

Research Project

Education and Social Progress

Project funded by own resources

Project title Education and Social Progress

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This project is about empowering and preparing individuals for tomorrow's world that can be prosperous yet challenging, unpredictable and uncertain. Those empowered can better contribute to a society that demands active citizenship. 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. Education can empower individuals by raising their cognitive skills which is reflected in, for example, literacy and problem solving skills. Moreover, education can reinforce non-cognitive skills such as self-efficacy and self-esteem that have been shown to be as powerful as cognitive skills in promoting individual success yet malleable even beyond childhood.

The power of learning in addressing life challenges and promoting progress is good news for education stakeholders. Yet this conjecture is largely based on emerging albeit limited evidence-base from a few OECD countries including the United States and the United Kingdom. Education policy-makers, teachers and parents clearly need more and better information that covers wider socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and linguistic contexts before engaging in comprehensive action plans to promote individual empowerment. Education stakeholders also need to start understanding the types and nature of cognitive and non-cognitive skills that need to be nurtured and how that might be done. To these ends, this project will:

- analyse the role cognitive and non-cognitive skills play in fostering measures of well-being and social progress in OECD countries; and
- identify how skills that matter can be better developed in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments including family, school and the community.

The long-term objective of this project is to translate these findings into instruments that can be used by education stakeholders. One instrument is a set of policy recommendations, which provides decision-makers with ideas and policy orientations that can be adapted to country specific contexts. Another is a set of toolkits that policy-makers, school administrators and teachers can use to explore ways to identify groups that are at-risk, skills that might be reinforced and concrete action plans to follow. The third instrument is a critical review of existing competency frameworks, which aims at assessing whether or not the conceptual thinking and practices related to key competencies are evidence-based.

Keywords Education, social progress, well-being, cognitive skills, non-cognitive skills

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