

I had the opportunity to read the manuscript “Teaching and Developing Social and Emotional Skills with Technology,” which reviews the literature on social and emotional skill learning (SEL) curricula across a variety of domains (school, workplace, medical/therapeutic) from the perspective of identifying opportunities for HCI research to contribute to this space. Three key related contributions of the review are (1) identifying a core set of topics, methods, and challenges to teaching social and emotional skills that cut across the various curricula and domains, (2) identifying existing technologies and approaches in the HCI research space that could be brought to bear upon these challenges, and (3) the challenges that supporting such curricula presents for the HCI community.

The audience for this review may potentially be not just HCI researchers looking for opportunities to do research in this space, but also psychology and education researchers looking to identify potential ways to incorporate technologies into the implementation and evaluation of these programs. In order to serve these two functions, however, the review would benefit from a tighter focus and deeper links between specific technologies and their potential applications in SEL curricula.

One suggestion for accomplishing this would be to limit the scope of the review to SEL curricula in school settings. The authors conducted a deep analysis of the content of actual school-based curricula via mind maps and iterative theme extraction, and the resulting topics and methods that are derived are specific and grounded in examples. In contrast, the sections on SEL programs in workplace, medical, & therapeutic settings are not as deeply fleshed out, and it seems the same content-based analytic approach was not applied to this literature. As a result, these sections are more high level and seem shoehorned into the framework of topics and methods already identified in the school section.

Grounding the review in school-based interventions would force the authors to ground the learning principles and lead to a deeper consideration of relevant existing technologies and HCI approaches and how they can be brought to bear upon these principles. As is, by cutting across so many domains, the set of learning principles that authors derive (feedback, practice, transferring skills, supporting motivation) are not specific to social-emotional learning, they are arguably generic to teaching any task or skill. That may well be the case, but I would argue that by focusing on school-based interventions, the authors could delve deeper into the *unique* challenges of, for example, providing feedback or opportunities for practice and transfer of skills to school-age children and in school settings.

Section 5 could similarly benefit from a tighter focus, as the parallels it draws between the learning principles and existing HCI work remain mostly high level. The section currently reads like a laundry list of any and all technologies that may be relevant, without deep consideration for the fact that different technologies will be more or less appropriate for different user groups (e.g. adults versus children, patients versus otherwise healthy individuals, employees versus employers) or contexts (home, school, clinic, hospital, workplace). For example, reflection and emotional self-awareness means something quite different for a first grader interacting with peers than an adult trying to navigate work relationships, and very different technologies would be required for each. If this section can be constrained somewhat, as would be the case with focusing on children and school-based interventions in mind, it would enable a deeper discussion

of specific technologies that would be appropriate for feedback, practice, real-word transfer, and supporting motivation and engagement in this population and in this setting.

There is some redundancy and too much high-level discussion across sections 4-6. First, the challenges to learning social and emotional skills outlined in section 4 are not strikingly different from the “challenges that supporting social and emotional skill curricula pose for HCI” outlined in section 6. In fact, the discussion of inside/outside settings in section 6.1 echoes the mention for need for feedback and practice outside of sessions, going beyond short-term role-play, and embedding and transfer of skills in section 4. Second, as the authors themselves point out, a lot of the technical, design, and methodological challenges (discussed at great length) in sections 6.2-6.4 are rather generic in that they’re common to most ubiquitous systems. Again, I would argue that grounding the discussion in a particular domain, such as social and emotional skills training in education settings, would allow the authors to devote more time to giving specific examples of challenges that supporting teachers in delivering curricula aimed at improving social and emotional skills in school-age children pose for HCI.

As a more radical proposal, I wonder whether sections 5-6 could be combined, condensed, and re-structured to more closely follow the challenges outlined in section 4. For each of the four learning principles and associated challenges, there could be a section on existing technologies and approaches that can be applied toward these challenges, followed by a section on design opportunities the challenges pose for HCI. Such re-structuring might ameliorate the sense that the technology discussions in sections 5 and 6 have too much breadth and not enough depth.

In summary, I believe that a literature review focusing on content-based analysis of social-emotional skills learning curricula with the goal of identifying specific challenges and hence opportunities for HCI research would be of great interest to the ToCHI readership. However the review would benefit from some limiting of scope; focusing on SEL curricula in educational settings would ground the discussion of how these programs can be supported with existing technologies and HCI approaches, and what new technology and design opportunities they afford the HCI research community.