to alcohol and drug abuse show that interventions which include SEL content and pedagogy are more likely to lead to decreased risk-taking behaviours and reduction in anxiety and depression among participants (Horowitz & Garber, 2006; Payton et al., 2008).

**Overview of Findings from Studies of SEL**

Meta-analyses into the impacts of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) consistently identify
three interrelated benefits for students. These are:

1. Improved well-being,
2. Improved social and health promoting behaviour, and
3. Increased academic achievement

These findings are consistent across age groups in primary and secondary schools, as well as in early childhood settings. SEL has been found to be an effective well-being, behaviour and academic lever both within school-based, universal interventions and when provided as a targeted intervention for students deemed to have greater needs or higher vulnerabilities (Payton et al., 2008).

A meta-analysis examined the effects of SEL over time. Taylor and colleagues (2017) reviewed the effects from 82 school-based, universal SEL interventions involving 97,406 students from the US, Europe and the Asia-Pacific. Students were studied at 6- and 18-month intervals after participating in SEL programs. At 18-months after the interventions, they still demonstrated significantly higher rates of social and emotional competencies, prosocial attitudes and other indicators of positive well-being than students in control groups. The review found strong evidence that notwithstanding family or guardian income, SEL programs can produce significant long-term effects in a range of settings and contexts, including both urban and rural/remote settings, and in both ethnically homogenous and ethnically diverse settings, thus indicating that similar results from interventions can be expected across locations, and cultural and socioeconomic status groups.

**SEL and Well-being**

Research has investigated the impacts of SEL programs on the mental well-being of children and young people. A meta-analysis of 213 school-based, whole-school SEL interventions involving over 270,000 students in primary and secondary schools across the US and the UK found that students involved in school-wide SEL programs demonstrated reduced experiences of depression and associated symptoms as well as improved social and emotional competencies (Durlak et al., 2011). These interventions focused on emotional recognition, goal setting, empathy, conflict resolution and decision making.

Building on this research, Sklad and colleagues (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of SEL interventions in the US and Europe, and found positive impacts on social skills and self-image alongside a reduction in substance abuse. Overall, the largest well-being effects were found for social skills in the period immediately post-intervention. On average, program participants had better social skills (seven standard deviations higher) than 76% of regular students who did not participate in such programs. The impact of the programs on positive self-image and substance abuse were more moderate showing an improvement in
outcome equivalent to one-half of a standard deviation.

Other studies have demonstrated that students who participate in evidence-informed SEL programs are less likely to suffer from anxiety and depression (Horowitz & Garber, 2006; Merrell, Juskelis, Tran, & Buchanan, 2008; Payton et al., 2008; Stockings et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016). There is research evidence that even pre-school students can improve emotional understanding and reduce their anxiety following SEL interventions. Fox et al. (2012), for example, conducted research with a group of 16 children between the ages of 3 and 5 accompanied by at least one of their parents in a 10-week intervention aimed at reducing anxiety symptoms. The findings showed that while 15 out of 16 children showed high levels of anxiety pre-intervention, this number reduced to 6 out of 16 in post-intervention.

Lower rates of depression and anxiety have also been identified for upper primary and middle years students (Corrieri et al., 2013; Werner-Seidler, Perry, Calear, Newby, & Christensen, 2017). In a randomized controlled trial involving 70 junior high schools and 7,495 students living in rural China, Wang et al. (2016) found that after eight months of implementation, SEL reduced school drop-out by 1.6%. The findings also showed a reduction of 2.3% in anxiety among students. In another study, Gravesteijn, Diekstra, Sklad, and de Winter (2011) used a quasi-experimental comparison group pre-test/post-test control design to explore the relationship between school-based SEL programs and the rates of suicidality among students in the Netherlands. The findings showed SEL was associated with reduced suicidality among young people, as measured by suicide rates and severity of ideation.

Evidence-informed SEL interventions have demonstrated improvements in social and emotional competencies, and reduced rates of anxiety, depression and suicide ideation.

SEL and Health Risk Behaviour

SEL interventions reduce health risk behaviours. Sklad and colleagues (2012) looked at short-term and follow-up outcomes related to drug, alcohol and cigarette use in their analysis of SEL studies, and found that SEL interventions reduce these behaviours – both immediately after the intervention and at follow-up. The findings showed that the rates of participation in health risk behaviours decreased post-intervention, demonstrating a lasting and cumulative effect. The follow-up effect of the SEL program was equivalent to 0.12 standard deviation meaning that “the average student would outperform an additional 5% of the population as a result of the intervention” (Sklad et al., 2012, p. 903). In a recent meta-analysis that reviewed 82 school-based SEL programs involving 97,406 kindergarten to high school students, Taylor et al. (2017) showed improved outcomes for students across seven categories of relationships, school status, sexuality, income, employment, criminality and mental health.
Evidence-informed SEL interventions lead to reductions in rates of health risk behaviours with cigarettes, alcohol and other drugs.

SEL and Anti-Social Behaviour

The link between SEL and reduction in anti-social behaviour is also well established. Research points to observable improvements in prosocial peer-related behaviour, and reductions in antisocial and offending behaviours, including reductions in gender-based bullying. Durlak and colleagues (2011) found that SEL improved student attitudes toward school, teachers and their peers. Other common outcomes of SEL interventions include improved sense of school belonging and connectedness (Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004), positive teacher-student relationships (Poulou, 2016) and improved peer connection (Midford et al., 2016). Students also report more emotionally supportive classrooms when SEL is included in their weekly curriculum (Hagelskamp, Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2013; McCormick, Capella, O’Connor, & McClowry, 2015).

Increased prosocial behaviour is among the other positive impacts of SEL. Indicators of prosocial behaviour reported by teachers or parents include cooperation, helping others, sharing and collaboration, and getting along with others (Durlak et al., 2011). Improvements in social behaviour are observed up to 18 months following SEL programs (Taylor et al., 2017). Sklad and colleagues (2012) extended their assessment of prosocial behaviours by incorporating teacher and peer measures of altruistic behaviours including peer-rated empathy and peace building. They found evidence that SEL led to an increase in teacher or peer reports of these behaviours among participating students.

In addition to improved pro-social behaviours, students who participate in SEL programs demonstrate less antisocial behaviours than students who do not (Durlak et al., 2011; Roger P. Weissberg et al., 2015). These effects have also been found across studies that include a follow up measure averaging nearly 2 years after the SEL programs (Taylor et al., 2017). In a meta-analysis comparing the effects of SEL program provision aimed at reducing disruptive student behaviour, SEL was found to be more effective than relationship or behaviour focused program equivalents (Kopershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk, & Doolaard, 2016). Students who present the most frequent antisocial behaviours at the beginning of the intervention generally show the most improvement (Puerta et al., 2016). Overall, social and emotional competencies are a key change mechanism in student behaviour, providing them with the tools necessary to make behavioural changes (Domitrovich, Durlak, Staley, & Weissberg, 2017; Dymnicki, Weissberg, & Henry, 2011; Ngwe, Liu, Flay, & Segawa, 2004).

Studies examining how SEL programs impact on antisocial behaviour use a range of measures including suspension and office referral data,
peer surveys and clinical observations of classrooms to identify changes in social behaviour. Wilson and Lipsey (2007) reviewed 249 studies of K-12 programs across the US to examine the effect of SEL on antisocial behaviour. Significant reductions in disruptive and antisocial behaviour were found, as indicated by hitting, bullying, fighting, verbal conflict and disruption. In a similar meta-analysis, Garrard and Lipsey (2007) looked at conflict resolution programs that targeted social and emotional skills. Students that participated in these programs showed significantly less high and low risk antisocial behaviours than those who did not.

Studies have also investigated the extent to which Social and Emotional Learning programs contribute to the reduction of bullying. A meta-analysis that synthesised a range of bullying prevention studies found that SEL associates with a 20% to 23% reduction in bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), although the efficacy of different programs in the studies they reviewed varied. Espelage and colleagues (2015) conducted a study involving 3651 students in 36 US schools. The authors examined whether: a) SEL reduced gendered forms of bullying, including homophobic teasing and sexual harassment perpetraions, and b) there were any changes in delinquent behaviours, including cheating, trespassing and damaging school property. The findings showed that SEL can reduce rates of cyberbullying, homophobic teasing and sexual harassment perpetration.

There is further evidence that SEL is an effective lever for reducing antisocial behaviours and bullying victimisation among students with cognitive, behavioural and learning disabilities (D. L. Espelage, Rose, & Polanin, 2016). Following such interventions, students with disabilities are likely to be involved in bullying incidents in schools, either as victims or perpetrators (Skyrzpiec, Askell-Williams, Slee, & Rudzinski, 2016). When surveyed against control groups, students with disabilities who participated in SEL intervened more when they witnessed bullying, and were less likely to bully other students (D. L. Espelage, Rose, & Polanin, 2015). These increases were sustained and increased after three years. Another study found that students with learning disabilities associated SEL with improved social standing due to their social and emotional skill development or the empathy of their peers (Kavale & Mostert, 2004).

Evidence-informed SEL interventions lead to reductions in antisocial behaviour including reductions in bullying and gender-based violence.

**SEL and Academic Achievement**

There is evidence that SEL can improve students’ academic outcomes. In Durlak et al.’s (2011) meta-analysis of over 200 primary and secondary school SEL studies, students that participated in SEL showed an average 11% gain in academic achievement compared to students who did not. Payton and colleagues (2008) also found significant improvements in
academic outcomes. Students in the studies that they reviewed averaged 11 to 17 percentile point improvement in test scores after they participated in SEL. In another study, S. Jones, Brown, and Aber (2011) showed that following the implementation of SEL across elementary schools, students in intervention schools experienced mathematics and reading achievement gains compared to students in control schools.

There are different explanations as to why SEL and academic achievement relate. These explanations range from increased capacities to manage emotions and focus more effectively on study, to the development of social skills that enable students to effectively participate in collaborative learning opportunities. Others refer to the ways in which improved school connectedness might lead to more engagement in learning activities (Humphrey, 2013). McCormick et al. (2015) use an ecological systems framework to explain the relationship between SEL and improved academic achievement, pointing to improvements to available emotional support and organisation when SEL becomes a part of school policy and practice. Despite the lack of an explanatory framework, the relationship between SEL and academic performance is now well evidenced (Dix, Slee, Lawson, & Keeves, 2012; Schonfeld et al., 2015; Sklad et al., 2012; R. P. Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015). Academic gains from SEL programs also appear to persist after participation. Taylor and colleagues (2017) found significant impact on student test scores
across the studies up to 18 months after the implementation of SEL.

Cultural Responsiveness of SEL

There is growing discussion about cultural responsiveness in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) – specifically, how social and emotional skills are defined, scoped and measured in different cultural contexts. Social and emotional skills can be experienced, expressed and recognised in different ways. For example, there may be different understandings of what respect looks like in relationship to gender, age and generation, and different traditions which influence how emotions are named, discussed, and demonstrated (Dobia & Roffey, 2017; Hecht & Shin, 2015; Jagers, 2001). Hoffman (2009) questions the Western cultural script which often underpins SEL, and in particular, the focus on managing and talking about emotions. It has been argued that students demonstrating social and emotional competencies that do not correspond to their socially and culturally accepted norms and practices may, in fact, face a disadvantage as these expressions can be interpreted in deficit way (Dobia & Roffey, 2017).

Hecht and Shin (2015) point out that collectivist cultures may encourage interdependence, responsibility and cooperation, whilst individualistic cultures may place higher value on personhood, rights, initiative and independence. Potentially, different understandings of self, others and community might impact all five domains of SEL identified in CASEL (2013). Matsumoto, Yoo and Nakagawa (2008) looked at emotional self-regulation practices across 22 countries, and found that cultural beliefs influence how people described effective emotions management and coping strategies. In some cultures, emotional self-regulation and control positively correlated with the way individuals responded to changing circumstance while in other cultures this was not the case. This research suggests that well-being initiatives can be more effective when they are informed by and responsive to the values and social and cultural norms of the community.
Resnicow and colleagues write about “surface” and “deeper” approaches to adapting SEL across cultures (2000). Surface cultural adaptations are characterised by attending to more peripheral differences such as choice of foods, places, and celebrations (Kreuter, Lukwago, Bucholtz, Clark, & Sanders-Thompson, 2003). Deeper approaches focus on the norms, values and meanings enshrined within a culture (Resnicow et al., 2000). Shallow cultural adaptation engages in dialogue at a surface level, and does not address deeper and more complex questions about whether assumed core competencies apply to the specific culture or cultures participating in the SEL intervention (Gonzales, Lau, Murray, Piña, & Barrera, 2013; Hecht & Shin, 2015).

Increased attention is now being paid to the importance of SEL assessment (Humphrey, 2013; Osher et al., 2016). Currently most SEL assessment tools and measures are validated in Anglo-American contexts (Merrell et al., 2008) and even when available in different languages, their underlying constructs have not yet been validated for use in other contexts (Humphrey, 2013).

**SEL interventions and measures should be evolved through deep cultural consultation in order to best cater for and work with the cultural strengths and knowledge of the school community.**

**Implications for implementation**

Effective Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs include a combination of social and emotional competencies, critical thinking and
negotiation skills. Successful SEL moves beyond giving information about different topics, towards a focus on rehearsing skills through activities that help people to think about challenges they may encounter outside of the classroom (Durlak et al., 2011; Payton et al., 2008). As such, collaborative learning strategies, where students apply skills to social situations, have been demonstrated to be crucial in SEL success (Durlak et al., 2011). Collaborative learning methods have been demonstrated to be essential within a range of other health and prevention education programs including drug education (Cahill et al., 2013; Midford et al., 2015), sexual health education (Kirby, Laris, & Rolleri, 2007) and anti-bullying education (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

SEL is most effective when facilitated by people with whom students have ongoing relationships, such as teachers and support staff, rather than by short term or external providers. Multi-modal programs that integrate problem-solving and social and emotional understanding work better than traditional prevention models based on teaching individual skills (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2004). Compared to stand-alone interventions, SEL is more effective when it connects to a broader school framework and focuses on a range of social, emotional, intercultural, behavioural and well-being issues. SEL also proves more effective when it is incorporated into routine educational practices within schools that have a positive relational climate (Payton et al., 2008).

In their meta-analysis of SEL effectiveness, Durlak et al. (2011) identified specific elements of effective programs that led to the largest overall outcomes. They found that SEL that had the biggest impact on students’ social and emotional development, behavioural change and academic achievement had four common elements which are now widely accepted in SEL research (Humphrey, 2013; S. M. Jones, Bouffard, & Society for Research in Child, 2012; Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers, & Weissberg, 2016; Taylor et al., 2017). Durlak offers the pneumonic ‘SAFE’, to communicate that effective SEL interventions:

- **Sequence** and connect learning so that skills and understanding build coherently;
- **Actively** involve students in content and skill rehearsal, through student-centred and collaborative pedagogies, rather than passively involving students in lecture-style learning;
- **Are frequent** such that students rehearse skills often and connect them to situations that are relevant to them; and
- **Explicitly** name the skills that are being targeted, and give clear indication of what development of that skill looks like.

Studies of SEL interventions have shown weaker results when teachers are left to devise the intervention. In the United Kingdom, the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)
program was introduced in 2005 and, by 2010, was being used by about 90% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools (Humphrey, 2013). Unlike the lesson plan format of the SEL programs which have been evaluated and found effective elsewhere, the SEAL approach was less structured. Schools and teachers were encouraged to create activities that met particular outcomes. They were also encouraged to supplement SEAL with other programs and well-being strategies (Weare, 2010). Several evaluations found that SEAL achieved little to no impact on the target social and emotional competencies (Berry et al., 2016; Humphrey, 2013). This led to calls for reconsidering flexible intervention designs to ensure teachers use the more effective pedagogical strategies and delivery methods crafted for this purpose in more explicitly and intensively supported studies (Humphrey, Lendrum, & Wigelsworth, 2013).

Another study also showed better results by providing more specific program resources. This study provided two different formats for SEL intervention: one with lesson plans and one with only a curriculum framework (Coelho & Sousa, 2017). There were larger gains in self-concept and social connection for students participating in the SLE programs which were provided with lesson plans for teachers. Concrete, practical implementation strategies are widely recognized as key to effective SEL programming (S. M. Jones et al., 2012). This is because detailed lesson plans offer teachers support and direction and modelling which assists them to meet the program objectives.

SEL is most effective when it is sequenced, includes participatory learning activities, is frequently taught and explicit in its learning objectives, and provided by facilitators who are in ongoing relationships with the students. Interventions providing detailed lesson plans achieve greater outcomes for students than formats that simply outline curriculum standards and objectives.
Gender Education

Gender is a term that is used to describe the socially constructed norms that work to prescribe the roles and responsibilities about the attitudes and behaviours expected from individuals. The term ‘gender’ is not synonymous with biological ‘sex’. Rather, it refers to the complex set of culturally shared norms and expectations about the characteristics that people ‘ought to’ possess, and how they should behave. Gender acts as a dynamic and multifaceted social force, influencing power relations, identities, social, legal and institutional structures, and cultural practices (Parkes, Heslop, Johnson Ross, Westerveld, & Unterhalter, 2016). Gender roles and expectations are learned, can change over time, and vary within and across different cultural settings (Cahill, Beadle, Davis, & Farrelly, 2016).

While individual perceptions about gender expectations begin in early childhood, as young people age, they experience increasing awareness of, and pressure relating to, conforming to dominant gender norms and expectations (Herdt, 2010; Galambos et al, 1990; Yu et al, 2016). However, young people need not just be passive recipients of the pressure to conform to various gender storylines. They can be positioned to become critically reflexive agents who work to shape these norms as they endorse, resist, or alter them at personal, interpersonal, and institutional levels. As such, young people can act as contributors to expanding norms surrounding gender equality and acceptance of gender diversity (Bragg et al, 2018; Neary, 2016; Yu et al, 2017).

Gender education, gender equity and heteronormativity

Gender education aims to help students to understand how norms associated with masculinity and femininity influence the ways in which social roles are assigned. Gender education also assists students to understand how life opportunities and transitions can be influenced by gender norms and associated institutional practices. The objective of gender education is to advance gender equality and respectful gender relationships. The design of Gender Education is informed by feminist theory. It is based on the premise that gender is socially constructed, and uses this premise to explore issues of gender rights and gender-based violence prevention. It draws students’ attention to the social, economic, cultural and institutional factors influencing their own as well as others’ gender identities, behaviours and opportunities.

Gender Education pursues an empowerment agenda. Effective Gender Education programs emphasise the development of the attitudes, skills and capacities needed to engage in respectful gender relationships, and work
towards gender equity. An emphasis on critical thinking, citizenship, values and ethics is at the core of Gender Education, as it requires students to engage with the socially constructed nature of gender and the ways it plays out in institutional as well as social and familial contexts. Effective approaches to Gender Education, therefore, emphasise social critique, and awareness of how the macro factors intersect with individual, family, community and institutional factors to influence people’s life opportunities. In this way, Gender Education can be understood as a form of critical inquiry and can be encompassed as a key component within citizenship education as well as within social and emotional learning and comprehensive sexuality education.

Inclusive Gender Education programs not only address those social norms and beliefs that influence relations between men and women, but also incorporate and inclusive approach towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and Questioning (LGBTIQ+) identities and perspectives. In this it aims to promote recognition and respect for diversity within gender identities, and to ensure that perspectives and relationships outside the heterosexual norm are included and respected at school (van Leent, 2014; van Leent & Ryan, 2016). Heteronormative assumptions suggest that heterosexuality is the normal and only representation of sexuality. Non-heteronormative sexualities or gender non-conforming identities are often assumed to be non-existent in the school context, particularly in the primary school context where the assumption that school children are too young to know about sexuality or gender often prevail (Epstein, 1997; Van Leent and Ryan, 2015; Van Leent, 2014). In reality, however, both primary and secondary schools regularly encounter non-heteronormative sexualities and gender nonconforming behaviours and identities as part of their everyday work (Van Leent, 2014).

An inclusive to gender education is important as social isolation is known to pose a significant learning and wellbeing challenge for LGBTIQ+ children and young people (Henderson, 2016). They experience more bullying and cyberbullying than their heterosexual or cisgender peers (Duong & Bradshaw, 2014).
Exclusion, stigma and violence can lead to school absenteeism by students to avoid dangerous and uncomfortable encounters and treatments (Bouris, Everett, Heath, Elsaesser, & Neilands, 2016; O’Malley Olsen, Vivolo-Kantor, Kinchen, & McManus, 2014). LGBTIQ+ children and young people also experience higher rates of depression, anxiety and stress for (Baltag & Sawyer, 2017; Hillier et al., 2010), along with higher rates of suicide and substance abuse (Blosnich, Nasuti, Mays, & Cochran, 2016; Gegenfurtner & Gebhardt, 2017; Huebner, Thoma, & Neilands, 2015; Mustanski, Andrews, & Puckett, 2016).

The following framework captures the nature of the work conducted within gender education. The model emphasises the central importance of attention to values and rights in orienting attention to gender equality. It shows the ways in which students can be invited to engage in an ongoing cycle to inquire about gender norms, analyse causal drivers and outcomes, create possibilities for action, and reflect on the choices people make, and their impact on relationships and institutional practices.

Diagram 2.0  Critical and Ethical thinking orients Gender Education

Table 1 presents some of the key concepts and topics that are identified and discussed in the literature on Gender Education and within Gender Education Programs.

Table 1 Gender Education: Key Concepts and Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender Education</td>
<td>Understanding gender</td>
<td>The social construction of gender</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender norms and assignment of gendered roles</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender diversity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender equity, access and opportunity in society</td>
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</table>
Discrimination, Intersectionality and impact of social and structural disadvantage

Respectful Gender Relationships
- Values
- Human rights
- Critical thinking about power relations
- Advancing gender equity within homes, schools, workplaces and institutions
- Prevention of gender-based violence

Skills for positive gender relationships
- Critical thinking about norms and peer influence on gendered attitudes and behaviour
- Decision-making in situations influenced by gendered expectations
- Communication, respect and assertiveness skills
- Help-seeking and peer support for those affected by gender-based violence or discrimination

Well-being and gender
- Understanding, recognizing and addressing gendered vulnerabilities to social, physical, economic and mental health problems

History of Research on Prevention of School-Related Gender-Based Violence

Gender Education includes a focus on the prevention of gender-based violence. At a global level commitment to the prevention of gender-based violence has been driven by data which demonstrates the high rates of violence against women and girls, particularly on the part of intimate partners and close family members. Recent research has also demonstrated the intersections between violence against children, and intimate partner violence, and the intergenerational nature of gender-based violence.

During the 1980s and 1990s there was increased research and policy interest in gender-based violence outside schools. The Declaration of the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 1993 created a universal legal framework that addressed gender-based violence (UN, 1993) and helped raise awareness about the importance of using rights-based agenda for addressing gender-based violence in schools. The sustainable development goals for 2030 include a focus on gender equity and the prevention of gender-based violence. Research also highlights the significance of ensuring an inclusive curriculum and pedagogy to contribute to the safety and well-being of LGBTIQ+ young people. Despite existing evidence, education interventions typically do not provide content that is relevant for LGBTIQ+ young people, including aspects of gender identity, sexualities, and sexual health as well as reproductive and biological differences of intersex children and young people (UNESCO, 2017).

Research into use of school programs for the prevention of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is an emerging field of study. Studies in this area have been preceded by a
long history of research into bullying prevention. Much of this research builds on the formative work of Dan Olweus in the 1970s (Bauer, Lozano, & Rivara, 2007; Olweus, 1995, 2001) which demonstrated the importance of combining specific classroom instruction around bullying prevention with whole-school approaches that incorporated elements of policy, monitoring and supervision, parent communication, and teacher development. Subsequent studies have built on this comprehensive approach to show that gender-based violence is often covert and is likely to escape teacher attention.

It has been highlighted in research that robust bullying prevention education can help improve overall school climate and student social relationships (Allison, Roeger, & Reinfeld-Kirkman, 2009; Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003; J. a. Dake, Price, James, H., Telljohan, Susan K., and Funk, Jeanne B., 2003; J. a. Dake, Price, James, H., Telljohan, Susan K., 2003; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Olweus, 2001; Pearce, Cross, Monks, Waters, & Falconer, 2011; Rigby, 2004; Smith et al., 2008; Swearer, 2001; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Yoon, 2004). However, research into bullying prevention has not commonly employed a gender lens in pedagogical design or reporting of outcomes and has by and large been ‘gender-blind’ (Dunne, Humphreys, & Leach, 2006).

Overview of Research on Gender-Based Violence Prevention Education

School-Related Gender-Based Violence prevention education programs support students to reflect on gender as a social construction, to identify how gender norms can result in harmful or limiting practices, and consider how these norms can lead to violence or allow violence to remain unchecked. When delivered as part of a broader whole-school approach, Gender-Based Violence Prevention Education can have a profound and long-lasting impact on student attitudes and behaviour.
(Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007; Ellsberg et al., 2015; Flood, 2006; D. J. Whitaker et al., 2006).

De La Rue and colleagues (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of gender-based violence prevention programs and found that participating students had better knowledge of gender-based violence, were less tolerant of gender-based violence, and reported less violence perpetration and victimisation than students in control groups. Key to the success of effective programs was pedagogy including the correspondence between theory, learning activities and the reflection prompts provided to students. Effective programs have been informed by feminist frameworks which are consistent with rights-based and ecological approaches (Kearney, Leung, Joyce, Ollis, & Green, 2016; Ollis, 2011). Such frameworks help students to reflect on power dynamics, structural constraints, and how norms affect behaviours and well-being (Gleeson, Kearney, Leung, & Brislane, 2015; D. Whitaker et al., 2006).

Gender Education programs that integrate effective SEL pedagogies to help students contextualise and rehearse skills have been found to be the most effective (De La Rue et al., 2014). Ball’s (2013) review of evidence of effectiveness for respectful gender relationships education in secondary schools found that interventions that used active SEL pedagogies to explore different perspectives and rehearse conflict resolution skills were more effective than standalone interventions such as those that focus on consent and dating, or those that used content-heavy instructional approaches. Similarly, DeGue and colleagues (2014) completed a systematic review of preventative approaches to gender-based violence and found that only three strategies achieved significant effects. Two of these were SRGBV programs that used interactive, student-centred pedagogies (DeGue et al., 2014). This finding corroborates previous evaluations of Gender Education curricula and programs (Foshee et al., 2004).

Schools can be highly effective places to promote gender equity, and to support students to understand how gender plays out in attitudes and behaviours, including violence.

Educational interventions that aim to reduce SRGBV are also more effective when they invite critical reflection on gender, develop knowledge about violence and its consequences (Kearney, Gleeson, & Leung, 2016). There is a strong rationale for focusing efforts on GBV prevention through fostering respectful relationship skills and attitudes among children and young people. Gleeson et al. (2015) defines respectful relationships education as:

... [T]he holistic approach to school-based, primary prevention of gender-based violence. It uses the education system as a catalyst for generational and cultural change by engaging schools, as both education institutions and workplaces, to
comprehensively address the drivers of gender-based violence and create a future free from such violence. (p. 3)

Primary prevention is both a cost effective and evidence-informed way in which education systems can address social problems such as those relating to gender based violence (Flood, Fergus, & Heenan, 2009). Indeed, according to the World Health Organisation (2010), education is the only strategy for preventing gender-based violence with current rigorous evidence of effectiveness.

Effective Gender Education interventions can benefit from research conducted into SEL programs because of the emphasis that such programs place on developing self and social awareness and relationship skills, especially when it comes to one’s actions and behaviours in relation to others. Effective Gender Education is also arguably an essential feature within social and emotional learning. This is because Gender Education invites critical reflection on the socially-sanctioned nature of gender roles and promotes respect within relationships.

**Implications for implementation**

Building on the contributions of Kearney, Gleeson, et al. (2016), and on reviews conducted by DeGue and colleagues (2014) and De la Rue et al (2014), and Ball (2013), effective School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) prevention interventions are those which:

1. Address the drivers of gender-based violence;
2. Have a long-term vision and purpose;
3. Take a whole-school approach to gender equality and inclusion;
4. Use age-appropriate, student-centric approaches
5. Employ participatory pedagogies via collaborative learning activities;
6. Take a holistic approach rather than a topic specific approach
7. Include social and emotional learning components to rehearse skills, explore different perspectives and develop conflict resolution capabilities;
8. Adequately resource schools and teachers;
9. Collaborate with associated services; and
10. Invest in integrated evaluation.
Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) aims to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and values that can help them make informed, responsible and respectful decisions about their sexual lives. CSE addresses the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality with the purpose of empowering young people “to realize their health, well-being and dignity, develop respectful social relationships, consider the well-being of others affected by their choices, and understand and act upon their rights throughout their lives” (UNESCO, 2017).

Offering a broad approach to sexuality education, CSE uses a health promotion and human development theoretical lens to frame discussion of puberty, reproduction, sexual health, gender identity, diversity, critical thinking, communication and relationship skills, love and sexual attraction (Barr et al., 2014). Comprehensive approaches to sexuality education take a life readiness focus and look beyond a more traditional focus on the prevention of risk behaviours.

A comprehensive approach to sexuality education provides opportunities for students to think about and rehearse the sorts of decisions and conversations that surround healthy sexual relationships. It provides information about puberty, reproduction, contraceptive and fertility control, and protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. CSE also responds to the need for a relationship-centred approach to sexualities education that young people have identified as important to program relevance and impact (Layzer, Rosapep, & Barr, 2017; UNESCO, 2009). CSE is informed by evidence about the most effective ways to influence healthy behaviours and respectful relationships. CSE recognises that people draw on a range of social and emotional skills as they form and sustain intimate relationships. These include an awareness of beliefs and emotions, the ability to empathise with other people, understanding of how social and cultural norms influence behaviour and values, a sense of self-efficacy, as well as skills in decision-making, communication and self-regulation (UNESCO, 2017). Sexuality education interventions that include a focus on advancing these social and emotional capabilities are more likely to have positive impacts on young people’s choices about intimate relationships and sexual behaviour (Constantine et al., 2015).

History of Research in Comprehensive Sexuality Education

There has been a shift in approaches to sexuality education over the last decades. There has been movement away from a chief focus on understanding the basic biology of human reproduction and risk management in relation to unwanted pregnancies, sexually
transmitted infections and HIV prevention. The movement has been towards more inclusive, holistic, rights-based and relationship-centric programs that aim to enable young people to deal with the complexities and choices involved meaningful and mutually beneficial intimate relationships (Education, 2016).

In the past, sexuality education programs tended to ignore the presence and the needs of LGBTIQ+ young people. Gowen and Wings-Yanez (2014) conducted research to shed light on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ young people in sexuality education. Their findings showed that LGBTIQ+ students experience forms of exclusion and neglect within such programs. They group these forms of exclusion into three categories, each of which can inform programmers seeking to prevent this default. They include the phenomena of:

- **Heterocentricity**, whereby curriculum content only provides information about heterosexual sexual practices and examples of heterosexual intimate relationships;
- **Silencing**, whereby teachers deflect student questions or discussion that touch upon LGBTIQ+ knowledge, attitudes or skills, or state that it is not ‘appropriate’ or ‘allowed’ to discuss these aspects of sexuality and sexual health; and
- **Pathologising**, which occurs as a result of LGBTIQ+ experiences only being raised in the context of HIV or STIs, mental health problems or legal consequences.

Inclusion of LGBTIQ+ topics within the sexuality education curriculum often meets resistance. Gegenfurtner and Gebhardt (2017) identified common arguments that are made against the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ focus within sexuality education, and reviewed the evidence behind them. They found that:

- There is no evidence that students who experience inclusive approaches to sexuality education are more likely to become same-sex attracted or to explore diverse gender identities;
- There is no evidence that inclusive approaches are harmful to the well-being of heterosexual and cisgender students;
- There is no evidence that LGBTIQ+ teachers being open with students affects the sexuality or gender identity of their students; and
- The inclusion of LGBTIQ+ perspectives within sexuality education curriculum has significant benefits for the well-being and sexual health of LGBTIQ+ students.

**Sexuality education has evolved over time from a focus on risk towards a focus on equipping children and young people to understand themselves and others, to develop positive relationships, and to be able to apply knowledge and skills towards maintenance of safe, healthy, respectful and responsible intimate relationships.**
Overview of Findings from CSE Reviews

UNESCO have commissioned reviews on the impact of sexuality education initiatives – both in terms of primary outcomes, targeted behaviours and health, and secondary outcomes including knowledge and values. The first review (UNESCO, 2009) looked at evidence from 87 sexuality education evaluations around the world. Overall, the findings of the review highlighted evidence that sexuality education can help delay sexual intercourse, reduce number of sexual partners and increase condom and contraceptive use. The review also found that:

- Sexuality education does not lead to early sexual initiation of participants;
- Sexuality education does not increase the sexual activity of participants;
- Sexuality education does not increase sexual risk-taking behaviour, nor HIV/STI rates;
- School-based sexuality education is a cost-effective way to improve sexual health;
- Abstinence-only approaches to sexuality education do not delay sexual initiation, reduce the frequency of sex nor the number of sexual partners that participants have;
- Abstinence-only approaches to sexuality education can be harmful to sexual health; and
- Holistic and multi-focus interventions are more effective than interventions that target one issue only, for example sole targeting of pregnancy prevention or HIV/STI prevention.

A more recent review drew from a larger evidence base, and included 77 randomised control trials and 22 systemic reviews (UNESCO, 2017). Over half of the studies reviewed were from developing contexts. This review confirmed the findings of the 2009 review and provided additional evidence that CSE delays sexual initiation, increases contraception use, and increases knowledge and attitudes related to responsible management of reproduction and sexual health (UNESCO, 2017). The UNESCO (2017) review also showed that CSE programs informed by feminist and rights-based frameworks achieve better outcomes, which is in line with the findings of earlier research (Chin et al., 2012; Constantine et al., 2015; Haberland, 2015). Gender-aware approaches to sexualities education unpack social and cultural norms around gender roles and power; they examine how gender norms are transferred and reinforced, and how they play out in sexual relationships.

Haberland (2015) found that educational interventions that included a focus on gender and power were five times more likely to be effective in preventing STIs, HIV and unintended pregnancy among young people than those which did not employ a gender lens. The review also highlighted that programs that base their content, skills and attitudes in
Gender Education are significantly more effective compared to those that do not. Haberland (2015) also found that 80% of the gender-focused CSE programs were associated with lower rates of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. Gender aware approaches have also been found to increase knowledge about rights, increase communication with parents and within intimate relationships, and increase confidence in managing challenging situations (Constantine et al., 2015; Rohrbach et al., 2015; UNESCO, 2017).

Haberland identified common characteristics among effective CSE interventions that helped to inform participants about issues surrounding gender and power. These include interactive and student-centred activities, explicit discussion of how gender and power manifest in intimate relationships, scaffolding critical reflection on how gender norms operate, allowing for personal reflection, and supporting students to value themselves and recognise their own power (Haberland, 2015, pp. 36-37). Haberland and Rogow (2014) refer to this as an “empowerment” approach to CSE (Haberland & Rogow, 2014, p. S17). Constantine and colleagues (2015) also found that educational programs which included opportunities for students to rehearse skills associated with sexuality and intimate relationships achieved greater outcomes for students.

Berglas, Constantine and Ozer (2014) interviewed experts in the area of rights-based education to develop a cohesive framework for a rights-based approach to sexuality education. They identified 4 core elements:

1. An underlying principle that youth have sexual rights;
2. An expansion of goals beyond STI and unintended pregnancy reduction;
3. A broad curriculum approach that includes gender norms, sexual orientation, expression, pleasure, violence and relationship responsibilities and rights; and
4. Participatory pedagogies that support youth to critically reflect on sexuality and sexual choices.

The authors argue that these four elements should be present for a program to be considered rights-based. Consistent with feminist perspectives, rights-based approaches aim to empower young people by using strategies that address the obstacles that they face for such an empowerment.

Regarding people with learning disabilities, Travers and colleagues (2014) advocate a similar approach that allows people with disabilities to experience sexuality in a meaningful way within mutually nurturing intimate relationships. Rather than a chief focus on prevention of STIs and unwanted pregnancies, the authors recommend a focus on self-concept and relationship elements of
SEL programs, and attention to the identification and exploration of power dynamics in gender and sexual relationships (Travers et al., 2014, p. 243).

As with SEL, fidelity of implementation is important if CSE interventions are to achieve optimal outcomes. Programs are shown to be less effective when providers make significant adaptations to curriculum and pedagogy, including when they reduce allocated time and student participation, change key messages, remove topics, and alter the theoretical underpinnings (Michielsen et al., 2010; Wight, 2011). To be most effective, CSE needs to be delivered in a way that is consistent with its intended content and pedagogy and adheres to its theoretical framework (Shepherd et al., 2010). Tailoring to meet cultural and learner needs is possible in a manner that is consistent with the program design.

Evidence-informed CSE, delivered in a manner consistent with their design do not lead to earlier sexual initiation, nor does it increase sexual activity. Rather, they are more effective than abstinence-only approaches. Programs that achieve the greatest outcomes for students when they are gender-aware and rights-based, and include a focus on gender relations.

**Implications for implementation**

The UNFPA (2014) reported on best practice in CSE in their operational guidelines, and identified nine common elements of effective CSE interventions. UNFPA advised that CSE programs should be:

1. Based in human rights
2. Explicit about sociocultural norms surrounding gender
3. Informed by thorough evidence
4. Taught in safe social environments
5. Linked to community services
6. Participatory in pedagogical approach
7. Supportive of student voice
8. Culturally relevant
9. Taught in formal and informal settings to a wide range of age groups.

The breadth of UNFPA’s (2014) approach reflects developments in the field of sexuality education over the last decade, developments that are marked with a shift from risk prevention and harm minimisation towards interventions that aim to support the sexual health and intimate relationships of all people, regardless of their gender or sexual identity (Education, 2016).

CSE is most effective and valued by students when it provides inclusive and contextually responsive learning activities which assist them to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that they need to build meaningful, respectful and mutually beneficial relationships.

**Common Areas of Focus among CSE, Gender Education and SEL**

This literature review highlights key areas of intersection between approaches to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), and Gender
Education. At the core of SEL, CSE and Gender Education is a shared emphasis on positive relationships.

**Common Values**

This review demonstrates that the fields of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Gender Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) share a common interest in promoting the key values of respect for the rights of self and others, and responsibility for the impact of one’s actions on self and others.

**Skills and Knowledge for Empowerment**

Social and Emotional Learning, Gender Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education share an interest in empowerment, and in building the capabilities of children and young people to enact the values of respect and responsibility in the everyday settings of their homes, schools and communities. SEL teaches a range of emotional and relationship skills which underpin CSE and Gender Education. These skills promote positive interactions and social and emotional well-being, both of which are a priority within relational approaches to sexuality education and empowerment approaches to Gender Education.

Two key skill sets feature as shared interest across the fields:

1. Relationship skills
2. Responsible decision-making skills

Effective approaches in SEL, Gender Education and CSE support students to critically reflect on and rehearse relationship skills. These include, among others, a focus on help-seeking, consent, peer support, problem solving and assertiveness in relation to protecting the rights and interests of self and others, and carrying out health-related choices. Effective interventions use contextually relevant scenarios to pose problems, engage students in exploring decision-making, and to advance their capabilities to assess available options in a given situation, and consider the short and longer-term implications of personal choices for self and others. These thinking exercises and associated rehearsal of communicative strategies work to support the development of responsible decision-making.

Effective SEL approaches can provide an entry point or foundation for more specific approaches to inclusive Gender Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education. On the one hand, the ‘self-awareness’ and ‘relationship’ skills dimensions of SEL focus on recognizing one’s own emotions and developing healthy relationships with others (CASEL, 2017). On the other hand, the ‘social awareness’ aspect of SEL invites critical reflection about social norms and values (CASEL, 2017), including gender norms and expectations. Social awareness also encourages empathy towards those who belong to diverse backgrounds, including those of different genders or sexualities. Each of the
programming areas share an ethical focus on advancing the values of respect and responsibility and an attention to the impact that people’s actions have on self and on others.

**Common Pedagogy**

Research demonstrates that effective Social and Emotional Learning, Gender Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education programs share common pedagogical approaches. They each rely on use of collaborative learning activities, alongside inquiry models of critical thinking to advance student learning. Effective approaches use contextually relevant scenarios, role plays, group work, games and reflective discussions to develop skills, values, knowledge and the capabilities for action in the world beyond the classroom. Collaborative learning activities promote social interaction, peer connection and student voice. They also provide a context in which to engage in critical thinking about relevant life challenges and opportunities, and to rehearse the skills that underpin well-being, identity and empowered relationships.

The schema below identifies the shared values, goals, and pedagogies between Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), Gender Education and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). This integrated model is offered, identifying that social and emotional learning provides the wider programmatic context. It proposes that sexuality education be seated within gender education. This model can be used to remind programmers that relationship-centric approaches are important within each field, and that awareness of power relations activated through a focus on gender can usefully enrich what might otherwise be more individualised or psychologised understandings of social and emotional learning. Locating sexualities education within these wider fields can help avert tendencies towards providing information-only programs, decontextualized from the personal and social worlds which influence sexual health and safety, human rights, sexual identities and intimate relationships.
Diagram 3.0  A framework for an integrated approach to provision of Social and Emotional Learning, Gender Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education

\textit{CSE, Gender Education and SEL share a common basis in the core values of respect for the rights of self and others, and responsibility for the impact of one’s actions on self and others. They share a common educative focus on teaching relationship skills and responsible decision-making. There is also a shared pedagogical focus on the use of collaborative learning activities to promote critical thinking.}

Table 2 provides a summary and a synthesis of key common and specific areas of focus across the three fields of CSE, Gender Education, and SEL as discussed throughout this review of the literature. It highlights the shared core values, common key skills and shared pedagogical methods. Table 2 also points to significant commonality of focus in key social and relational topics and competencies.
Table 2 Areas of common and specific focus in SEL, Gender Education, and CSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common values and skills</th>
<th>Domain-Specific concepts, competencies and topics</th>
<th>Method Similarity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Core Values</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shared Core Skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Comprehensive Sexuality Education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility for the Rights of Self/Others</td>
<td>Relationship Skills</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility for Impact of One’s Action on Self/Others</td>
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<td>Values, rights, culture and sexualities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsible Decision-Making</td>
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<td>Understanding gender and identities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect for the Rights of Self/Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>Violence prevention, peer referral and help-seeking</td>
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<td>Relationship Skills</td>
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<td>Skills for health and well-being</td>
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<td>Human body and development</td>
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<td>Sexualities and sexual behavior</td>
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Conclusion

There has been growing interest in research and policy on student wellbeing over the past few decades, often through programs that have a discreet or separate focus on advancing Social and Emotional Learning, Gender Education, and Comprehensive Sexuality Education. This literature review provides a framework to guide integrated approaches to provision of such programs.

The review highlights that whilst each of these fields has a distinct contribution to make towards student health and wellbeing, they also have areas of commonality in orienting values, skills, and common pedagogical methods with a shared emphasis on developing positive relationship:

- **Common Key Values**: Each of these fields share a focus on respect for human rights. This rights-oriented approach presumes the importance of the values of *respect* for the rights of self and others, and *responsibility* for impacts of one’s actions on self and others.

- **Common key skills**: The fields of SEL, Gender Education, and CSE place emphasis on teaching interpersonal and intrapersonal *relationship skills* and *responsible decision-making*. Each of the fields focuses on the social and relational competencies needed to carry learning into action. As such, these fields focus on empowering students to translate their learning into positive social action.

- **Common methods**: The fields share pedagogical methods of *critical thinking* and *collaborative learning*. These methods encourage peer-to-peer interaction, and problem-solving around relevant lifeworld challenges. These exercises assist students to develop their social as well as critical and creative thinking capabilities, and assist with the challenge of transferring learning into action.

This research report addressed a gap in studies relating to student wellbeing, namely the largely siloed body of work presented within different programmatic frameworks. The report suggests that it is possible to take an integrated approach to promoting wellbeing, inclusion and respect for all through an integrated framework that can help inform research, policy and programs. The proposed framework can be used to orient the design of relationship education programs encompassing the approaches used within Social and Emotional Learning, Gender Education and Comprehensive Sexuality Education.


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