

Health, Personal & Social Development: A Key Component of the Social Role of Schooling

The purpose of this document is to outline the scope and nature of teaching and learning related to health, personal and social development (HPSD) education. This strand of teaching and learning is an essential component of the social role of schooling.

This scoping exercise is intended to inform the work of the [FRESH Working Group on Health Literacy, Life Skills and Social Inclusion](#)¹. This working group will be supported by a parallel [International Research Network](#) formed in partnership with the World Education Research Association as well as by [Global Consortium of Education and Other Faculties](#). These two networks are focused, respectively, on research and the development of a work force capable of delivering the education necessary for HPSD education and the social role of schooling.

These international discussions and activities are intended to inform and influence global initiatives such as the monitoring of the achievement of Goal #4, Target 4.7 (education) of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals and the [Education Workforce Development Initiative](#) of the [UN Commission on Education](#) as well as serve as guidance to countries and states in the choices to be made in developing or updating their HPSD education programs.

The social role of schooling

Schools have long been viewed as an important setting for protecting and promoting the safety, health, personal and social development of children and adolescents. In many countries, the first public or community schools were often established by parents, faith-based organizations, charities and cultural groups to socialize and care for the children whose parents had moved into cities during industrialization of their societies and economies.

The social role of schooling continues to be recognized in key documents about the purposes of education. The [1996 Delors Report](#) to UNESCO recognized the social role of schools. It proposed an integrated vision of education based on two key concepts, 'learning throughout life' and the "four pillars" of learning, to know, to do, to be and to live together. The traditional academic and vocational purposes of schooling are reflected in learning "to know" and "to be". The socialization role of schooling is captured in learning "to be" (to develop one's personality and to be able to act with growing autonomy, judgment and personal responsibility) and "to live together" (developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence).

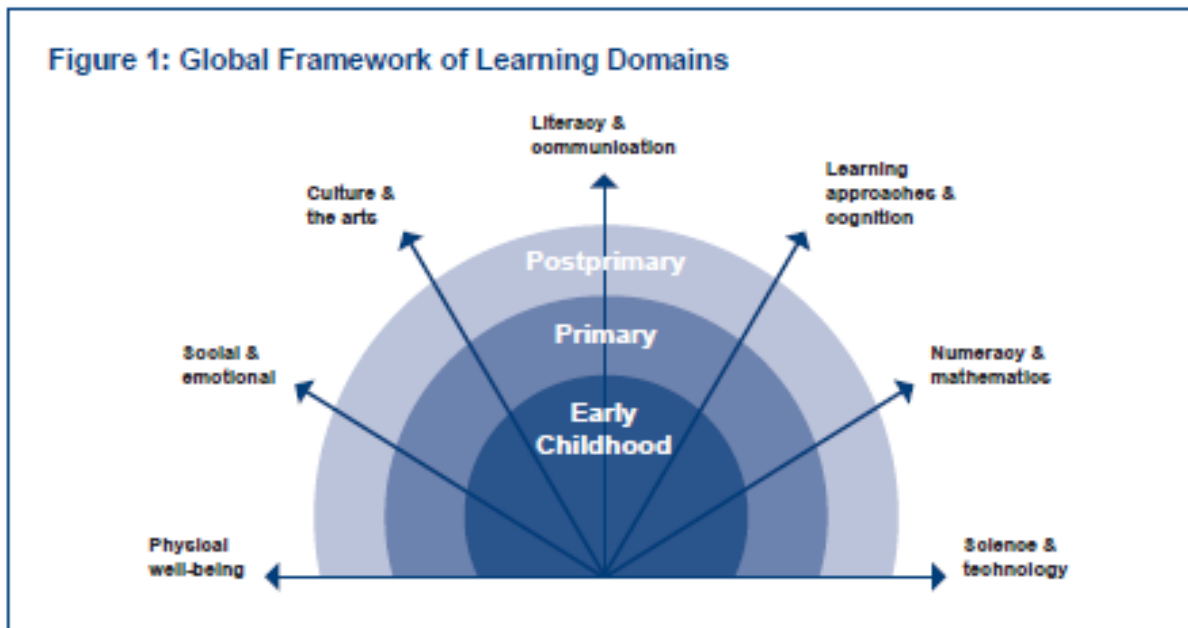
There are two other functions that schools provide for society in addition to those outlined in the Delors report. These include the custodial role (i.e. providing safe care of children during the school day) which is likely the primary concern of parents and the role of social placement or selection of students for future places in society through various accreditation activities.

A more recent [UNESCO report](#) published in 2015 has underlined the rethinking of education to incorporate the principle of sustainable development. The "sustainability" proposed in this landmark paper is far beyond the discussions of economic development balanced with environmental or

¹ The FRESH Partnership is a collaboration among several UN agencies, donors and other organizations concerned with the promotion of educational success, health and development of children and youth through schools.

ecological protection. It is “inspired by a humanistic vision of education and development, based on respect for life and human dignity, equal rights, social justice, cultural diversity, international solidarity, and shared responsibility for a sustainable future”. In other words, education without equity or that does not seek to include all young people is not sustainable.

Several statements and position papers have been published which recommend that a broad set of learning opportunities be offered to or required of students in their K-12 schooling. For example, the [Learning Metrics Task Force](#) a group led by Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution developed this depiction for the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in cooperation with Education International representing the world’s teachers. Educational goals and opportunities for all students should be established within this broadly based set of domains.



In 2015, as part of the development of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the world’s educational leaders and countries met to articulate the kind of education that should be offered in schools. The [Incheon Declaration](#) and the ensuing [2030 Framework for Action](#) to accomplish this high quality education provide clear directions that health, personal and social development education needs to be part of the core offered student learning opportunities.

Sections 9 and 10 of the Incheon Declaration state:

9. Quality education fosters creativity and knowledge and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy as well as analytical, problem-solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED).

10.....We further commit to ensuring that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, achieve relevant and recognized functional literacy and numeracy proficiency levels and acquire life skills,...

The [FRESH Working Group on Health Literacy, Life Skills and Social Inclusion](#) will examine this wide breadth of learning opportunities through the examination of several leading paradigms that have been and are being used to guide teaching and learning in health, personal and social development education. Most of these paradigms include student learning outcomes as well as the conditions and processes needed to support learning these outcomes. It is likely that this list will evolve as the work of the group proceeds. The initial list of paradigms includes:

- Literacy in health and safety, including functional knowledge, communication skills and critical thinking as well as the ability to access/use reliable information and support from parents, peers, health and other services, protection/police services, trusted adults related to various issues such as child sexual and economic exploitation, hygiene, infectious diseases, abuse & neglect, nutrition, substance abuse, mental health, accidents, environmental hazards, disasters and many others
- Life skills, including life/social skills, coping skills related to resilience, conflict resolution skills, social and emotional intelligence, essential family life skills, financial/economic and media, digital & consumer literacy, decision-making, positive youth development, awareness of social influences & determinants, engagement & empowerment in family, school and community life
- Social inclusion, including human rights, global citizenship, peace education, gender equality, social responsibility, ethics/morals/faith/spirituality, education to prevent extremism, violence, bullying, and discrimination, education to promote diversity and inclusion of students with disabilities, diverse sexual orientations/genders and alleviating disadvantages caused by gross social/economic inequities

No education system has the capacity or need to use all these paradigms. Many of them overlap or offer compatible perspectives and insights. Consequently, each country or state authority responsible for curriculum/ program development will need develop a combination of paradigms that best suits their situation.

For example, a curriculum could ensure that students are **literate about their health and safety**, have the **life skills** to apply that knowledge and interact successfully with others, be willing and able to **include and support others** or modify their environments, have the **social & emotional intelligence** to understand the influences on their lives, be prepared as **global citizens** to act in **socially and environmentally responsible** ways as well as recognize the inherent **sustainability of societies** that care for all of their citizens, be **resilient** and have the **coping skills** to recover from life events, harsh conditions or trauma, benefit from the **social attachments and empathy** needed to stay connected to their families, schools and communities as well as **prevent violence, alienation or extremism** and uphold the values, **ethics, morals** and respect for **human rights** that should act as a compass their decisions and development into adults.

This complex task of integrating these paradigms into a coherent set of curricula and pedagogy is the challenge to be taken up by specialists that are attuned to the local context and cultures to be served by the education system. The strategic value here is that these specialists can benefit from a clear understanding of the insights and applications to be derived from these paradigms to develop

coherence within the core HPSD curriculum/program, across the other subjects/curricula and across the other learning opportunities available in other parts of the school day. (See Figure 1 below)

Each country and community will also need to identify the specific issues, conditions and behaviours that they need to address based on data-driven analysis and consultations as well as select the educational/development paradigms that best suit their context. Policies, curricula/education programs and services delivered through schools will then need to **focus their resources and educational capacity** on those issues and paradigms within a broad approach that includes capacity-building and systemic planning of their core HPSD education program.

However, there are some urgent over-arching challenges or conditions that need to be addressed in all contexts because they have emerged as urgent global threats in all contexts encompassing many specific issues/problems and must be addressed as the world works on the 2030 UN goals. These include:

- Gender Bias: Girls in low resource and conflict/disaster-affected countries must gain equitable access and support in their schooling by addressing the constraints and conditions that discriminate against them. Boys in high resource countries are dropping out or not continuing their schooling and face higher risks from violence, substance abuse and alienation from society. Further, stereotypes based on gender can limit or distort educational access and participation giving rise to exclusion, bullying and violence.
- Climate Change: Schools must contribute to the needed dramatic shifts in consumption and production, help prepare communities in reducing risks from disasters and other emergencies and inculcate stronger norms supporting environmental citizenship and planetary health, especially in contexts such as small island developing states, dry regions and coastal communities.
- Youth Alienation/Violent Extremism: The push created by economic inequalities, crumbling, damaged or distorted social values and weakened institutions such as families, faith organizations and local communities and the pull from xenophobia-driven organizations such as racial supremacists, religious fanatics and others have caused many young people to lose their way and become alienated from their families, communities and societies. Schools can and must employ a wide variety of inclusive and supportive strategies and programs to reduce alienation, prevent extremist behaviour and re-connect young people with their social institutions.
- Economic, Social, Political & Educational Equity: Societies are stable when they can distribute resources and life chances equitably among their citizens. If competitive societies do not truly allow for fair and open competition or if cooperative societies do not truly and fairly redistribute resources, then repression and rebellion are inevitable. Pluralistic, democratic political systems that value diversity and inclusion can govern the distribution of these resources. Schools can help to alleviate disadvantage through a wide variety of programs and services as well as offer all students a better life through their educational achievements. Of specific importance here is the reversal of effects of colonization of indigenous nations, armed occupation of nations and the exclusion of students with disabilities and special needs.

A HPSD Curriculum with Links Across Other Subjects and Other Learning in the School Day & Community

This diagram depicts the connections between HPSD education as a separate subject, how HPSD can be covered in other subjects as well as other parts of the school day. The 17 UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals are shown as a backdrop and the development of "whole child" is the central focus. The impact of the knowledge, skills, work lives, beliefs and norms of educators and others that work with or in schools is also noted.

Figure 1

