Preface

Children and adolescents need a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills in order to succeed in modern life. Cognitive skills have been shown to influence the likelihood of individuals' educational and labour market success. In turn, social and emotional skills, such as perseverance, sociability and self-esteem have been shown to influence numerous measures of social outcomes. Cognitive and socio-emotional skills interact and cross-fertilise, and empower children to succeed both in and out of schools. 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 Education and Social Progress (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.

Andreas Schleicher
Director for Education and Skills
What is the aim of the Education and Social Progress (ESP) project?

The Education and Social Progress (ESP) project aims at better understanding the learning contexts that shape skills indispensable for individual well-being and societal progress.

The project focuses on:

- The **wider-benefits of skills** such as better jobs, healthier lifestyles, active citizenship, safer society and improved life-satisfaction.

- The power of **social and emotional skills** such as perseverance, resilience and agreeableness in driving children's success in life; and

- The role family, school and community **learning contexts** play in skill formation.

The long-term objective of this project is to translate these findings into a set of recommendations and measurement instruments for policy-makers, school administrators, practitioners and parents.
What are the wider-benefits of skills?

Few would doubt the major role skills play in raising individual’s educational and labour market outcomes. However, less is known about the power of skills in promoting a wide array of social outcomes such as healthy behaviours, civic participation, safe community, environmental awareness and even happiness.

The ESP project investigates how skills enhance individuals’ capacity to thrive in the modern world. Those empowered can better adapt in a dynamic and skill-driven labour market. They are more capable of preventing physical and mental illness by following healthy lifestyles and interpersonal relationships. They are more likely to weather the storms of life such as victimisation, hospitalisation and family disintegration through forward-looking, coping strategies. Such individuals have the capacity to drive social cohesion and the well-being of nations.
How can education promote people’s success in life and well-being?

How can we better prepare individuals to face tomorrow’s world - a world that can be prosperous, yet, unpredictable, uncertain and challenging?

Education can prepare individuals by improving their **cognitive skills** which are reflected in, for example, literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills. Moreover, education can enhance **social and emotional skills**, such as perseverance, sociability and self-esteem. Recent evidence suggests that social and emotional skills can be as powerful as cognitive skills in promoting individuals’ success while remaining malleable beyond childhood.

Cognitive, social and emotional skills can help reduce obesity

**Probability of being obese at age 16 by skill deciles in the United Kingdom**

Source: OECD (2015) based on the 1970 British Cohort Study

**Note:** Obesity is captured using body mass index (BMI) calculated based on a medical examination of weight and height. A child whose BMI is equal to or exceeds 95th percentile is considered obese.
How can we raise skills that matter?

A considerable amount of research sheds light on different ways to enhance individuals’ level of literacy and academic skills. For instance, evidence suggests the importance of improving the quality of teachers, the classroom climate and content of curricular activities. Less is known, however, about ways to improve social and emotional skills.

Some studies suggest that early interventions are critical and that parenting plays an important role. Other studies highlight the importance of peer interactions within and outside of schools.

It is imperative to better exploit existing information on the relationship between learning contexts and social and emotional skills. Moreover, improving the availability of information will help generate better evidence.
How can this project help policy makers, teachers and parents?

Schools, families and communities can play an active role in fostering children’s social and emotional skills. Teachers can enhance children’s motivation by becoming effective mentors. Parents, in turn, can provide warm, supportive and interactive environments through day-to-day home activities. Local communities can complement teachers’ and parents’ efforts by providing informal learning opportunities for children to engage in real-life projects. Today there are numerous initiatives fostering social and emotional skills across OECD countries, but the focus varies widely across and within countries.

Policy-makers, educators and parents clearly need more and better information that covers wider socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and linguistic contexts before engaging in comprehensive actions to promote individual empowerment. They also need to start understanding the types and nature of cognitive and social and emotional skills that should be nurtured, and how that might be done.
Conceptualising skills: What are cognitive and socio-emotional skills?

Skills that matter are multidimensional and include cognitive, social and emotional facets. These skills interact and cross-fertilise, and progressively develop as children grow up.
The ESP project's framework is designed to highlight:

• The role skills play in shaping individuals’ social and economic outcomes; and
• The role learning contexts play in shaping skill formation.

The ESP project addresses diverse learning contexts, in homes, schools, communities and workplaces. It also looks into a wide spectrum of outcomes, particularly social outcomes, including health, civic engagement, safety, well-being, and environment, in addition to educational and labour market outcomes.
Project components

**Phase 1: 2011-2014**

Activities of the Phase 1 are organised around two components:

1. **Conceptual framework development and literature review**  
   Conceptual papers are prepared to define skills, identify the determinants and consequences of skills, and synthesise available evidence.

2. **Analyses of longitudinal data on context, skills and outcomes**  
   Existing longitudinal data from OECD countries are analysed to complement available evidence-base on the determinants and consequences of skills. The analysis uses longitudinal data from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.
Project components

Phase 2: 2015 onwards

Building on evidence from Phase 1, the OECD Secretariat is preparing a longitudinal study of children’s social emotional skills in cities scheduled to be launched in 2020, with the aim to identify the process of skill formation and its socio-economic outcomes. A feasibility study is scheduled to start in 2015 to prepare the main longitudinal study.

The study will be conducted in major cities or regions in OECD member and partner countries. It will involve students, teachers, and parents. The target cohort will be children in Grades 1 and 7 (approximately ages 6 and 12). The study will measure learning context, social and emotional skills, and outcomes. The developmental work will take place from 2015 to 2019, and the main study will start in 2020 and continue onwards.

Activities of the Phase 2 are organised around two stages:

1. Development of the survey design and measurement instruments (2014–2019)
   Preparatory work will be carried out to ensure that the survey design and measurement instruments are appropriately adjusted to assess contexts, skills, and outcomes over time. The first stage of this work is the feasibility study of developing social and emotional skills instruments.

2. Main data collection (2020 onwards)
   Data on skills, learning contexts, and outcomes will be collected regularly over the years. Analytical reports will be prepared using the micro-data collected.
Main outputs

Publications

- “Fostering and Measuring Skills: Improving Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills to Promote Lifetime Success” (Kautz, T. et al., 2014)  
  November 2014
  March 2015

Meetings

- High Level Policy Forum on Skills for Social Progress**  
  São Paulo, 24-25 March 2014
- Book launch seminar on Skills for Social Progress  
  Paris, 10 March 2015

** jointly organised by the OECD, Ministry of Education of Brazil, INEP and Instituto Ayrton Senna.
ESP Timeline

2011
Conceptual framework development and literature reviews
International conference on Education and Social progress (Dec 2012, Amsterdam)

2012
Analyses of longitudinal data on context, skills and outcomes

2013
High Level Policy Forum on Skills for Social Progress (Mar 2014, São Paulo)

2014

2015
Feasibility Study to develop survey instruments
Field Trial

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020
Launch of the longitudinal study
The OECD brings together 34 countries committed to democracy and the market economy to promote policies that improve economic and social well-being across the world. It provides a setting where governments can share policy experiences; seek solutions to common challenges; identify good practices; and, co-ordinate domestic and international policies. OECD members work in light of the following causes:

- Supporting sustainable economic growth.
- Boosting employment.
- Raising living standards.
- Maintaining financial stability.
- Assisting member and non-member countries’ economic development.
- Contributing to growth in world trade.

Education and Skills are major driving forces of growth, development and equality. The OECD’s Directorate for Education and Skills focuses on the current key challenges that educational systems are facing, including how to better equip children with the knowledge and competencies most desirable for lifetime success.
OECD Skills Strategy

Being skilled has always been an advantage – if not a necessity – for individuals. The modern labour market requires being able to manage uncertainty and change. People need both occupation-specific and general skills, together with the willingness, ability, and opportunities to retrain throughout their adult lives. These skills can foster improvement in living and learning outcomes.

In 2012 the OECD launched a Skills Strategy, since having a skilled workforce is essential for countries competing in an advanced economy. Being skilled enables workers to be more productive, and greater productivity is the basis of sustainable growth. The OECD Skills Strategy helps governments review the design and implementation of national skills policies in light of other countries’ experiences.

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI)

The Education and Social Progress project is an activity of the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI).

CERI does extensive research work which covers learning throughout the life course. With projects expanded over longer periods than most OECD education work, CERI aims to set an agenda for the future, ensuring that its work is thoroughly integrated with empirical analysis and innovation awareness.
WEBSITES and CONTACTS

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