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**Social and emotional skills are crucial for the wellbeing and happiness of every child. They are relevant for educational outcomes, for employability prospects and for addressing the kinds of global challenges that the Sustainable Development Goals seek to address.**

Social and emotional skills can help societies meet the needs of all of their young people, their families and communities and in the long term save governments money. Despite this there is still much more focus on cognitive and academic skills development in schools and higher education. We, the participants of the Salzburg Global Seminar session *Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills* (December 4 to 9, 2016), believe that global education policy and practice now needs to focus on the development of the whole person from earliest childhood to emerging adulthood.

Social and emotional skills are basic human capabilities that allow individuals to manage their emotions, work with others and achieve their goals.<sup>1</sup> They can be taught and improved, and they can be measured using a blend of different approaches. Social and emotional skills interact with other skills such as academic skills.

The *Salzburg Statement on Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills* is to be accompanied by a comprehensive report on the conversations and topics addressed at the session to be published in 2017.

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# The Salzburg Statement

## Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills

### A CALL TO ACTION

One of the main reasons for the historic lack of engagement with social and emotional skill development in schools relates to issues of measurement. It is a feature of education policy around the world that the majority of teachers' time in school focuses on the delivery of their curriculum, which has traditionally been organized around things that could be measured. Latest developments in social and emotional skills measurement allow these skills to be measured meaningfully within different education systems. These measurement tools enable school systems around the world to advocate for systemic change that involves incorporating social and emotional learning programs.<sup>2</sup>

## Principles and Recommendations

### MEASUREMENT

There is no single instrument that precisely measures social and emotional skills. Therefore, multiple methods – such as self-reports, teacher, parental and peer evaluations, task performance tests, situational judgment tests and administrative records should be employed. We anticipate that self-reports will remain the principal evaluation tool but they need to be supplemented by a range of complementary instruments such as anchoring vignettes and forced-choice.

Policymakers and school leaders can use these measures to assess social and emotional skills at the system level. Teachers and parents can employ both formative and summative assessments to improve learning and teaching. These stakeholders can take an active role in the customization and deployment of social and emotional learning measurement tools while keeping in mind contextual differences and scalability. There may be differences in the relevant types of social and emotional skills as well as appropriate assessment methodologies across countries and populations groups.

*Recommendations continue overleaf*



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## REPORTING

Social and emotional skill measures should produce data and information that can be reported in a way that enables key stakeholders to take action to deliver quality education. Reporting should:

- **Understand the needs of all students** including the most marginalized and at risk;
- **Encourage educators** to embed effective social and emotional development interventions;
- **Inform parents** and guardians on how to support social and emotional learning at home;
- **Inspire policymakers** in education and other sectors including health and social policy;
- **Trigger community leaders** to mobilize resources for the development of social and emotional skills; and
- **Promote public understanding** and trigger widespread media interest in social and emotional learning.

## WHAT NEXT?

While acknowledging the substantial progress made over the last few decades to improve the measurement of social and emotional skills, there is still a considerable amount of investment and work needed from policymakers, practitioners and researchers.

- **Researchers** need to expand the domain coverage, improve validity and reliability and ensure cross-cultural comparability of measurement instruments; and to enhance the knowledge base on what works to improve social and emotional learning;
- **Practitioners** can better integrate the knowledge base on social and emotional skills in assessment, learning and teaching practices; and
- **Policymakers** can make greater use of measurement and demand better information about social and emotional skills.

<sup>1</sup> Each of these three higher-order constructs contain lower-order facets such as emotional awareness and emotional acceptance (managing emotions), assertiveness and communication skills (working with others) and goal setting and task engagement (achieving goals). This framework is consistent with many other frameworks that characterize social and emotional skills. For instance, the framework by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) includes self-management (managing emotions), relationship skills and social awareness (working with others), responsible decision-making and self-awareness (achieving goals) as core components. A framework by KIPP Schools include self-control (managing emotions); zest, optimism, gratitude and social intelligence (working with others); and grit and curiosity (achieving goals).

<sup>2</sup> There is a debate as to whether social and emotional skills should be tested as part of international comparative studies like PISA. One argument is that there are now valid frameworks and measurement instruments which make such testing possible, yielding meaningful, comparative results. The results could inform policymakers where social and emotional

skills are being successfully enhanced or where policy and educational institutions might need to pay more attention. Such use would also lend greater legitimacy to social and emotional skills being focused on alongside the “hard” skills such as mathematics. People require all such skills in order to flourish in the 21st Century, and this presents a challenge to testing regimes that focus too narrowly.

A contrary argument, however, is that on a large scale, social and emotional skills cannot be tested in the same way as knowledge and skills in academic subjects. They argue that the measurement instruments are not yet cross-culturally and linguistically comparable. Moreover, they are often context specific and present a challenge for automated assessment. SEL for example, is often best exhibited in groups - peers, families, communities – and therefore do not reveal optimal data when derived from individual’s responding to standardized testing prompts. A concern is that the inclusion of social and emotional skills in global assessments would lead teachers to “teach to the test” toward coachable responses rather than pay attention to the development of the whole person.

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