The potential dangers of a systematic, explicit approach to teaching social and emotional skills (SEAL)

Carol Craig

Preamble

Please note this document is not critical of classroom teachers, head teachers or other professionals who, in the course of their working lives have to help young people improve their social and emotional skills. The critique advanced here solely focuses on a centralised, systematic, programmatic approach which recommends that all children, in all schools should be formally taught these skills on a year on year basis from 3 to 18.

The Centre for Confidence and Well-being is committed to improving the well-being of young people. We think it is being eroded by a complex interaction of various cultural changes and we do not believe there are any short-cuts or panaceas. We think SEAL is being presented as a panacea and may not simply be diversionary but ultimately part of the problem.

SEAL covers a huge range of disparate approaches and strands. Of course, there are elements to this work which we would not only accept but also recommend. For example, we are in favour of improving the climate in schools to make the atmosphere more positive and supportive of young people. We promote the idea of fostering good relationships between teachers and pupils. We are all for pupils been given more of a voice. We also think that some amount of skill based training for older secondary school pupils may be beneficial. What we question is the explicit teaching year on year of social and emotional skills to all children and the accompany framework of learning outcomes and evaluations.

We think that what is required above all else at the moment is a debate on the merits of the SEAL approach. We welcome readers' views and urge them to use the forum on our website to post comments.

Author's introduction

This is a controversial paper. SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) is now a major plank of the current government's education policy in England and Wales. We are taking steps to publish this critique because we believe that the approach being recommended to schools may not only waste of time and resources but also unwittingly undermine young people's well-being. As yet there is no work of this type being encouraged by the Scottish Executive. However, some local authorities and schools in Scotland are interested in piloting this approach.

We share the Department of Children, Schools and Families concern about young people's well-being but we think this concern is causing panic and pressure to take action and dangerous short-cuts which do not appear to be well thought through. Despite claims to the contrary, they are not strongly based on evidence.

Since SEAL is still only 'recommended' and not compulsory, teachers, schools and education authorities have the power to ignore or adopt. Our paper may be a useful counterpoint to the arguments they are being given on the benefits of SEAL. It will help them see the paucity of evidence for such a wholesale change in education and encourage them to evaluate the credibility of the case for SEAL and what the potential dangers might be.

Finally, I have been working with teachers and researching these types of themes for many years. I am not a psychologist but I am an enlightened layperson who is prepared to ask difficult questions and point out potential flaws. The Centre for Confidence and Well-being has nothing to gain from taking a critical approach. We could easily have jumped on the emotional literacy/skills bandwagon and created packs of material, particularly for the Scottish market. We are publishing this paper for the simple reason that our research leads us to conclude that SEAL may be well-meaning but formally teaching young people social and emotional skills could back-fire and ultimately make their well-being worse, not better.

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Introduction: The potential dangers of teaching Emotional Intelligence/Literacy in schools

> There is no robust, independent evidence that making children and young people express their feelings in formal rituals at school will develop lifelong emotional literacy and well-being. Inserting a vocabulary of emotional vulnerability into education is likely to encourage the very feeling of depression and hopelessness it is supposed to deal with.[1]
> Kathryn Ecclestone

In 2005 the Department for Education and Skills in England sent out a circular advising all schools with children from pre-school to middle school (i.e. three to eleven) that they should now introduce, into the taught curriculum, social and emotional skills such as recognising and handling emotions and calming and self-awareness techniques.[2] This was followed in 2007 with similar guidance for secondary schools. This was issued by the new Department for Children, Schools and Families as the DfES was disbanded in June 2007. For the sake of simplicity we continue to refer to these initiatives as coming from the DfES.

One of the leading experts in the UK on this type of work in schools is Professor Katherine Weare from the University of Southampton. In 2004 she wrote:

> Work on what in the UK at least is often called 'emotional literacy' is developing at an extraordinary pace in education, both under this particular banner, and under related themes such as emotional intelligence, emotional and social competence, mental health, and emotional and social well-being.[3]

The intellectual rationale for much of this work comes from Daniel Goleman's best-seller *Emotional Intelligence*.

At the Centre for Confidence and Well-being we believe that there may be benefits from enhancing the emotional intelligence, or literacy, of teachers or other professionals working with young people. We also think that emotional intelligence training or coaching may be useful for leaders and managers.[4] Older secondary school pupils may benefit as well, at least from informal teaching on the topic. However, we strongly advise against undertaking this type of work formally with young children – particularly if it is being undertaken on a year on year, whole school basis, where students are assessed on their skills. As there is still not enough evidence to support this type of intense, on-going work with young people, we believe that *the DfES Guidance is encouraging a major psychological experiment on England's children which we think could unwittingly*

backfire and undermine some young people's well-being in the longer term. Such work will also distract schools from their main educational purpose. In the course of this report we shall set out the Centre's reasoning for this claim.

This report is divided into six sections:

Section 1 looks at the history and conceptual difficulties inherent in the notion of emotional intelligence.

Section 2 examines the thinking and work being developed in the UK under the banner of emotional literacy.

Section 3 outlines the recommendations on this type of work which were set out in the DfES Guidance to schools on social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) in 2005.

Section 4 examines the results of a pilot on SEAL conducted between 2003 and 2005.

Section 5 sets out the Centre for Confidence and Well-being's arguments that this type of work in schools may not simply be a waste of time but could actually back-fire and undermine young people's well-being in the longer term.

Section 6 is a summary of alternative courses of action which the Centre recommends.

Section 1: The difficulties with the concept of Emotional Intelligence

> *The relationship between intellect and emotion has traditionally been viewed as involving a conflict between two different psychological forces.*[5]
> Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts

A short history of Emotional Intelligence

During the Scottish Enlightenment some of the leading figures, such as David Hume, Adam Smith and Thomas Reid, were fascinated by emotions. They did not see reason and emotion as being at odds with one another. Smith, for example, believed that emotions such as sympathy were fundamental to human relationships and provided the foundation for morality and social cohesion. Hume argued famously 'reason is, and ought to be, the slave of the passions.'

Thoughts such as these stirred the great European philosopher Emanuel Kant 'from his slumbers'. He argued that moral behaviour could only arise from cool, unemotional reason. Kant's belief that human beings should be rational, logical thinkers – untainted by emotion – had an enormous influence on the subsequent development of Western thought and it is commonplace in our culture for us to see emotion and rationality as enemies.

In the 1980s, however, this was challenged by the Harvard educationalist Howard Gardner. Gardner argued that we needed to broaden our view of intelligence and he included inter-personal and intra-personal intelligence as two of his now-famous 'multiple intelligences'.[6] Gardner's work had considerable impact on two academic psychologists – John Mayer and Peter Salovey. In 1990 they published a paper called 'Emotional Intelligence'. Their basic thesis was that emotions can 'serve rationality rather than interfere with it' and they supported Gardner's claim that we need to broaden our notion of intelligence.[7]

Research by neuroscientists has been even more challenging to the traditional western notion of rationality devoid of emotion. They have shown that emotion is fundamental to the way the brain functions. The neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux, whose research provided a new way of thinking about the brain, writes ' … minds without emotions are not really minds at all. They are souls on ice – cold, lifeless creatures devoid of any desires, fear, sorrows, pains or pleasure'.[8] Research shows, for example, that emotion helps us to make decisions and enhances memory.

But undoubtedly the main person responsible for bringing the importance of emotions to popular consciousness is the psychologist and journalist, Daniel

Goleman. In his internationally best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence*, first published in 1995, Goleman made huge claims for the importance of emotional intelligence. The cover of the book states boldly that it will tell the reader 'why it matters more than IQ'.[9] Within a few years of publication the idea of emotional intelligence had entered public consciousness and a small industry grew up to teach people the skills of emotional intelligence, or literacy as it is often called in education. However, the issue is much more complicated than Goleman or his followers suggest.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional ability

The originators of the term Mayer and Salovey specifically define emotional intelligence as 'the capacity to reason with emotion in four areas: to perceive emotion, to integrate it into thought, to understand it and to manage it'.[10] What is important about the Mayer-Salovey model is that it is based on emotional *ability* and intelligence. Their work is about standard, objective ways to define emotions and their uses. Mayer and Salovey have now evolved ways to measure emotional ability which include, for example, being able to identify basic emotional states on people's faces and how basic emotions combine to make complex feelings. In short, emotional intelligence in this schema refers to 'the co-operative combination of intelligence and emotion'.[11]

Mayer and Salovey's work is based on the idea of 'four branches' of emotional intelligence:

Branch 1: Awareness of emotions in both self and others.
Branch 2: Using emotions to facilitate problem-solving, reasoning, decision-making etc.
Branch 3: Understanding emotions by being able to name them and recognise the subtle interplay of different emotions. (E.g. how annoyance could lead to anger.)
Branch 4: Managing emotions. (E.g. avoiding depression.)

Mayer and Salovey claim that some people have ability across the four branches or only in one or two. They also claim that people can be taught the skills.

Mayer and Salovey's method of obtaining 'right' answers to EI questions is through a method called 'consensus based scoring'. What this means is that the right answer is the one given by the majority in a particular culture. Critics of this approach say that instruments of this type do not measure a type of *intelligence* but simply how much an individual is in tune with the norms in that culture.[12]

Mayer and Salovey argue that the value of their approach to emotional intelligence is that EI meets 'standards for traditional intelligence'. By that they mean it meets three broad criteria: 'First, EI test items can be operationalized in such a fashion that there are more-or-less correct answers. Second, EI shows specific patterns of correlations similar to those of known intelligences. … Finally, EI should develop with age'.[13]

As we are about to see with the criticism levelled at Daniel Goleman, Mayer and Salovey's work is the intellectually respectable end of emotional intelligence. Nonetheless their work has many critics and, as it is still a new field, there are many more questions than answers. For example, there is still a major debate on definition (for example, are we really talking about emotional or *social* skills?) and measurement is still an issue. Mayer et al accept the need for much more research. They write:

> *The priorities for research in the area as we now see them concern (a) learning more about what EI predicts, (b) understanding how EI relates to other intelligences and personality traits, (c) understanding the processes underlying EI, (d) **determining whether teaching emotional knowledge has a desirable effect on behavioural outcomes and might change EI itself**, and (e) expanding EI measurement to a wider range of age groups to better understand its developmental course.*[14](My emphasis.)

In short, just about everything about EI, particularly relating to teaching these skills and what the benefits may be, still has to be adequately researched. As the celebrated psychologist Professor Seymour Epstein put it: 'The jury is still out as to whether there is a scientifically meaningful concept of EI'.[15]

In 2004 a major critical tome was published called *Emotional Intelligence: Science or Myth*. It is almost 700 pages long and combines the intellectual experience, knowledge and acumen of three senior researchers: Gerald Matthews who is a cognitive scientist, Moshe Zeidner an emotions researcher and Richard Roberts who is described as a 'hard-core intelligence researcher'.

In the course of the volume they continually show the difficulties inherent in the attempt to verify the concept of emotional intelligence. For example, they explain the difficulties involved in conceptualising or discussing emotions in 'scientific terms' and how 'Emotions are processed within a variety of discrete systems such as perception, attention, memory and response selection' which makes it difficult to pick out a key system.[16] They also devote considerable time to showing the overlap between EI and personality, something we shall return to below. Ultimately they conclude that 'there are major conceptual, psychometric

and theoretical problems to be overcome before EI may be considered a genuine, scientifically validated construct'.[17]

It is worth mentioning that Matthews et al are not uniformly hostile to the idea of trying to validate EI, as they think it may be useful in stimulating some new research but they are clear that at present EI is more 'myth than science'.[18]
Goleman's definition of EI

Most of the criticisms of EI from psychologists are, however, mainly directed at Goleman's work. For example, in his introduction to the Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts tome, Professor Robert J. Sternberg, a famous cognitive scientist and intelligence expert, cannot contain his hostility to Goleman and his followers. He says that the movement they have spawned is often 'crass, profit-driven and socially and scientifically irresponsible'.[19]

Two of Goleman's biggest critics are Mayer and Salovey who have to constantly distance themselves from his work to gain any academic credibility. The main criticism of Goleman's work is that he has not restricted emotional intelligence to the idea of emotional ability but is using what they call a 'mixed model'.[20] What this means is that alongside the notion of emotional ability he adds in a large number of characteristics such as: warmth, empathy, zeal, persistence, optimism, motivation, self-control and social skills. To confuse things further he adds into this melange the idea that part of emotional intelligence is about being able to get into 'flow' (engagement in activities) and then for good measure argues that 'there is an old-fashioned word for the body of skills that emotional intelligence represents: character.' In short Goleman's work is a rich soup of positive personality characteristics which he has then labelled 'emotional intelligence'. This leads Mathews et al to point out that Goleman has included 'any desirable feature of personal character that is not cognitive intelligence'.[21]

This may not seem to be a problem but it is. Effectively Goleman, and other popularisers, are making out that these psychological variables are connected or packaged in some way when they are not. In other words, much of Goleman's work simply points out the importance of optimism or flow, for example. He hasn't found a new characteristic called 'emotional intelligence' that brings all these different characteristics together. The following example helps illuminate how these characteristics or states are not just different from one another, but are potentially at odds: Many computer enthusiasts apparently find it extremely easy to get into flow (the ability to become absorbed in an activity) – they completely lose themselves in the world of programming, computer games or the internet. Does this make them empathetic? Of good character? Is their persistence or motivation inherently good or emotionally intelligent? The answer to all these questions is 'no'. *Flow, good character, motivation, empathy and persistence are different from one another.*

The danger of taking the broad approach that Goleman and followers do is that it just morphs into anything they want it to be and cannot adequately be described or measured. Goleman is implicitly scornful of the concept of self-esteem. He never mentions the term in *Emotional Intelligence* yet much of his desire to get young people to persist and get into flow appears to be in response to the laissez-faire attitude encouraged by the self-esteem movement. However, many of those who have followed in his wake do include self-esteem as part of their work on emotional intelligence or emotional literacy. The School of Emotional Literacy in the UK, for example, offers courses in self-esteem. This is why some critics have argued that many involved in the personal development world, who were working on self-esteem, simply re-branded their approach once emotional intelligence became the flavour of the month.

Goleman's shaky evidence base

> *Rather than old wine in a new bottle EI might more appropriately be considered a psychological form of snake oil.*[22]
> Mathews, Zeidner and Roberts

On the surface Goleman's work appears 'scientific' partly because he is talking about 'intelligence' and partly because he uses, with much aplomb, the then little-known research of a neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux. The latter's work, published as *The Emotional Brain*, aims to show, for the first time, the real architecture of the brain and how it is the amygdala, in the old reptilian part of the brain, which sends messages to the cortex.[23] In other words it is emotion which is often in the driving seat. This then leads Goleman to talk about how, through fear, the amygdala can 'hi-jack' reason. From there Goleman extrapolates that some people are better at controlling this than others – the emotionally intelligent – and how, given the rising tide of violence in society, we need to teach these skills to young people at school.

However, if you read *The Emotional Brain* you get a different picture. For a start LeDoux does not think it is possible to generalise about emotions. He thinks the brain has a number of different systems for different emotions. 'We shouldn't mix findings about different emotions all together independent of the emotion that they are finding out about,'[24] LeDoux writes, and then adds 'Unfortunately, most work in psychology and brain science has done this.' This again immediately calls into question the notion that there is something that can easily be labelled 'emotional intelligence' or emotional literacy for that matter.[25]

More importantly, LeDoux makes it clear that 'Emotional responses are, for the most part, generated unconsciously. Freud was right on the mark when he described consciousness as the tip of the mental iceberg'.[26] Later he writes: 'We

have little direct control over our emotional reactions'.[27] LeDoux's research shows that the amygdala sends stronger messages to the cortical areas than vice versa and this also indirectly questions Goleman's notion that emotional control can easily be taught. LeDoux concludes that it is 'so hard for us to gain conscious control over our emotions' and that 'Psychoanalysis may be such a prolonged process because of this asymmetry in connections between the cortex and amygdala'.[28] This difficulty in controlling emotions driven by fear is summarised in the concluding section entitled Que Sera Sera when LeDoux writes 'Telling yourself that you should not be anxious or depressed does not help that much'.[29] Little of this is conveyed in *Emotional Intelligence* where we are repeatedly told that we can learn how to control what Goleman calls ' emotional hi jacks'. (Interestingly, the first example Goleman gives us of this is a *heroin addict* who loses control in a burglary and commits murder.) In a recent email correspondence with the Centre Joseph LeDoux told us that Goleman had used his work as a 'metaphor' – that is a polite way of saying that it has more to do with literature and story telling than science. This is important as part of the attraction of Goleman's work, for people in the education field at least, is that it is supposedly 'scientific'.

Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts also take issue with Goleman's use of neuroscience and his idea of 'emotional hi-jacks'. Specifically referring to his work they write 'there is little evidence that neural processes directly control either irrational emotional outbursts or self-control.'[30]

Professor Howard Gardner, whose work is seen as pivotal to the development of the concept of emotional intelligence, has made some positive comments about Goleman's book but basically undermines the whole concept. For example, he completely disagrees with trying to 'expand' the concept of intelligence to include 'personality', 'motivation' and 'character' as 'such stretching is likely to snap the band': this is exactly what Goleman does with his 'mixed model'. More importantly Gardner questions the entire notion of 'emotional intelligence' as 'Emotions are part and parcel of cognition'. Adding 'If one calls some intelligences emotional, one suggests that other intelligences are not –and that implication flies in the face of experience and empirical data'.[30] In other words, all types of intelligence have an emotional basis. This simple statement seems much more in tune with the evidence from neuroscience than the attempt to label some types of processes as emotional intelligence.

The dangers of labelling

Other prominent psychologists like Professor Jerome Kagan, latterly at Harvard, have also warned of the dangers of labelling people 'emotionally intelligent' as this process can easily become as judgemental, and potentially damaging to those deemed deficient, as measurements of IQ.[31] Remember the man who is

seen as the creator of intelligence tests, Alfred Binet, argued against them being used as a crude indicator of IQ but this is exactly what happened. If measurements of this type are carried out then being low on EI it is likely to carry exactly the same stigma as not being clever at school.

Indeed it is concern over this development that particularly irks Professor Robert Sternberg. He writes:

> The same people who criticize the conventional psychometric testers for potentially making a mess out of the lives of people who have potential but do not score well on conventional tests do much worse in promoting what, for the most part, are largely unvalidated or poorly validated tests of emotional intelligence.[32]

It is interesting to note that Matthews and others argue that Goleman positioned EI in part as a response to the arguments set out in *The Bell Curve* written by Richard Hernstein and Charles Murray. They argue that IQ is the best predictor of success in life and that it is largely inherited. As Matthews et al point out 'The approach espoused by the authors conveys a rather pessimistic message for an egalitarian society'[33] and offers little hope for people from ethnic minority or disadvantaged socio-economic groups many of whom are currently not doing well at school.

Matthews and others argue that in response to the thesis set out in *The Bell Curve*, Goleman very deliberately argued that EI could be learned and was much more amenable to intervention than IQ. However, while accepting the fact that such an idea is more attractive and optimistic, Mathews and colleagues argue that promoting EI would not lead to equality and that as with IQ, an elite, in this instance an 'emotional elite', would emerge. They argue this in part because some early evidence suggests there is a relationship between EI and socio-economic status, with those in higher groups scoring higher on EI than those in lower groups.[34] Also they argue that research shows that there is considerable overlap between EI and personality. This means that some people are born with a higher propensity for EI characteristics.

Negative psychology

Another problem with Goleman's work is its negativity. Emotional intelligence as a concept has a positive ring about it but if you read Goleman's book you'll see just how negative he is about emotions. It may be because his work has been so influenced by LeDoux (who writes mainly about fear) that Goleman sees emotions in such a negative light – as something much more to be feared, controlled and regulated than celebrated. A later book called *Destructive Emotions* underscores Goleman's focus on negativity in *Emotional Intelligence*.[35]

In short, Goleman is contributing substantially to the very negative bent in traditional psychology that focuses on human failings and says we all have deficits and need to be 'fixed' in some way.

This is in contrast with Mayer and Salovey's work as their approach has a much more positive emphasis. Indeed Mayer once wrote that EI 'If substantiated: broadens our understanding of what it means to be smart. It means that within some of us who are labelled 'romantics' or 'highly sensitive' or 'bleeding hearts', serious information processing is taking place'.[36] This type of positive view of emotional processing is almost absent in Goleman's work.

Goleman's claims for the importance of Emotional Intelligence

Critics, including Annie Murphy Paul postulate that one of the reasons why *Emotional Intelligence* became such a best seller in the US is because Goleman is arguing that IQ doesn't matter that much. Paul argues that this thesis 'tapped into a deep vein of distrust in all things intellectual'.[37] In short, the American public liked the fact that Goleman was putting analytical, bookish types in their place. There is little doubt that Goleman made much of the idea that EI mattered more than IQ. This is even used as the subtitle for the book. And it is these claims that have got him into serious difficulty with the academic community. Many psychologists complain that Goleman and supporters make 'fantastic' and 'overblown' claims for its importance.[38]

Goleman estimates that about 20 per cent of life's success is attributable to IQ. This is not the controversial part of the equation: what is controversial is the implication that the remaining 80 per cent of success in life is due to factors related to emotional intelligence. Critics like Mayer and Salovey point out that people's success in life can be attributed to a huge range of variables - social class, contacts, regional area, market opportunities and luck as well as a myriad of personality characteristics. In a later book Goleman argued that EI accounts for 67 per cent of success at work. However, Mayer, Salovey and Caruso write 'Such claims suggest that EI predicts major life outcomes at levels virtually unheard of in psychological science'.[39] They report a meta-analysis of workplace studies which show that some personality characteristics which overlap with Goleman's definition of EI did not predict job performance. The only personality characteristic which was shown to be significant was conscientiousness, which overlaps with Goleman's notion of self-control, but it only accounted for 3 per cent of the variance – a far cry from the type of figures claimed by Goleman.[40]

Critics, like Mayer and Salovey, also point out that Goleman's argument that IQ hardly matters is not substantiated by the research he quotes to support this

claim as the subjects were not measured for the type of abilities he claimed they had.[41] A further weakness of Goleman's work is well set out in a critical piece written by Annie Murphy Paul entitled 'Promotional Intelligence':

> *Goleman often focused* [in *Emotional Intelligence*] *on a particular group of people – in one case, scientists at Bell Laboratories; in another 'Harvard graduates in the fields of law, medicine, teaching and business.' Tests of their intellectual ability, Goleman triumphantly informs us, bear no relationship to their later career performance. Yes, but: Harvard students and top-flight scientists have already been painstakingly selected for their braininess. In order to give the proposition a fair test, says Salovey, you'd have to follow the careers of a group that included 'people who are severely mentally retarded and people who are average and people who are geniuses, Albert Einstein's. IQ, Goleman tells us, is merely a 'threshold competence' – just a foot in the door – but at such penthouse heights it's a threshold very few will have the opportunity to cross.[42]*

If we want to know whether Goleman has now accepted that his claims were unjustified or overblown we have to scrabble about in footnotes. For example, in a footnote to one of his more recent books Goleman points out that research has never been carried out on the general population to establish EI's importance vis a vis IQ.[43] In an article where they critique Goleman's 'fantastic' claims for emotional intelligence, Mayer and Salovey include the following footnote:

> *After reviewing a draft of this manuscript, Dr Goleman wished to clarify his position by stating that his general point has been that 'in some life domains emotional intelligence seems to be highly correlated with a positive outcome than is a measure of IQ. The domains where this can occur are 'soft' – those where, e.g., emotional self-regulation or empathy may be more salient skills than purely cognitive abilities, such as health or marital success.[44]*

In other words, Goleman tacitly accepts there are many 'hard' domains in life where cognitive abilities are more important to success than EI. In Goleman's later book on emotional intelligence and leadership he claimed that people need a high IQ to get into MBA programmes or achieve the type of academic success required to get into leadership.[45] This means that what distinguishes people from one another and helps them succeed at that rarefied leadership level is their emotional intelligence. That may well be true though we can think of a number of leaders in high places who do not seem to be skilled at managing their emotions or recognising other people's. However, the important point for policy makers in education, concerned about the development of young people, is not whether

emotional intelligence is of importance to leaders – it is how much it matters to the general population and this has never been proven.

Does Emotional Intelligence exist and does it matter?

> *Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not easy.*[46]
> Aristotle

To say that Goleman completely overstates the importance of what he calls emotional intelligence does not mean that it does not matter at all. It is evident from the Centre's work that we accept the importance in life of some of the positive characteristics Goleman emphasises such as optimism or the ability to get into flow.[47] (Though, we also accept the critique which says that it is meaningless to package these as 'emotional intelligence'.) However, this still leaves the question of emotional regulation, recognition or management. We have little doubt that some people are naturally better at this than others and that for some people, such as leaders, it may contribute to their success.[48] It is common for people to see traditional IQ and emotional intelligence (as emotional ability) in opposition to one another but this need not be the case. Whatever you may think of them as people, Tony Blair and Bill Clinton are two figures who are gifted intellectually but who are likely to score high on at least some branches of emotional intelligence.

But while we think there may be some people who are naturally better at managing their own emotions and reading others this immediately raises the question – what are the potential benefits of allocating valuable education time to formally teaching young people emotional ability? Mayer, Salovey and Caruso give a fascinating insight into this in a 2004 article:

> ***A composite picture.*** *The high EI individual, most centrally, can better perceive emotions, use them in thought, understand their meanings, and manage emotions better than others. Solving emotional problems likely requires less cognitive effort for this individual. The person also tends to be somewhat higher in verbal, social, and other intelligences, particularly if the individual scored higher in the understanding emotions portion of EI. The individual tends to be more open and agreeable than others. The high EI person is drawn to occupations involving social interactions such as teaching and counselling more so than other occupations involving clerical or administrative tasks.*

> *… The high EI person is more likely to have possessions of sentimental attachment around the home and to have more positive social interactions, particularly if the individual scored highly on emotional management. Such individuals may also be more adept at describing motivational goals, aims and missions.*[49]

In short, emotional protégés look very like the people who are the strongest advocates, and facilitators, of emotional intelligence work: teachers, counsellors, coaches, trainers and leaders. Mayer et al write that emotionally intelligent people are less likely to be involved in clerical or administrative tasks (activities which tend to be dismissed) but this raises the question: could this also include professions which society does tend to value more such as scientists, engineers and artists? If so do we want to gear our education system more to the production of teachers, counsellors and marketing people? Do we have a problem getting enough people of this type? Of course, we should value these professions but if emotional intelligence skills are particularly relevant to these occupational groups then this training could, and should, be carried out more appropriately as occupational training – not at nursery, primary or even secondary schools.

The downside

It is also useful to note before passing on that like all things in life EI can be overdone – that someone can be too emotionally intelligent in one or more of the branches. Peter Salovey quotes research which shows that people high in EI tend not to be 'creative'.[50] Being creative requires an individual to express themselves as an individual and this can be inhibited, rather than facilitated, by too much attention to what other people think or feel. This may also apply to enterprising activity if what an individual wants to do is not necessarily supported by other people in their circle.

Secondly, the dark-side of emotional intelligence is manipulation. This is in part about someone understanding other people's motivations and feelings and then using this knowledge, often discreetly, to achieve their goals. These are the skills of conmen, fast-talking salespeople or the 'hidden persuaders' of the political or marketing world. Remember, emotional intelligence is neutral and can be used for moral or immoral purposes.

Emotional Intelligence as a panacea for social problems

In the large quote from Mayer et al above on what the high EI individual looks like one sentence was omitted and to which we should now return. They also argue that this type of individual 'relative to others is less apt to engage in problem behaviours and avoids self-destructive, negative behaviours such as smoking,

excessive drinking, drug abuse or violent episodes with others'.[51] Since, on their own admission, much on EI, including definition and measurement and whether the skills can be taught, has still to be proven through robust studies we need to keep this claim in perspective. As they point out themselves some of the research is mixed. For example, one study showed 'a rise in psychological aggression with higher Managing Emotion branch scores'.[52] Matthews et al also quote research which shows that people who score higher on 'social intelligence' are more likely to be aggressive.[53]

The belief that EI is a way to reduce social problems also drives much of Goleman's work. Indeed if you read *Emotional Intelligence* it is apparent that Goleman thinks it imperative that we 'school the emotions' because of the apparent rising tide of social problems, particularly violence.[54] Goleman constantly gives examples of young people going on mad rampages of vandalism or violence and of people shooting or becoming violent as a result of fear. Throughout the book Goleman tells us that emotional intelligence will reduce violence, depression ands stress, improve health, family life, remove prejudice and make organisations better. In short, Goleman presents emotional intelligence as a panacea in exactly the same way that the self-esteem movement did a decade or so earlier. With hopes dashed on that front, many schools in America have now attached themselves to the emotional intelligence bandwagon.

Throughout *Emotional Intelligence* Goleman shows himself to be very similar to many American psychologists who see every problem in society as the result of the individual's psychology rather than anything about social, economic or political structures. In a book of almost three hundred pages Goleman never considers how the (alleged) decline in young people's impulse control, empathy or other emotional problems may be the result of participation in violent computer games, excessive television watching, the negative effect of advertising, increasing materialism, the impact of the self-esteem movement and the rise of narcissism, poor diet and nutrition, exposure to toxins or the fact that young people see their parents less as the result of a long working hours culture and commuting. Compare this with the view of neuroscientist Dr Michael Merzenich who wrote in the wake of the Virginia College massacre that constant exposure to violent games and media images is affecting young people. He also speculates that the rise in autism may be due to the increase of dioxins in nursing mothers' breast milk.[55] Recent research conducted in the UK shows conclusively that attention deficit order in children (which includes problems with some aspects of behavioural problems and impulse control) is linked to consumption of additives[56] used commonly in food and drinks consumed by children. There is also other robust research showing that supplementing children's diets with fish oil[57] can improve mood and behaviour.

None of these social issues is addressed and Goleman only sees one answer - fix the problem by regulating these young people's emotions. Goleman is so worried about American teenagers for one simple reason – they have access to guns. He writes:

> These teenagers are the first generation to have not just guns but automatic weaponry easily available to them … the toting of guns by teenagers means that disagreements that in a former day would have led to fistfights can readily lead to shootings instead.[58]

Of course, Goleman is right to be worried about this. A country in love with guns, and intent on upholding the individual's right to bear arms, rightly fears what any individual might do if they get angry. It is estimated that in the US, on average, about eight children or young people are killed ever day with guns - some of these fatalities are suicides or accidents but more than half are murders.[59] It is figures like these which explain why many of the 'youth development' programmes in American schools which try to teach EI skills are funded through violence reduction budgets.

What is astonishing about Goleman's concerns with violence in Emotional Intelligence is that he does not even float the idea of banning or restricting the sale of guns. He sees the solution only in terms of 'schooling the emotions'. Perhaps Goleman is being realistic as he knows that America will never countenance gun control but the rest of the world should be careful about adopting a solution to a problem which has originated as an answer to a specifically American problem. Of course, there is some problem with guns in the UK, but it is limited and may be containable. In some areas of Scotland and England young people are using knives. But again we need to look for a variety of solutions rather than going for what many Americans are desperately keen to see as a panacea – emotional intelligence; for going down this route may not simply be a waste of time and resources but actually damage young people's well-being.

The dangers of following in America's footsteps

> The failure of the self-esteem movement in American education illustrates the vulnerability of the field to inspiring but wrong-headed ideas.[60]
> Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts

There is one final issue worth considering here before we move on, which is not specifically about emotional intelligence but about its use in the USA.

America fell in love with the concept of self-esteem in the 1970s and educational and child-rearing practices throughout the US in the past few decades have tried to protect or foster self-esteem.[61] The reason for the interest in trying to boost self-esteem is that it was seen as a panacea – as something which would cure almost all modern ills such as teenage pregnancy, drug taking, violence, low academic achievement and so forth.

There was one problem, however, and it was lack of evidence. The empirical evidence did not justify this conclusion but this fact was ignored in the belief that the evidence would indeed be found. A well-respected American psychologist, Roy Baumeister, decided that he would provide the psychological evidence needed to support the importance of self-esteem. His research ultimately proved the opposite and Baumeister reports that this unexpected development was the greatest 'disappointment' of his professional career.[62] In fact Baumeister's research not only showed that self-esteem was irrelevant to academic success and many social problems, it also showed that those with high self-esteem were more likely to be a problem for society than those with low self-esteem. His research showed that those who thought very well of themselves were more likely to be aggressive or indulge in risky behaviours.[63] Similar research was conducted by Professor Nichols Emler who was based at that time at the London School of Economics.[64]

Much of this evidence has been ignored in the US. Lauren Slater, a psychologist who writes extensively on psychological issues, gives the following explanation:

> *Self-esteem, as a construct, as a quasi religion, is woven into a tradition that both defines and confines us as Americans. If we were to deconstruct self-esteem, to question its value, we would be, in a sense, questioning who we are, nationally and individually. We would be threatening our self-esteem. This is probably why we cannot really assimilate research like Baumeister's or Emler's.*[65]

Under the influence of the idea that boosting self-esteem will protect youngsters from various social problems and enhance their academic performance, teachers in American schools have given students copious amounts of unwarranted praise, protected them from criticism and competition and involved them in activities where the focus is on them and how they are 'special'.[66] In a later section, we shall return to and put forward some of the evidence which suggests that these types of activities have encouraged narcissism to rise in the US as well as anxiety and depression in young people. For the moment it is useful to focus on the academic consequences of this approach.

American academic standards

During the time that self-esteem has held sway over American schools their performance has dropped. Here is some indication of the extent of the education problem in the US:[67]

- American high school students are continually at the bottom of the league for developed nations in maths and science, outranking only Cyprus and South Africa.

- 73 per cent of public school eighth graders taking the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)'s mathematics exam in 2003 performed below the 'proficiency' level. 32 per cent performed below the 'basic' level.

- 70 per cent of public school eighth graders taking the NAEP's reading exam in 2003 performed below the 'proficiency' level.

- About half of college students need to attend remedial classes in maths or English. It is estimated that $16.6 billion dollars a year are spent trying to improve the basic academic skills of students in the USA.

- *Education Week* concluded in 1999 (at the peak of self-esteem building) 'that most fourth graders who live in U.S. cities can't read and understand a simple children's book, and most eighth graders can't use arithmetic to solve a practical problem.'

As this data shows, academic achievement is not only a problem for college students but there are also millions of children, particularly from poor backgrounds, who never master basic skills.

A whole range of reasons have been advanced to explain why American standards have dropped including 'dumbing down' textbooks after the war, the types of reading schemes adopted, the lack of standardized tests and so forth.[68] No doubt there is something in all these arguments. But it is also very likely that the ethos and practices driven by the self-esteem movement have played an important contributory part. It doesn't take much imagination or analysis to see that emphasising how the child feels in the moment, and making this more important than the acquisition of skills, could undermine academic performance.

It is important to note that for many years in the US as academic standards dropped grades went up. In 2004 48 per cent of first year college students reported getting an A average in high school. The equivalent figure in 1968 was 18 per cent. It is not difficult to see how such grade inflation could be a result of the desire to protect children's self-esteem. Many teachers started to give

students grades not for what they had achieved but for what they might achieve. In short, the grades awarded were often aspirational.[69]

As educational attainment figures have dropped more and more states have thrown money at the problem. Between 1960 and 90 class sizes decreased by a third and teachers' salaries tripled. Since 2001 federal spending on education has increased by $15 billion – an increase of almost 40 per cent. Spending on programmes designed to improve teacher quality has reached almost $3 billion under the Bush Administration. This allows local school districts to use federal funds to hire new teachers, increase teacher pay, and improve teacher training and development.

Tougher standards

The scandal over grade inflation has led to a movement for 'tougher standards'. During the 1990s this movement led to increased testing in many states. Schools that did not perform well were sanctioned or put on probation while the high performing ones were rewarded. Individual students who failed were held back a grade. This 'high stakes' testing as it is called, is now mandated by law as part of President Bush's 'No Child Left Behind' initiative.

A battle royal now rages in America between 'the tough standards' lobby who see rote learning, homework and testing as the way to drive up standards and more liberal educators who decry such a crude approach to education.

America's report card

The National Association for Educational Progress produce an annual Report Card on the state of American education. In their latest report (2005) they are quite candid that all the pump priming (and presumably introduction of more tests) is hardly making a difference. They write:

> *When will public policy makers finally understand that simply focusing on reducing classroom size, pumping more and more money into public schools, raising expenditures per pupil, hiring more school staff, and raising teacher salaries will not improve learning?[70]*

What NAEP want is for the federal government to deregulate schools and allow more competition within the system. But it is also plausible to argue that what would improve standards in American schools is to start questioning the idea that teachers should be trying to boost students' self-esteem and develop their emotional literacy.

American employers

The decline in academic standards and basic literacy and numeracy is a major problem for American employers. Even a decade ago it was estimated that American employers spend in excess of $30 billion a year training their employees in basic skills. What's more it is estimated that a similar sum is lost to employers every year as a result of employees' poor skills. Economists like John Kendrick of George Washington University and John H. Bishop from Cornell University argue that the decline in American productivity is partly attributable to the decline in academic achievement in the US.[71]

Dr Jean Twenge argues in her book *Generation Me* that employers currently complain that young employees want to get on quickly and make lots of money but they don't want to work their way up through an organisation or put in real effort. What's more they are very thin-skinned and do not like being corrected. In short, they do not make good employees.

Relevance to Emotional Intelligence

So what has this got to do with emotional intelligence? America's love affair with self-esteem has not disappeared but it has become intertwined with an emphasis on emotional intelligence, emotional literacy or social and emotional education. Goleman never mentioned the term self-esteem in his book, and clearly dislikes the concept, but self-esteem, and how the self feels, is still at the core of these social and emotional education programmes. Even if it is not, the methodology is often very similar to what was done under the banner of self-esteem as the emphasis on both approaches is on feelings. What's more by emphasising the importance of teaching social and emotional skills in the curriculum, schools are no longer seen primarily as the place where children learn academic skills and acquire knowledge. This is very likely to lead to a decline in academic standards.

America's fear of what young people may do with guns has been one of the reasons why educators and other policy makers are so keen to teach young people social and emotional skills. Many who argue for these practices are well-meaning and genuinely committed to social improvement. But in the United Kingdom we must be sceptical about their claims and their practices and very careful that we do not abandon our approach in favour of a country whose education system is now a national disgrace. Those who believe that young people's mental health and well-being is much more important than academic achievement also have to realise that the focus on feelings in American schools may be *fuelling* their epidemic of depression and anxiety in young people rather than counteracting it. This is an important theme we shall return to in section five of this paper.

Section 2: Emotional Intelligence/Literacy in the UK

> *… in spite of current theorizing about EI programs, we really do not know that much about how they work, for whom they work, under what conditions they work, or indeed, whether or not they work at all.*[72]
> Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts

The reliance on Goleman

The controversy surrounding the concept of emotional intelligence has not prevented the development of a whole industry in the UK around these ideas. Professor Katherine Weare and one of her colleagues, whose work we shall examine more fully below, writes that it was clear from their research that 'Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* is considered a seminal work in this area, and is much cited as an inspiration for developments in the recent past'.[73]

Those favouring more focus on social and emotional education in schools are aware that to make real progress they have to show that emotional intelligence/literacy is important for children's success in life. This means that they have seized on Goleman's overblown and unsubstantiated claims as a rationale for their work. The DfES Primary Guidance recommending social and emotional learning includes the following as the opening paragraph in Appendix 4 which is entitled: 'Research on the benefits of developing children's social, emotional and behavioural skills: current findings' -

> *Research on 'emotional intelligence' has brought a wider view of 'intelligence' to include personal and social issues.* ***Emotional and social competences have been shown to be more influential than cognitive abilities for personal, career and scholastic success, so they need to be central to school and learning to increase school effectiveness.*** *Working in this area can improve educational and life chances.*[74] *(My emphasis)*

The authority given for this statement? - Goleman, 1996. Education leaders in Southampton, the local authority in England spearheading emotional intelligence work, also argue that it should be given 'equal priority with literacy and numeracy' and put 'at the heart of the curriculum'.[75]

What is surprising is that Professor Weare, the leading UK academic in the field, simply glosses over the fact that psychologists have attacked Goleman's claim and that he openly accepts that no research has been undertaken which proves the importance of IQ vis a vis EI for the population at large. In a 2004 book on the topic she notes that 'it has been suggested that Goleman overstated the case'

and that conventional intelligence is still very influential. But she then goes on to say 'However, it appears to be true' that emotional intelligence gives people an edge over others who are equally intelligent. She then finishes the paragraph with the statement: 'So to this extent there is *no doubt* about how influential emotional intelligence is.' [76] (My emphasis.) This conclusion is at odds with the evidence presented in the previous section of this paper.

Goleman's work is also at the core of both Primary and Secondary SEAL: it is Goleman's 'five domains' which form the foundations of the programme. It is important to remember here that critics claim that Goleman's notion of emotional intelligence is a ragbag which includes any positive human characteristic other than IQ. They also point out that many of the characteristics he cites are at odds with one another or largely emanate from personality. In short, Goleman's work cannot credibly be used as the intellectual foundation, and justification of large-scale work of this type in school.

No doubt the creators of SEAL would counter by saying that while Goleman's five domains are used for SEAL, the programme is not overly reliant on Goleman's work. They are likely to argue that they are not using the notion of emotional intelligence as such and have come up with their own social and emotional competences framework. But there's little doubt that SEAL comes out of the same stable as emotional intelligence. Indeed in her book and report Professor Weare encourages us to be relaxed about the use of terminology and encourages us to see terms such as emotional intelligence, emotional literacy and social and emotional competence as almost interchangeable. So it is hardly surprising that as we shall see later, Professor Weare's approach, and that of SEAL, suffer from many of the same problems as Goleman's emotional intelligence.

Before moving on, I want to point out another link between the emotional literacy lobby in England and Goleman. Goleman's interest in neuroscience is also reflected in SEAL and those doing this type of work in the UK. For example, Elizabeth Morris, of the School of Emotional Literacy, who claims she was the first person to bring Goleman's ideas to the UK, uses Goleman's notion of 'emotional hi-jacks' in her courses and publications. Elizabeth Morris and others also continually attempt to link their work, or their suggestions for developments in education, to research emerging from neuroscience. However, much of this is suspect.

Sarah Jane Blakemore and Professor Uta Frith are neuroscientists and authors of *The Learning Brain: Lessons for Education* – an acclaimed book published in the UK in 2005. Blakemore and Frith state clearly that they think that brain research will in the long run have implications for teaching and learning but that it is still too early. 'Much of the research is not yet ready for implications to be

drawn', they write. At another point they state: 'Despite major advances in our understanding of the brain and learning, neuroscientific research has not yet found significant application in the theory or practice of education.'

Blakemore and Frith cite LeDoux's work and the emotional brain and at one point write 'Brain research *might* be able to provide insights into how to assist children in becoming emotionally competent'. (My emphasis.) Given that Blakemore and Firth see this a potential future development, there is nothing in this book that supports the emotional literacy lobby's arguments that their work is in tune with the latest brain research. It certainly does not support a headlong rush into the type of classroom activities now encouraged as part of the SEAL programme. Indeed in discussing how we might enhance learning ability Blakemore and Frith give more attention to sleep, fish oils and exercise than to ideas about helping children develop emotional competence.

The use of other research

Goleman's work does not provide the whole rationale or evidence base for the emotional literacy lobby in England. Ostensibly there are a variety of studies which give support to the importance of developing young people's emotional and social competences. Professor Katherine Weare and Gay Gray from the University of Southampton were commissioned by the DfES to write a report called *What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Wellbeing?* It was published in 2003. The researchers' remit was 'to undertake a study examining how children's emotional and social competence and wellbeing could most effectively be developed at national and local level and identifying those broad approaches which show most promise'.[77]

In the report the authors, on their own admission, do not undertake a 'systematic review' of the literature.[78] As in her other work, Weare is candid about how difficult it is to learn from some of the research which has been carried out. Here are the kind of issues Weare and Gray raise about the difficulties of learning anything useful from these studies:[79]

• There are a huge number of studies and they are presented in such different ways that it is hard to review and compare. Remember this is bound to be the difficulty with any broad concept such as Goleman's emotional intelligence. Researchers recently listed fifteen different components to what people may be calling emotional intelligence. Adding in the idea of social and emotional competences, or positive mental health and well-being, compound the difficulty as this then includes studies carried out on conflict resolution, bullying, drug and alcohol abuse and countless other issues.

- Many of the studies are of a 'holistic' approach and so this makes them almost impossible to evaluate let alone compare. The problem here is isolating the factor(s) which had most influence on the beneficial outcome. A holistic approach can include anything and everything about the school and its environment – ethos, leadership, rules, contact with parents, teaching style and so forth as well as the various elements of what is actually being taught as part of the research study.

- It is notoriously difficult to undertake any research in schools as it is a 'multi-factorial' environment. This means that there are always lots of variables which may influence young people.

- There is no consensus in these studies on what is being aimed at. This means as Weare and Gray point out there is no agreement on 'what is included or excluded'.

- There are no standard measures or indicators for this work. A parallel report for DfES on measurement instruments for this type of work found that there were 58 instruments in use internationally and that most of them were for social rather than emotional competence. The reviewers took the view that it was may not be possible to assess these skills.

- This leads then to the problem that there can be no agreed way to conduct research. Weare writes that there are 'almost as many ways of assessing interventions as there are interventions'.[80]

- Many studies do not use robust enough methods of evaluation such as base-line measures and control groups. Research undertaken by the Institute of Health Research in Oxford published in 2003 only identified 17 out of 425 studies that were rigorous enough to include – all but two of these were from the United States and were mainly conducted on students in elementary schools in deprived areas.[81] This means that not one of these studies was carried out on a typical pupil in an English school. Most of the studies were small and involved less than 500 students.

This is a daunting list gleaned from Weare and Gray's work, but we could add more. For example, many research studies are done on work carried out on programmes delivered by people who are most committed to it – often those who have devised it – and so we need to question the objectivity of these studies. A further problem is that the effect of these programmes may be weakened, or distorted, when they are delivered by people who have only received a small amount of training further down the line. Matthews et al refer to these types of problems when they talk about 'atypical results' and link the difficulty to the fact that these programmes are often 'especially well resourced or operated by

particularly competent or committed teachers or school counsellors or psychologists'. They sum up their review up school programmes by saying:

> *There are serious methodological problems with validation of school-based programs. These include non-equivalence of experimental and control groups, poor documentation of methods, over reliance on self-report criteria of success, poor generalizability of methods, and failure to assess longer-term outcomes. Where evaluation is possible, outcomes tend to be mixed and/or moderate.[82]*

Another issue is that the results, or benefits, which can be observed in such pilot programmes, are, as Matthews and colleagues point out, 'mixed' and often have small or moderate effects. In short, the results are limited and often only confined to one or two measures. Finally, another difficulty is that little of this research is longitudinal. The research is not designed to follow a group of children, with a control, and see what impact this type of work will have on them into adulthood. Another major problem with using these types of studies as evidence to support what is proposed by SEAL is that these are largely studies conducted over a specific period of time and for specific purposes. They have not tested anything like SEAL – year on year, explicit teaching of children from 3 to 18. This is an important point which we shall return to below.

Weare and Gray are vocal in the report on 'the importance of evidence-based practice'.[83] They say that it is 'clear from research and practice in the field that in, some cases, claims are being made without clear evidence to support them'.[84] They urge us to be 'cautious' and for the need 'to sift the evidence carefully'. They claim that at the 'LEA level' there is a lack of 'rigorous evidence'. But once they have said that they then forget this caution and in the rest of the document use Goleman's work, some American studies and the views of committed practitioners in the field (the very people they say lack rigorous evaluation, ie, evidence'[85]) as a basis to make great claims – claims which then form the basis of their recommendations to the DfES. This is how they present some 'key findings' in their report to the DfES:

> ***Key Findings***
> ***Anecdotal*** *evidence from LEAs suggests that work in this area has a range of benefits, including better behaviour, more confident staff and better pupil involvement.*
> *Evidence from the research literature had demonstrated that work in this area can achieve the following outcomes:*
> - *Greater educational and work success*
> - *Improvements in behaviour*
> - *Increased inclusion*
> - *Improved learning*

- *Greater social cohesion*
- *Improvements to mental health.*

While convinced of the importance of this work, some LEAs are worried about how schools might accommodate it, given the range of other initiatives and developments underway in schools. At the same time evidence from the research and work in some LEAs has shown that it can directly contribute to school improvement.[86] (My emphasis.)

One of the difficulties with Weare's work is that she is good at pointing out the limitations of the research base, and in her books equally good at warning us of some of the potential downside of this type of work, but she is too committed to emotional literacy for this to rein in her obvious enthusiasm and commitment to get this work off the ground across schools in England. At the Centre we have little doubt that Professor Weare, alongside other people who are enthusiastic about emotional literacy and are genuinely committed to the improvement of young people's well-being. When we read much of Weare's work we find that we are often in agreement with the aims and values inherent in her work, however, we believe her desire to see large-scale, intensive work across English school on emotional literacy is based on a prior, commitment to this type of work rather than the evidence.

Blinded by faith

> *We would not want drugs to go to market that are essentially untested and that have only their promoters' claims to back them up. Yet we routinely rely on such claims to buy educational and organizational products and services. People's lives may be affected in much the same way as their lives can be affected by drugs …[87]*
> Robert J. Sternberg

It appears that one of the problems with the emotional intelligence/literacy field is that because people like Weare see this type of work in schools as a panacea- as the silver bullet that is going to make the improvements to so many aspects of young people's lives – they become enthusiasts whose commitment to the work starts to blind their judgement. They lose their ability to be sceptical, to think through the potential negative consequences of what they propose and they ignore the fact that the evidence does not support their recommendations for young people to be given formal teaching on this type of work on a year on year basis. This is exactly what happened with the self-esteem movement in the US.[88] Huge claims were made for the importance of self-esteem but when the evidence did not support this they continued, believing that the evidence was wrong or that somehow the studies weren't showing what they intuitively knew to be the case.

Rarely did they question whether their approach was unnecessary or might unwittingly damage the young people they hoped would benefit. They never seemed to think there might be long term social damage.

In the case of Weare and Gray's report one of its major shortcomings is that it is based primarily on interviews with people who are committed to this type of work: people in committed LEAs, members of the Steering Group or academics from the University of Southampton – the authors' own academic institution.[89] In other words, they have not sufficiently considered views contrary to their own nor do they outline the reasons for the controversy around Goleman's work.

Given the lack of convincing evidence, what Weare and Gray should have called for are large-scale, well funded pilots in this area of work so that we could really see, in a UK context, what might work. They do recommend that the DfES and LEAs require baseline data to be collected on all new initiatives; that the DfES develops a research strategy; and that more money should be made available for evaluation and some other steps. But, despite the paucity of supporting UK evidence, and limited evidence from the US, they recommend that schools '*prioritise* work on emotional and social competence and wellbeing' (my emphasis). Weare and Gray go further and recommend to the DfES that they ensure a whole school approach is taken and that schools:

> *develop and adopt programmes designed to promote emotional and social competence and wellbeing that include the taught curriculum, and which teach emotional and social competences in a comprehensive, organised, explicit and developmental way.*[90]

So despite the very limited evidence at their disposal, Weare and Gray prescribe a course of treatment which will be as intense as possible in its effect. In other words, *this is no low dosage pill but a massive infusion of ingredients which they cannot know with any certainty will work but which has the potential to inflict serious damage on the patient – both the education system itself, as well as individual teachers and students.*

A mistaken assumption

Weare and Gray are adamant that for benefits to accrue children must formally be *taught* these skills. However, this is not a necessary part of introducing these ideas into schools. On their own admission 'There is evidence that the school environment is the largest determinant of the level of emotional and social competence and wellbeing in pupils'.[91] This means that much could be achieved through school reform which attends to ethos, behaviour, leadership and the like. Weare also constantly acknowledges in her books that 'a highly significant factor' in whether children learn these skills is 'the behaviour and attitudes of adults'[92]

they deal with – and this includes teachers. Neuroscientists Blakemore and Firth argue that 'imitation' is an important way the brain learns and that 'The teacher's values, beliefs, and attitude to learning could be as important in the learning process as the material being taught.'[93]

The fact that young people can implicitly learn these skills from adults should point us in the direction of CPD and other approaches to develop teachers' skills in this area, it does not necessarily mean a taught curriculum. Weare and Gray openly acknowledge that the indirect approach is more in line with experts' views. They write that while it is essential to get the organisational and teacher elements right for emotional and social competency development:

> *there is not clear agreement about whether explicit, organised programmes of learning and teaching for all pupils are desirable. Most who were involved with working in this area, including LEA managers, thought they were, but some experts had their doubts.*[94]

One organisation opposed to a taught programme is Antidote – a UK organisation expressly set up to encourage emotional intelligence in the culture at large. Other than letting us know of Antidote's opposition, because they do not want to see schools and teachers being told what to do, Weare and Gray do not outline the arguments against. Instead the authors quote some recent research into 'youth development' programmes which suggest that the programmes which came out best in evaluations had a taught curriculum. 'So there is a strong case for saying' write Weare and Gray 'that if we want to help people learn emotional and social competences we need to include a clear, well-planned, central curriculum.'[95]

But the evidence does not support such an assertion. Some of the programmes they quote have limited objectives such as giving young people, about to go to junior high school, problem solving skills. Another project quoted was for young people, largely from African-American backgrounds, to develop a 'healthy self-concept'. None of the research they quote is for a curriculum focused on emotional intelligence where children, year on year will be exposed to such training. Remember their proposals are for young people to have exposure to a programme for fifteen years of their life – ie from the age of three (if they go to nursery) to eighteen. There is no evaluation of anything remotely like this. *This is why we are claiming this initiative is taking schools into the realm of large-scale psychological experimentation.*[96]

In arguing for such a comprehensive, in-depth approach, Weare and Gray are making a huge, unsubstantiated assumption – because some work of this type may be helpful then more will be better. But this makes no sense. One vitamin pill might help our health but taking the whole bottle may not just be a waste of

money but could be dangerous. Psychology is an even more complicated area, than physical health, and we cannot make the assumption that more is better. This is easily demonstrated with choice. Some choice is good for our well-being but research shows that too much choice (often more than six)[97] is debilitating and if we are continually exposed to choices in our lives it can undermine our well-being rather than enhance it. The same has been shown in some research studies on the benefits of emotional disclosure. Giving research participants more time to reflect on their experience had a more adverse affect than limited amounts of time.[98]

Concealing the downside of this work?

In her book *Developing the Emotionally Literate School* Katherine Weare is open about many of the potential problems with this area of work. For example when extolling the virtues of self-expression she writes: 'An overload of emotional awareness can lead to paralysing introspection, self-centredness and/or dwelling or getting stuck in a difficult mood rather than trying to deal with it'.[99] She sees the potential antidote to this being the balance brought by other competences (an extremely sophisticated approach). However, in the report for the DfES this type of concern has not been permitted. In Appendix A 'Examples of emotional and social competences' Weare and Gray outline a list of what these might be – it is compiled in part from Weare's earlier work and other sources including Goleman. They preface the list with the following:

The need for caution

> *What follows is simply an attempt to make the concept of emotional and social competence more concrete through suggesting some constituent competences that may be useful to some people some of the time. It should not be seen as a 'blueprint for the perfect person'. None of the competences that follow are sufficient in themselves, almost all need balancing with other competences.* ***Therefore each section will suggest some drawbacks that can happen if a competence is practised to excess or without being balanced by others****.* [100](My emphasis)

However in the list that follows **no** drawbacks are listed. All we get is a uniformly positive list. So either the inclusion of this material appeared too negative to the authors or the DfES asked for these negatives to be eliminated. Either way we are only given half the story and readers are steered away from the potential problems with this type of work.

If you look again at the drawbacks Weare mentioned when outlining how it was possible to become too introspective, self-centred or stuck in a negative mood you'll see we're talking about extremely significant downsides. This isn't simply about young people falling behind in maths, or not understanding French grammar. This is about their minds being encouraged down a track which may lead to unhelpful attitudes which could undermine their mental health, and their relationships. And this is more likely to happen as Weare and Gray are suggesting *universal* teaching of these skills. In other words, it is not just children who are deemed deficient in these skills – it is all children irrespective of whether they are already good at them. So children who are already expressing their feelings will get lots of lessons on the benefit and encouragement to do so and thus may express their emotions even more. Those who already have high self-esteem, and perhaps too much focus on themselves, will be encouraged to value themselves and to feel proud when they might already be doing that more than is helpful.

We get none of this nor the myriad of other problems which could well arise. They simply aren't even mentioned in this report to the DfES. What we get instead is a list of strong recommendations for extensive work in this area which the DfES then uses as the basis for their 2005 Guidance to schools, mainly in the primary sector.

The problems with being too direct

Before going on to look at how Weare and Gray's recommendations have been taken up by the DfES we want to take issue with a few more assumptions underlying their work. The first is the idea that an *explicit* approach to the development of young people's social and emotional skills is a good idea. An enlightened, contemporary Scottish economist John Kay has come up with a useful idea to help us see the problem with being overly direct.

> *If you want to go in one direction, the best route may involve going in the other. Paradoxical as it sounds, goals are more likely to be achieved when pursued indirectly. So the most profitable companies are not the most profit-oriented, and the happiest people are not those who make happiness their main aim. The name of this idea? Obliquity.*[101]

Kay provides us with a series of examples of obliquity in action. For example, the fire fighters who have now reduced the likelihood of enormous raging forest fires not by putting out fires that start spontaneously (these types of fires keep the debris on the forest floor reduced) but paradoxically by allowing many fires to burn themselves out. Another of Kay's examples is the companies which are profitable as a result of great staff motivation or customer satisfaction, rather than

a fixation with the bottom line. The problem Kay spots is that people involved in modern organisations often underestimate the complexity of the situation in which they now work and underestimate 'the value of the traditional knowledge they inherited'. He writes: '… the answer to the problem is not better analysis and more sophisticated modelling, but more humility'.[102]

In essence, Kay is attacking twentieth century rationality with its functional approach and obsession with formalising outcomes and setting targets. In modern complex systems, this can have negative effects as it underplays the fact that there often has to be a much more subtle interplay between 'intention and outcome'.

At first glance the emotional literacy agenda looks like it is in opposition to all that functional rationality as it is talking about being holistic and putting feelings at the heart of the curriculum. But as we shall see later this is entirely deceptive. This agenda will be grafted on to the existing obsession with evaluation and assessment. Far from challenging some basic underlying assumptions in the education system it will be co-opted and used largely for the purposes of behavioural control.

Applying the concept of obliquity to our topic means that the best route to improving the social and emotional skills of young people may not be to teach it directly. Direct teaching could easily back-fire and, for reasons outlined later, actually undermine well-being rather than enhance it. Instead it may be better to look at other aspects of children's lives including school ethos, teacher behaviour and the prevailing culture in which children grow up.

The need for humility

John Kay talks about the need for humility but this is absent from the literature and reports in the UK on emotional literacy. One of Weare and Gray's 'key findings' in the DfES report is: 'Evidence from the field suggests that only a small minority of teachers appear to be in favour of work to promote emotional well-being and that the majority are reluctant to get involved'.[103] Teachers' objections are not adequately adumbrated but what the authors do say is that this objection is 'in part because they are not trained in how to do it'.[104] In short, they hope to design an initiative which will train reluctant teachers out of their views. On various occasions in this report and Weare's work reference is made to teachers' 'lack of comfort with emotional matters'[105] – the implication being that somehow they are inadequate or uptight. This is one of the reasons why many people find it difficult to oppose this agenda as doing so is simply proof of how uncomfortable you are with emotions.

There is much talk in this literature too about the importance of respecting people's views, of not taking a 'top down' approach and imposing things on schools but, at heart, this whole initiative is driven by people who believe that they are right despite their acknowledgement that the majority of teachers, and parents, do not agree.

The value of traditional knowledge

> *Contrary to the impression given in some of the more febrile writings on EI, we do not need to hold the front page for the news that emotions are important in everyday life.*[106]
> Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts

Kay also writes about respecting 'the value of traditional knowledge' but here too the emotional literacy lobby are implicitly dismissive of this. This is evident too in the international movement round emotional intelligence. Their fascination with recent developments in neuroscience which show how important emotions are to how the brain works is often used by the lobbyists to insinuate that somehow we have been educating people in entirely the wrong way and that we must start again. But the challenge presented by the new work on the brain is largely to philosophers and theorists who have seen emotion and reason as opposites. When it comes to practice, educators have been dealing with the emotional brain for years. For example, the emotional literacy lobby emphasise the need for impulse control and managing anger and frustration but this is exactly what teachers in nurseries and classrooms have been informally teaching children for years. Recent research also shows that homework, the mainstay of traditional education practice, is a good way of teaching children 'self-responsibility' and provides opportunities for children to learn 'organisational and self-regulating skills' including dealing with negative emotions such as frustration and anger. It is also particularly beneficial as it requires input from teachers and parents.[107] The point here is not to advocate homework per se, but only to show that traditional practices were effective in some ways for catering for the emotional brain.

Another example of how emotions were addressed for years in schools can be seen in the outdoor education lobby. They have always been fond of arguing that the importance of this type of education is that it provides children with an intense, emotional experience which enhances their learning and provides them with what we would now call a 'peak' experience. These advocates did not have the insights of neuroscience to support their arguments, but they always knew that the emotions generated by being outdoors, away from home and with peers meant that young people were much more likely to remember the experience.

So by all means let us factor in what this new brain research means for education but let us not pretend that traditionally our forebears were oblivious to the role of emotions in school life.

The fragile self

Professor Weare writes: 'Unless basic social and emotional needs such as love and belonging and self-esteem are met, students are not going to be capable of intellectual learning'.[108]

At the Centre for Confidence and Well-being we are very keen to promote some of the ideas from the growing discipline of Positive Psychology which does indeed outline the role that a positive, supportive atmosphere has for learning. Obviously too we are keen on the concept of encouraging children's confidence and are aware that traditional education systems have not been very good at nurturing this. But the above assertion from Professor Weare is an overstatement of the case. In the past many young people were schooled not just in cold classrooms but in an educational environment which could be downright oppressive. Just think about the treatment many boys got at boarding schools in the past where they could be caned by teachers and regularly humiliated. But this did not mean that many of them did not learn intellectually. Their learning may have been retarded but they often still did well academically. What's more we must also not underrate how many children can be galvanised into learning to prove their worth to a teacher who has unfairly written them off.

We are not raising this topic to extol the virtues of traditional classrooms or to say that it is acceptable for teachers to shout and use sarcasm. The Centre thinks that such practices are unacceptable. But those interested in this field should be careful about unwittingly promoting the view that human beings are fragile and vulnerable and will fall to bits, or be completely unable to learn, if they are not educated in an ideal way. Professor Frank Furedi argues convincingly in his book *Therapy Culture* that those interested in promoting self-esteem and emotional literacy essentially undermine human beings.[109] Arguments such as those advanced by Professor Weare can easily posit a basic fragility of human beings. This may be well meaning but it can easily encourage those in education to try and wrap young people up in cotton wool. The effect of this, paradoxically, is to undermine, rather than respect, young people's resilience.

Section 3: The DFES Guidance on Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

Primary SEAL

In 2005, two years after the delivery of the report from Weare and Gray, the London based Department of Education and Skills sent out guidance to every school from pre-school to middle school (ie for three to twelve year olds) reflecting Weare and Gray's recommendations.[110] The Guidance, which has 'recommended' status 'aims to provide schools and settings with an explicit, structured whole-curriculum framework for developing all children's social, emotional and behavioural skills'.[111] In other words, what it recommends is a 'whole school' and taught approach to SEAL in exactly the way that Weare and Gray envisaged. It talks about a 'spiral curriculum' which means that every year young people in school will be exposed to what is deemed an 'appropriate' level of material and activity. An appendix to the document lists 'The knowledge, skills and understanding developed by the SEAL resource'. These are broken down into five main headings:

- self-awareness
- managing feelings
- motivation
- empathy
- social skills.

These five domains come from Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*. Each of these headings has within it a number of 'I can' statements which are effectively learning outcomes. There are a staggering 42 of these in all. Many are similar to the competences outlined in the Weare and Gray report. They have 65 bullet points so some of theirs have been lost or telescoped. Interestingly the most obvious omission is Weare and Gray's competence called 'autonomy' – a subject to which we shall return.

At the Centre we are not traditionalists who argue that school should just be about the 3Rs. This means that there are a few aspects of this SEAL document which we would not take issue with. We particularly agree that the emotional context in which children learn is an important part of the learning process and it is beneficial for staff, on a whole school basis to acknowledge the importance of this and to factor in into management decisions and professional development. There is also some amount of overlap in our emphasis on confidence, and the type of activities we support on resilience, for example, and some aspects of the SEAL programme. (See the Centre's publication *Creating Confidence*.) However, we think that the backbone of the SEAL document is misguided and may actually undermine young people's well-being. We specifically question the emphasis on

self-awareness, managing and talking about feelings, calming techniques, the good to be me/self-esteem type of activities and the regulation of children's friendships. The fact that these topics have to be formally taught, year on year, we believe, intensifies the type of problems we examine below.

There are now literally thousands of resources to support SEAL.[112] Here we simply give a suggestion of the type of activities which are now recommended in the classroom:

Recognising feelings

A board headed 'How do you feel today?' where children have to take a peg with their name on it and put it onto a flower with an emotion (excited, nervous, angry and happy) written on it. DfES has a number of resources available to encourage children to register emotions. This includes a 'feelings detective' poster for children to register their own or others' feelings as well as a 'feelings fan' and an 'emotional barometer' template 'designed so that children can express the strength of a particular feeling, and the effect of interactions on their own emotional 'temperature'. There is a strong emphasis throughout this document on children being able to identify, name and *express* emotions.

Calming techniques

A wall poster which reads: 'Have you used any of these calming techniques today?' and then has cards which read – 'Say to yourself – be calm – be calm – be calm'; 'Tell someone how you feel'; 'Feel your pulse'; and so forth. Calming techniques are a major feature of SEAL and there is a 'Ways to calm down' resource sheet.

Regulation of friendship

There are lots of examples throughout SEAL on resources to help classroom work on friendship, for example, a child's poster which outlines 'rules for breaking friendship kindly'. There is a very big emphasis throughout the SEAL Guidance and supporting resources on school staff regulating children's friendships.

Good to be me

Part of this theme is an emphasis on the child feeling 'special'. The accompanying resources suggest that teachers undertake activities with children, and use stories, where the central message is how everyone is special. This is exactly the type of activities in the US which critics believe have been pointless and encouraged individualism and a fixation with the self. One of the stories which the DFES recommends using with young children has as its punch line:

"You have already given me everything that I could ever want. You have shown me that it is Good to be Me!" But do we want to communicate to children that *the most important thing in life* is their feelings towards themselves?[113] . Some critics like the Canadian Maureen Stout argue that placing so much emphasis on subjectivity and feelings has undermined the importance of objective information and data – what education used to be about. She links this to America's falling educational standards.

Secondary SEAL

In 2007 the DfES then brought out a 'Guidance booklet' on SEAL for all staff working in secondary, middle, special schools and local authority and Children's Services staff.[114] This also promotes work in schools based on Goleman's five domains. Appendix 1 lists 50 'SEAL learning outcomes'. Unlike Primary SEAL where there is more supporting activities for use in the classroom, many of the activities here are for engaging secondary staff, and pupils in discussion about these types of themes. This is welcome. However, it must still be pointed out that in the course of the Guidance booklet staff are repeatedly told how good this approach is for young people and how it is based on 'good evidence'. The word 'conclusively'' is also used in reference to whole-school approaches.

Difficulties with critiquing SEAL

One of the difficulties with critiquing SEAL and why it has attracted little public criticism is that it contains so many elements that any progressive professional, or parent, has to be in favour of something about SEAL. So SEAL is about formally teaching social and emotional skills but it also about Every Child Matters, social inclusion, reducing bullying, improving skills for work, improving attendance, reducing discipline problems. It is also supposedly about improving attainment and improving young people's mental and physical health. It is also about improving school ethos and reducing teachers' stress.

Presented in this way it is in effect 'childhood and apple pie'. Who could object to such laudable aims? The fact that we are being offered a panacea is clear from section 2.4 of the Guidance booklet when it tells us that the following are examples of what can be achieved with 'well-designed programmes to promote social and emotional skills':

- Pupils have higher self-esteem and confidence
- Pupils are happier and get on better with one another
- Pupils are more engaged in learning so fewer disengage from school
- Quieter pupils become more assertive and confident
- There is better behaviour in the classroom and improved attendance
- There is less bullying

- There are lower rates of truancy, offending and drug misuse'.[115]

What is also evident is that the type of work promoted does not hang together conceptually. Goleman's five domains have been critiqued partly because they have no coherence. What's more self-esteem features both in Primary and Secondary SEAL even though Goleman never once mentions self-esteem in *Emotional Intelligence*. In reporting on the announcement of Secondary SEAL in September 2007 Alexandra Frean, Education Editor of *The Times*, added happiness and well-being into the mix of what SEAL is about. This focus on happiness and well-being emanates more from Positive Psychology than emotional intelligence/literacy. The main leader of this movement, Professor Martin Seligman, is scathing about the 'all about me' types of activities and deliberate attempts to build self-esteem. His work would not give intellectual support to the feelings dominated agenda at the core of SEAL.[116]

Another difficulty with grasping what SEAL is about is that it is often discussed alongside the Government's 'Respect' agenda. This is 'a cross-Government strategy to tackle bad behaviour and nurture good'. Part of the measures used here are anti-social behaviour orders or parenting orders, programmes and contracts. Schools Secretary Ed Balls announced funding for Secondary SEAL in September 2007 at the same time as announcing fines for parents for not managing their excluded children. In the same announcement he outlined powers to give head teachers the authority to insist parents sign 'contracts' governing the behaviour of their children. On other occasions SEAL has been discussed in terms of improving discipline in the classroom, encouraging manners and providing support from teachers.

The amorphous nature of SEAL means that it will be difficult to evaluate its effectiveness. Some of what goes on under the banner of SEAL might be positive as the staff development activities helped teachers to develop useful skills, for example. But some of the activity might have happened anyway because of other initiatives. This difficulty with attributing benefits to the SEAL programme itself came out clearly in the Secondary SEAL pilot. The report authors write:
'Whilst many schools and local authorities felt the … pilot had made a difference they also found it difficult to attribute any impact and outcomes directly to the pilot itself'.[117]

This statement should be held in mind when looking at the results of the Primary School pilot on SEAL to which we now turn.

Section 4: Direct evidence on the ineffectiveness and potential dangers of SEAL

> *The great tragedy of Science – the slaying of a beautiful myth by an ugly fact.*
> Thomas Huxley

Between 2003 and 2005 the DfES conducted a 'Primary Behaviour and Attendance Strategy' pilot which involved 25 local authorities (Las). The Report on this work appeared in 2006 – after the Primary Guidance document, described in the previous section, had been issued. The research was carried out by Susan Hallam, Jasmine Rhamie and Jackie Shaw from the Institute of Education at the University of London.[118]

The pilot aimed to test the effectiveness of DfES strategies to improve behaviour and attendance in primary schools and embed the 'whole school policy and practice and work on teaching and learning'.

The pilot had four strands of activity:

A Continuing Professional Development strand (CPD)
This provided professional development opportunities to all schools in the pilot Las.

A School Improvement Strand (SI)
This was specifically designed to provide 'facilitated support to schools where behaviour and attendance had been identified as key issues.' This mainly took the form of 'teacher coaches' to work with teachers in the classroom.

Curriculum Materials or SEAL strand (SEAL)
This was a universal element 'providing curriculum work focusing on the social and emotional aspects of learning for all children in pilot schools.'

A Small Group Intervention Strand (SGI)
This was a 'targeted element providing group work for children needing extra help in this area and their parents/carers.' This was provided by a mental health practitioner.

Conceptualising the different strands

In essence these four strands can be reduced to two dimensions: teachers/children as the point of intervention and universal/targeted provision. The accompanying diagram shows how the various strands fit into these dimensions:

Universal provision

CPD	SEAL
Teachers	children
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	SMALL GROUP INTERVENTION

Targeted provision
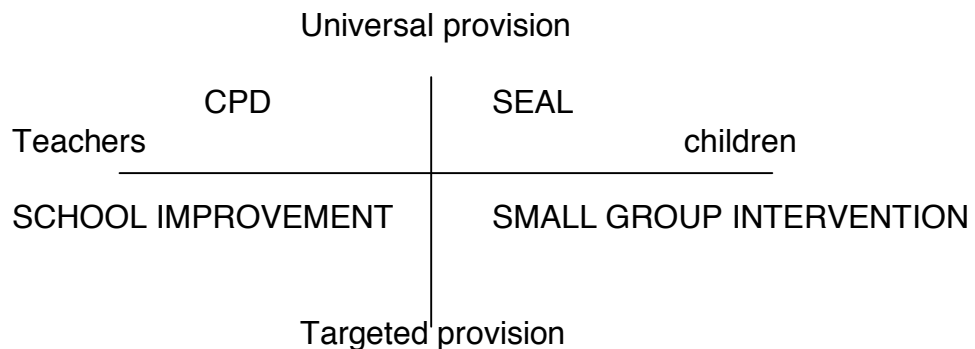
From reading the report it is clear that the School Improvement strand was fairly successful. Despite the fact that a number of head teachers and teachers felt threatened in some way by the teacher coaches (the teachers felt singled out for being poor teachers) the results show that this strand managed to reduce non-authorised absences much more than in non-pilot schools (though there was much more room for improvement given their pre pilot levels). It also shows impressive benefits in academic performance for some subjects at Key Stage 2. The CPD strand also showed some benefits as did the Small Group Intervention strand. What we are most interested in, however, are the benefits delivered from participation in the SEAL activities.

Before going on to look at what the report says about the SEAL aspect of the pilot it is important to point out some acute limitations of this research.

The limitations of this pilot study

No control groups
One of the main weaknesses of this pilot, on the report authors' admission, and contrary to the advice of Weare and Gray, is that there were no control groups.

This means that all the strands of this pilot are likely to suffer from what is called 'the Hawthorne effect' which refers to the phenomenon whereby people observed during a research study temporarily change their behaviour or performance as a result of attention and observation. Matthews et al argue that when it comes to EI related projects:

> *Experimental teachers rating students on outcome measures may rate students undergoing emotional training in a more positive manner in terms of EI, simply because they know these participants were involved in a special experimental project designed to foster EI.[119]*

In short, we have no way of knowing the extent to which the teachers' perceptions of the pupils' behaviour and skills following the pilot were due to the operation of the Hawthorne effect.

If the DfES had wanted to get robust data from this pilot they should have split participants into control and study groups.

The selection of participants for various aspects of the study

Another major problem with this pilot is the fact that teachers, and other staff, interviewed for the qualitative data were not drawn randomly from the 80 schools which set out being involved in this pilot (ie they provided baseline data from pupils). Those interviewed apparently came from 'good practice schools'. This is never fully explained or defined. Nor do the authors discuss how interviewing teachers from a particular type of school would influence their qualitative findings. What's more the 'post intervention questionnaires', used extensively in the report, were not given to all participating staff. The report authors explain:

> *Post-intervention questionnaires, including open questions and rating scales were administered to head teachers, teachers and support staff in a sample of participating primary schools in each LA to explore their perceptions of the impact of the various elements of the programme. **The schools for this aspect of the evaluation were selected on the basis of their willingness to participate and on the recommendation of the LA co-ordinators**.[120]* (My emphasis.)

In short, the staff who give views on SEAL are not a random sample of participating teachers or head teachers but are hand picked on the basis of some largely, unexplained criteria. This casts huge doubt on the value of these interviews to help understand how staff across schools viewed the SEAL programme and its impact.

What the report says about SEAL

The authors recognise on numerous occasions that there was a certain resistance in some schools and from some teachers or head teachers in undertaking this work. However, the impression generally given thereafter is that for schools which implemented the programme it was a success. This impression comes from the fact that the report contains many positive quotes from teachers and a few from the small number of head teachers who responded. For example, one teacher reported that it had given her 'strategies to deal with things, behavioural and emotional issues. Stress levels have been helped in terms of the behaviour…'. Another is quoted as saying 'There is a definite change in the children as they move around the school. The first topic that was addressed was the bullying topic and this has stopped all the minor squabbles that take place with children'.[121] These positive comments are also reflected in the majority of responses teachers made to the questionnaires about the children's behaviour and well-being. The teachers' response to the SEAL pilot was summarised as follows in the accompanying Research Brief:

> *All staff perceived a positive impact on the children's behaviour and well-being. Classrooms and playgrounds were calmer. Children's confidence, social, communication, and negotiating skills, and attitudes were perceived to have improved. There were positive perceptions of the impact of the children's work. Overall 90 per cent of teachers indicated that the SEAL Programme had been at least relatively successful.[122]*

Teachers report that many of the children generally liked the activities – which is not surprising since there is a large emphasis on this work being 'fun'. The teachers too were positive about the materials which they thought of 'high quality'

There are also a number of positive comments from parents included in the report though the response rate here was tiny – only 26 parents (0.5 per cent) gave any feedback although over five thousand children were involved right through the pilot. The Research Brief acknowledges this problem when it reports that 'Parents were reluctant partners with the programme'.[123]

When it comes to children's perceptions there is only one quote in the whole report from a group of children who were interviewed yet the authors report that 21 groups of children were interviewed. The only comment from children is overwhelmingly positive. The report states that the children indicated that they wanted the prime minister to be told:

The work should continue because it is worth it. It has made a HUGE difference to the school and it's changed everybody's lives. You are at school for most of your life and it has made such a difference. It is worth spending the money on because it is paying off.[124]

We are not told what age these children are or what gender. It is used at the end of the chapter reviewing the SEAL work and helps to give the impression that the pilot was a great success. Even if there had been more positive comments of this type quoted we urge caution in accepting these remarks. Children like fizzy drinks, sweets and watching cartoons on television even though they are not good for them. What's more these positive remarks could easily be the result of the Hawthorne effect.

The authors, both in the main report and the Research Brief, mention some of the problems but nonetheless are intent on suggesting that the SEAL aspect of the pilot had been generally successful. However, if we analyse the objective data on exclusions and attainment, the children's questionnaires, and some of the teachers' responses in more detail, a very different conclusion emerges – one that suggests that the SEAL pilot was not a great success and generated enough negativity in pupils for us to be concerned about DfES being intent on more schools being involved in this type of work. It certainly does not provide 'evidence' of the efficacy and positive impact of SEAL. Yet the DFES has used this pilot as justification for its decision to roll out SEAL to primary and secondary schools.

The results: exclusions, attendance and absence

The pilot programme was aimed to test out if these various types of activities could improve exclusion and attendance figures.

Exclusion

Table 6.2 of the report shows that the head teachers who responded disagreed with the idea that the pilot had reduced fixed-term exclusions and they were fairly evenly divided on whether it had improved attendance or punctuality. One head teacher, at least, said that the number of exclusions had *increased* as the SEAL activities seemed to encourage rebelliousness in some pupils. This topic is examined more fully in the next section.

Authorised absence

The report authors write of the SEAL results: 'The reduction in authorised absence in the SEAL schools was not significantly different from the overall

reduction amongst all pilot schools or all primary schools.' In short, it made no difference.

Unauthorised absence

Again SEAL did not yield any significant benefit and any changes were generally the same as for non-pilot schools.

The results: attainment

The Pilot was also designed to see if SEAL activities improved attainment.

For Key Stage 1 (5-7 year olds) the report authors were unable to compare the results with non-pilot schools as the data was unavailable.

KS1 Reading

The report shows differences in results for the various strands of the pilot. School Improvement (teacher coaching) made a marginal difference to the numbers of children attaining Level 2 in reading whereas SEAL actually *lowered* the mean by 1.29. When SEAL was added to schools involved in the teacher coaching activities then this addition actually undermined the coaching benefits and the result ended up being – 4.2. The report authors comment that taking all the strands of the pilot together 'the change was positive (mean pre pilot 81.93, mean post pilot 82.16) but not statistically significant.' Just doing CPD with teachers (without SEAL) yielded a better result than the SEAL strand of the pilot.

KS1 Writing

Results here were mixed though across the pilot as a whole the mean improved slightly by 0.23 which was not statistically significant. However, it dropped by 1.3 for the SEAL schools. The Small Group Intervention did better at + 5.5 and School Improvement on its own by + 2.7 though this was from a much lower baseline figure.

KS1 Mathematics

Across the pilot as a whole there was no statistical change and the mean rose merely by 0.52. The result for SEAL on its own was -2.8. In other words, schools participating in SEAL reduced their results for maths.

So we can see that the attainment results for SEAL at KS1 are negative for maths, writing and reading.

For Key Stage 2 (7 – 11 year olds) comparative data was available for all primary schools. What this shows is that on some of the data the percentage of children attaining the academic level in question in the pilot groups was often lower than it was in the average for primary schools as a whole. This means that we must continually bear in mind that the scope for improvement in some of the pilot schools is much greater. In other words, it may have been easier with improvements in teaching, for example, to raise the number of pupils attaining the desired level by 5 percentage points when the base line figure is 65 per cent rather than 80 per cent.

KS2 English

The improvement figure for the SEAL schools was 3.8 which was exactly the same as for all primary schools in England that year. In other words, there was no benefit from being involved with SEAL. The SI strand did exceptionally well at + 9.1 but as the authors point out their baseline figures were low so there was much more room for improvement.

KS2 Mathematics

There was general improvement in maths scores and across the pilot this was slightly higher than primary schools as a whole. At first glance the SEAL schools do seem to have done well here. In primary schools as a whole the improvement was 2.6 whereas in SEAL schools it was 4.4. However, the baseline mean for SEAL schools was lower than the mean for all primary schools, so there was room for improvement. (The SEAL base line mean was 69 per cent and for all primary schools it was 73.1 per cent.)

KS2 Science

The average change in primary schools was negative at – 0.1 and in SEAL schools no change was recorded at all so in this sense it is a better result (though not statistically significant). However, again the SEAL figure was slightly lower to begin with.

The report authors write:

> *At KS2 schools involved in the School Improvement strand appeared to make significantly greater improvements than CPD-only schools and non-pilot primary schools. This may have been because of their lower levels of performance at the start of the programme.*

This seems an acceptable conclusion but the authors then add:

> *Schools implementing SEAL and small group interventions together, and those implementing SEAL, the school improvement strand and small group interventions together appear to have made consistent improvements across all subjects from 2003-2005.*[125]

This makes it look like the common, and helping, factor is SEAL. But it is not. In schools where these three strands of initiatives are being piloted their baseline figures are in some instances 10 per cent below the mean for non-pilot primary schools so they have considerable scope for improvement. SEAL on its own did nothing for English or science.

The teachers' views on attainment

When asked in a questionnaire to give their response to how SEAL had impacted on children's school work teachers were equivocal as to its benefits (Table 6.5):

- An equal number of teachers agreed and disagreed with the idea it had improved pupil's concentration.

- More teachers disagreed with the idea that it had 'raised the standard of learning achieved' (33 per cent to 29 per cent).

- Slightly higher numbers of teachers agreed with the proposition that SEAL had raised 'the assessed attainment levels of pupils participating in the pilot' but, as we have seen, this was not supported by the data.

From the above it is clear that *SEAL on its own did not* improve attainment levels yet this is how the authors sign off their report on the SEAL strand of activity:

> *To ensure that the programme is implemented successfully LAs need to ensure that teachers receive appropriate training in the use of the materials and in relation to their own emotional and social skills.* **Evidence needs to be presented that the implementation of SEAL has a positive impact on academic standards and is not in conflict with them.**[126] (My emphasis)

To what evidence do they refer? Certainly not the evidence contained in their report. Matthews et al also report that there is no reliable evidence of improvements in academic performance from international studies of programmes on social and emotional skills.[127]

There is one simple reason why devoting time to this material in the classroom is much more likely to undermine, rather than enhance, academic skills – time. Time devoted to these programmes means less time devoted to academic skills.

Impact on pupils

As we have seen the teachers are more of the view that the SEAL programme promoted children's 'emotional well-being' and most are of the view that it helped the level of anxiety in the classroom, improved children's behaviour and relationships. (However, it is important to note that only a small number of teachers responded – 31.) Non-teaching staff (a group of only 19) were also very positive about the effect on pupils. **However, the questionnaire responses from pupils present a different story.**

Thousands of pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 in 78 schools completed pre and post pilot questionnaires. Questionnaire data was then grouped into a number of different categories – for example, self-esteem and motivation, social skills and relationships. There are some slight differences in the categories for KS1 and KS2.

5-7 year old pupils

The data for Key Stage 1 pupils is presented in Table 6.6 in the report. It lists the various attitudes on the left and then gives data for pupils from the reception class, Year 1 and Year 2. It also gives information on the significance of the change. However, the table is very hard to read as it does not allow for easy comparison of the pre and post results. Another complication is that it gives the mean for the questionnaire responses in a way that does not allow ease of comparison between the categories. For example, self-esteem has a total maximum score of 15 whereas academic work has a maximum score of 9.

So to make the data easy to understand we have rearranged it by putting pre and post scores beside each other and translating all the means to percentages so that we can more easily compare across the various questions asked (see Table 1).

Table 1: Analysis of pilot findings on pupils' responses (%) at key stage 1 (reworked data from table 6.6 in pilot study)

	Reception Pre	Reception Post	Change	Year 1 Pre	Year 1 Post	Change	Year 2 Pre	Year 2 Post	Change
Self Esteem and Motivation (15)	97	94	- 3	95	95	0	95	96	+ 1
Emotions and Awareness of them in Self and Others (18)	86	83	- 3	82	83	+ 1	82	84	+ 2
Social Skills and Relationships (21)	88	88	0	88	87	- 1	88	88	0
Attitudes Towards School and Relationships with Others (15)	95	93	- 2	91	90	- 1	89	93	+ 4
Academic Work (9)	84	83	- 1	82	80	- 2	81	80	- 1

What the data shows is that for the reception class the results dropped for four out of five categories and remained static in one. For Year 1 they dropped in three out of five, went up by 1 per cent in one and stayed the same in another. Year 2 did better with positive changes for three out of the five categories – though it is interesting to note that the area where there was a drop was attitudes to academic work. The table in the report tells us that all these changes (except academic work) are not statistically significant. These results do not suggest that the SEAL pilot was successful.

5–7 year olds: gender

The data becomes more interesting when it is analysed by gender (Table 6.7 in the report). This data is no longer broken down by year group and is shown for the three years across the pilot at Key Stage 1. Again we have translated this data into a table which is much easier to read (see Table 2).

Table 2: Analysis of pupils' responses (%) by gender at key stage 1 (reworked data from table 6.7 in pilot study)

	Girls Pre	Girls Post	Change	Boys Pre	Boys Post	Change
Self Esteem and Motivation (15)	95	95	0	93	94	+ 1
Emotions and Awareness of them in Self and Others (18)	83	84	+ 1	82	81	- 1
Social Skills and Relationships(21)	88	88.	0	86	86	0
Attitudes Towards School and Relationships with Others (15)	93	93	0	89	89	0
Academic Work (9)	82	82	0	79	79	0

What emerges is that for four out of the five categories the girls recorded no change. Only in one category was there a positive change. For boys there was a positive change for self-esteem/motivation but negative changes for 'emotions and awareness of them in self and others' and no changes in the others. We are told that all these gender results are statistically significant.

This gender difference is not simply continued but intensified for children at Key Stage 2.

8-11 year olds

The report's Key Stage 2 results (table 6.9) are presented below. This shows that there are 6 positive results, 15 negative results and 11 where there was no change (see Table 3).

The report's authors write:

> *There were some statistically significant changes between pre and post questionnaire responses. There were statistically significant changes for Perceptions of own Emotions (negative), Awareness of Emotions in Others (positive change), Social Skills and Relationships (positive), Attitudes towards Schools and Relationships with Teachers (negative), and Academic Work*

(negative). **The negative change in Perception of Own Emotions does not appear to be age related and is therefore likely to be a reflection of the impact of the programme, making the children more aware of and critical of their own emotional responses**.[128] *(*My emphasis.)

The authors maintain that there is a positive change in social skills and relationships but while there were improvements in the year 3 group, across the classes studied, the overall figure declined - not a statistically significant change perhaps but not a general improvement as the authors make out.

8–11 year olds: gender

Again the most interesting data emerges when it is analysed by gender. Both boys and girls only increased in one category. However, across the results the boys' figures are more negative. For boys they fell in five of the eight categories and for girls they fell in three. Across the eight categories, the girls dropped by 2 per cent and the boys by 6 per cent. The biggest drop of all – by 4 per cent – was for boys, again in the category called 'awareness of own emotions'. The report authors write: 'there were statistically significant gender differences in relation to almost all of the scales prior to and following the programme with the girls exhibiting more positive responses in all cases' (see Table 4).[129] What this really means is that the girls results were not mainly positive but they displayed *less negative* responses overall when compared with the boys.

What is also interesting, particularly given the fact that the teachers who responded to questionnaires tended to say there had been improvements in their relationships with pupils, is that there is a uniformly negative picture in this table for boys' and girls' attitudes to school work and relationships with teachers.   Both boys and girls have become more negative about school work, attitudes to school and relationships with teachers and towards academic work.

We shall consider a number of possible explanations for why these results may have dropped – particularly for boys- in the next section of this report.

The problem with self-reported responses

It is also important to be aware that some of the children's responses are measuring attitudes (towards school or themselves, for example) but some are trying to measure, or at least infer skill level, from the children's responses. So in Key Stage 1 one of the questions is 'I know when my friends are starting to get sad'. However, self-report questionnaires on emotional intelligence have been consistently shown to be unreliable.[130] A child could easily say 'yes' to this question because he or she think they can (and knows it is desirable) but actually

is deficient in this skill. Mayer and Salovey's questionnaires on EI are considered much better than self-report measures as they assess emotional ability, for example, by giving respondents pictures of faces and asking them to assign emotions. It is only by carrying out this type of research that researchers are able to know if this type of emotional ability is there or not and whether it has increased. Nothing like this has been attempted here so when the researchers say that children's 'perceptions of others' emotions' or their social skills have improved or their 'social skills' as a result of the pilot they simply do not have the evidence to support this. All they have are children's subjective viewpoints on these questions. We are not arguing that these subjective responses have no value but, without actual supporting evidence, they are not good enough to base the claim that skills have been developed.

What is the problem SEAL is trying to address?

It is worth pointing out that in the report the authors never comment on the children's baseline figures on the questionnaires. But this information is important. Table 5 presents the results for KS1 and KS2.

The figures for Key Stage 1 are extremely high as baseline figures. Looking at these figures it seems odd to assume that there is any *universal* problem to be addressed. The figures here simply show the range of means for these year groups and not the range of scores. We do not know from the data presented in the report what were the highest and lowest pupil responses.

It is worth pointing out here that even the boys' means scores are very high. For example, the boys' mean score, before the pilot, for social skills and relationships is 86 per cent and understanding emotions in self and others 82 per cent. Of course, there may be some children who score very low and who may need some additional help from the teacher or from a specialist. But some children undoubtedly would have scored exceedingly high on social skills, self-esteem or awareness of emotions and encouraging them to be more like that may not be an advantage to them. This is a theme we shall return to in the next section.

These remarks generally hold true for Key Stage 2 as well. The lowest base-line mean for self-esteem and motivation is still high and all the other scores are very positive. The lowest figure interestingly is *anxiety about school work*. Since the SEAL programme requires considerable school time this may increase pupil anxiety rather than decrease it.

Again the boys' means at Key Stage 2 are not remarkably low – scoring only 2-4 per cent lower than the girls on some of the emotions scores. The lowest mean score at Key Stage 2 is 59 per cent for boys and it is for 'anxiety about school work'. This is the score where there is the biggest gap between boys and girls –

Table 3: Analysis of pilot findings on pupils' responses (%) at key stage 2 (reworked data from table 6.9 in pilot study)

	Yr 3 Pre	Yr 3 Post	Change	Yr 4 Pre	Yr 4 Post	Change	Yr 5 Pre	Yr 5 Post	Change	Yr 6 Pre	Yr 6 Post	Change
Self Esteem and Motivation (25)	88	89	+ 1	88	89	+ 1	88	87	- 1	87	87	0
Perceptions of own Emotions (20)	71	70	- 1	70	69	- 1	70	69	- 1	70	70	0
Awareness of own Emotions (5)	74	74	0	72	74	+ 2	74	72	- 2.	72	72	0
Awareness of Emotions in Others (5)	76	80	+ 4	78	80	+ 2	78	78	0	78	80	+ 2
Anxiety about School Work (10)	61	60	- 1	61	61	0	61	61	0	60	60	0
Social Skills and Relationships (60)	77	77	0	78	78	0	79	78	-1	79	78	-1
Attitudes towards school (30)	84	82	- 2	81	80	- 1	78	78	0	77	75.	- 2
Academic Work (45)	77	76	-1	76	75	-1	74	72	-2	74	70	- 4

Table 4: Analysis of pilot findings on pupils' responses (%) by gender at key stage 2 (reworked data from table 6.10 in pilot study)

	Girls Pre	Girls Post	Change	Boys Pre	Boys Post	Change
Self Esteem and Motivation (25)	88	88	0	88	88	0
Perceptions of own Emotions (20)	72	72	0	68	67	-1
Awareness of own Emotions (5)	74	74	0	76	72	- 4
Awareness of Emotions in Others (5)	78	80	+ 2	76	78	+ 2
Anxiety about School Work (10)	65	64	- 1	59	58	- 1
Social Skills and Relationships (60)	78	78	0	77	77	0
Attitudes towards school (30)	82	81	- 1	77	76	- 1
Academic Work (45)	77	75	- 2	73	72	- 1

Table 5: Comparison of range of baseline means for Key Stage I and Key Stage 2

Key Stage 1 (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2)	Range of Baseline Mean Results	Key Stage 2 Year 3,4,5,6	Range of Baseline Mean Result s
Self-esteem and motivation	95 - 97%	Self-esteem and motivation	86 – 88%
Attitude towards school and Relationships with Teachers	91 - 95%	Social skills and relationships	77 – 79%
Social Skills and relationships	88%	Attitudes towards school and Relationships with teachers	77 –84%
Emotions and Awareness of them in Self and Others	82- 86%	Awareness of emotions in others	76 –78 %
(Attitudes to) Academic Work	81-84%	Academic work	74- 77%
		Awareness of own emotions	72 –74%
		Perceptions of own emotions	70 – 71%
		Anxiety about school work	60 –61 %

6 per cent – and no doubt reflects the fact that girls are outperforming boys in the classroom. The answer to boys' anxiety is to engage them more in education and teach them better. It seems ill-judged to start introducing this type of social and emotional training which, as we shall see in the next section, will indirectly tell boys that they need to start behaving more like girls to get good evaluations in this new area of school work.

Comparison of results for the SEAL and school improvement strands

In the pilot some schools participated both in the SEAL programme and School Improvement. Teacher coaching in the classroom was the essence of the SI strand and does seem to have made some difference to attainment and attendance. Table A.7 in the appendices gives a break down of how teachers

responded to questions about the effectiveness of these two strands. There are 25 items in all and what is most striking about this table is that for 18 of them the difference in response to SEAL and SI was so small that the result was not statistically significant. Box 1 lists the 18 items where there was no statistically different response, the items where SI actually scored higher than SEAL and the 2 items where SEAL scored higher than SI.

So the only two items where SEAL scored significantly above SI in the perception of teachers were 'raising levels of respect among pupils' and 'reducing bullying'. SEAL is a complicated programme, which as we shall see later, seemed to contribute to teachers' stress and did nothing to improve their workload. It did nothing for school attendance or attainment and had a negative impact on children's attitudes across a variety of measures. Surely there is a better and easier way to improve children's respect levels and bullying than a cumbersome programme, and potentially, damaging programme such as SEAL.

Box 1
Items in Table A7 in the pilot report where teachers' responses between items for the School Improvement strand and the SEAL programme strand were so slight as have no statistical significance:

- Improving the attendance of pupils participating in the pilot
- Improving punctuality in arriving at the classroom
- Reducing teacher workload
- Improving the behaviour of pupils when in the classroom
- Reducing management time in school spent on discipline matters
- Improving staff pupil relationships
- Improving staff skills in promoting positive behaviour and reducing poor behaviour in the classroom
- Improving motivation towards school
- Improving concentration on work
- Raising the assessed attainment levels achieved by pupils
- Promoting the emotional wellbeing of pupils across the school
- Increasing pupils' ability to control emotions
- Improving pupils' ability to make and keep friends
- Engendering positive attitudes towards school amongst pupils participating in the pilot
- Improving pupils ability to resolve conflict
- Improving listening skills among pupils participating in the pilot
- Encouraging greater communication between the school and home

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Items where there was a statistically significant difference but were in favour of SI as opposed to SEAL:

- Reducing the level of anxiety in the classroom
- Improving your confidence in promoting positive behaviour
- Improving the working climate in your school
- Raising the standard of learning
- Enhancing parent teacher relationships

Items where SEAL scored higher than SI:

- Raising levels of respect among pupils
- Reducing bullying

Conclusions on the SEAL Pilot

If we look at the objective data presented in this report it is clear that the SEAL strand of the pilot did not improve attendance or attainment and had more of a negative, than positive, effect on children's attitudes. All that is really positive are the responses of the fairly small number of teachers who filled in questionnaires or gave verbal responses. Yet in the Research Brief on the evaluation of the pilot this is how the SEAL strand was reported in the 'Key Findings':

> *As perceived by teachers, the SEAL programme had a major impact of children's well-being, confidence, social and communication skills, relationships, including bullying, playtime behaviour, pro-social behaviour and attitudes towards school. It increased children's awareness of emotions in others and the calmer environment in the classroom also led to some perceived improvement in learning and attainment.*[131]

We have little doubt that the teachers who responded positively did so in good faith but no-one examining the objective evidence presented in this report would readily endorse the above conclusion which is included as the only 'key finding' on the SEAL strand of the pilot.

At the Centre for Confidence and Well-being we are not suggesting that no children experienced some benefit from SEAL. There may well have been some improvements in understanding others' emotions, for example. However, there did not appear to be a particular problem to be addressed in these areas. Of course, there are issues to do with bullying in schools but this can be addressed through various anti-bullying measures and does not need to be addressed through a programme like SEAL.

It would be possible to conclude from the SEAL pilot that activities like these are a waste of time and money and potentially divisive for schools since some teachers and head teachers do not want to implement the programme. However, this would be short sighted. **There are good reasons to believe that activities like SEAL may not simply be neutral in their effect, and a waste of time and money, but actually harmful.** It is to these arguments which we now turn.

Section 5: Why the SEAL approach may undermine many young people's well-being

A deficit model

Emotional intelligence/literacy experts make great play of the fact that, until recently, some children at school were singled out for having problems and were then given remedial work to develop their social and emotional skills. We are told that this deficit approach has been eliminated as all children are going to be treated to SEAL. But rather than eliminate a deficit approach the DfES document has extended the deficit to *all* children. Every child at school is going to be taught self-awareness, how to manage their feelings and so forth whether or not they have a difficulty. The implication is that young people all need to be taught a range of skills – managing their feelings, making friendships, keeping calm – that previous generations accomplished without express help and took for granted. This is exactly what Professor Frank Furedi and others have claimed is leading to the 'professionalisation' of our emotional lives and to the idea that we are fragile, vulnerable people who need to depend on professionals to be taught how to feel, control ourselves and relate to other people.[132] In short, this approach is turning children's emotional life and their friendships into a problem to be solved. We need at least to ask whether this way of viewing life is one of the reasons why we have a *rise* in people seeking help for mental health problems.

What's more, as the Guidance documents for both Primary and Secondary SEAL acknowledge there will still have to be a 'tiered approach' to developing social and emotional skills. This means that there will still be a group of children and young people at school who are considered particularly deficient in these skills and who will get additional help. The Primary report even shows in diagrammatic form an inverted triangle illustrating three levels: the whole school approach for 'all children'; 'small-group intervention for children who need additional help in developing skills'; and then 'individual intervention' of an unspecified nature.[133]

An overly sophisticated approach

If you read Appendix 1 of the DfES Primary and Secondary Guidance documents on the 'learning outcomes' for this work, you could swear you were reading the prospectus for a management training programme or a post-graduate diploma in counselling skills as they are such complex and sophisticated lists of desired outcomes. No doubt the authors would counter by saying that the activities for these learning outcomes are pitched at a level suitable for the year group. However, there is no escaping the fact that the concepts underpinning this work, no matter how they are taught, are far too sophisticated for most adults let alone three to eleven year olds.

Here are five examples of learning outcomes from the two lists:

1. I know that it is OK to have any feeling, but not OK to behave in any way I feel like. (Primary/pre-school)
2. I understand that changing the way I think about people and events changes the way I feel about them. (Primary/pre-school)
3. I can change the way I feel by reflecting on my experiences and reviewing the way I think about them. (Primary/pre-school)
4. I can make sense of what has happened to me in my life and understand that things that come from my own history can make me feel prone to being upset or angry for reasons that others may find it difficult to understand. (Secondary)
5. I can see the world from other people's point of view, can feel the same emotion as they are feeling and take account of their intentions, preferences and beliefs. (Secondary)

The authors of the Primary Pilot on SEAL report that 'the psychological concepts underlying the programme were new and difficult to assimilate for some school programme co-ordinators'. A few teachers are reported as saying that the materials were 'too difficult for the younger children' and some thought the content of the stories 'too advanced'.[134] Professor Weare herself writes: 'Whatever they are learning, younger children mainly need very concrete experiences of demonstration and some rote learning.'[135] Which prompts the question - Would she really want children learning about their emotions and friendships through rote learning?

The messages may be conveyed in stories and other activities suitable for young children but the ideas they will be exposed to through SEAL are extremely abstract and complicated. For example, the first learning outcome outlined above ('I know that is OK to have any feeling, but not OK to behave in any way I feel like) is a complex idea that defeats most adults, and is likely to elude many of the inadequately trained teachers, let alone the three to eleven year olds. And this is not simply my view.

Professor Mark Greenberg is an associate of Daniel Goleman and a creator of the PATHS programme. In a book edited by Goleman Greenberg is quoted as saying that the work they are doing with young people where they teach the management of feelings is really 'primitive' – ie not at a sophisticated level of development. He explains how they try to teach young people to make this distinction between what they feel and how they behave and describes how many children 'often cannot separate their feelings from their behaviour.' Then he states: '… many adults have a hard time doing this. It is complicated and

occupies much time in most forms of adult psychotherapy.'[136] Greenberg is a professor and an expert on emotional development. If he is admitting how difficult this is to do, what confidence can we have that this will be done well by a teacher with very little training, with a group of twenty plus children, under twelve, for half an hour or so in the classroom on an occasional basis?

In her book Professor Weare argues: 'Assertiveness is generally seen as the most emotionally literate way to communicate with others in normal circumstances'.[137] I have been an assertiveness trainer for almost twenty years and have taught people to be trainers. I am aware that assertive behaviour is subtle and complicated. I also think it is very situational specific and requires a sophisticated balancing act. In my view it is not something which can be taught to the average child below the age of ten.

The problem with self-expression

Another key aspect of SEAL is the emphasis it places on young people not just recognising and managing their feelings but 'expressing' them as well. Students will be encouraged to talk about their feelings. Professor Weare believes 'We all need to learn to express our emotions, because expressing an emotion is an integral part of experiencing it.'[138] However, this view is not universally accepted in psychology. Expression of emotion varies enormously according to personality and cultural norms. The cultural variation is something which is accepted in the SEAL Guidance itself, and includes some information on it, but the architects of this initiative are much less open about the fact that the desire for emotional expression varies greatly with personality as well.

In recent years in western cultures 'the hydraulic' view of emotion has come to dominate. The hydraulic view of emotion is the idea that if people 'bottle up feelings', to use the everyday term, then the pressure will build up and they will either 'blow their top' in anger or have an explosive bout of crying. If this doesn't happen, the hydraulic theory suggests, the person may become ill. It is worth pointing out in passing that many eastern cultures do not believe it is essential for people to express emotions and yet this does not undermine their mental health. Modern western culture, however, has been very influenced by the views of Sigmund Freud. In his great little book *Emotion* Dylan Evan writes:

> *We look back at the stiff-necked Victorians with a smug sense of superiority. 'Emotional literacy' is held in high esteem. People who cannot talk openly about their feelings are regarded as psychologically immature, relics of a bygone age when repression reigned supreme. However, psychologists are increasingly realising that the hydraulic theory of emotion is too simplistic. It may well be good on some occasions to indulge in the spontaneous expression*

of emotion. On other occasions, however it can be positively harmful.[139]

This has become evident partly as a result of research into post-traumatic stress/critical incident debriefing – something which has become the norm in contemporary society. Following any disaster – rail crash, pile up on the motorway or shooting incident – counsellors are taken in along with emergency staff. The idea here being that the 'victims' need help with their psychological injuries as well as any physical ones. However, research shows that this type of debriefing/counselling after such events can make people worse not better. One theory, which appears to fit with the latest evidence from neuroscience, is that by talking about bad events we stop them from simply fading away through 'extinction' and simply keep reactivating the experience. What's more, people have natural healing mechanisms which make them resilient. In other words, our minds, just like are bodies, are designed to repair themselves. Counselling, or other psychological interventions, can get in the way of this spontaneous healing.[140] This is one of the reasons why we have to be very careful about introducing a focus on emotions in the classroom.

Of course, we cannot equate children in the classroom with trauma victims (although some children in the class may be feeling traumatised and the teacher may not know this) but the general point remains: talking about how you feel is not necessarily 'the good thing' which the SEAL document suggests. Authors of *One Nation under Therapy* Christina Hoff Sommers and Sally Satel (a practising psychiatrist) also fundamentally challenge the predominant notion that 'uninhibited emotional openness is essential for mental health'. And what they go on to say does has direct applicability to the classroom –

> *… recent findings suggest that reticence and suppression of feelings, far from compromising one's psychological well-being, can be healthy and adaptive. For many temperaments, an excessive focus on introspection and self-disclosure is depressing.[141]*

This is partly the effect of what some psychologists refer to as 'the negativity bias'.[142] The brain is hard wired to prioritise negative information and has a tendency to become negative through introspection. So it is not difficult to see why it may often be 'adaptive' as Sommers and Satel point out to deal with negative emotions not be recognising and paying attention to them but by suppressing or distracting. Salovey - one of the originators of the term 'emotional intelligence' - has the good grace to admit that emotional intelligence work has this type of downside, accepting that it may sometimes be the best course of action not to pay attention to one's feelings. 'A person might run the risk of becoming overwhelmed or even paralyzed by negative emotion or unnecessarily bogged down with emotional information from the external world,' he writes and

adds: 'There might be times when being oblivious to emotional states is adaptive'.[142] This may be particularly the case for young people from abusive backgrounds. Dissociating from their feelings may not be healthy but it may be better (more adaptive) than experiencing the bad feelings such neglect and abuse engenders. It doesn't take a professional to see that getting abused or neglected children to focus more on how they are feeling might make them feel worse – not better. Of course, this is the type of information which could be covered in an emotional intelligence course for adults – but is out of the question for inadequately trained teachers working with three to eleven year olds.

Recent research published in the Journal of Developmental Psychology has found that girls who excessively discuss problems and who constantly vent over personal problems, show increased levels of anxiety and depression. This was not found for boys. Rose et al, who carried out the study, found that the more girls talked about their problems the more depressed or anxious they felt. They first looked at whether depression or anxiety increased the likelihood that students would obsessively discuss their problems. The researchers found that boys and girls with emotional difficulties were more likely to ruminate about their troubles. Rose examined the effect of rumination on students' emotional well-being and friendships. The boys reported no change in feelings of anxiety and depression, but girls were more likely to say that they felt worse. Rose said girls got caught up in a 'vicious cycle' in which depression or anxiety spurred rumination, which in turn led to increased depression or anxiety. For both boys and girls, talking about problems strengthened relationships, but for girls there was also an increased level of anxiety and depression. These findings are in line with previous studies which have shown that support groups can reinforce eating disorders or delinquent behaviours. Talking about problems can be a good thing, but Rose et al's research shows that too much rumination can be harmful, especially for girls.[143]

Many adults would resist being put in the position of having to express their emotions publicly. The fear of this possibility is often what prevents a large number of people from attending some types of training courses. So is it right to undertake this work with young children when they have no choice about whether they are involved? The SEAL document says that young people should not be forced to take part, but as adults it often feels too difficult to opt out of something that has been sanctioned by higher authorities, particularly when opting out could land us with the label of being 'uptight' or demonstrating our lack of skill in this area. What's more, as we shall see later, children who do opt out could be assessed as incompetent in this area.

Why instructions to 'calm down' can backfire

In the SEAL document there is a heavy emphasis on the importance of young people learning how to 'calm themselves'. Of course, professionals working with very young children have always had to devote considerable time to helping children calm themselves and recover from upset feelings so that they can concentrate on other activities. Few professionals would survive working with young children if they weren't able to do this.

However, introducing the idea of 'calming yourself' into the formal and 'taught' curriculum for three to eleven year olds is something different. The emphasis on calming down is very much in tune with Goleman's work. Goleman has been influenced by Buddhism where calm states are valued and induced, for example, through practices such as meditation.[144] However, in the SEAL document and in the work of emotional literacy experts in the UK, children have to be taught more direct ways of calming themselves through breathing techniques and telling themselves 'be calm … be calm … be calm'. Most people reading this critique of emotional intelligence would have attended school when there was a basic expectation that children were in a calm state of mind – in other word, being calm was so much the norm it wasn't even mentioned. Some children at home may have had temper tantrums but it was unheard of in school, at least for children over seven, largely because of rules, expectations and teachers' behaviour. Today there may well be many more parents who are not managing to help their children regulate their emotions, and schools may have to work harder with some children to help them control their emotions and calm themselves. But what the SEAL document does is make 'calming down' into a problem for all children. Gone is the expectation of calmness – this is now something children have to learn. As soon as we put it in these terms we see that it introduces the idea of failure – of *not* being able to induce a calm state. It is very easy to see how by going on about how important it is to be calm, rather than providing a context where calm is expected, teachers could unwittingly increase children's feelings of nervousness around not being calm. In short, the focus on calmness could encourage some children to feel anxious and worried about not being calm.

There is another psychological mechanism at work which suggests that an emphasis on calming down in the classroom is likely to backfire. A social psychologist called Dan Wegner has published many articles on what he calls 'ironic processes of mental control'. What this means is that often by trying to control our mind in some way – e.g. trying not to think about cigarettes or trying to fall asleep – we often, ironically, induce the opposite. The mechanism at work is this: if we try not to think about a white bear (one of the experiments Werner recounts) then the mind sets up a goal (don't think of the bear) and will automatically set up a monitoring process for this goal so that it knows if success has been achieved. When the goal is a mental process the mind then

automatically keeps checking to see if it is being successful – am I thinking about a white bear? – and so the very thing we are trying not to think about keeps coming into our thoughts. Ironic effects are particularly likely if we are in a stressful situation or if our brains are being taxed, as they often are in an educational context.[145]

Ironic effects are particularly common around relaxation – the more we try to relax the more aware we become of being tense. Wegner et al write: '… too often our efforts to cool down, withdraw, or calm ourselves seem to backfire – producing greater agitation than we had suffered before we even tried to relax.' They even report that people suffering from anxiety 'who are given a paradoxical instruction to become anxious sometimes fare as well in relaxation as those who are instructed to relax'.[146] Werner and colleagues suggest that it may be better for professionals to take much more indirect approaches and 'disguise the overall aim of relaxation procedures in some way.'[147] (An approach which chimes very well with John Kay's concept of obliquity.)

In short, all that emphasis on being calm in the classroom could well make young people's excitability and lack of control worse – not better.

The dangers of political control and social conformity

Until the emphasis on emotional literacy/intelligence, schools were mainly concerned about behaviour – it was how you behaved or what you said which mattered. What you felt was your own business. But for children in England this has now gone – feelings, the most intimate part of our lives – are going to be managed ostensibly by children but in reality by the people drawing up the lists of emotional and social competences. As Professor Weare herself says deciding what goes into such a list 'cannot be value-free, culture-free or an apolitical exercise.'[132] She is acutely aware that there is a particular problem for children in this. She writes: 'The associated competences that are thought to be appropriate for children tend to focus on conformity, 'good behaviour', co-operation and positive thinking, usually adult defined'.[133] This is why she argues for a plurality of concepts for emotional literacy. But despite this, Weare and Gray do draw up a list of such competences in their report for the DfES. Interestingly, one way that Weare thinks it possible to get round the oppressive problem of a value-laden list is if we emphasise the importance of autonomy. She points out that few lists of social and emotional competences feature autonomy 'but there is strong evidence to suggest that this competence is a central one for emotional literacy and can balance out an over focus on the needs of others, and an unhealthy social conformity'.[134] However, while autonomy features on Weare and Gray's list in their report it does not make it into the DfES Primary Guidance document and the learning outcomes. Other than one line on being assertive, there is exactly the 'unhealthy social conformity' which she warns us of.

Even more sophisticated programmes based on objective emotional ability (ie based on right and wrong answers) have this potential downside – a downside acknowledged by Salovey. In this case it is not subjective views of list makers which will predominate but the emotional norm. It is not too difficult to see why encouraging children to read others' feelings, and develop empathy, could at least for some children lead them to be overly concerned with other people's views and feelings. This could inhibit them taking any action which others may not like. Remember Salovey reports research which shows that creative people often do not score very high on emotional intelligence since they pay attention more to their creative impulses – something which is often out of sync with others' emotions and views. Most great artists' work was seen as an affront to others who had more traditional views and sensitivities. The same may be true of entrepreneurs – another activity which often requires the confidence to be different from others.

The problem of control goes much further than who draws up the lists of competences on which children are to be judged and trained. The SEAL document has learning outcomes linked to 'managing feelings' such as 'I can adapt the way I express my feelings to suit particular situations or people'. But this immediately raises the question of control. Who decides what level of self-expression is appropriate for a child or which feelings 'suit' particular situations or people? This simple question opens yet another hornet's nest. It will in fact be teachers as they are the ones who will control and evaluate the process. It would be reasonable to expect that if they are going to teach children these skills then there is a blue-print somewhere which explains the level of self-expression which is appropriate or which feelings are suitable. But there is not and is it unlikely that there will be as this document would show just how oppressive this development is for every child in England. Instead we shall get total subjectivity. This is one of the reasons why some psychologists and psychiatrists have dismissed the whole idea of teaching young people emotional intelligence. Paul McHugh is one of America's most distinguished psychiatrists. As soon as Goleman's book appeared he was critical of some of its basic assumptions about teaching emotional intelligence, thinking that it sounded like a reinvention of the 'encounter group', which had failed with adults: the idea of trying it with children was 'abominable' in his view. He also criticised the idea that children can be taught the right emotions to have in different situations. 'We don't even know the right emotions to be taught to adults,' McHugh stated forcefully.[135]

Most of the management and expression of feelings will be decided and evaluated by teachers. As they have little formal knowledge or expertise in this field, they are likely to do little more than fall back on their own personal experience. Not only will this be totally subjective (and ultimately confusing for children who are exposed to different teachers) but teachers, through defining

appropriateness and suitability of feelings, will understandably mould young people in their own image. Even if this is done with subtlety and good intent, it is more oppressive and restricting of children's individuality than clear boundaries and rules on behaviour.

To be fair to teachers many of them don't want this power over children. In her book on emotional literacy in schools Professor Weare reports there are concerns in schools that this type of work is 'manipulative and coercive.'

Encouraging rebelliousness

As soon as we start to talk about the dangers of social control and conformity the prospect of rebellion rears its head. Professor Weare is aware of this difficulty with behaviour approaches as she tells us:

> *There is some evidence that using behavioural approaches with younger children to engage them in practising healthy behaviour achieves compliance in the short term, but can backfire as children gets older and more knowledgeable, and lose trust in the truthfulness of their teachers as a result of being coerced.*[136]

She uses this to argue that, rather than trying to change children's behaviour, we have to attend to their emotions. But why should this be different? Children are likely to react to attempts at emotional management in exactly the same way.

This is exactly what emerges from the SEAL pilot. While the teachers and head teachers who were selected to given their respond to the pilot were generally positive about the work they did under this banner and the impact on the young people, some acknowledge that it had a negative impact on some children. The authors state that some head teachers actually reported a rise in 'fixed term exclusions' since the SEAL programme had been introduced. One head teacher reported: 'The children who normally behave well continued to behave well and for the ones who are lacking in emotional literacy it probably has not made much of a difference and … I think in some cases has made children worse'.[137]

Another head teacher reported that some children 'have rebelled against the SEAL programme'. The authors say: 'It seemed that the SEAL programme impacted positively on the behaviour of the majority.' However, this majority were unlikely to be presenting much of a problem in schools. The ones who were a problem in many cases seemed to get worse and this is why there was a rise in exclusions. The authors' response is not to wonder whether this is the wrong approach but to say that the SEAL programme 'for a small minority was insufficient and more work was needed'.[138] Critics may well wonder if this means

if this is a euphemistic way of saying that that these children needed to be subjected to more influence, if not more coercion.

The problem with elevating feelings

One of the most noticeable, and worrying, aspects of the SEAL document is the way that it elevates feelings so that they are the most important aspect of our lives and hurting other people's feelings is a major taboo. For example, in the learning outcomes, against which children will be judged, it expressly mentions the importance of not hurting others feelings:

• I can express a range of feelings in which do not hurt myself or other people.
• I can make, sustain and break friendships without hurting others
• I can resolve conflicts to ensure that everyone feels positive about the outcome.

Clearly few would argue that hurting other people's feelings is 'a good thing' but elevating feelings in this way will exact an enormous price. There are three major issues of concern here: the problem with subjectivity; unrealistic expectations and an imposition of values.

1. The problem with subjectivity

Traditionally our society as a whole and institutions such as schools, have been governed by rules about behaviour – for example, thou shall not kill or run in corridors. Rules about behaviour are clear, though obviously there are grey areas such as the difference between running and fast walking or the difference between murder and manslaughter. However, making hurting people's feelings a major taboo takes us into very different territory. People vary enormously in how they feel about things – some people are thick-skinned others are exquisitely sensitive. People can also vary enormously in how they respond to what people say or do because of mood or other things which are happening in their lives. But now all that matters is that children don't hurt others feelings. In effect this means that we are requiring them to inhabit a world dominated by subjectivity where they do not know from one minute to the next how their actions, thoughts or feelings might impact on another person's feelings. And if they do hurt someone else they will effectively be marked down for it.

If you are unconvinced about the problem here let me bring in Daniel Goleman's views. Goleman is extremely negative about emotion (this is why it has to be so regulated). He argues that 'the emotional mind' (which he equates with feelings) is 'childlike' in its operation. It is concerned not with objective facts but with how it perceives the world. 'What something reminds us of can be more important than what 'is', writes Goleman. He then goes on to say the emotional brain tends to

think categorically in 'black and white' terms and that it 'personalises things'. He goes on:

> *The childlike mode is* self-confirming *suppressing or ignoring memories or facts that would undermine its beliefs and seizing on those that support it. The beliefs of the rational mind are tentative; new evidence can disconfirm one belief and replace it with a new one – it reasons by objective evidence. The emotional mind, however takes its beliefs to be absolutely true and so discounts any evidence to the contrary. That is why it is hard to reason with someone who is emotionally upset: no matter the soundness of your argument from a logical point of view, it carries no weight it is out of keeping with the emotional conviction of the moment. Feelings are self-justifying with a set of perceptions and 'proofs' all their own.*[139]

This we would argue is an argument for an intellectual education rather than an emotional one. It is a plea for critical thinking and philosophical approaches which help to harness emotions and feelings rather than the simple elevation of emotions, and attempts to manage emotions directly, which accompanies the SEAL type of emotional literacy.

What SEAL is effectively doing is giving subjective feelings a free rein in the classroom and the people who will pay the price for this will not just be children, but also teachers themselves. This is the point that Steve Salerno makes in a critical book about the self-help movement in the United States. He is particularly looking at how there is so much emphasis now on not damaging young people's self-esteem (a variant of not hurting others' feelings) and reports that in many school districts in the US teachers can be fired for undermining students' self-esteem. He writes:

> *One San Diego school district maintains a code of ethical conduct for teachers that bizarrely prohibits them from 'actions and/or activities that in any way might cause a student to feel bad about himself or herself respective to their peers.' A new hire might reasonably ask, And what exactly does that exclude? If anything?*

> *'The standards are so broad that they could be read to prohibit just about anything and everything' a twenty-year New York City teacher told me. 'It's an eye-of-the-beholder thing. If the student ends up feeling bad, you did something wrong.' Rightly, he asks, 'I don't mean to whine, but I am a credentialed professional who's been doing this job for two decades. I care about my students, and I take pride in my job. Where is the concern for my self-esteem?*[140]

This is exactly the Alice in Wonderland world that the SEAL document is taking the English education system. Everyone in schools now is going to be on the look-out for hurt feelings.

2. Unrealistic expectations

Emphasising feelings in this way is also setting up children and young people for anxiety and failure. Of course, there are better ways to break off friendships but there is no guarantee with even the most diplomatic method that the other person will not be hurt – and we are thinking about adults here, never mind children. IT is disingenuous to make out, as this SEAL document does, that it is possible to break off friendships without the other person being hurt. Likewise it is not always possible to resolve conflict to ensure that everyone feels positive about the outcome. Unfortunately we do not live in that perfect world.

The continual emphasis on hurt feelings is also likely to undermine resilience. We need to get back to the idea that the vast majority of people – young and old alike – are strong, resilient people who are not easily damaged by an unkind word or look. It is much more empowering for children to be told 'sticks and stones, may break my bones but names will never hurt me' than to encourage them to believe that hurt feelings are such a big problem we must take utmost care *never* to hurt people's feelings. Besides the world does not operate like this. As soon as these children step out the door of school they will enter a world which is not continually careful about feelings in this way and they will be far less equipped to deal with it.

3. An imposition of values

The SEAL document is at great pains to talk about social inclusion and has various passages about special needs students and those from different cultural backgrounds. It also says on various occasions about how the teacher must account for various learning styles. But what repeatedly gets lost in this document is one of the biggest differences facing teachers in the classroom and that is personality. There is hardly an acknowledgement in the Guidance documents that some children, and many teachers and parents, may simply not agree with the SEAL value system, or the type of being-in-the-world which they are trying to promote.

Of course, no one would argue that conflict is a good thing or hurting people's feelings should be encouraged, but people differ considerably on personality about how important it is for people to be 'agreeable' as it is described on 'the Big Five' personality inventory.[141] Some types of people argue that being agreeable is the most important thing in the world- it is their value system and the way they see the world. Undoubtedly it is good to hear the views of people who uphold

such values as this is an important message. However, there are other people (almost half the UK population according to research carried out by Oxford Psychologist Press) who do not share this value system. These are the 'thinking types' who are much less motivated by such personal, feeling-oriented values and care much more about principles such as truth, justice and integrity. Their mantra is much more likely to be 'truth rather than tact'. Even as children they may well disagree with SEAL's vales and if they are actively encouraged to conform it may provoke rebelliousness.[142]

The disregard for personality can be seen in the fact that Secondary SEAL makes clear that young people are expected to develop in line with the 50 learning outcomes. The Guidance booklet states on how Assessment for Learning can be used alongside SEAL: 'Encourage pupils to set success criteria for meeting the SEAL learning outcomes'.[143] In other words, they will be encouraged not to realise their potential and develop their own personalities. No, they will be actively encouraged, and trained, to become more like the personality outlined in the learning outcomes. This means that young people who do not want to express their feelings will be expected to learn how to do this, even though this might not be their preference.

A feminine bias

Professor Weare in her book quotes someone from the emotional literacy field in schools as saying 'School staff wonder if they are being manipulated. What is the hidden agenda of people trying to promote this work?'[144] This is an important question. We have little doubt that many of them are well-meaning and genuinely have the well-being of young people at heart. Though, it is also true that some also have strong, professional or commercial interests in this work being developed. For government there is the attraction of trying to solve some endemic social problems through psychological engineering and social control.

But there is another interest group here as well and that is a particular group of women. For example, the DfES Steering Group has fourteen members – eleven of whom are women… And this group do not appear to be very positive about masculinity.[145]

One of the most worrying aspects of the SEAL document is its treatment of boys. As we have seen what it is intent on doing is encouraging and valuing the development of a particular 'nice' type of person who expresses their feelings and is empathetic. In other words, they are keen to promote a way of being which is more feminine than masculine. And the SEAL document accepts this. Here, in its entirety, is how the author acknowledges the problem:

Boys and girls are likely to respond differently to some of the activities, and may find different areas more or less difficult. Teachers/practitioners will need to be sensitive to these potential differences, and to the fact that the expression of emotion, talking about feelings and being seen to be empathetic and caring tend to be seen as feminine traits, with the consequence that boys may actively reject them rather than risk potential ridicule from peers and criticism at home. Teachers and practitioners will need to be aware of these issues during the planning and delivery stages and it would be useful for schools and settings to have developed a consistent response to them. Positive male role-models are a useful source of countering such responses, and examples of situations, stories and role-play should, wherever possible, engage the interest and motivation of boys.[146]

That's it. That's all the SEAL document has to say, on the author's own admission that this whole-school, taught, year one year, activity may not suit 50 per cent of those sitting in the classroom – boys. Any difficulty that this is likely to cause is being passed, like a hot potato, onto teachers and schools to sort out and the main tool is their box is, as usual, likely to be nothing more than *sensitivity*. In short, schools and settings are going to have work out for themselves how to respond to the problem of gender differences and emotional expression which, if not actually hard-wired into the brain, have been around for millennia.

The whole SEAL approach is effectively ensuring a further feminisation of primary education: not only are teachers and head teachers increasingly female but now the whole ethos of English schools is going to be dominated by the values of a particular group of women who want, at all costs, to avoid *hurt feelings*. Girls who do not share these values are unlikely to feel at home in the overly feeling class-room but they are unlikely to feel as uncomfortable as the legions of boys who will, rightly, feel that this is not their preferred way of being.

As we saw earlier this gender difference comes out clearly in the report on the pilots. Some boys may have liked the programme and found improvements in relationships with others in the classroom but generally the boys showed no improvement or their results actually went down. The authors write: 'There were statistically significant gender differences in relation to almost all of the scales prior to and following the programme with the girls exhibiting more positive responses in all cases'.[147] These were the results for boys under twelve, the resistance and negative effect on older boys forced to go through the SEAL programme may well be much more pronounced.

A short-sighted approach

The sociologist, Professor Frank Furedi argues that 'therapeutic culture is hostile to behaviour patterns that demonstrate self-reliance and self-control'. This means that a traditionally male way of controlling emotions and taking pride in autonomy and strength are now seen as 'a fatal flaw in the male psyche'.[148] He does not argue that it is feminism as such which has come to castigate men in this way but a culture dominated by psychologists and therapists. This is the culture which is coming to dominate England's schools.

And it may well back-fire. What is required in schools, as in society, is a prevailing culture which does not expect everyone to behave the same way: which values and encourages the people who want to express their emotions, of whatever gender, and the ones who prefer a more stoical or self-contained approach. We are enriched by diversity not undermined by it. In England they are talking the language of diversity and personalisation but in fact beneath the rhetoric is the imposition of a limited set of, largely female, values, and the reinforcement of a particular personality type. In short, it is a million miles away from something which genuinely values the individual.

What we need in education, as elsewhere in life, is a better balance between what we think of as a masculine and feminine approach. SEAL is more likely to drive men out of education than attract them into it. Some critics in America think that the feminisation of schools, coupled with the absence of male role models for young men is having a very negative effect on their lives. Various commentators have observed that rap anthems about raping and torturing women come out of a world where men are too subjected to women's, rather than older men's control.[149] In other words, we must consider the possibility that well-meaning teachers repeatedly telling young boys to be kind and nice may back-fire in rebellion and disrespect.

The Centre agrees that we need young men to be taught the virtues of self-control and respect for others but this is much more likely to be successful as a result of men modelling these skills in the classroom or through activities which boys, in particular, are likely to value – sport, martial arts, outdoor education, enterprise or other skill-based activities.

The values and behaviour of empathetic, feeling women can be an asset in schools, particularly in the early years. They can attend to the environment in which children learn and can be caring and responsive to the young people. They can also act as positive role-models. However, teaching children directly that what they need to do is become more like them and adopt their values is disrespectful and disempowering.

Evaluation and stigmatization

Imagine for a moment the prospect of going into your boss's office so that he or she can discuss with you whether you express your feelings appropriately or enough; whether you recognise other people's feelings enough; whether you give enough compliments; are assertive enough or how you are doing on another 40 + 'skills' of these kind. This discussion will then result in your boss making some kind of evaluation of your skills and setting you goals for improvement. Depending on the framework used, some of your colleagues will get assessing you as well on all these skills. No doubt, like most people, you balk at the prospect.

Professor Weare in her 2004 book and in the report to the DfES, does not raise the spectre of profiling staff for their social and emotional skills. Her wariness on this leads to a bizarre omission. So, for example, in the chapter 'profiling, assessing and evaluating emotional literacy' she jumps from assessing the individual student to assessing whole schools or organisations. What is omitted is evaluating individual staff's social and emotional competence. And this is not accidental as Weare and Gray write:

> *It would not be helpful if emotional and social competence were to become a factor which teachers and carers are expected to take on and be assessed against. They need to have their own emotional needs to be taken into account, and to be valued and respected, be given resources and help.[150]*

But if such assessment is a no go area for staff then why is it acceptable for students? Why should we think it is ok to formally rate young people on lists of social and emotional competences? Weare, as usual, raises some of the possible problems and objections to this type of assessment and evaluation with young people, but then tells us it is not only desirable but essential to do so. Indeed she even draws our attention, without one word of criticism, to a 'Record of Assessment for Emotional Literacy Checklist' drawn up by the Southampton Emotional Literacy Interest Group. This 'checklist' invites the teacher to grade each child A-D on a range of social and emotional competences.[151] When arguing for 'early identification' of problems she writes that such a process 'need not be reduced to being a one-off judgement of a child and then used to limit expectations of them'.[152] However, the words '*need not'* are telling as they suggest that this approach *may well* be used by some teachers in precisely this way. We have to remember here what is termed the 'Pygmalion' or 'teacher expectancy' effect – an effect supported by research. What this means is that children often live up to teacher's assessments and expectations of them.[153]

The Primary Seal Guidance makes clear that children's ability and performance on the 42 skills outlined should be evaluated:

> *There are no formal arrangements* [as yet?] *for assessing individual's children's progress in developing social, emotional and behavioural skills … . Within each theme overview, however, there are descriptions for each age group of what children will know, understand and be able to do following the successful completion of work on this theme.*[154]

The document then goes on to talk about how 'judgements teachers make about children's progress' will be linked to various key stages. It also says that teachers are 'encouraged' to use formative, rather than summative assessment. In other words, children will be expected to discuss their skills in this area against a predetermined checklist of skills, take feedback from the teacher and set goals for improvement. Other children may also be involved in the assessment. This is exactly the process that most adults would object to. The Guidance document then says that as a result of this formative assessment, the children 'and others learn to value and celebrate their achievements in this as well as more academic areas of work.' From the various statements about how formative assessment is to be used to evaluate children's skills it is clear that the thinking behind this initiative is that there is a right way for them to develop these skills and a timetable for doing so.

But what if the child is not able to celebrate success as he or she hasn't managed to evolve the right kind of self-expression, for example? In brutal language what if they do not evaluate well on a good number of the 42 skills? Arrangements have to be made for the child who is having 'significant difficulty in making progress'. But what of the others who just aren't very good at them, or just don't want to be? Many boys, for example, who may not like this approach or young people with a preference for introversion who just aren't as expressive as they are now expected to be? Nothing is said about them but no doubt they have to be treated 'sensitively'. However, children are not easily deceived: they will know that in the social and emotional game of life they have been judged and found deficient. For those who are not performing well academically this is going to be yet another blow. The designers of these materials can talk about self-esteem and confidence but unwittingly the approach they are trying to bring into schools will lead many children to feel negative about themselves as they will begin to see themselves as failing to meet standard expectations.

Evaluating children in this way is not supported by many practitioners interested in social and emotional competence. The Health Services Research Unit in Oxford were commissioned to undertake some research into 'assessing emotional and social competence in primary school and early year settings'

following the publication of the Weare and Gray report and prior to the DfES issuing its Guidance on SEAL. The authors undertook desk research and 'a small scale qualitative survey' which asked various practitioners and academics in this area to 'identify issues and concerns related to the assessment of these concepts'. They make a number of points about respondents being concerned about the purpose of the assessment and its value. They write: 'The potential for using the results of school competence assessments to rank schools or children … concerned several respondents'.[155]

Not a child-centred agenda

This leads on to one of the deceptive aspects of this agenda. So many people nowadays have been put off by the target-driven, management-by-objectives approach which dominates public sector organisations including schools. To many it seems far too impersonal and cold to turn people's lives into this kind of data. So at a superficial level the emotional literacy agenda can seem a welcome diversion from this. After all the cold logic and strategies is it not great to hear people talking about emotions and feelings? This is further enhanced by the fact that advocates keep talking about the importance of a 'holistic' approach. It also seems to put all those government driven targets on numeracy and literacy in their place by urging us to be more child-centred.

But government departments and inspectors of schools do not operate like this. They will simply be unable to resist making this type of work in schools conform to what has become their standard way of operating. All young people's emotional lives (not just the few who have obvious difficulties) will become the focus of checklists of learning outcomes, assessments and evaluations. Who knows, the next step might even be targets! Professor Weare is aware of the difficulties with this agenda and the potential for bias and labelling but she cannot resist advocating this type of assessment because she knows that this work will never get off the ground unless it can be grafted onto familiar approaches to assessment. She writes:

- *We live in a climate where profiling and assessment are increasingly important in education, as elsewhere. …*
- *The growing emphasis on having a proper 'evidence base' for educational development has led to the need for 'harder' approaches to the collection of evidence in all areas, including emotional literacy.*
- *There has been a huge rise in the development of testing of academic attainment and some schools are keen to have parallel methods to use for assessing emotional and social competence.[156]*

Feelings, emotions and relationships are the core of our personal lives. They are an intimate part of us. The Centre believes that the prospect of all children's emotional lives being managed by professionals working for government departments *is a good enough reason on its own* to object to the 2005 SEAL Guidance and provides adequate rationale for our call for these type of ideas to be dropped altogether.

The idea of evaluating young people to assess progress and then encourage them to do better on a checklist of learning outcomes or competences is one of the biggest areas of disagreement between the Centre for Confidence and Well-being and the supporters of SEAL. We think that it may be useful in some case for teenagers to be given the opportunity to do some assertiveness training, for example. It may be advantageous to do before and after measuring of their skills in this area to see whether the course had any beneficial effect and used their time wisely. But this is entirely different from assessing the skills, or profiling, any particular student according to a predetermined set of competences.

Micro-management of children's friendships

Another worrying aspect of the SEAL document is the way that it suggests teachers micromanage childhood friendships. Under learning outcomes for 'social skills' are a number related to 'friendships and other relationships'.

- I know how to be friendly – I can look and sound friendly, be a good listener, give and receive compliments and do kind things for people.
- I recognise 'put-downs' and know how they affect people, so I try not to use them
- I can make, sustain and break friendships without hurting others.

The reason for this interest in children's friendships no doubt comes from fears about bullying. Research internationally shows that bullying is a problem in most, if not all, schools and that it can have a major negative effect on people's lives. In their resiliency programme for schools – *Bounce Back* – Helen McGrath and Toni Noble devote a whole chapter to the topic of bullying and speak authoritatively on the subject as a result of extensive work with schools.[157] They are clear on what bullying is and what it is not and we give some indication of their definition and suggestions for action.

Key features of bullying

In *Bounce Back* this is how Helen McGrath and Toni Noble define bullying and suggestions for how it should be treated:

A regular pattern of aggression which is directed towards one student on a regular and predictable basis. The intention is to harm or distress the targeted student. There is a relative imbalance of power in that the student selected for regular harassment is less powerful in some way at that time (eg more isolated, less aggressive, smaller, younger, different in some significant way). Only the targeted student is seeking a solution to the problem.

Appropriate action
• Reference to school rules and core values
• Warning cards followed by graduated negative consequences
• Counselling for the targeted student and perpetrators
• Restorative justice.

McGrath and Noble also suggest a number of activities which schools can take to reduce the likelihood of bullying. For example: reference to school rules and core values; communicating the message that bullying is wrong by linking it with human nastiness such as fascism or the Ku Klux Klan; encouraging children to be courageous and report incidents of bullying; diversionary tactics to reduce the likelihood of bullying as a result of boredom; and numerous other suggestions.

At no point do the authors suggest that teachers attempt to regulate, police or control all children's friendships but this is exactly what the SEAL document suggests. This guidance is predicated on the idea that all children have to *learn formally* how to relate well to others. In other words, it takes something that would have been seen as natural for previous generations and turns it into a problem which children need help with. What's more it means that the part of children's lives where they could exert control and make their own decisions – wise or unwise – has shrunk enormously.

There is a noticeable parallel with other aspects of children's lives where this type of regulation and control has taken over. Fear of accidents and paedophiles now means that children are increasingly not allowed to play outside or walk to and from school or other activities. Experts are now saying that this is putting children's lives more at risk as result of inactivity and rising levels of obesity. Moreover, the regulations now imposed by government agencies on involvement with young people has undermined many youth clubs and activities involving children.

Children need to learn some lessons in life on their own. They need to make mistakes, learn from them and also realise that problems don't last – they can overcome them. Over-regulation of children's lives is therefore reducing, not encouraging resilience.

Schools should be concerned about setting the overall ethos of the school and encouraging pro-social values. They can also point out the timeless wisdom of principles such as 'do as you would be done by'. They should also take steps to ensure that bullying is being eliminated if possible but they should not micromanage children's friendships by telling them what to do and then monitoring what they are doing.

What's more it is not in teachers' interests to be involved in the detail of children's friendships. Not only will it eat up valuable time but also if will often lead to conflict with parents who are likely to side with their offspring.

All about me – The dangers of 'the bloated self'

There is another major difficulty with the whole SEAL approach and it is the fact that it encourages a fixation with the self. The Centre does not doubt that those who are keen to promote SEAL believe that it will improve relationships and advance the common good but there is an unmistakable emphasis in this approach on the individual child and his or her emotional state and feelings about themselves. Weare and Gray's list of emotional and social competences, for example, puts self-esteem at the top of the list: 'Having self esteem, a competence which includes valuing and respecting yourself as an unique individual and seeing yourself as separate from others'.[158]

The term self-esteem does not appear in the Primary Guidance document and only passing reference in the Secondary one. This may be as a result of the publicity given to Professor Nicholas Emler's book on self-esteem which echoed Roy Baumeister's findings that self-esteem was not as important as people thought and that individuals with high self-esteem could be aggressive and indulge in risky behaviours. Nonetheless, one of the seven themes in Primary SEAL is 'Good to be Me' and encourages exactly the same type of activities carried out in American schools in the attempt to foster children's self-esteem.

The Guidance document is aware of the value system on which these activities are based. It even notes that the type of activities encouraged in this theme and in the 'Going for Goals!' theme may be at odds with the belief system of people from different cultures. The authors write:

> *In some cultures that place great value on community and the role of the greater good, some of the underlying premises within the*

Going for goals! *theme may appear rather individually focused and run counter to what children from these cultures may learn within the family or community.*

Another example, might be the work within Good to be me *on the positive feeling 'proud', which may conflict with beliefs in some cultures or religions that pride is sin.*[159]

What they do not note is that some psychologists or child development experts have argued that these types of activities are undermining the mental health of young people in America. Lillian G. Katz who works at the University of Illinois Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative warned some time ago that some school self-esteem programmes in the US encourage an excessive focus on the self and may have unwanted effects. 'As commendable as it is for children to have high self-esteem, many of the practices advocated in pursuit of this goal may instead inadvertently develop narcissism in the form of excessive preoccupation with oneself,' writes Katz.[160]

Research undertaken by a psychologist Jean Twenge supports Katz's view. Twenge has conducted a meta-analysis involving data from 1.3 million young Americans from the mid 1960s to the present day. This has recently been published in a book entitled *Generation Me*. Twenge shows that self-esteem has risen among young people in the USA in the past few decades but so has narcissism. Only 12 per cent of teenagers in the early 1950s agreed with the statement 'I am an important person' but by the late 1980s this had risen to 80 per cent. Other psychologists have also found a rise in narcissistic personality traits. Psychologists are in general agreement that narcissism is not an attractive quality and narcissists make exceedingly poor parents and partners.

Twenge argues that the rise of narcissism can be seen in the growing sense of 'entitlement' among Generation Me in the USA. She says this can take the form of students 'demanding' better grades, irrespective of the effort they have put in, or speeding drivers and road rage which has become increasingly a feature of modern society, particularly America.

Twenge's work shows other worrying trends in young people's responses to questionnaires. Her research shows that in the past few decades there has been a large increase in anxiety and depression in young people and a move from internal to external locus of control – a change which often leads young people to refuse to accept personal responsibility and to blame others for problems in life.[161] These types of changes, including narcissism, are unlikely to be the exclusive result of the way that children are schooled and are no doubt linked to changes in society at large such as the influence of the mass media, materialism

and individualism. However, Twenge, Seligman and others argue that self-esteem building has played an important part.

A Canadian education psychologist based in the US, Maureen Stout, for example, argues that the self-esteem movement has made a considerable impact on American schools and has led to an unhealthy preoccupation with the self and a decline in academic standards. She argues that emotional intelligence/literary work is destined to intensify this effect. Indeed she thinks it strange that Goleman could not see the inevitability of his approach encouraging a narcissistic emphasis on the self. She points out that Goleman argues, as we have already seen, that the feeling mind is 'childlike' and he refers to it as 'personalized thinking'. What he means by this is that the emotional mind perceives the world 'with a bias centring on the self'.[162] In other words, concentrating on our emotions leads us back into our subjective world rather out into the external world of facts and ideas. In short, it focuses on the self and its feelings. Of course, individuals should refer to their own feelings some of the time but the danger with the emotional literacy approach is that it encourages far too much of this at the expense of acquiring knowledge and skills.

In her article on the dangers of too much self-focus in the classroom Lillian Katz compares the vacuous 'all about me' approach encouraged by American educators and the much better approach she observed in an 'English school' where children were involved in quantifying the various properties of all the children in the classroom in terms of weight, height etc.[163]

However, emotional literacy experts in the UK like Professor Weare argue that 'Class lessons offer endless opportunities to put the learner at the heart of the process. Children can make themselves the subjects, reflecting on aspects of themselves, their physical and mental characteristics 'and a list of other personal attributes or concerns.[164] She points out that this is 'fairly common practice' in primary schools and one that secondary schools 'can usefully continue'. But do we really want to continue to emulate standard American education practices given the performance of America schools and the fact that young people's well-being is not good?

The bloated self

In his classic work *The Optimistic Child* Seligman warned that the focus on 'feeling good' promoted by the self-esteem movement could lead to an epidemic of depression in young people. Part of his argument is that by attempting to protect children from bad feelings children do not learn. Bad feelings, he argues, have a purpose and galvanise us to take action. What's more feelings of frustration are an inevitable part of the learning process. If we protect children

from negative feelings we render children powerless and undermine their mastery.

In recent years Seligman has argued persuasively that the excessive focus on the self and how it feels is not good for well-being.[165] He points out that previous generations were linked into to institutions which they considered more important than themselves such as the family, the community or the nation. This means that in previous times people were able to get the inevitable ups and downs of life into perspective. However, Seligman argues that when people think that they are at the centre of their lives – when the self is bloated with its own importance - then people feel overwhelmed and unable to cope when things do not work out well for them. What's more such an obsession with the self undermines meaning. As Seligman argues meaning, by definition is about serving a goal larger than oneself. The more we focus on our selves the more meaningless our life becomes. Research shows that meaning is important for a sense of happiness, life satisfaction and well-being, so encouraging young people to continually think so much about themselves and how they feel may undermine, rather than foster, well-being.[166]

Parents' responsibility

Professor Weare argues that 'there is considerable evidence that effective work on emotional and social education is more effective if it involves parents.' She see this as important so that parents do not 'harbour unfounded fears'[167] on the nature of the work, such as emotional expression, or 'fear their child will be stigmatized' through profiling and assessment.[168] Both these fears we believe are completely legitimate. However, Professor Weare thinks it important to involve parents so that they can be won round or even involved in delivering programmes.

However, the reality is somewhat different. As was shown earlier, the pilot project on SEAL showed that 'parents were reluctant partners with the programme'. Very few wanted to get involved. Over five thousand pupils were involved with the SEAL pilot yet they only have feedback from 26 parents (0.5 per cent).

In reality much of the rationale for SEAL, at least from the DfES's point of view is that they believe parents are failing in their duties. The Primary Guidance document states:

> *Research is bringing home the wide extent of various types of neglect and abuse. This is being exacerbated by the breakdown of extended families and communities which reduces support for the nuclear family, and the higher rates of divorce and subsequent one-parent families. This has led to a shake-up in the belief that*

we can leave children's emotional and social development entirely to parents: other agencies have to get involved as well.[169]

It was the inclusion of this paragraph, with no empirical research to support it that led one newspaper when the Guidance was made public to state in their headline: 'Government tells schools to focus on emotional development as parents cannot be trusted.'[170]

At the Centre we have little doubt that the rising tide of alcohol and drug abuse means that there are more and more children suffering from neglect and abuse. We are also aware that primary schools report a growing number of children in deprived areas who do not have the skills required to be in a primary one classroom. But they are certainly not the majority and if schools now take on the responsibility of all children's emotional, social and behavioural skills whose fault is it going to be if children don't do well on them? Will schools and teachers get the blame? We agree with the concern expressed by the NUT on the SEAL document that requiring schools to concentrate on this type of activity 'adds to some parents' assumptions that their children are someone else's responsibility.'[171] Will some parents increasingly leave the job of regulating children's emotions and teaching them basic social skills to schools? Will they think, erroneously, that professionals will do it better than they can?

We must always bear in mind with this agenda that the percentage of children's time spent at school is small – only 15 per cent of their lives. Schools will *never* be able to devote the necessary time to it and taking this responsibility on will create more problems for them in the longer term. As we shall argue more fully below, we think that schools should only be directly teaching these skills to young children on a 'needs must' basis. If children need this help because they are not getting it at home then devote time to it. If some schools have a particular problem then they should devote time to it. But universal provision is sending out the wrong signals to parents and to children themselves. No doubt the argument against this is that this stigmatises children in need but this is already provided for in the Guidance where three tiers of intervention are outlined. We still see targeted intervention as preferable to making emotional and social skills a problem for *all* children.

Exacerbating young people's transition to secondary school

The DfES Guidance issued in 2005 was for schools and settings involving children from 3 -11. Guidance for secondary schools was issued in 2007. In Weare and Gray's report they are clear that involving secondary schools in SEAL work may be a much bigger 'challenge' than involving the primary sector. They give the following reasons for this: first, secondary schools 'may be more uncomfortable with notions of emotional well-being than primary schools'.[172] A

second problem they identify is that secondary schools have their own budgets and so may be opposed to being told how to spend it.

Weare and Gray also acknowledge that there is already a 'disjuncture between primary and secondary schools, with children who progress happily at primary school experiencing set-backs when they enter the very different world of the secondary school.'[173] They quote a DfES study which found that 'two out of five pupils fail to make the expected progress' a year after changing schools. Weare also acknowledges elsewhere that the different culture of primary and secondary schools means that 'many children withdraw and become invisible in secondary schools; others conclude they have to 'act out' to survive and be noticed.'[174]

In their recommendations to DfES, Weare and Gray suggest that all schools prioritise this type of work and do not make a distinction between primary and secondary schools. However the DfES then decided to target schools and settings involving children from three to eleven first. What this means is that by placing feelings and emotions at the heart of the curriculum for children exposed to SEAL activities at primary school the DfES may be exacerbating the difficulties for some of these youngsters in making the transition to the real-world, atmosphere of secondary schools.

Presumably the DfES made the decision to introduce SEAL to primary schools, before secondary schools as they are aware of the fact that many secondary school staff will not like this work. If they find that SEAL is adopted on a grand scale in primary and not in secondary, children are likely to be the biggest casualties as this work is likely to intensify differences in culture between these two big sectors in education.

Teachers' stress

Another main concern of Weare is the stress level of teachers. She argues that research shows that teachers 'are the most stressed occupation group of all' and says that in a recent survey 45 per cent of teachers rated themselves as 'highly stressed'. Weare and Gray also maintain that recent research shows that one in five teachers leaving the profession cite stress as one of their reasons for departure.[175] Proponents of this approach tacitly believe that if emotional literacy is put at the heart of schools it will somehow alleviate teachers' stress.

But what the SEAL pilot showed is that SEAL, far from lowering teachers' stress, may have contributed to it. The report's authors tell us that some staff 'found implementing the programme stressful particularly when they had no training in taking circle time or in facilitating consideration of pupils' emotions.'[176]

However, this is playing down the problem. If you look at the table 6.1 in the report on the pilot showing 'Head teachers' and teachers' perceptions of the impact of SEAL on staff' a different picture emerges. The few head teachers who responded are divided on whether it reduced 'staff stress' and more disagree, than agree, with the statement about it 'reducing teacher workload'. The teachers themselves were not asked about stress but they are emphatic that it did not reduce teacher workload: 79 percent responded that they either 'disagreed' or 'disagreed strongly' with this proposition and only 18 per cent 'agreed' or 'agreed strongly', with the remaining 3 per cent undecided. Teachers were asked about SEAL 'reducing management time in school spent on discipline matters for pupils' and 79 per cent disagreed or disagreed strongly with only 18 per cent in agreement.

To be fair we would like to point out that the small number of non-teaching staff consulted were firmly of the view that it had reduced staff stress but this could be for a variety of reasons such as feeling more included since SEAL is a whole school approach. As ever, the Hawthorne effect could also have influenced these findings.

What is interesting is the comparison between teachers' responses to these questions for the SEAL and the School Improvement strand which involved the use of teacher coaches. Asked about reductions in teacher workload a slightly smaller number disagreed with this proposition than for SEAL. What is telling is how they responded to the question about reducing management time in school on discipline matters. In comparison with the 22 per cent of teacher respondents who agreed with this proposition for SEAL, the number was 46 per cent for those who had teacher coaches. In other words, SEAL was less effective than teacher coaching in creating the conditions to reduce teacher stress and workload.

Underlying messages and ironic effects

The architects of SEAL would no doubt rebut my arguments by saying that what they propose is much more sophisticated than I suggest. They may argue, for example, that young people won't get depressed as a result of encouragement to express their feelings as they will be taught how to regulate their feelings and manage their moods. They may also argue that the SEAL programme has been carefully selected to ensure a balance between a concern for others and virtues such as self reliance, self control, taking responsibility for your own feelings etc. This may be possible to achieve in a one-to-one relationship between a professional and client. But what we have to bear in mind here is that what they propose is a mass psychological intervention – literally millions of children and tens of thousands of teachers and other professionals are going to be involved. Weare et al's sophisticated ideas, and notion of balance, are bound to get lost in translation to everyday practice.

A lesson from the US may be helpful here. The leaders of the Self-Esteem movement in the US have never urged parents and teachers to give young people lots of praise or protect them from competition. But this is what happened and it is not difficult to see why: it is estimated that people forget over 80 per cent of what they learn.

With a huge initiative of this kind, which is being designed to involve all school staff and people working with young people, what they are likely to grasp and remember are the big, emotional messages. Having studied much of the SEAL material I would say these overarching messages are;

- It is good for everyone to express their feelings.
- We always need to pay attention to others' feelings.
- It is a terrible thing if we hurt others' feelings.
- It is very important that we feel good about ourselves.
- We need to learn and use calming techniques or we'll get anxious.
- Everyone needs to learn about feelings and relationships from experts (ie teachers or trainers).
- We should all be feeling happy.
- We are all vulnerable and at risk if we don't take steps to protect ourselves.

For some young people this may well be a recipe for depression, anxiety, self-obsession, inertia, mental health problems, external locus of control and blame. It may also erode their resilience and confidence as well as their academic skills. Some may end up feeling worse about themselves since they aren't naturally the type of person which SEAL encourages young people to become. This is the opposite of what the architects of SEAL intend but psychological interventions are always capable of producing ironic effects. Staff could suffer from these side-effects as well. The people who are unlikely to be affected by SEAL are its creators - the policy-makers, academics and politicians. Ironically they don't live in a world which constantly gives them these messages and nor do they abide by such injunctions and values.

Section 6: What is to be done?

Defining the problem

In 2007 UNICEF published a report on the state of 'child well-being in rich countries' which looked at 21 nations across the globe.[177] Children in the UK fare worst on the report's six dimensions of well-being. Second bottom of the league are children in the US. (Subjective well-being data for American young people was missing from this report. Its inclusion could have seen the US drop below the UK since the US scores poorly on young people's mental health.)

One of the dimensions in which British children scored particularly badly is entitled 'relationships'. There are three different aspects to this dimension. The first is family structure. The UK has one of the highest percentages of children living in single parent families and in step families. The only higher figure for single parent families in this survey is the US. The report authors admit that it seems 'insensitive and unfair' to use family structure as an indicator of child well-being: after all some children are brought up badly in two-parent families and children of single parents can be well brought up. Nonetheless the report states:

> *… at the statistical level there is evidence to associate growing up in single-parent families and stepfamilies with greater risk to well-being – including a greater risk of dropping out of school, of leaving home early, of poorer health, of low skills, and of low pay. Furthermore such risks appear to persist even when the substantial effect of increased poverty levels in single-parent and step-families have been taken into account … .[178]*

The UK also scored poorly on the percentage of '15 year olds who eat the main meal of the day with their parents 'several times a week''. Only 65 per cent of British teenagers asked this question reported interacting with parents in this way –one of the lowest figures in the study. Relationships with peers also seemed problematic for a greater percentage of our young people. The UK and the Czech Republic were the only two of the countries studied where less than half of 11, 13 and 15 year olds surveyed said 'yes' to the question 'do you find your peers generally kind and helpful?'

The UK also scored very badly on the dimension called 'behaviours and risk'. The measures where UK youngsters scored poorly were on questions about experiences of being drunk, cannabis use, sexual activity and teenage pregnancy.

Another problematic area for the UK is the number of young people classified as 'not in education, employment and training', and the percentage of children living in poverty and in workless households.

The UK also came out near the bottom of the table on 'children's subjective well-being'. The measures here are about life satisfaction, how many young people say they really like school and how they rate their health.

The UK has a low figure for the number of children killed from accidents and injuries and so scores well here. The figure for reading, mathematics and scientific literacy is also moderately good.

The UK certainly does not do well in this report but we must also get the results in perspective. The number of children living with two parents in the UK is still 70 per cent. About 65 per cent of 15 year olds report that they spend time 'just talking' to their parents several times a week. 74 per cent reported their health as 'good or excellent' and more than 80 per cent rated themselves above the mid point for life satisfaction.

When the UNICEF report was published it attracted considerable publicity. Some disputed the various measures used and whether they were meaningful. It is certainly easy to read the report and feel confused by some of the findings. For example, countries like Switzerland and Portugal which scored best on the number of young people saying that they could count on peers being helpful and friendly were also the countries which reported the highest levels of bullying.

Much of the publicity on the report has been about poverty. The Government argued that the poverty figures had greatly improved and the figures quoted out of date. Many critics said it was an accurate picture and, if anything, the figures have become worse in recent years, not better. Professor Jonathan Bradshaw, from York University, one of the report's authors, put the UK's poor ratings down mainly to poverty and inequality. He also said it reflected a 'dog eat dog society'. Certainly, if we examine the specific measures where the UK is failing we soon see that what's involved is a complex interaction of cultural, economic and sociological factors. Many of the problems in child well-being do appear to be linked to the growing inequality in modern Britain. Others appear to be the result of long working hours, commuting and the growing numbers of children being brought up in families where they are not getting enough attention from their parents.[179]

The Centre believes that many children in the UK are increasingly becoming the casualties of a very materialistic, me-centred culture which puts jobs, money and consumption before family life, relationships and young people's well-being. In other words, at an individual and a collective level we are not investing enough

time, energy or resources in our children's lives and there is a growing problem with attachment. This is a particularly acute issue for the children living in the most deprived areas and they are bearing the brunt of the problem.

The Centre believes that it a mistake to think that there is one solution or panacea. We certainly do not think that schools and teachers can, or should, shoulder the burden of trying to plug the gaps in children's lives. We believe this is what those who have devised SEAL are attempting to do. We have set out various reasons for our opposition to SEAL in preceding sections and why we think that this solution, far from making this better, may make matters worse for young people in the longer term.

Government needs to be more realistic about what it can change and influence and what it cannot. This will lessen the chances that it will launch interventions which could be pointless or dangerous. Problems with young people's well-being are the result of an enormous number of social and cultural changes. We could list these as –

• Family breakdown
• Community breakdown
• Rise in drug and alcohol abuse
• The impact of the mass media
• Advertising/marketing/higher expectations
• Pressure to achieve (exams etc)
• Materialism
• Increasing inequalities
• Decline in religion
• Lack of exercise
• Poor diet/eating habits/additives
• Pessimism of the age (eg, ecological disasters).

In short we should not be surprised that the well-being of young people in the UK is poor when our values are not child-centred and when we do not encourage them, or equip them with the skills needed to live good lives. This is not about teaching children and young people about emotions; this is about the values of society at large. Of central concern too is the behaviour and skills of adults.

Psychology may be in vogue, but it is not helpful to put too much emphasis on psychology or fixing individuals. For example, recently the police have claimed that teen violence is often fuelled by drink. Some commentators argue that the issue here is the cost and availability of alcohol. It may be far better to deal with the availability issue than attempt to effect a change in young people's psychology. Strong evidence has now been published showing that additives in foods commonly consumed by children can lead to attention deficit disorder and

behavioural problems. Of course, psychology matters but it is often affected by culture and structures and changing these may be less risky than targeting individuals' psychology.

Before outlining our interest in the early years, I would like to say that we also believe that there needs to be more investment in youth work. Young people in deprived areas in particular would benefit from their energy being diverted into productive activities where they could learn and be exposed to positive role models.

Early engagement

The Centre has been greatly influenced by the work of Alan Sinclair on what he calls 'early engagement'. Alan was formerly Director of Skills and Training for Scottish Enterprise. In this role he consulted businesses widely on what type of skills they were looking for in employees – many businesses talked about the importance of 'soft skills' such as problem solving, team working, communication and so forth. This then led Alan to study how skills of this type are developed and led him into the early intervention agenda. Alan is now working with the Work Foundation and is based in the Centre's office in Glasgow.

Alan is now one of a growing number of people, from different professional backgrounds who are convinced of the need to channel more and more resources into early years. As Alan explains in his report 0-5: *How Small Children Can Make a Big Difference,* 'the most important six years in a person's life are up to the age of five.'[180] He summarises research which shows how important the early years of life are to the development of the child's cognitive, social and emotional skills. According to Alan's research, CT scans show that that 'the average three-year-old has a larger and different-shaped brain' from that of a child who has 'suffered severe sensory deprivation and neglect.'[181] It is not just the first few years of life that are particularly important but also the months preceding birth when the developing foetus can be adversely affected by the mother's stress. Research indicates that prenatal stress can increase the chance of behavioural and social problems as well as impair language and cognitive development.

Alan summarises the research in the following way:

> *… if in the first three years of a child's life there is sensitive care – a good attachment, then children will feel better in themselves, be more resilient and appreciate other people's feelings. The child will have the capacity for empathy. If the relationships that surround the child are working the brain, like a muscle, will take advantage of the correct type of exercise and grow. If there are failed attachments,*

abuse and neglect we can expect the child to grow into an adolescent and adult who knows no empathy, does not respect rules, is disruptive and prone to violence and mental health problems.[182]

Alan then goes on to argue passionately for the need for 'early years enrichment' and engagement. The models he advances for this type of work mainly come from Scandinavia where considerable sums are invested in good quality day care and parenting support. This ensures that parents, who may fail their children by not providing enough attention and stimulation, are supported by what the Scandinavians call 'pedagogues'. When this involves supporting parents in the home, this does not have a punitive feel to it as it can in the UK. What's more, this support is offered long before a problem has been detected and before there is talk of removing children from the family home.

Alan is a trained economist and supports his argument for early engagement with data which show that the investment made in early years will save the state money in the longer term. Various studies have shown that this type of investment can cut crime, improve health and educational attainment and help produce young people who are likely to be productive members of society.

Why this is needed

If we examine the data on the rise of alcohol and drug use and the number of children being brought up with parents with these problems, it is impossible to deny that there is a growing number of children who are neglected and abused. This is further compounded by the decline in the extended family and the rise in single parents, many of them teenage mothers who have themselves been inadequately parented. Many schools report that a growing number of children are attending P1 without the necessary skills to be in a classroom and some are setting up 'nurture units'.

Relevance to SEAL

In England and Wales the Government has responded to these problems by investing in a project called Sure Start and devising a complementary 10-year childcare strategy. Sure Start childcare centres have been set up ad provision made for the development of a childcare workforce. Much of this is welcome, though more intensive provision is needed, particularly for parents. It is certainly a significant step beyond what has happened in Scotland and Wales.

In England the SEAL curriculum is part of this Sure Start initiative. When we pose the problems in terms of the need for early years enrichment and parental support for children who are neglected and abused and seriously at risk of

missing out, we see how redundant SEAL is. Some of its proponents argue that it is about cultivating 'herd immunity' but in reality it is like sticking a plaster on every school age child whether they need it or not. For the children who have a problem to be addressed it will do little good as it is too little too late. What's more, as we have argued consistently in this paper, treating children to a year on year curriculum based approach to social and emotional skills could provoke a reaction which could worsen, rather than alleviate the problem.

Facilitating children's social and emotional development has to be done through sensitive provision for pregnant women who are at risk of stress and through various schemes which provide high quality day care and parental support in the first five years of life – particularly the first three.

In order to ensure that the children who need most support with their cognitive, emotional and social development resources get good provision, we need to target the groups most at risk. Alan Sinclair argues that the 'logic' of addressing the problem means that -

> *To get the most out of our public spending, expenditure on parenting and enriched day care should be skewed to households most likely to struggle. That means targeting the children of workless households, single parents, and the working poor and, in an age creating more alcohol and drug casualties, elderly carers of infants.*[183]

Support for individual children in schools

Even with the Sure Start initiative in England and the various related policies in the UK we are some considerable way from a Scandinavian type solution to the problem of the growing number of children who are missing out on important aspects of their socialisation within the family. Of course, schools and education authorities cannot ignore the problem. Where the numbers warrant it, schools should set up nurture units to give additional help with social and emotional skill development to the children most in need. If the difficulty remains beyond P1 then these children should be given additional support and be explicitly taught social and emotional skills if necessary. The Centre supports the idea that teachers should give one to one help to individual children, or small groups, with social and emotional skills on a 'needs must' basis.

The obvious objection to such targeted help is that it is too much of a deficit, problem-focused approach. But even the creators of SEAL recognise that there will always be children who need help in social and emotional skill development beyond the curriculum activities they envisage for the whole class. This is why the SEAL Guidance document talks about three tiers of intervention. The need for

these different tiers, also testifies to the fact that SEAL is unlikely to address any serious problems children have with social and emotional skills, and that more intensive work will be required.

Other steps schools can take to enhance well-being

The Centre recognises that the issue of child well-being is much wider than those displaying obvious difficulties. We also think that schools can play in ensuring a more supportive environment for children. Here are a few of the Centre's ideas on how this can be done.

Creating positive classrooms and positive schools

Centre staff have been involved in studying the research and insights associated with the emergent discipline of Positive Psychology. This is a growing international movement, based on extensive empirical research, led by Professor Martin Seligman and Professor Mihaly Csikmentmihaly. Positive Psychology is concerned with finding the conditions which create good flourishing lives. Its focus is not just on individuals but families, organisations and cultures.

Positive Psychology demonstrates that 'the negativity bias' of the brain means that it is very easy for people to be fearful and pessimistic and that we have to learn to keep this in check by the experience of positive emotion. Positive Psychologists, such as Professor Barbara Fredrickson, show how important positive emotions are for building relationships and for learning, creativity and development. However, Positive Psychology also stresses the importance of meaning and purpose for a good flourishing life and how we can undermine people's well-being by encouraging them to be too fixated on themselves and their feelings.

We believe that traditionally the best teachers and the best schools were those who instinctively managed to create a positive, supportive environment for learning in the classroom or the whole school. However, we also believe that they did this, not on the basis of unwarranted praise, fixations with feelings or simplistic attempts to protect children from frustration or competition, but through high expectations, clear rules and more sophisticated methods to build relationships and respect. Such a positive atmosphere is not only good for learning but also for young people's well-being. This means that we wholeheartedly support training and development initiatives which are designed to equip school staff with the knowledge and skills required to create positive relationships, positive classrooms and a positive school ethos. This is why we do not reject all facets of SEAL. Some of the specific techniques which the Centre particularly favours for promoting a positive atmosphere are included in our

publication *Creating Confidence: A Handbook for Professionals Working with Young People.*

The Centre also accepts that teachers and others working with young people need to have much better than average understanding of themselves and others and be skilled in managing their own moods and emotions. This means that we accept that teachers and others may benefit from high quality training on emotional literacy or intelligence and that these insights may have some part to play in creating a more positive learning environment.

Teaching by example

The Centre also believes that teachers and other professionals have a role to play in teaching young people social and emotional skills. However, we believe that these skills are best learned in specific life situations and that teachers and other professionals should ideally teach these skills *by example* rather than via a year on year, explicit teaching approach. Again the importance of teacher modelling points up the importance of good CPD training or coaching on emotional regulation or relationship skills. The Centre believes that some of the more robust emotional intelligence training (ie Mayer and Salovey's concept of emotional ability) could have an important role to play here.

Tackling bullying

The evidence suggests that there is a growing problem with bullying at school. We think that this is an important agenda item for schools but believe this can be addressed, as we explained earlier, via whole school approaches on behaviour. This may require some specific teaching on what bullying is and what it is not as well as encouragement for students to tell school staff about incidents. We do not think the SEAL approach is an essential plank in an anti-bullying approach.

Reducing anxiety about school work/emphasis on academic tests

In the SEAL pilot the biggest problem for the young people surveyed was 'anxiety about school work'. The UK has a whole has become obsessed with tests, measurement and academic performance and some recent research shows that this is putting undue strain on young people. We are not pretending to be experts on this area but think that educational policy makers should pay more attention to the experience of some of our European neighbours where children attend formal school when they are seven and spend the first few years of life more in play and social learning than academic learning. This practice is consistent with higher academic results in the longer term. We also think it important to keep an emphasis on the importance of children achieving academic skills while at the same time broadening the curriculum at secondary level to cater for those

students who simply do not have an interest in pursuing a very academic range of subjects.

Explicit teaching

When it comes to improving children's emotional and social skills the Centre prefers an approach where the skills are caught from the teacher rather than formally taught in lessons. However, we are not dogmatic about this and believe that there may be some occasions when explicit teaching may be advantageous. We think that schools and teachers should d decide what type of lessons they teach and that there should not be a centralised programme of classes or activities being pushed from central government. This then allows schools to specialise in certain types of activities or to play to their strengths.

Resilience

We think it may be advantageous to undertake a small amount of explicit teaching with primary school children on resilience. The need for this is quite simply that modern teaching and child rearing practices have over-protected children and reduced their ability to learn from life's hard lessons. (In other words, we are trying to antidote some previous negative effects from psychology.) We have been particularly impressed by a classroom resiliency programme called *Bounce Back* developed by two Australian educationalists with a psychology background. They encourage the use of everyday class lessons in to teach children better strategies to deal with life's hard knocks.[184] We see this approach as an anti-dote to the self-esteem building approach which has become fashionable in recent years, rather than an extension of it. *Bounce Back* has some material on feelings and emotions but it is overwhelmingly encouraging a cognitive, problem-solving approach.

Younger secondary school students may benefit too from continuing the emphasis on resilience. For older students we think it may be helpful to introduce them to assertiveness or communication skills training. We also think that some of the insights of Positive Psychology may be useful. This could either take the form of some optimism training or an introduction to the concept of 'flow'. The main focal point of these lessons would be on providing students with the research findings on what makes for fulfilling flourishing lives. Exposure to some of Professor Carol Dweck's research on mindsets could also be helpful.[185]

Differences between the Centre's recommendations and SEAL

Following our critique of SEAL, it may seem like special pleading to now say that some of the approaches we favour should be permissible in schools. However,

while our approach may seem at first glance to overlap with some of the SEAL materials, what we envisage has a very different ethos.

The most fundamental difference between the Centre's approach to lessons on personal development themes and the SEAL curriculum is that we are absolutely opposed to the idea of social and emotional competences, lists of learning outcomes and evaluating or profiling students. We would never recommend evaluating children's optimism or assertiveness in a way that would lead the individual student to feel that they had now to make changes to reach an acceptable level. The Centre is of the view that schools should simply offer training to students on the basis that they might find it useful and helpful. The Centre is keen on the idea of pre and post intervention measurements to see if there are any tangible benefits as a result of the training but we would always want this to be undertaken on a group, not an individual basis.

Another difference between the Centre's preferred approach and SEAL is that we are primarily interested in focusing on giving young people information or cognitive/problem solving skills. The skills involved in raising optimism or building resilience are primarily cognitive. This means that our approach is consistent with school's role in developing young people's cognitive and intellectual skills. This is true of some aspects of SEAL but some of SEAL has a strongly therapeutic/counselling feel to it.

So where we differ from SEAL is that we do not think it helpful to encourage schools to focus explicitly on young people's emotional development unless there is a specific difficulty which needs to be addressed. We do not think it useful either to encourage young people to focus on their feelings or emotions too much as this can easily lead to self-obsession. Nor do we think it helpful to convey to young people that we *all* need help from professionals with the development of our emotional and social lives. This approach is likely to fuel mental health problems for many young people rather than contain them.[186] What's more we do not think that most teachers will ever be trained well enough to deal with the subtleties of this agenda or the problems which are likely to arise.

Finally, the Centre is keen to see schools develop confident young people with the skills to act in the world. Rather than focus on feelings and dwell on 'all about me' activities, redolent of American classrooms, we want teachers to help young people acquire skills. Schools can also encourage young people to think more about their role in the world and what they can actively do to become engaged with others and in projects which are not about them and their feelings but have much wider social relevance and benefit. By combining the confidence to act with meaning and purpose and the importance of social connection we shall enhance young people's well-being.

We have little doubt that the people behind SEAL will say that this is what they want too; that this is also their agenda. We are convinced of their sincerity but we think they have chosen the wrong method to reach their destination. If they are sceptical they should examine the United States' record and contemplate how the types of classroom methods which have been used there, and which SEAL is now bringing into English schools, have been part of the rising tide of young people's anxiety, depression, narcissism, blame and falling academic standards.

NOTES

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[4] Caruso, D.R., Mayer, J.D., & Salovey, P.(in press) Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Leadership', in R. Riggio & S. Murphy (Eds.), *Multiple Intelligences and Leadership*, Mahaw, NJ: Erlbaum.

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[6] Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind.*

[7] P. J. Salovey and J. Mayer, 1990, 'Emotional Intelligence'. *Imagination, cognition, and personality*, 9(3), pp185-211.

[8] Joseph Le Doux, *The Emotional Brain*, p25.

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[12] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, p518.

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[15] Seymour Epstein quoted in Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, p3.

[16] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, p268.

[17] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, p547.

[18] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, p548.

[19] Riobert Sternberg wrote the introduction to Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*. The quote is from pxii.

[20] Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 'Models of emotional intelligence', p402.

[21] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, 2002, *Can Emotional Intelligence be Schooled? A Critical Review,* p215.

[22] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, p79.

[23] Joseph Le Doux, *The Emotional Brain*, pp164-166.

[24] Joseph Le Doux, *The Emotional Brain*, p16.

[25] Emotional literacy is how emotional intelligence has been re-branded for work in education. For a discussion of the terms see Katherine Weare, *Developing the Emotionally Literate School*.

[26] Joseph Le Doux, *The Emotional Brain*, p17.

[27] Joseph Le Doux, *The Emotional Brain*, p19.

[28] Joseph Le Doux, *The Emotional Brain*, p265.

[29] Joseph Le Doux, *The Emotional Brain*, p303.

[30] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, p533.

[30] Howard Gardner, *Atlantic Monthly,* pp71-72.

[31] Nancy Gibbs, 'The EQ Factor: New Brain Research Suggests that Emotions, Not IQ, may be the True Measure of Human Intelligence', in *Time Magazine*.

[32] Robert J. Sternberg quoted in Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, pxii.

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[34] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth,* p72.

[35] Daniel Goleman, *Destructive Emotions: A Dialogue with the Dalai Lama.*

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[45] Daniel Goleman, *The New Leadership*.

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[47] See *Creating Confidence* for an insight into the Centre's views.

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[49] Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, *Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Findings and Implications* (2nd last page).

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[53] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, 2002, 'Can Emotional Intelligence be Schooled? A Critical Review'*,* p226.

[54] Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, pp261-187.

[55] Michael Merzenich, *The Brain and the Law, when Bobby Goes Bad*, on-line blog found at http://merzenich.positscience.com/2007/04/18/the-brain-and-the-law-when-bobby-goes-bad

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[59] Information provided in the US by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. These figures were for 2004.

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[67] The information in this section comes mainly from the National Association for Educational Progress's Annual Report Card (2005); Charles J. Sykes, *Dumbing Down Our Kids: Why American Children Feel Good About Themselves But Can't Read, Write, or Add*; Jean Twenge's *Generation Me;* and Maureen Stout, *The Feel Good Curriculum*: *The Dumbing Down of America's Kids in the Name of Self-Esteem.* A good summary of recent developments in US education can be found on the PHI Delta Kappa International (The Professional Association in Education) website. See in particular NCLB and the Competitiveness Agenda by Frederick M. Hess and Andrew J Rotherham. It is available also from http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.26339/pub_detail.asp
The tough standards lobby got going as a result of John Jacob Cannell' s first report called 'How Public Educators Cheat on Standardized Achievement Tests: The 'Lake Woebegone Report' published by Friends of Education in 1989. You can read Cannell reflect on his reports by going to the following URL http://thirdeducationgroup.org/Review/Essays/v2n1.htm

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[69] See Jean Twenge, *Generation Me.*

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[71] See Jean Twenge's *Generation Me* on this topic and also Charles J. Sykes, *Dumbing Down Our Kids: Why American Children Feel Good About Themselves But Can't Read, Write, or Add.*

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[73] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p15.

[74] Department for Education and Skills, 'Excellence and Enjoyment: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning. Guidance', p48.

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[76] Katherine Weare, *Developing the Emotionally Literate School,* p5*.*

[77] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p5.

[78] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p5

[79] Katherine Weare, *Developing the Emotionally Literate School,* pp141-2 and Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', pp29-30.

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[81] Sarah Stewart-Brown and Laurel Edmunds, 'Assessing emotional and social competence in primary school and early years settings'.

[82] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, p542.

[83] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p29.

[84] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p29.

[85] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p30.

[86] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p33.

[87] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth*, p. xii.

[88] See Part 2 of *Creating Confidence* for an outline of the history of the self-esteem movement.

[89] See Appendix B in Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p81.

[90] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p73.

[91] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p7.

[92] Katherine Weare, *Developing the Emotionally Literate School,* p127.

[93] Sarah-Jayne Blakemore and Uta Frith, *The Learning Brain*, p163.

[94] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p64.

[95] Katherine Weare and Gay Gray, 'What Works in Developing Children's Emotional and Social Competence and Well-being?', p65.

[96] For a good description of these types of programmes see Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth,* pp450-456.

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[114] Department for Education and Skills, 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning for Secondary Schools: Guidance (SEAL)'.

[115] Department for Education and Skills, 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning for Secondary Schools: Guidance (SEAL)', p10.

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[118] Department for Education and Skills, 'Excellence and Enjoyment: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning. Guidance'.

[119] Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, *Emotional Intelligence: Science and Myth,* p460.

[120] Department for Education and Skills, S. Hallam, J. Rhamie and J. Shaw, 'Evaluation of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilot', p123.

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