

Foreword

Children and adolescents need a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills in order to succeed in modern life. Cognitive skills, including those that are measured by achievement tests and academic grades, have been shown to influence the likelihood of individuals' educational and labour market success. They also predict broader outcomes such as perceived health, social and political participation as well as trust. In turn, social and emotional skills, such as perseverance, sociability and self-esteem have been shown to influence numerous measures of social outcomes, including better health, improved subjective well-being and reduced odds of engaging in conduct problems. Cognitive and socio-emotional skills interact and cross-fertilise, and empower children to succeed both in and out of schools. For example, social and emotional skills may help children translate intentions into actions, and thereby improve their likelihood of graduating from universities, follow through healthy lifestyles and prevent engaging in aggressive behaviours.

Some of the important social and emotional skills are malleable during childhood and adolescence, allowing opportunities for policy makers, teachers and parents to provide the right learning environments to accompany them at those stages. While everyone acknowledges the importance of social and emotional skills, there is often insufficient awareness of “what works” to enhance these skills and efforts made to measure and foster them.

This report synthesises three years of analytical research conducted under the auspices of the Education and Social Progress (ESP) project at the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). It includes literature reviews, empirical analyses of longitudinal data and a review of policies and practices in OECD countries and partner economies. The report identifies promising avenues for effective social and emotional development. They include promoting strong relationships between educators (e.g. parents, teachers and mentors) and children, mobilising real-life examples and practical experience in existing curricular activities, and emphasising hands-on learning in extracurricular activities. Improvements in learning contexts and practices do not necessarily require major reforms or resources. We can start this process by adapting the ways in which existing curricular and extracurricular activities are delivered.

Furthermore, this report shows that social and emotional skills can be measured meaningfully within cultural and linguistic boundaries. Such measures can be instrumental to help decision makers better assess children's current skill sets and their future needs, and thereby help teachers and parents to effectively adapt the pedagogy, parenting and learning environments accordingly. The OECD is committed to developing such measures in an international comparative framework. This includes continuing efforts made in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as well as the new phase of the ESP project. The latter will involve the enhancement of existing social and emotional skills instruments to better understand the levels and developmental processes across countries and cultures.

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Acknowledgements

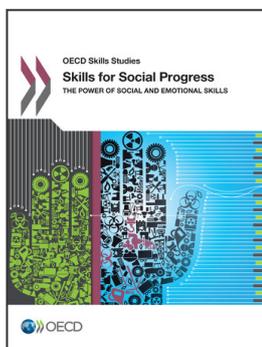
The authors of this publication are Koji Miyamoto, Maria del Carmen Huerta, Katarzyna Kubacka, Hiroko Ikesako and Elodie de Oliveira from the OECD. The analysis presented in this report is the main outcome of the Education and Social Progress (ESP) project by the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), a project lead by Koji Miyamoto.

We have received numerous inputs from many researchers responsible for the empirical analyses presented in Chapters 3 and 4, including Sergio Urzua, Miguel Sarzosa and Ricardo Espinoza (University of Maryland, United States), Ben Edwards and Galina Daraganova (Australian Institute for Family Studies, Australia), Steven Groenez (University of Leuven, Belgium), Ross Finnie (University of Ottawa, Canada), Michael Kottelenberg and Steve Lehrer (Queen University, Canada), Friedhelm Pfeiffer and Karsten Reuss (Centre for European Economic Research, Germany), Lihong Huang (Oslo and Akershus University of Applied Sciences, Norway), Jan-Eric Gustafsson and Elias Johannesson (Gothenburg University, Sweden), Robin Samuel (University of Basel, Switzerland), Nikki Shure (University of Oxford, United Kingdom) and Dan Sherman and Yibing Lee (American Institutes for Research, United States).

Special thanks go to James J. Heckman (University of Chicago, United States) and John Q. Easton (Spencer Foundation, United States) who provided extensive comments and suggestions on the draft report. We also thank Tommaso Agasisti (Politecnico di Milano, Italy), Angela Duckworth (University of Pennsylvania, United States), Charles Fadel (Center for Curriculum Redesign, United States), Tatiana Filgueiras and Laura Rodrigues di Pizzo (Ayrton Senna Foundation), Filip de Fruyt (Ghent University, Belgium), Oliver John (University of California at Berkeley, United States), Tim Kautz (University of Chicago, United States), Patrick Kyllonen (Education Testing Services, United States), Lars Nerdrum (Permanent Delegation of Norway to the OECD, France), Peter Tymms and Cesare Aloisi (Durham University, United Kingdom), Sergio Urzua and Miguel Sarzosa (University of Maryland, United States), and Stefan Walter (Swiss Coordination Centre for Research in Education, Switzerland) for insightful comments. Colleagues from the OECD, including Francesco Avvisati (Directorate for Education and Skills), Marion Devaux, Christopher Prinz, Dominic Richardson and Franco Sassi (Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs), and Carrie Exton and Conal Smith (Statistics Directorate) also provided constructive inputs. We thank Lynda Hawe from the OECD for managing the publication process; Sophie Limoges for her assistance; Romain Duran, Alain Agnès, Carol Schollé and Vincent Lefèvre from Design Media for preparing the layouts; and Julie Harris and Sally Hinchcliffe for editing the manuscript.

A draft version of this report has been presented at the OECD's informal Ministerial meeting on "Skills for Social Progress" in Sao Paulo on 23-24 March 2014. We thank the Brazilian Ministry of Education, INEP and the Ayrton Senna Foundation for co-organising this event. We particularly thank José Henrique Paim (Minister of Education, Brazil), Viviane Senna (President of the Ayrton Senna Foundation, Brazil) and José Francisco Soares (President of INEP, Brazil) for making a successful event.

We very much appreciate all the valuable contributions and comments made on this report by the CERI Governing Board Members and representatives from Brazil, Greece and the Russian Federation, as well as participants of the informal Ministerial meeting on “Skills for Social Progress”. Lastly, our sincere thanks go to Dirk Van Damme, Head of the OECD’s Innovation and Measuring Progress Division, for guiding the development of this report, and Marta Rilling from the OECD, for following through the whole publication process.



From:
Skills for Social Progress
The Power of Social and Emotional Skills

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264226159-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2015), "Foreword and Acknowledgements", in *Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264226159-1-en>

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