

# 1

## Introduction

### Overview

The aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with a broad overview of the field of social and emotional learning (SEL) and a rationale for this book. In doing so I touch upon some of the key issues that are addressed in more depth later in the text. The chapter concludes with a brief look at the structure and content of the book in order to give the reader a sense of what is to follow.



### Key Points

- SEL is a dominant orthodoxy in education systems across the world.
- It refers to the process of explicitly developing skills such as empathy and self-regulation in children and adults, typically in school settings.
- SEL interventions vary in their reach, component structure and prescriptiveness.
- Research on the implementation and outcomes of SEL programmes has yielded promising results, but there are a number of problematic issues with the current evidence base.

## Rationale for the text

SEL is currently the zeitgeist in education. It has captured the imagination of academics, policy-makers and practitioners alike in recent years. To many, SEL is the 'missing piece' in the quest to provide effective education for all children and young people (Elias, 1997). They claim that school-based promotion of SEL will lead to a range of positive outcomes for children and young people, including increased social and emotional competence, improvements in academic attainment, better behaviour and reduced mental health problems (Durlak et al., 2011). To others, the increased interest in SEL represents the latest in a series of classroom fads (Paul and Elder, 2007), or a worrying example of the 'therapeutic turn' taken recently in education and society more generally (Furedi, 2003, 2009). They argue that SEL is, at best, a waste of time and resources (Craig, 2007). At worst, it is seen as a corrosive influence that distracts schools from their primary purpose of educating children and young people (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008).



### Points for Reflection

- What is your view on the role of SEL in education?

The aim of this book is to provide a critical appraisal of the field. What I hope will set it apart from the many other books available on this topic is, firstly, that it will take a balanced, analytical approach throughout. I do not intend to promote SEL as a panacea for all that ails education. Nor do I wish to endorse the argument that it is a potentially damaging influence on children and young people. It is up to you, as the reader, to make up your own mind. I will simply present the evidence as I see it, which brings us to the second distinguishing characteristic of the book: a clear focus on research. The ideas and arguments presented throughout *Social and Emotional Learning: A Critical Appraisal* are grounded in research findings, drawn from around the world. A truly international scope is – I hope – the third 'unique selling point'. SEL is a global phenomenon and this is reflected throughout the book. Finally, the analysis presented in these pages benefits from the inclusion of the very latest developments in the field, including a seminal meta-analysis of empirical findings relating to the impact of school-based SEL interventions (Durlak et al., 2011).

## What is SEL?

In this brief introductory chapter I hope to highlight some of the key issues that will be addressed in the book. So, where do we begin? A working definition of SEL would certainly be helpful. As we will see in Chapter 2, there is a significant degree of ambiguity and conceptual confusion evident in attempts to set parameters on what is (and is not) SEL (Hoffman, 2009). In the meantime, consider the following widely used definition provided by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). CASEL define SEL as:

a process for helping children and even adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships and our work effectively and ethically. These skills include recognising and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically. They are the skills that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices. (<http://www.casel.org>)



### Points for Reflection

- How does this definition of SEL fit with your own?
- What assumptions and values are embedded in the prevailing view of SEL?

Let's briefly break this definition down. Firstly, SEL is a *process*. It's a course of action, a method or practice in which schools engage. Secondly, SEL is for *children and adults*, each and every member of the school community. Thirdly, SEL teaches skills that *we all need* and are *fundamental for life effectiveness*. Thus it is a universal, essential process. Fourthly, the skills endowed through SEL are *social-emotional* in nature, relating to both *intrapersonal* (within the individual – such as being able to manage one's emotions) and *interpersonal* (between the individual and others – such as establishing positive relationships) domains. The key components of this definition and its assumptions and implications have been critiqued from a variety of perspectives (e.g. Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009; Hoffman, 2009; Watson et al., 2012), but this is something we will address later. For now, it at least gives us

a broad idea of what we mean when we talk about *social and emotional learning*.

SEL has become increasingly important in educational research, policy and practice in recent years. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to suggest that it has perhaps become *the* dominant orthodoxy in education worldwide. As evidence of this, consider that in the United States (US), a landmark bill was recently introduced to the House of Representatives that changed federal education policy to promote SEL (including, for example, amendments to existing legislation in order to enable funding for teacher training and continuing professional development to be used for SEL programming) (Biggert et al., 2011). Furthermore, in most US states, SEL is integrated into mandated K-12 learning standards, with one state (Illinois) having explicit, free-standing SEL goals and benchmarks (Dusenbury et al., 2011). Educators attempt to meet these standards by implementing one (or more) of a plethora of programmes. There were in excess of 240 of these programmes available a decade ago (CASEL, 2003), a number which is only likely to have increased since then.

A similar picture has emerged in other countries. In England, for example, our last government introduced a range of policy initiatives that either directly or indirectly addressed SEL. The most well-known of these was the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007; Department for Education and Skills, 2005a), a national strategy which was estimated to be in use in 90 per cent of primary and 70 per cent of secondary schools by 2010 (Humphrey et al., 2010). In Australia, the KidsMatter (early childhood and primary school) and MindMatters (secondary school) SEL initiatives have been rolled out to every state and territory (Ainley et al., 2006; Slee et al., 2009). Education systems in many other nations – including Spain, Portugal, Finland, Singapore, Canada, Sweden and Germany – have also embraced SEL (Marcelino Botín Foundation, 2011).

## A taxonomy of SEL

SEL programmes take a variety of forms. To begin to make sense of what can, at first, seem like a bewildering array, it may be useful to consider the following fundamental intervention characteristics. This taxonomy is derived from key reviews and texts in the field (e.g. Durlak et al., 2011; Weare and Nind, 2011; Wilson and Lipsey, 2007). The three dimensions are presented briefly below before each is discussed in more detail.

Firstly, it is possible to distinguish between:

- *universal* interventions, developed with the intention of delivery to the entire student body;
- *targeted/indicated* interventions, designed to provide focused input for students at risk of (or already experiencing) social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

It is worth noting that, from the outset, although I make reference to targeted/indicated approaches at certain points, the primary focus of this book is on universal SEL interventions. This is because these approaches are much more closely aligned with the underlying theory, philosophy, assumptions and values of the field (see Chapter 2).

We can also consider the extent to which an intervention pervades different aspects of school life. Typically, distinctions are made between:

- interventions that emphasise the delivery of a taught *curriculum*;
- those designed to change aspects of the *school environment or ethos*;
- programmes that involve work with *parents and/or the wider community*;
- those that involve some *combination* of these components.

Finally, we might also consider the level of prescriptiveness inherent in the programme guidance. Here, a distinction is usually made between:

- interventions that are *top-down* in nature, providing detailed, structured guidance on implementation procedures, with an implicit assumption that they will be carried out faithfully;
- programmes that are *bottom-up* in nature, emphasising flexibility and local adaptation in implementation.

### **Dimension 1: intervention reach**

Perhaps the most basic distinction that can be made in the SEL literature is between programmes that are designed for delivery to the entire student body ('universal' interventions) and those that provide focused intervention for those children at risk of or already

experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties ('targeted/indicated' interventions). Beyond the fundamental difference of their reach, universal and targeted/indicated interventions also differ in a number of other important ways:

- Universal SEL interventions reflect a preventive approach, where the emphasis is on equipping children and young people with the skills they need to become resilient to the onset of difficulties. Targeted/indicated interventions are, by definition, reactive in nature, and therefore concerned with remediating existing problems.
- Given their nature and the fact they are often delivered in withdrawal sessions, targeted/indicated interventions can be associated with stigma for participating children; universal interventions are generally considered to be more 'inclusive' since every child takes part and there is less focus on within-child problems (Reicher, 2010).
- Universal SEL interventions tend to be fairly 'light touch' in nature, but are typically delivered over a prolonged time period (often throughout the school year); by contrast, targeted/indicated interventions are more intensive, reflecting the greater needs of the children involved.
- Research demonstrates greater change in outcomes for children participating in targeted/indicated interventions than for those involved in universal programmes (Wilson and Lipsey, 2007). However, this reflects the fact that there is greater 'room for improvement' in key outcome variables among children selected for targeted interventions.

A balance between universal and targeted provision in schools is typically recommended. Indeed, some of the more recently developed programmes incorporate both. Examples include the KidsMatter initiative in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) and the SEAL programme in England (Department for Education and Skills, 2006, 2007a). However, research tells us that many schools still work primarily from a 'reactive' model. For instance, in a recent scoping survey of school-based provision in England, 71 per cent of schools reported that their central focus was on helping children with existing or developing problems (Vostanis et al., 2012).

## Dimension 2: component structure

The second dimension in our SEL taxonomy is the structural composition of the intervention itself. Here we can distinguish between programmes that comprise primarily a single component and those that involve multiple components. Although there is no complete consensus, reviews of research (e.g. Adi et al., 2007; Blank et al., 2009) typically identify three common components:

- *A taught curriculum* – typically taking the form of a series of teacher-led lessons and activities designed to help children develop the social and emotional skills outlined earlier in this chapter.
- *School environment* – although somewhat more protean than other components, this would usually include activity in a range of areas (for example, revisions to school policies and rules) focused on improving the school's ethos/climate, so that as an institution it more closely embodies the values embedded in SEL.
- *Parents and the wider community* – programmes including this component incorporate a particular focus on broadening the reach of SEL beyond the immediate school environment. This could include parenting support, community projects and so on.

There are two important qualifying statements relating to this dimension. The first is to note that its utility in classifying SEL programmes is at the broadest level only. For example, even the archetypal curricular interventions typically contain at least some element of the other two (e.g. homework activities to be completed with parents to enable consolidation and generalisation of skills). The second issue to note is that there is by no means an equal balance between programmes that focus mainly on one or some combination of these factors. For example, Blank et al.'s (2009) review of universal SEL approaches in secondary education found that the overwhelming majority were primarily curriculum-based, with only a handful incorporating the other two components. Similarly, Durlak et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis reported that multi-component programmes comprised only a quarter of the evidence base.

**Dimension 3: prescriptiveness**

The level of prescriptiveness inherent in a given programme is an issue that has received scant attention until recently. This is due in part to the historical dominance of highly prescriptive approaches to SEL. It is only in the last few years that more flexible programmes have started to emerge. Another contributory factor is the increased attention that has been paid to implementation in recent years – in particular the fidelity-adaptation debate (see Chapter 5).

Prescriptive SEL programmes (such as the Second Step programme in the US) are usually curriculum-based and typically provide very detailed manuals that instruct school staff in the appropriate manner of delivery in a step-by-step fashion. There is a single, preferred model of implementation and lessons are often provided in the form of a comprehensive script. This is expected to lead to better quality implementation, because manualisation can provide a scaffold for school staff, giving them structure and organisation, a clear plan of what to do and guidance on how they should do it (Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 2002).

By contrast, flexible approaches to SEL (such as the secondary SEAL programme in England) emphasise choice, local ownership and goodness of fit with local context. School staff may therefore be encouraged to choose the specific aspects of a programme that they wish to deliver, in addition to developing their own materials and/or supplementing with other activities. Sitting somewhere in the middle are approaches that offer both a degree of flexibility and an inherent structure, but at different levels (such as the KidsMatter programme in Australia).

The above taxonomy provides a useful starting point for our understanding of the nature of SEL programmes. However, it is important to note that there are several other ways in which they may differ. For example, what is the modality of the intervention? Programmes may use behavioural strategies, cognitively-oriented approaches, social skills training, and so on. I have opted not to include this aspect in the main taxonomy because these modalities are not mutually exclusive. Also, most SEL programmes reflect a blend rather than a single orientation. Finally, where analysis has been undertaken, the evidence suggests they produce largely similar effects (Wilson and Lipsey, 2007).





### Points for Reflection

- How does the composition of an SEL programme reflect underlying assumptions and values of programme developers?

## Why has SEL become so popular?

Why has there been such interest and enthusiasm for SEL across the world? The reasons are manifold and will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3, but three commonly cited benefits of SEL are central:

- *Preventive* utility, whereby SEL helps to ‘inoculate’ children and young people from a variety of negative outcomes, such as emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- SEL *promotes* a range of desirable outcomes, such as increased social competence.
- These two properties make children more effective learners, thus *increasing academic attainment*.

The third benefit noted above is particularly crucial given the increasing emphasis on academic standards and test scores in education systems around the world. However, as we will see in Chapter 7, it is also a somewhat controversial claim.

Bringing these ideas together, the guidance for schools in the secondary version of the aforementioned SEAL programme in England told teachers that they could expect

better academic results for all pupils and schools; more effective learning . . . higher motivation; better behaviour; higher school attendance; more responsible pupils, who are better citizens and more able to contribute to society; lower levels of stress and anxiety; higher morale, performance and retention of staff; [and] a more positive school ethos. (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007: 8–9)

Given such claims, it is not difficult to understand why such programmes have been so beguiling to educators.

However, the view of SEL as a universal remedy is complicated by several factors. SEL programmes are extremely heterogeneous. They vary greatly in their nature, audience, settings and expected outcomes. This makes prescriptive claims about their benefits rather problematic, especially given the variety and different forms they may take. It is fair to say that no single SEL programme has been proven to improve all (or even most) of the outcomes listed above. This does not stop the claims made creating a level of expectation among school staff that cannot realistically be met, and which may subsequently act as a barrier to sustained implementation efforts. For example, consider the aforementioned SEAL programme. In our recent national evaluation (Humphrey et al., 2010), we found that expectations of what secondary SEAL could achieve varied wildly within and between schools. There was no ‘common vision’, and staff often had extremely grandiose ideas about the amount of improvement in outcomes that the programme would bring about. When these expectations were not met in the early years of the programme, many staff began to withdraw their efforts.

## What can research tell us about SEL?

The issues noted above have been addressed in part by attempts to delineate the different SEL programmes and provide assessments of their evidential bases. For example, we might look to:

- *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs* (CASEL, 2003). This text describes and rates 80 programmes in relation to the outcomes they target and the evidence for their effectiveness.
- The *National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices* (<http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/>). The Registry provides a searchable directory of interventions that encompass SEL programmes under the broader umbrella of ‘mental health promotion’.
- The *Blueprints for Violence Prevention* database (<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/matrix.html>). The database helpfully distinguishes between *model* and *promising* programmes. This distinction is based upon independent judgements of the quality of evaluation research, sustained effects and multiple site replications.

Brief examination of such resources quickly separates the ‘wheat from the chaff’. The Blueprints project, for example, recommends only 11 interventions from over 900 as meeting their ‘model program’ criteria, and 20 as meeting their ‘promising program’ criteria. Of these, some (such as the Incredible Years and Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies curricula) are what we might call ‘bona fide’ SEL approaches (in that their central aims, content and outcomes are social-emotional in nature). While this demonstrates that there are several ‘proven’ SEL interventions, it also highlights the fact that the evidence base for the majority is still developing.

A recent meta-analysis of universal school-based SEL programmes by CASEL (Durlak et al., 2011) highlights further issues with the evidence base. This paper represents the most up-to-date and comprehensive analysis of the evidence for SEL, with 213 studies included, representing outcomes for nearly a quarter of a million children and young people. The authors reported very promising findings, with children involved in SEL interventions demonstrating improved social and emotional skills, academic attainment, attitudes and behaviour, when compared to controls (e.g. those not involved in SEL interventions). However, they also reported a high level of variability in the quality of studies:

- 53 per cent relied solely on child self-report, raising issues of reliability in studies involving younger children;
- 42 per cent did not monitor implementation in any way, meaning what school staff actually did and, in particular, how closely they stuck to intervention guidelines was unknown;
- 19 per cent were unpublished reports and therefore not subjected to academic scrutiny;
- 24 per cent used measures with no reported reliability, meaning that they may not tap consistent responses over time;
- 49 per cent used measures with no reported validity, meaning that they may not measure what they purport to measure.

So, although the evidence fairly consistently points towards the positive outcomes of SEL interventions, we know that there are quality issues inherent in the research literature. This suggests that a degree of caution may be required in interpreting the outcomes of studies.

Why is research – and in particular, the quality of research – such an important consideration in the analysis presented in this book?

Put simply, SEL interventions incur significant investment of time and resources (human, financial, material) on the part of participating schools. Now more than ever (given the current fiscal and educational climates), schools need reassurance that such an undertaking is worth their while. They need to know if there is strong evidence that a given intervention is likely to produce a set of desired outcomes. Keeping research evidence central to the decision-making process for schools interested in implementing SEL interventions helps to guard against the ‘crass, profit-driven, and socially and scientifically irresponsible’ (Sternberg, 2002: xii) side of the ‘industry’. As a case in point, consider the case of the School of Emotional Literacy, a UK-based SEL organisation. During the major upsurge in interest in SEL in the UK in the last decade, various local authorities (LAs) spent a total of £300,000 sending teachers on emotional literacy courses provided by the School of Emotional Literacy, until it was revealed that the courses were not accredited (as had been advertised) and were delivered by a trainer whose professional qualifications were spurious (including a doctorate from an Internet-based ‘university’ in Vanuatu, a tiny island in the South Pacific) (Milne, 2008).

Research (and the kinds of research-based databases noted above) can therefore help to distinguish between the proven SEL programmes, those whose evidence base is still developing and those that may be nothing more than snake oil. As Merrell and Gueldner (2010) state, ‘It is usually a waste of time and resources – and is potentially risky – to implement a program that has no or shaky evidence that it will produce the desired results’ (p. 29). However, even with those interventions for which there exists a robust evidence base, the journey from research to practice can be complicated (Durlak and DuPre, 2008). Of particular note here is the difference between the environments of highly controlled, well-supported research studies (‘efficacy’ trials) and the complex, messy world of everyday school practice. The SEL evidence base is primarily composed of research in the former at the expense of the latter. The potential dangers of such disparity were highlighted by Shucksmith and colleagues (2007):

Studies . . . have seen the investment of massive sums of money in large multi-component longitudinal trials. The results that emerge from these are very useful and are showing the way towards the design of more effective interventions, yet there must be serious doubts as to the availability of such resources within normal education budgets. (p. 5)

These concerns, echoed by Greenberg et al. (2005), are well founded. Where research is conducted on SEL interventions in typical practice conditions ('effectiveness' trials) schools often fail to replicate reported intervention effects (e.g. Kam et al., 2003).



#### Points for Reflection

- How important is research evidence compared to what 'feels right'?

## The importance of implementation

The problems experienced in bringing evidence-based SEL programmes 'to scale' (e.g. Elias et al., 2003) in normal school settings reinforces the need to explore an area that has only recently begun to attract the attention it deserves: *implementation*. If research on outcomes answers the 'what' in SEL evaluation, implementation research answers the 'how' and 'why'. Thus implementation studies consider aspects of programme delivery such as:

- dosage (e.g. how many sessions were delivered?)
- fidelity (e.g. how closely did the teacher stick to the intervention manual?)
- reach (e.g. was the intervention delivered throughout the school?)

Such studies are also concerned with the factors that influence these (e.g. staff attitudes, time and resources, support from school leadership) (Durlak and DuPre, 2008). The findings of such research have yielded fascinating insights into the processes that underpin the promotion of the range of outcomes highlighted above. First and foremost, *implementation matters*. Reviews of the literature (e.g. Durlak and DuPre, 2008; Greenberg et al., 2005) have shown that the different aspects of implementation can each influence the outcomes of a given intervention. This helps to explain why SEL programmes may be less successful when they are rolled out in real-world settings, where they essentially become diluted among competing pressures and with less support available. However, that is not to say that positive outcomes can only be achieved when school staff stick

rigidly to the programme 'script'. Indeed, expecting them to do so is unrealistic. They are professional educators working in unique contexts and circumstances, and as such some degree of adaptation is inevitable. In light of this, one important finding from a major review of over 500 studies conducted by Durlak and DuPre (2008) was that positive results could be achieved with around 60–80 per cent implementation fidelity. This has led to discussion of how to promote the correct balance between fidelity to programme manuals and procedures on the one hand, and adaptation to local needs and circumstances on the other. The implications of these issues will be examined in more detail in Chapter 6.

## The structure of this book

Although we have only touched upon a selection of the fundamental issues that will be explored in the ensuing chapters, I hope that this brief introduction has convinced you of the need for a critical appraisal of the field of SEL. In the closing section of this chapter, I provide a concise overview of the structure and content of the book. In planning the organisation of the text, I have attempted to provide comprehensive coverage of the fundamental issues relating to SEL, and to present them in a sequence that makes sense from the point of view of creating a coherent narrative.

In Chapter 2, I provide a critical analysis of the conceptualisation of SEL in the academic and practitioner literature. It uses the aforementioned CASEL definition as a starting point, before exploring alternative conceptualisations and related terms such as 'emotional intelligence'. An examination of the general discourse around SEL is presented, and the implications for theory, research and practice of the inherently protean nature of the concept are discussed. The chapter then outlines and appraises SEL theory – that is, the underlying logic model that connects school-based promotion of SEL to a range of positive outcomes.

Chapter 3 considers how SEL came to be a dominant orthodoxy in education. The influences on the development of the field, including the various conceptualisations of social, emotional and multiple intelligences, progressive education, the concept of resilience, the field of prevention and the self-esteem movement are outlined and discussed. The chapter concludes by considering the political and economic drivers of SEL.

Chapter 4 comprises an international analysis of the current state of SEL in education. Exemplar case studies are provided, including

the USA, England, Australia, Sweden and elsewhere. Each case study explores the influence of SEL at both policy and practice levels. The US case study, for example, examines the various state-level SEL standards and recent national legislation (e.g. the Academic, Social and Emotional Learning Act 2011), in addition to a sampling of the proliferation of school-based programmes, such as Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) and the Caring School Community (Child Development Project). I then explore how cultural differences have influenced the shape SEL has taken in different countries. In particular, I discuss the top-down (primarily the USA) versus bottom-up (primarily Europe and Australia) schism in the design and implementation of approaches to SEL.

Chapter 5 examines the processes involved in the assessment and monitoring of SEL, addressing core questions such as what should be evaluated (e.g. proximal vs. distal outcome variables, assessment of process) and whose perspective should be prioritised. There is a particular focus on the assessment of children's social and emotional competence, with discussion of key issues including the underlying theory and frameworks, the scope and distinctiveness of measures, approaches to assessment (e.g. observation, sociometric techniques, questionnaires), the assessment of maximal (ability) versus typical (trait) behaviour, implementation characteristics and psychometric properties of measures. A range of exemplar measures are reviewed.

In Chapter 6, the focus of the book shifts to how schools implement approaches to SEL and the impact this has on outcomes. Drawing upon seminal work (e.g. Durlak and DuPre, 2008), I outline and discuss the different components of implementation (e.g. fidelity, dosage, quality) and the contextual factors that have been shown to influence them (e.g. implementer characteristics, organisational capacity, programme characteristics). A key area of focus in the implementation literature – the balance between fidelity and adaptation – is examined in detail.

Chapter 7 examines the impact of approaches to SEL on a variety of outcomes, including social and emotional competence, attitudes, pro-social behaviour, mental health and academic achievement. I provide a critical review of research in the field, discussing issues relating to cost-effectiveness, the role of programme developers in evaluations, confirmation bias and adverse effects, and the basic question of what constitutes a good outcome. The chapter concludes by considering examples of outcome research whose findings have 'gone against the grain' (e.g. Humphrey et al., 2010; Social and Character Development Research Consortium, 2010) and analysing them through the lens of Raudenbush's (2008) model for the interpretation of null results.

In concluding the book, Chapter 8 draws together and summarises

the key themes developed throughout the preceding chapters. I build upon these to make a series of recommendations for future research, including the need for a new wave of effectiveness studies, an increase in high-quality research beyond the United States, a broadening of focus in implementation evaluation, and detailed modelling of the cost-benefits and cost-effectiveness of SEL.

## Notes on voice, terminology and textual features

I write primarily in the first person singular ('I') and plural ('we') throughout the book. This is to impart a more inclusive tone and make the text less impersonal (I am used to writing in academic journals where you are typically required to refer to yourself as 'the current author!').

It is also worth pointing out from the outset that I refer to 'programmes', 'interventions', 'approaches', etc., interchangeably throughout the book. This is done in the interest of variety, and in the absence of any evidence that they actually describe different things when used in reference to SEL.

At the beginning of each chapter I present key points that summarise the content that follows. Think of this as the 'bite-size' version of the chapter for the reader in a hurry!

As you will have already seen, the text is interspersed with 'points for reflection'. These are included at key points to encourage you as the reader to consider critical issues raised in the text from your own point of view. You are by no means bound to agree with the arguments I put forward!

Finally, at the end of each chapter I make some recommendations for further reading. There is an emphasis on key texts by expert authors that link to and extend the chapter content.

### Further Reading

Ecclestone, K. and Hayes, D. (2008) *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education*. London: Routledge.

Merrell, K. and Gueldner, B. A. (2010). *Social and Emotional Learning in the Classroom: Promoting Mental Health and Academic Success*. London: Guilford Press.