Better understanding our youth’s social and emotional development
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Dear Leaders, Policy Advisers and Education Stakeholders

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has launched a study on the social and emotional skills of students to help cities and countries improve social and emotional skills amongst school-aged children and young people.

The role and impact of social and emotional skills are increasingly critical in diverse and changing economies and societies. This is true for individuals, but it is also true for communities and nations as a whole.

Children are continuously developing social and emotional skills throughout their childhoods and into adult life. When this development is hampered, the consequences can be severe. This is particularly the case in stressful, fast-paced urban environments, greatly affecting:
education attainment
transition from school into the labour market
job satisfaction
mental and physical health
levels of civic engagement, volunteering and social integration
the prevalence of crime and other anti-social behaviour
general well-being.

Cities and countries may not have robust data to help inform policies that best support young people. The OECD has an established track record for carrying out the most renowned studies on students' learning and development across the globe. We are keen to work with cities and countries on designing this study and ensure the information produced is valid and reliable and can help to improve how children and young people learn social and emotional skills.

This brochure provides further information on the study and how to get involved.

Please do not hesitate in contacting us if you have any questions about the study.

Andreas Schleicher
Director for Education and Skills
OECD
Using OECD expertise in conducting international studies

The OECD has led key international studies on education and skills for many years including:

- The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), assessing the skills of 15-year-old students in reading, maths and science.
- The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), on literacy, numeracy and problem solving.
- The Teacher and Learning International Survey (TALIS), providing a voice to teachers and school principals.

From studies such as PISA, PIAAC and TALIS, the OECD has built up a body of knowledge on students’ skills and student well-being.

Over the last three years, the OECD has undertaken significant evidence-based analysis in preparation for a study on social and emotional skills. The outcome of this work is summarised in the report titled "Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills," published in March 2015.

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Importance of social and emotional skills

We use social and emotional skills everyday …

We are seeing significant shifts in economic, environmental and social conditions that change the way people live and the way individuals, communities and industries operate. These interwoven connections along with technological advancements are accelerating the pace of change faster than we have ever seen before.

Children and adults now live in a highly interconnected world where ‘how you interact’ matters. The ability of individuals to adapt, be resourceful, respect and work well with others, and to take personal and collective responsibility is increasingly distinguishing those communities and societies that are building improved social cohesion and economic growth and those who are not. This has resulted in social and emotional skills receiving increasing attention from policy-makers and educators around the world.

Developing social and emotional skills allows children and young people to navigate this complex environment, shaping their everyday interactions with friends and family. These skills are a fundamental part of the skillset all individuals need in order to function and thrive in today’s changing world.
Social and emotional skills are malleable

Children develop these skills through interactions with their family and friends, educators and teachers, at school, at home, in their wider community and later on in the workplace. Early and continuous development of these skills achieves the best results as developing these skills at a later age requires more effort and investment from all sides.
Young people with strong social and emotional skills are:

- More likely to have better grades
- More likely to have higher income and better jobs

* Average correlation coefficient

* Standardized regression coefficients
- More likely to live longer

- Less likely to commit violent and criminal acts

* * * Average correlation coefficient
Source: Roberts et al. (2007), "The power of personality",
http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2007.00047.x

* * * Weighted average correlation coefficient
** Antisocial behaviour includes instances of violence, crime,
delinquency, bullying and offending.
Source: Jones, S.E, J.D. Miller and D.R. Lynam (2011), “Personality, antisocial
behavior, and aggression: a meta-analytic review”,
http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2011.03.004.
Focus on cities as well as countries

The role of cities is increasingly critical

Across the globe, we are seeing significant movement of people towards cities with more than half of the world population already living in urban areas. As the number and scale of cities grow we are seeing profound impacts on lifestyles, housing, transport and employment.

Each city is unique, with characteristics that define them and set them apart from other cities or regions within the same country. These fast-paced environments are important contributors to their countries’ economies. Today, cities’ diverse populations are presented with more opportunities, more social interaction and face more pressure than ever before.

Therefore, the rationale for offering the study to cities, in addition to individual states, provinces and countries, reflects the increasing role that some cities are taking in the education of their citizens. There may also be particular pressures and imperatives that face cities in relation to the development, or lack thereof, of citizens’ social and emotional skills. From the early phases of the project, interest has been expressed directly from city representatives, in addition to that from country representatives.
By participating in this study

Participating in this study will give cities and countries an in-depth understanding of how young people’s social and emotional development can vary depending on gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, migration background and other factors relevant to each city or country.

Cities and countries will also have information on the level and distribution of these skills in their jurisdiction, comparing results between the two age cohorts involved.

In addition, cities and countries will have a greater understanding on individual, family, and school determinants that foster or hinder the development of these skills.

With insights gleaned from this study, cities and countries will be able to evaluate the strengths and areas for improvement, and risk factors when developing or implementing new policies.
Cities and countries can learn from each other…

An international study benefits participants in two ways. First, the overall cost of designing and developing the study is lower because it involves more than just one or two jurisdictions. The design will also be more sophisticated because the OECD and participating cities and countries will have more resources at their disposal than if only one jurisdiction conducted the study. Second, the data collected will be more robust because multiple cities and countries around the world are participating in the study. Cities and countries can also learn from each other to make improvements to achieve better outcomes for citizens.

… and monitor progress over time

After benchmarking the level and distribution of skills, cities and countries may choose to monitor progress over time. This will be particularly relevant for cities and countries that wish to monitor the effects of recently implemented policies. Cities and countries may choose to do this individually, using the measures developed in this study, or they may choose to participate in the next phases of this work on social and emotional skills. The former would allow cities and countries to gauge progress at their own pace while the latter would provide information on the progress of all participating cities and countries at a specific period. Some of the most effective learning across jurisdictions has occurred from seeing how significant and sustained improvements are achieved over time.
Scope

The study will involve two cohorts of students, aged 10 and 15.

The study will gather information on

- Students’ social-emotional skills
- Skill-related activities in home, school and community learning contexts
- Background characteristics of children, teachers and parents.

The study commenced in 2017 and will be carried out over a three year period. Administering the study in schools will take place in 2018 and 2019 with the findings released later in 2020.

Cities and countries are currently joining the study. Cities and countries that are interested in participating in the study are encouraged to contact the OECD.
The study is assessing a variety of social and emotional skills
Get involved

Contact the OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills team (esp.contact@oecd.org) for further information on the study, including:

- Cost
- The time and resources involved in participating in the study
- More detailed scope and timeline of the study.
Find out more about OECD work on social and emotional skills

Please see the following:

  [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264226159-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264226159-en)
  [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5js07529lwf0-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5js07529lwf0-en)
- OECD (2018), *The Study on Social and Emotional Skills*,  
  [www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/thestudyonsocialandemotionalskills.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/thestudyonsocialandemotionalskills.htm)
OECD and the Directorate for Education and Skills

The OECD provides a setting where governments compare policy experience, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices and co-ordinate domestic and international policies. It brings together countries committed to democracy and the market economy from around the world to:

- support sustainable economic growth
- boost employment
- raise living standards
- maintain financial stability
- assist member and non-member countries’ economic development
- contribute to growth in world trade.

In today’s globalised economy, education is a major driving force for growth and development. The OECD Directorate for Education and Skills focuses on current key challenges facing education systems including how to improve the quality of teachers, teaching and learning in order to provide the knowledge and skills needed in the 21st century.
For more information, visit:
http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/thestudyonsocialandemotionskills.htm

If you have questions, you can reach us at:
esp.contact@oecd.org