Time for a holistic perspective of career development in adolescence: the SELCE Model



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Adolescence can be a time of great change. As young people formulate and reformulate their goals for the future, academic and career choices assume increasing importance. Social relationships expand, and emotions can intensify and become more complex.

Young peoples' academic, career and social choices and experiences are closely intertwined and are reflected in the emerging complexities of adolescence. Integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) into career guidance can help young people feel better prepared to navigate the multi-faceted transitions into post-secondary education or into the world of work. Indeed, a holistic view of SEL and career development in adolescence would guide our understanding of these as interconnected, complementary, and often overlapping skill and knowledge sets.

Combining career learning with social emotional learning

In our efforts to develop an integrated model of Social Emotional Learning and Career Education (SELCE), we compared two sets of developmental standards: the Australian Blueprint for Career Development (National Careers Institute, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Commonwealth of Australia, 2022) and the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning Framework (CASEL, 2020).

In the Australian Blueprint we find an emphasis on acquiring world of work knowledge and appreciating how work can impact people's lives. The role of parents, significant adults and social contexts are considered, as they offer growth experiences and influence the career development of the individual. Further, the importance of maintaining one's wellbeing is emphasized.

The CASEL model emphasises the importance of building knowledge of and competencies in emotional understanding and regulation. There is an explicit focus on the two-way connections between self and others, and emotions and behaviours. References to the world of work and career remain in the background of this model.

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Competencies common to the CASEL model and the Australian Blueprint model

Despite their different emphases, the models share three sets of overlapping skill areas. These form the core elements of our integrated model (Howard & Ferrari, 2021).

Self-awareness and self-management

Each person develops a unique set of strengths and areas of growth, and experiences a unique set of emotions and feelings. These person-specific skills and experiences impact the choices an individual makes and the behaviours they display.

Social awareness and maintaining positive relationships

People develop the ability to understand how the situations in which they find themselves can influence the thoughts and feelings they experience and the behaviours they demonstrate. Relationships are supported by the ability to value multiple ways of being in the world, including being able to understand and appreciate different ways of thinking, value systems and customs.

Building one's academic and career identity

Decision-making and problem-solving involve a series of steps that should be followed deliberately and with care. A well-developed academic and career identity includes a sense of responsibility for self, others, and the surroundings, as well as a consideration of how one can have an impact on the world.

Table 1: Comparison of the Australian Blueprint model and the CASEL model

	Australian Blueprint	CASEL	Integrated model
Self-awareness and Self-management	• Think about which of your behaviours and attitudes contribute to your self-concept (positive and negative). • Understand how your self-concept impacts your goals, decisions, and wellbeing.	• Identify personal strengths and weaknesses and the effects they have on your choices. • Describe the personal skills and interests you want to develop.	• Develop an awareness of the behaviours you display and how they impact your emotional state and, over time, shape your concept of self.
Social awareness and Positive relationships	• Understand the interrelations and reciprocity of social relationships. • Demonstrate appropriate behaviours and attitudes in complex relationships. • Understand the importance of being able to work with people from different cultural and language backgrounds, age groups, genders, and disabilities. • Demonstrate positive social skills, such as being helpful, respectful and cooperative.	• Recognise how a situation would make you feel and treat others how you would hope to be treated in those circumstances. • Show graciousness in winning and losing. Respond non-defensively to criticism or accusation through role-play. • Actively encourage others and recognise their contributions. • Demonstrate respect for members of different ethnic and religious groups.	• Develop empathy skills, or the ability to anticipate how others may feel and how one's own behaviour may affect them. • Consider the needs, values, and beliefs of people around you, as well as the context, when deciding how to express yourself. • Be aware of and value multiple ways of being in the world, including understanding and appreciating different ways of thinking, value systems and customs.
Career identity and Responsible decision making	• Understand what it means to take responsibility for your own actions. • Improve your abilities and attitudes so as to contribute positively to work experiences (at home, school, work and in the community). • Seek out support when needed.	• Recognise that an individual is responsible for their behaviour. • Develop strategies to work things out rather than retaliate when you feel wronged.	• Take personal and social responsibility for your decisions and actions. • Consider the social impact of your decisions and how you can contribute to the community (e.g. school, sports) in which you are embedded.

A cognitive developmental perspective to career development

Our proposal for an integrated and holistic SELCE model is informed by cognitive development theory. It recognises that career development is a lifelong process (Super et al., 1996), and that in adolescence, young people develop a complex understanding of career choice and pursuit (Howard & Dinius, 2019; Howard & Walsh, 2011).

The SELCE Model

Our model has two axes.

- Developmental perspective measures increasing cognitive development over time.
- Integration shows the progress of the integration of the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Career Education (CE) models.

See Appendix for a text description of this diagram. The model expresses the different educational content and processes that are appropriate at each stage of education and the continuing and changing impact of these on a student's development of identity.

There are five key implications to consider: Developmental perspective; Integration of SEL and CE; Connectedness of learning; Content and process; Identity development.

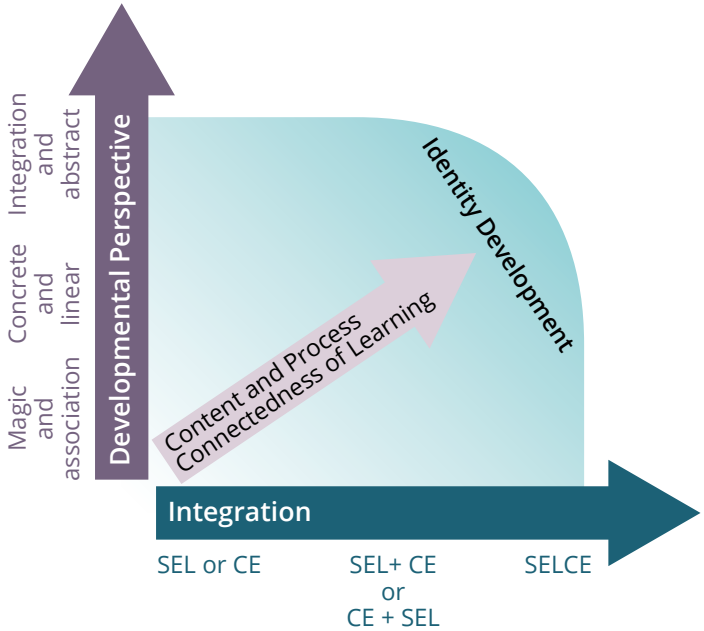


Figure 1: SELCE Model

1 **Developmental perspective**
Learning experiences should be tailored to students' current level of thinking and learning needs. We suggest applying the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL; CAST, 2018) to ensure students not only understand 'what' they are learning, but also 'why' and 'how'.

2 **Integration of SEL and CE**
Educators can integrate SEL and CE in a number of ways. Where SEL and CE curricula are being delivered separately, integration could begin by identifying areas of overlap. Combining curricula will both save time and help students to understand and apply transferrable skills. In settings where only one curriculum (SEL or CE) is implemented, teachers and counsellors can start to identify links with the other domain area, adding more connections over time.

These approaches would ideally lead to the development of one curriculum that combines SEL and CE seamlessly (i.e. SELCE). An integrated approach would help students develop a set of personal and interpersonal competencies that they could draw on in social and academic contexts, and that they could utilise in their future development as learners and workers.

3 **Connectedness of learning**
By integrating SEL and CE concepts into the same lesson or set of lessons, students can gain an understanding of how to successfully apply the skills they have learned in the classroom in other situations (e.g. social and work settings).

4 **Content and process**
Equal emphasis should be given to the content of the lesson and the process of applying it. Knowledge gained of self, others and the world of work is of limited value if one does not know how to use it. Integrated SEL and CE lessons can, for example, help students:

- understand the nature of reciprocal emotional processes and to recognise them in their own lives (e.g. the influence they have on others; the influence others have on them)
- recognise that the ability to understand social emotional interconnectedness can help them anticipate the dynamic interactions that may occur as they balance work and family life into the future.

5 **Identity development**
Finally, the integration of SEL and CE connects learning activities that are better understood as related aspects of the same trajectory. SEL activities focus on helping students build and strengthen their academic self-concept, while CE activities support the development of a vocational identity. These are, essentially, the same process, with academic development being the foundation of later career development. Presenting academic and vocational development in this way helps students learn to see current school-based learning as the foundation for their future life in the world of work.

Table 2: Example activities and Guiding questions for implementing a SELCE approach

	Classroom activity	Guiding questions
Developmental perspective	Ask students to create a time management table with concepts to be presented either verbally or using images or digital tools. Student presentations could be in narrative form, a compilation of images, or some combination of forms.	• Are the materials and activities designed for the reasoning level of my students? • Is the complexity increased progressively? • Do the materials meet students' learning needs?
Integration of SEL and CE	When teaching students how to use time management strategies, use this opportunity to connect this set of skills to those that will be required in the world of work.	• Is the curriculum developed to support both social emotional learning and career development?
Connectedness of learning	When delivering an SEL lesson focusing on students expressing their wishes, listening to the wishes of others, and working out a mutually agreed compromise, include some examples of work-based scenarios they may encounter in the future.	• Do the lessons include exercises that allow students to become more competent and increase their expertise across a range of life contexts?
Content and process	The use of multiple scenarios allows students to appreciate the interconnected nature of life roles, while also supporting the development of more complex thinking and of a future perspective.	• Do the learning activities provide new knowledge (the what) and new strategies (the how)? • Is a future perspective embedded in the curriculum? • Do the learning activities demonstrate how SEL skills are useful for the world of work, and how learning about the world of work could help in managing SEL skills? • Do the learning activities connect present learning of skills to future success?
Identity development	Learning activities that require students to articulate their broader life goals and connect them to their academic and career goals. These activities support students in articulating their developing adult identity.	• Does the curriculum help students understand how SEL and CE contribute to identity development? • Does it help them understand what they can do to improve their identity development with SEL and CE?

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Appendix

The horizontal axis is titled Integration and shows the progress of the integration of the SEL and CE models, from SEL or CE to SEL+CE or CE+SEL, then to SELCE. The vertical axis is titled Developmental Perspective, and measures cognitive development over time, from the Magic and association of early childhood, Concrete and linear of late childhood, to the Integration and abstract thought of adolescence. The data line starts at the intersection of the axes and rises at a constant 45 degree angle. It is labelled Content and process and Connectedness of learning. The whole plot area represents a young person's continuing Identity development.

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