Bridging the SEL CASEL Framework with European educational policies and assessment approaches

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The importance of enhancing social and emotional skills in educational settings has gained prominence, with many countries and organizations embracing the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) framework to equip individuals with the tools needed for shaping a self-identity, emotional regulation, goal achievement, empathy, nurturing relationships, and responsible decision-making and overall well-being. In this paper, we aim to connect the globally acknowledged Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning SEL framework with international policies that underscore the importance of social and emotional skills in the school context. To accomplish this goal, we first provide a brief overview of the key components of the SEL framework. Subsequently, we explore two significant educational policies within the European context. The first policy is the World Health Organization Health Promoting Schools initiative. We present its objectives, a WHO-affiliated program example, the promoted and assessed competencies of students, and its results, connecting its framework with the CASEL SEL approach. The second focus is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Study on Social and Emotional Skills, describing its developmental process and the assessment framework. Finally, we describe the alignment of SEL with these European educational policies and illustrate their role in advancing and improving the evaluation of SEL initiatives in educational environments.

Keywords: Social and emotional learning, CASEL framework, policy, education, assessment, OECD, Life skills.

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing recognition that social and emotional learning (SEL) plays a crucial role in promoting students' psychological well-being, academic success, and overall development (Cavioni & Grazzani, 2023; Conte et al., 2023; Corcoran et al., 2018; Lawson et al., 2019). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework has been extensively utilized in the field of SEL. Its prominence is supported by its widespread adoption in educational settings across various countries, as reflected in literature (e.g., Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2022; Mahoney et al., 2021). Within this landscape, SEL has been defined as the process through which young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish, and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2020). The foundational definition of SEL was first developed in 1994, marking the beginning of a structured approach to integrating these essential skills into educational settings. The CASEL framework includes five fundamental competencies, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Self-awareness involves recognizing one's emotions, thoughts, and values and understanding their impact on behaviour. Self-management refers to effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. Social awareness entails showing empathy, understanding diverse perspectives, and respecting others. Relationship skills involve maintaining healthy relationships through effective communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Lastly, responsible decision-making involves making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behaviour. SEL adopts a systemic approach that underscores the significance of creating inclusive and supporting learning environments across key settings encompassing classrooms, schools, families, and communities, enhancing the social, emotional, and academic development of all students (Durlak et al., 2015; 2022).

SEL has emerged as a vital component of educational policies and it has garnered recognition worldwide for its potential to empower students with the competencies necessary for success in life (Cavioni et al., 2021; Colomeischi et al., 2022; Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). SEL is not a one-size-fits-all concept, but SEL competencies evolve with the developmental stages of children's and adults' social, emotional, and cognitive growth (Denham, 2018). This perspective emphasizes the adaptability of SEL to meet the varying needs of individuals as they navigate through different phases of development. SEL also recognizes the importance of integrating a universal and inclusive approach, while also striving for cultural responsiveness in its definition and assessment (Aspen Institute, 2018). Indeed, effective SEL program implementations are influenced by cultural and contextual factors namely the family backgrounds, the socioeconomic statuses of students and their families, community norms, educational practices, and curricula, as well as school legislation (Cressey, 2019; Ulla & Poom-Valickis, 2023). These features highlight the importance of a tailored approach in SEL establishing equitable learning conditions for all students and guaranteeing sustainability over time (Cavioni et al., 2017; Durlak et al., 2022; Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Jagers et al., 2019).

SEL, which first developed within the context of the United States, has evolved into a global educational imperative (Grant et al., 2017; Hoffman; 2009). Numerous schools within and beyond the United States have adopted various SEL programs (e.g., Berg et al., 2021; Cefai et al., 2018a; 2022). This trend has been extended to numerous countries worldwide, where assessment instruments concerning SEL have been also developed and applied (e.g., Anthony et al., 2022, 2023; Cavioni et al., 2023a; Grazzani et al., 2024, this issue; Martinez-Yarza et al., 2023). This approach is also evident in the European context, where it is increasingly recognized explicitly and implicitly within educational policies (see Cefai et al., 2018b). Moreover, the need for SEL policies has surged to unprecedented levels in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in heightened psychological distress and exacerbated mental health issues among young individuals (Cefai et al., 2015; Grazzani et al., 2022a; 2022b; Martinsone et al., 2022).

Starting from the internationally acknowledged and comprehensive SEL theoretical background outlined by the CASEL, this paper intends to build a bridge between this framework and two established policies within the European context that actively promote and assess these fundamental skills within school settings. Specifically, we focus on two noteworthy educational policy frameworks that can be associated with the goals of SEL in Europe. The first of these frameworks is the World Health Organization's (WHO) Health Promoting Schools initiative (HPS; Vilaça et al., 2019). The second focal point of our investigation is the assessment framework developed within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Study on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES; OECD, 2021). Within the scope of integrating SEL into European educational policy, we selected these frameworks for two main reasons: their harmonization with the CASEL comprehensive approach to well-being in educational settings, and their implementation across numerous European countries. Specifically, the WHO HPS initiative is at the forefront of creating inclusive educational environments that equally prioritize the physical, social, and emotional well-being of the educational community. Its broad implementation throughout Europe indicates its central role in fostering school environments that contribute to learning and growth (Barnekow et al., 2006). In parallel, the OECD SSES lays a robust empirical groundwork for measuring the efficacy of SEL efforts. Through the development of reliable and comparative data on social and emotional skills, the OECD study provides critical insights that enable the evaluation of SEL initiatives across varied demographics, cultures, and educational frameworks (Kankaraš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019).

As we embark on this exploration, our aim is twofold: firstly, to outline the alignment of these European policies with the CASEL SEL framework, and secondly, to elucidate how these policies have played a crucial role in the development, implementation, and evaluation of SEL initiatives within educational contexts.

WHO Health Promoting Schools (HPS)

The WHO HPS framework is a globally recognized initiative that envisions educational institutions as centres for promoting not only academic achievement but also the physical, mental, and social well-being of students and the broader school community (Vilaça et al., 2019). The HPS framework, founded on the central belief

that health and education are intrinsically connected, offers a holistic approach to school health. It extends beyond traditional healthcare, encompassing health promotion, prevention, and education. In this broader perspective, psychological well-being is recognized as an integral and indispensable component of health (WHO, 2021). This recognition finds its roots in the WHO's comprehensive definition of health which refers to a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. This definition goes beyond the conventional notion of health solely as the absence of physical ailments, emphasizing that well-being includes mental and social dimensions (Cavioni et al., 2020; 2021; WHO, 2001). More specifically, the foundation of the HPS framework can be traced back to the Ottawa Charter from the First International Conference on Health Promotion, held in Ottawa in November 1986 (WHO, 1986). The Ottawa Charter presented a pioneering perspective on health promotion, defining it as the process of empowering individuals and communities to enhance their health and well-being by enabling them to exert greater control over their own health setting the stage for a holistic approach to health. The Ottawa Charter identified five key strategies for health promotion which have become fundamental principles: 1) Building healthy public policy, which involves creating policies that support health in all sectors, ensuring that health is a key consideration in policymaking across different areas of government and society; 2) Creating supportive environments, which is related to the capacity to shape environments that promote health by making the healthy choice the easier choice; 3) Strengthening community action, which refers to encouraging collective efforts within communities to identify and address health issues collaboratively; 4) Developing personal skills, which empowers individuals with the knowledge and abilities needed to make informed decisions about their health; and 5) Reorienting health services refers to shifting the focus of healthcare systems from treatment to prevention and health promotion. The HPS approach is a comprehensive and holistic approach to fostering the well-being and health of students within an educational setting. It incorporates health promotion into the entire school environment, while also considering ways in which the school can extend its influence on the community to facilitate overall health-promoting initiatives (Barnekow et al., 2006; Vilaça et al., 2019). In our analysis, it is feasible to establish a congruence between the adaptation of the Ottawa Charter's five principles by the HPS framework for educational contexts and the foundational principles of the CASEL framework for SEL (see Table I).

Building upon such WHO recommendations, Europe has witnessed the emergence of the Schools for Health in Europe Network (SHE). SHE, initially established in 1991 as a WHO-supported network, transitioned into an independent non-governmental organization NGO in 2017 receiving co-funding from the European Union and the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The SHE network plays a key role in Europe for the advancement and application of the HPS approach including fostering the exchange of best practices, skills, and expertise to support the development, implementation, and enhancement of school health promotion. Furthermore, the SHE network provides ongoing technical support to the European Member States. This support is facilitated through a network of national and regional coordinators and extends to all SHE member countries. Lastly, the SHE network is committed to creating and maintaining active collaboration between the health, education, and social sectors within the European Member States and on an international level.

Table I

Alignment between the HPS framework based on the Ottawa Charter principles and the CASEL SEL principles

HPS framework based on the Ottawa Charter principles	CASEL SEL principles
1. Building healthy public policy	The importance of government and educational policies actively supporting and giving priority to SEL initiatives across various sectors
2. Creating supportive environments	The mission of educators to intentionally design school environments aimed to support health and well-being, encompassing aspects such as social and emotional well-being, and a culture of respect
3. Strengthening community action	The recognition of the pivotal role of schools which become hubs of community collaboration to engage students, parents, teachers, and the broader community in collective efforts to promote the social and emotional well-being of all stakeholders
4. Developing personal skills	The responsibility of educational institutions in fostering personal skills not only related to academic achievement but also encompassing social and emotional competencies, life skills, and health literacy
5. Reorienting health services	The key function of schools which act as intermediaries, connecting students and families, advocating for the needs of the whole school community, and facilitating access to resources that promote the overall well-being all of school members

In alignment with the SEL CASEL framework, SHE acknowledges the concept of a whole-school approach (Weare, 2000). This approach recognizes that every developmental context within the school community plays a role in shaping students' SEL skills. As illustrated by Bessems and colleagues (2020), three of the SHE whole-school approach components strongly resonate with the views of the CASEL framework. First, the importance of the school's social environment. This aspect emphasizes the quality of relationships within the school community, encompassing interactions between students, among students and staff, and the influence of relationships with parents and the broader community. It underscores the vital role of fostering positive, supportive, and inclusive social dynamics within the school. Secondly, it emphasizes incorporating SEL and health-related skills into the curriculum covering an array of topics, including the promotion of healthy lifestyle-related subjects like fostering practices of healthy eating, physical activity, and sports, as well as the prevention of risky behaviours and habits such as those related to obesity and substance use. This empowers students to develop competencies and proactively address matters related to their mental and physical well-being. Lastly, it underscores the value of establishing strong connections between the school, students' families, and various stakeholders within the surrounding communities. Collaborative efforts with these key individuals are essential in supporting school-wide SEL promotion initiatives.

These multifaceted topics have been actively promoted through programs like the Life Skills Training (LST) program (Botvin et al. 1995). The term "life skills" encompasses a broad spectrum of psychosocial and interpersonal aptitudes including decision-making, problem-solving, critical thinking, social skills, empathy, and the capacity to manage one's emotions and adapt to change. This comprehensive set of skills enables individuals to tackle the demands of daily life, maintain healthy lifestyles, reduce risky behaviours, and foster

overall well-being (WHO, 2017). Although the LST program was originally developed in the United States without specific reference to HPS principles, the LST program's adaptation in Europe has effectively incorporated key elements [1] that align with and support the core principles of the HPS approach. Within the European Union, several countries have embraced the program, contributing to its international presence. Presently, the European member states that have adopted LST include Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Spain, and Sweden.

The LST program is an evidence-based SEL program aimed at enhancing children and adolescents personal and social skills, encompassing the regulation of emotions like anger and anxiety, bolstering self-efficacy, self-esteem, relationship, and communication skills, coping strategies, and decision-making as well as preventing substance use (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, drugs), violence, and mental health problems (Botvin et al., 1995; Velasco et al., 2022). For instance, in Italy, an adapted version of the LST program has been made available for adolescents since 2010, primarily as a preventive measure against substance abuse and other high-risk behaviours, involving over 250 schools and 50,000 students along with their educators (Crispiatico et al., 2020). Results indicated that students in the experimental group exhibited significantly improved well-being, particularly in coping skills (with a notable emphasis on anxiety management), and a higher resistance to drug use. Additionally, they displayed lower levels of tobacco and alcohol use compared to their counterparts in the control group, as evidenced by assessments conducted at 8 months, 1 year, and 2 years after program implementation (Velasco et al., 2017). Notably, the positive effects extended to the teachers who implemented LST, enhancing their self-efficacy in managing preventive activities and addressing health-related topics with their students.

The concept of SEL shares a significant intersection with the LST aims as both SEL and LST are centred around developing essential abilities that empower individuals to navigate life's challenges successfully (WHO, 2003). Thus, both paradigms come together in their common objective of preparing individuals to succeed in a constantly changing world by providing them with the essential skills required for adaptability, resilience, and holistic well-being (WHO, 2020). More in detail, in terms of aligning the CASEL's five core competencies with the LST topics, we find that the two CASEL competencies namely self-awareness and self-management competencies are carefully integrated into LST units that focus on nurturing self-esteem and providing guidance on dealing with stress, anxiety, and anger. Social awareness and relationship skills directly correlate with the subject covered in various LST units encompassing areas such as communication skills, conflict resolution, assertiveness, and building healthy relationships. Furthermore, the decision-making skills competency is reinforced within the LST curriculum through dedicated units concentrating on decision-making processes related to resisting peer pressure, smoking habits and substance use and their consequences on health (National Health Promotion Associates, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c).

Assessment Framework of the OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES)

According to the OECD approach, social and emotional skills are individual capacities that can be manifested in consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, developed through formal and informal learning

experiences and important drivers of socio-economic outcomes throughout the individual's life (OECD, 2015). These capacities are nurtured through a range of learning experiences, spanning both formal and informal settings. In 2019, the OECD launched a project named Study on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) with three objectives: 1) creating a set of valid, reliable, and standardized datasets on social and emotional skills to compare data from diverse student populations across different cultures, social and educational settings; 2) collecting empirical data concerning the social and emotional skills of students; 3) equipping policymakers, educators, families, and communities with a comprehensive model to nurture students' SEL within schools and various other formative and educational contexts (Kankaraš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019).

The OECD SSES finds its roots in earlier studies, namely, the International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study (IELS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The IELS is a comprehensive survey that focuses on the assessment of five-year-old children, with a primary aim to identify the pivotal factors that either propel or impede early learning development. It underscores the profound significance of the initial five years in a child's life, a period marked by an extraordinary rate of learning and the acquisition of fundamental cognitive and socio-emotional skills. The IELS survey generates scales to assess attributes such as empathy, trust, pro-social behaviour, and disruptive behaviour (OECD, 2020). The PISA study, a triennial survey initiated in 2000 and now covering over 80 countries, primarily focuses on assessing 15-year-old students' skills in reading, mathematics, and science. In 2015, PISA aimed at gathering international data related to social and emotional skills including indicators of well-being as well as life satisfaction, experiences of bullying, and levels of anxiety (OECD, 2017). Furthermore, in 2018, the PISA assessment sought to provide insights into students' abilities to explore local, global, and intercultural issues, appreciate diverse perspectives and worldviews, engage in successful and respectful interactions with others, and undertake responsible actions conducive to sustainability and collective well-being (Schleicher, 2019).

To develop the final version of the OECD SSES assessment framework (John & De Fruyt, 2015), various measures were reviewed including the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg et al., 2006), the Hierarchical Personality Inventory for Children (HiPIC; Mervielde & De Fruyt, 1999), the Inventory of Child Individual Differences (ICID; Halverson et al., 2003, and the Big Five Inventory-2 (BFI-2; Soto & John, 2017). Based on this, the OECD study's conceptual and assessment framework (Chernyshenko et al., 2018; Kankaraš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019; OECD, 2021) presented a model named the "Big Five" to underline the alignment between the OECD framework and the well-known Big Five personality model (Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1990; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1990; Soto & John, 2017). The identified OECD framework five factors are: task performance (akin to the Big Five personality factor "Conscientiousness"), emotional regulation (associated with the Big Five personality factor "Emotional Stability"), collaboration (related to the Big Five personality factor "Agreeableness"), engaging with others (connected with the Big Five personality factor "Extraversion") and open-mindedness ("Openness to experience").

The OECD SSES Big Five model covers the assessment both at a student SSES individual competencies and also on the influences of contextual factors namely socio-demographic background, family, school, and wider community environments. The field test phase, carried out in 2018, involved students aged

10 years in grade 2 (named "Cohort 1) and students aged 15 in grade 7 (named "Cohort 2") for a total of 500 students in each of the two cohorts, as well as their parents, teachers, and school principals. Table II reports the contextual information collected in this phase. To measure the individual SSES students' skills, the protocol included 10 self-report items for the Cohort 1, and 15 for the Cohort 2. Data were collected in six countries namely South Korea, Colombia, Russia, Canada, Italy, and Turkey (OECD, 2021)

Table II

Contextual information collected in the OECD SSES *study (OECD, 2021, p. 29)*

Student	Parent	Teacher	Principal
Demographics	Demographics	Demographics	Principal's demographics and structure of school
Well-being, attitudes, and aspirations	About the child	Education and professional development	Student and teacher population
Relations with friends and parents	Well-being and skill profile of parents	Teaching practices	School resources
School life	Relationships with their child	Teacher's school	Pedagogical practices, curriculum, and assessment
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	Perceptions of social and emotional skills	Perceptions of social and emotional skills	School climate
Short cognitive ability measure			Policies and practices

In 2019, a final version of the survey assessing the students' self-reported perceptions regarding the degree to which they possess a total of 15 skills was developed (Kankaraš & Suarez-Alvarez, 2019). As presented in Table III, the assessment framework encompassed a total of 15 abilities, categorized into the Big Five competencies (Abrahams et al., 2019; John & De Fruyt, 2015; Lipnevich et al, 2017). The survey incorporated two additional scales namely self-efficacy, which referred to the strength of individuals' beliefs in their ability to execute tasks and achieve goals, and achievement motivation namely setting high standards for oneself and working hard to meet them. Such scales were created from items used to evaluate the 15 abilities.

The main study was carried out in 2019; a total of 14 distinct language versions were employed across 9 different countries namely Colombia, South Korea, Finland, United States, Turkey, Russia, Canada, Portugal, and China. Table IV displays the ultimate sample size concerning the surveys for students, parents, and teachers, categorized by cohorts.

Table III

OECD SSES *Big Five domains, underlying social and emotional skills and examples of assessed items (OECD, 2021)*

Big Five domain	Skills	Example of items
Task performance It's the competence that empowers task and goal-driven behaviours, encompassing attributes like decision-making, deferring instant gratification, compliance with social norms and standards, and the aptitude for task planning, arrangement, and priority setting	Self-control	• I avoid mistakes by working carefully • I stop to think before acting
	Responsibility	• I keep promises • I avoid responsibilities
	Persistence	• I keep working on a task until it is finished • I finish things despite difficulties in the way
Emotional regulation It accentuates favourable attributes, shifting the focus from anxiety, depression, and anger to highlighting qualities such as self-assurance, optimism, and emotional equilibrium	Stress resistance	• I am relaxed and handle stress well • I do not panic easily
	Emotional control	• I stay calm even in tense situations • I am not easily upset
	Optimism	• I believe good things will happen to me • I enjoy life
Engagement with others It places importance on skills that enable individuals to interact positively and enjoyably with others in their social environment including developing leadership, charisma, courage, and assertiveness	Energy	• I maintain high energy throughout the day • I show a lot of enthusiasm
	Assertiveness	• I like being a leader in my class • I know how to convince others to do what I want
	Sociability	• I like to be with friends I like talking to a lot of different people
Collaboration It places particular emphasis on authentic reciprocity and mutual interactions in individuals' relationships with others	Empathy	• I understand what others want • It is important that my friends are ok
	Trust	• I believe that most people are honest • I trust others
	Cooperation	• I get along well with others • I am always willing to help classmate
Open-mindedness It underscores the significance of nurturing intellectual curiosity, exploration, innovation, and creativity	Tolerance	• I like hearing about other cultures and religions • I learn a lot from people with differing beliefs
	Curiosity	• I love learning new things in school • I like to know how things work
	Creativity	• I sometimes find a solution that other people don't see • I have a good imagination

Table IV

The final sample size related to the students', parents', and teachers' surveys, divided by cohorts (OECD, 2021)

	Cohort 1			Cohort 2		
	Students	Parents	Teacher	Students	Parents	Teacher
Sample size	31187	18662	28540	2978	16806	27853

Figures 1, 2, and 3 aim to offer insights into the psychometric characteristics of the OECD SESS measures (OECD, 2021). These figures display the reliability data individually for each cohort and collectively for the pooled data from both cohorts, denoted as 'All'. Figure 1 displays the reliability coefficients for the students' direct assessment final scales, indicating satisfactory reliability across all scales. Figure 2 presents the scale reliabilities from the parents' indirect assessment of students, revealing that the aggregate dataset encompassing all students was satisfactory, with values exceeding 0.70. Figure 3 illustrates the scale reliabilities based on the teachers' indirect assessment of students, with certain scales, like assertiveness and persistence, exhibiting high reliabilities.

Our analysis reveals conceptual similarities between the CASEL SEL framework's five core competencies and the array of skills outlined in the OECD SESS study. For instance, optimism, self-efficacy, curiosity, and creativity pivotal elements within the SSES skills, resonate with CASEL's focus on fostering a positive outlook, recognising one's strengths, and developing interests featured in self-awareness competence. Self-control, persistence, stress resistance, achievement motivation, and emotional control, which are core components of the SSES study, closely align with CASEL's self-management competency. The qualities of energy, assertiveness, cooperation, tolerance, and sociability correlate with CASEL's relationship skills, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal interaction and communication. Empathy and trust, as integral to the SSES skills, are foundational components of CASEL's social awareness. Lastly, responsibility in the OECD study finds resonance with CASEL's responsible decision-making, which encourages thoughtful choices.

Figure 1

Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) for student direct assessment final scales (adapted from OECD, 2021)
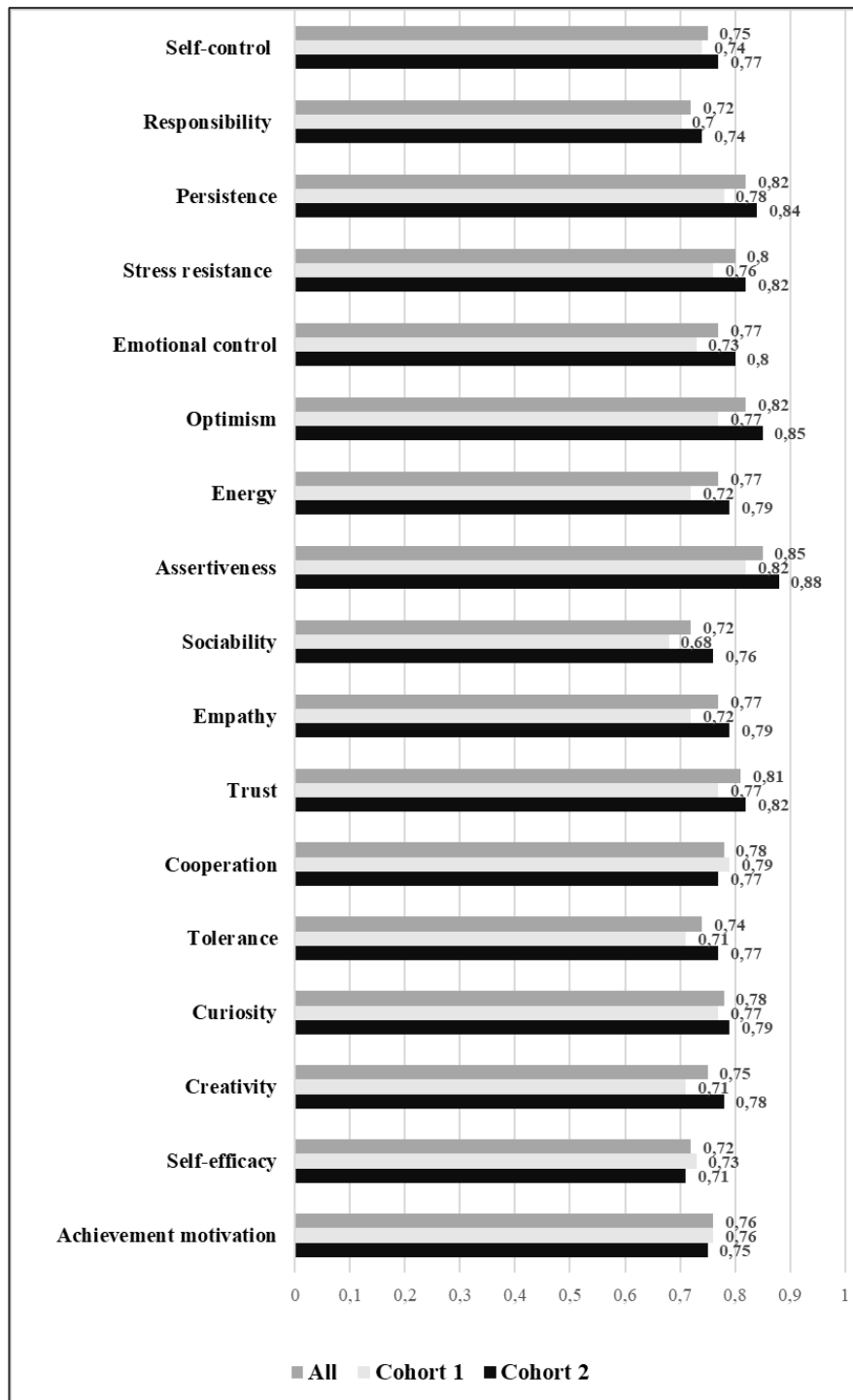
Figure 2

Reliability coefficients for parent indirect assessment final scales (adapted from OECD, 2021)
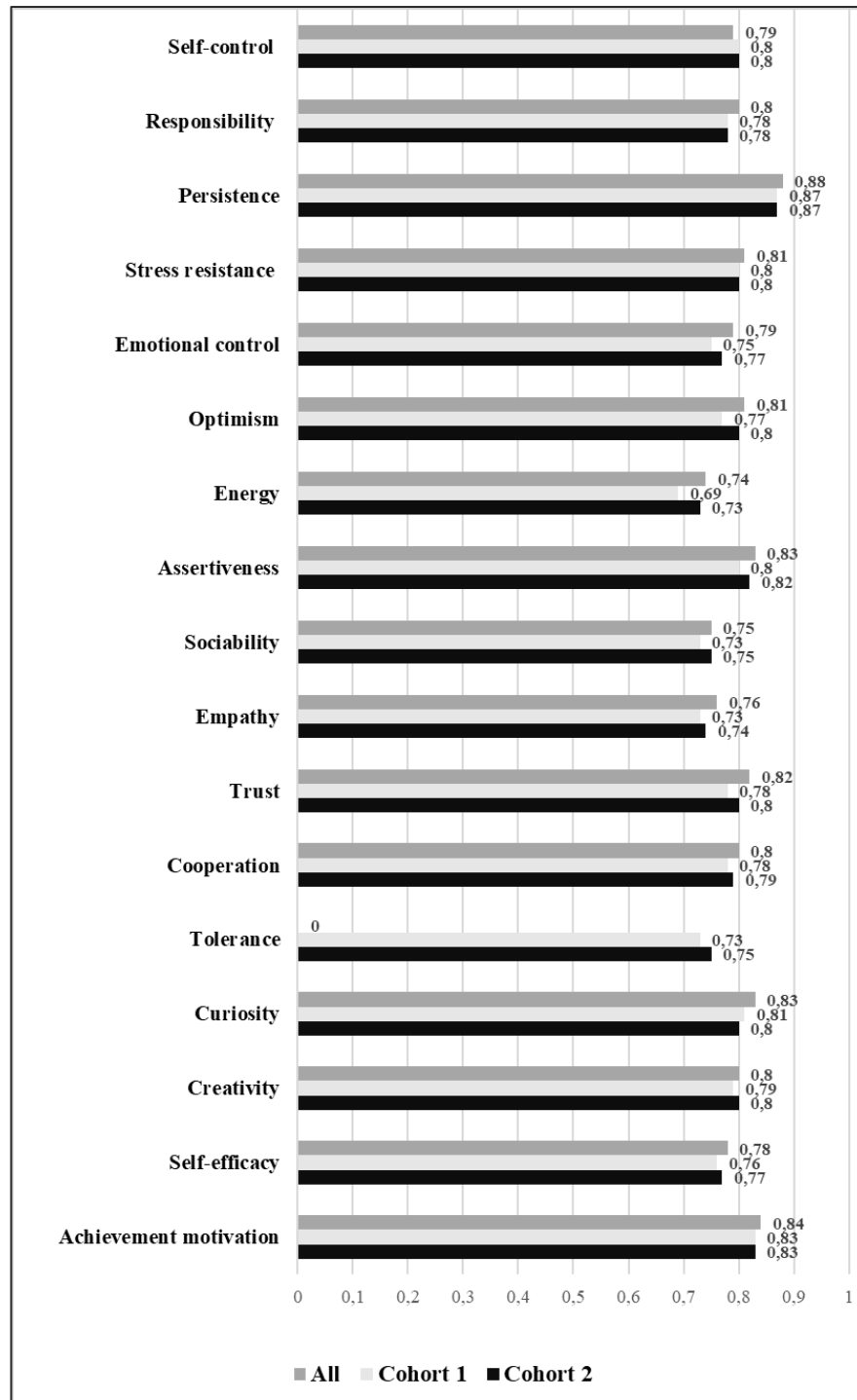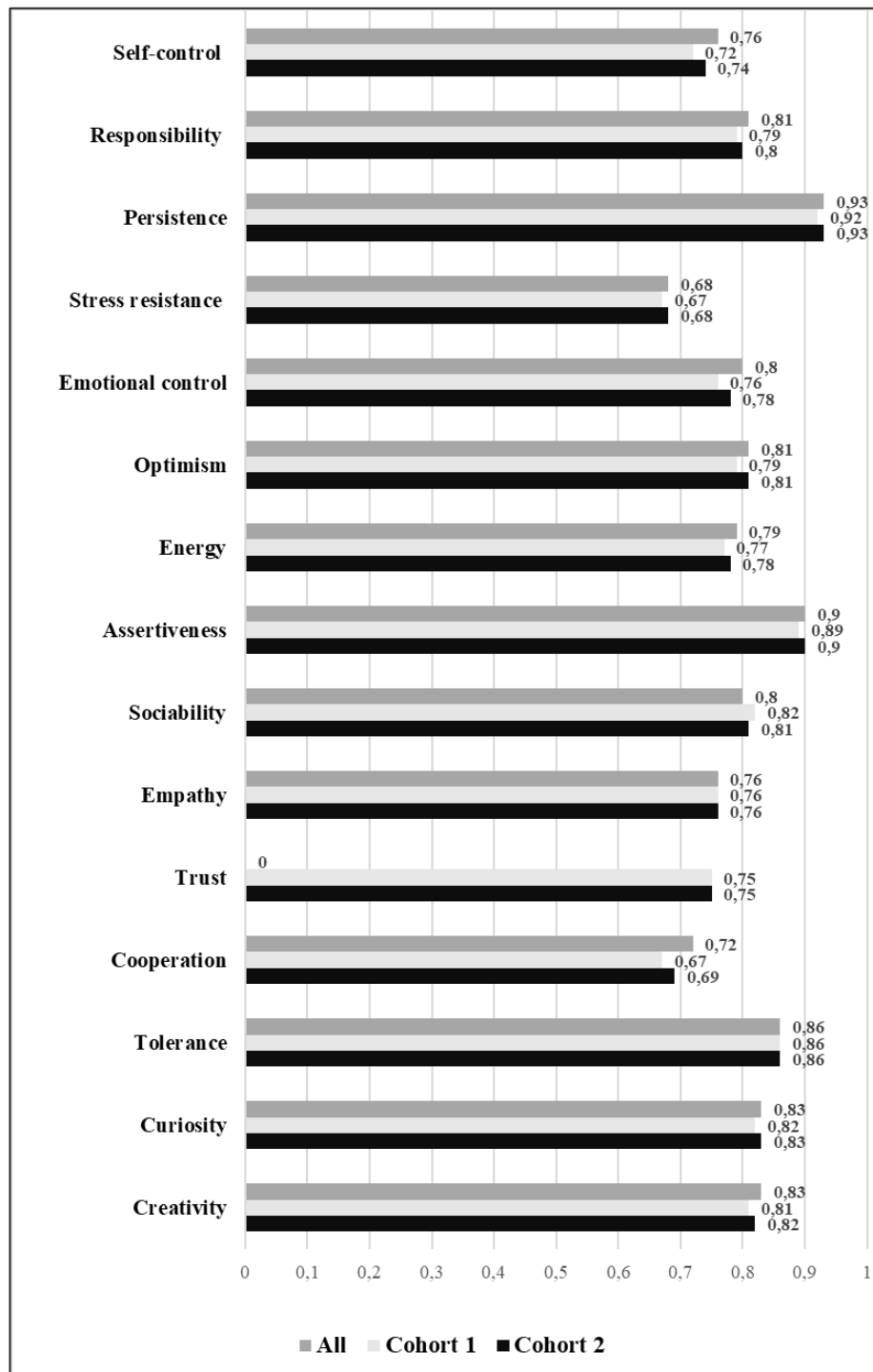
Figure 3

Reliability coefficients for final scales of the teacher indirect assessment of students (adapted from OECD, 2021).

Note: No data are available for the Achievement motivation and self-efficacy subscale in this study.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to provide a comprehensive exploration of the intersection between the CASEL SEL framework and the international educational policies within the European context that emphasize the importance of social and emotional skills in school settings. We aimed at providing insights, not only for policymakers and educators, but also for those responsible for the comparison and refinement of SEL-related assessment systems, which constituted the primary focus of this paper.

We have closely examined two significant educational policies: the WHO Health Promoting Schools initiative and the OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills. Through this exploration, we have established a connection between the objectives, programs, and assessment systems of these policies and the principles of SEL, as defined by the CASEL framework (Mahoney et al., 2021). Our study aligns with the Explore SEL initiative from Harvard University (http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu), which sought to establish a detailed, evidence-based system for classifying, explaining, and connecting diverse SEL competencies and frameworks, including the OCSE and WHO Health Promoting Schools frameworks. Our exploration enhances the dialogue on SEL by closely examining the integration of the CASEL framework with European educational policies, thereby expanding upon the objectives of the Explore SEL project. Our study's aims also resonate with the initiatives of the CASEL Assessment Work Group committed to bridging theoretical SEL frameworks with evidence-based assessment instruments.

Consistent with our goals, the necessity for robust teacher training becomes clear, highlighting the importance of well-structured teacher training programs. This emphasis on educator preparation is crucial for the practical application and effectiveness of the policies and assessments discussed (Cavioni et al., 2023b; Conte et al., 2024). As a way of example, a key element of the LST program effectiveness and sustainability is its focus on engaging teachers directly in fostering environments that promote SEL and prevent social, emotional, and behavioural problems among students. Initially trained by experienced professionals, these educators subsequently take on the role of trainers, teaching their peers using designated manuals and assessment tools and providing guidance for implementing the program (Velasco et al., 2015).

Regarding limitations, it is crucial to recognise that, due to the vast diversity in educational systems and cultural contexts within European countries, there may be variations in the implementation of policies and their resulting assessment system and outcomes. While this study acknowledges the presence of these variations, it does not conduct an exhaustive analysis of these multifaceted differences. To offer a more comprehensive understanding of how these policies influence the effectiveness of SEL initiatives in a wide range of European nations, future research should consider a more detailed examination of individual case studies.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

Endnote

[1] The European adaptation of the LST program embraces a holistic approach to health and well-being, extending beyond mere physical health to include social and emotional aspects. This approach reflects the HPS principle of comprehensive health education. Additionally, the program in Europe covers a wide array of life skills vital for students' all-around growth, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and coping abilities, aligning with the HPS focus on equipping students for healthy living and life's challenges. Moreover, the adaptation of the LST program conforms with the WHO's guidelines for school health promotion, emphasizing the creation of culturally pertinent and context-specific programs suited to the European educational settings.

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