

Glossary. The definition of Social and Emotional Skills:

Background

Social and emotional learning (SEL) and social and emotional skills continue to be a major topic of policy debate:

- Social and emotional skills are an explicit priority for the EIF as part of our wider definition of EI.
- SEL and non-cognitive skills are a major predictor of many important life outcomes, important to social mobility and a key mechanism for EI programmes and practice throughout childhood and adolescence.
- The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has undertaken a substantial review of the literature on non-cognitive skills¹, to define and categorise a range of elements of development including SEL.
- The EIF hosted a policy roundtable jointly with Save the Children on May 28 on the topic of social and emotional skills. For many the issue is expressed in terms of character, grit, or other terms.

The EEF review identified the following evidence gap in relation to non-cognitive skills:

- “There are gaps in the evidence because many studies define and measure non-cognitive skills in disparate ways, assess them in isolation, and focus on short-term outcomes. Priorities for future research should be to explore how skills can be transferred between areas of a young person’s life, and how far changes can be sustained in the long term.”

Definitions and scope

There are a range of very different ways of defining and measuring the set of attributes, skills, personal characteristics and features of identity that often get bundled in the phrase social and emotional skills. Whereas the EIF tends to focus on social and emotional skills, the SMCP is concerned about the broader set of non-cognitive skills and the Cabinet Office is drawing heavily on the Young Foundation’s Framework of Outcomes for Young People’ to provide a framework for specifying important features of development. Because of these differences an immediate issue is one of scope for the proposed work. To support further discussion four frameworks are summarised here:

- Social and emotional learning
- Non-cognitive skills
- Skills for life and work
- Character

Social and emotional learning

SEAL was developed under the previous Government as a “comprehensive, whole-school approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and wellbeing of all who learn and work in schools” (DCSF, 2007, p.4).

It is an important reference point because it was a national attempt to develop a set of approaches that allowed for local autonomy but provided tools and support for schools to

¹ Leslie Gutman and Ingrid Schoon (2013). The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people. Education Endowment Foundation

build on the learning from well evidenced US approaches and apply them in schools in England.

It defined social and emotional learning as set out in Table 1.

Table 1. Definitions of the five social and emotional skills promoted through SEAL (from DfES, 2007, p.5-6).

Self-awareness	Knowing and valuing myself and understanding how I think and feel. When we can identify and describe our beliefs, values, and feelings, and feel good about ourselves, our strengths and our limitations, we can learn more effectively and engage in positive interactions with others.
Self-regulation (managing feelings)	Managing how we express emotions, coping with and changing difficult and uncomfortable feelings, and increasing and enhancing positive and pleasant feelings. When we have strategies for expressing our feelings in a positive way and for helping us to cope with difficult feelings and feel more positive and comfortable, we can concentrate better, behave more appropriately, make better relationships, and work more cooperatively and productively with those around us.
Motivation	Working towards goals, and being more persistent, resilient and optimistic. When we can set ourselves goals, work out effective strategies for reaching those goals, and respond effectively to setbacks and difficulties, we can approach learning situations in a positive way and maximize our ability to achieve our potential.
Empathy	Understanding others' thoughts and feelings and valuing and supporting others. When we can understand, respect, and value other people's beliefs, values, and feelings, we can be more effective in making relationships, working with, and learning from, people from diverse backgrounds.
Social skills	Building and maintaining relationships and solving problems, including interpersonal ones. When we have strategies for forming and maintaining relationships, and for solving problems and conflicts with other people, we have the skills that can help us achieve all of these learning outcomes, for example by reducing negative feelings and distraction while in learning situations, and using our interactions with others as an important way of improving our learning experience.

Source: **Neil Humphrey Ann Lendrum Michael Wigelsworth (2010) "Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme in secondary schools: national evaluation." DfE Research Report DFE-RR049**

It is noteworthy that the evaluation considered impacts not just on these outcomes but on the following broader children's outcomes:

- Social and emotional skills
- General mental health difficulties
- Pro-social behaviour
- Behaviour problems

This indicates the strong and important relationships between social and emotional learning and wider features of development and behaviour.

Non-cognitive skills

The literature on features of child development important for later outcomes emphasises a range of elements, sometimes classified under the umbrella term non-cognitive skills; a set of capabilities and features of identity that is broader than but includes social and emotional skills. The EEF review sought to identify key non-cognitive skills that can be modified, “flexible, malleable characteristics which have been linked to positive outcomes for children and adolescents,” namely:

1. Self-Perceptions
2. Motivation
3. Perseverance
4. Self-Control
5. Metacognitive Strategies
6. Social Competencies
7. Resilience and Coping
8. Creativity

A brief discussion of the definition of these terms may be useful.

Table 2. Summary information on non-cognitive skills from Gutman and Schoon

Non-cog skill	Definition	Measurability	Causality	Malleability
Self-perceptions	An individual’s own beliefs about whether or not they can accomplish a task, including both current self-concept of ability and expected self-efficacy in the future	High – many well established scales	Some indicative evidence that self-efficacy predicts greater academic persistence and higher achievement.	High – good impact sizes evaluation studies
Motivation	Why individuals think and behave as they do, including achievement goal theory, expectancy-value theory, and intrinsic/extrinsic aspects of motivation.	High, though there are many terms with related meanings that fit under the heading of motivation	A range of studies have shown the importance of aspects of motivation for achievement but the evidence is much less well established that interventions can impact on outcomes through this mechanism	Medium – Some evidence that motivation can be manipulated in an experimental setting, with modest effect sizes
Perseverance	Covers “engagement with education” and “grit.”	Low - Grit is a new notion with emerging measurement scales but no evidence yet of predictive validity nor that grit is a stable character trait.	Strong theory but there is scant experimental evidence regarding the role of school engagement in changing students’ outcomes	Little experimental evidence.
Self-Control	The ability to forgo short-term temptations, appetites, and impulses in order to prioritise a higher pursuit	High – established scales.	High quality experimental evidence that interventions to improve self control can have lasting impacts on wider outcomes	High - Experimental studies have found that self-control improvement programmes are an effective intervention for improving self-control particularly up to age 10
Metacognitive Strategies	Goal-oriented efforts to influence one’s own learning behaviours and processes by focusing awareness on thinking and selecting, monitoring, and planning strategies that are most conducive to learning (Zimmerman, 2001)	Medium, a wide range of diverse measures	Good evidence of medium size effects from meta-analysis of quasi-experimental and studies with pre and post measurement	High – good evidence that training can impact on meta-cognition and planning, e.g. Dignath et al (2008)
Social Competencies	Social skills relate to a very wide variety of positive	There is a wide range of good measurements of	There is a wealth of experimental evidence	Good evidence that social skills can be enhanced

	<p>interactions with others including having good communication skills, showing empathy, having good friends, and being cooperative. Leadership skills are also included in this category.</p>	<p>different aspects of social competency. The SDQ for example has five dimensions of behaviour including: emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and pro-social behaviour. SDQ is a well-validated instrument for measuring mental health status among children and young children (Goodman, Ford, Simmons, Gatward, and Meltzer, 2000). A range of metrics of leadership skills available</p>	<p>showing small to medium effects of SEL interventions on a range of positive outcomes. In their meta-analysis, for example, Durlak et al. (2011) found that SEL interventions had an average effect size of .23 on attitudes, .24 on positive social behaviour, .22 on conduct problems, .24 on emotional distress, and .27 on academic achievement. No longitudinal evidence of impacts of leadership skills. However, there are few longitudinal studies assessing the impact of social skills on achievement, their development over time, and the mechanisms whereby social skills impact future outcomes. It is difficult to isolate the effects of social skills on outcomes as research often bundles them with other non-cognitive skills.</p>	<p>intervention but some important gaps in evidence. In a large-scale meta-analysis examining the impact of school-based universal SEL programmes for example, Durlak et al. (2011) examined 21 studies with control groups of children from kindergarten to high school. They found that substantive effects of SEL intervention with an average effect size of .57 on SEL skills. Some evidence leadership skills can be taught.</p>
Coping	<p>Coping is a notion related but distinct from resilience. Resilience is defined as positive adaptation despite the presence of risk, which may include poverty, parental bereavement, parental mental illness, and/or abuse (Masten, 2009, 2011; Rutter, 2006). Resilience is not considered an attribute or personality trait that some children possess and others do not, but rather a developmental process. Coping, on the other hand, refers to a wide set of skills and purposeful responses to stress. Coping involves skills that people use when faced with specific difficulties, whereas resilience is a process which follows the exercise of those skills (Compas et al., 2001). As a result, coping is malleable and the use of more successful coping strategies can be taught to individuals.</p>	<p>There are many ways of measuring coping, including open-ended interviews, observations, reports from parents or teachers, and self-report questionnaires for older children and adolescents. It is not a simple uni-dimensional construct and strategies for coping change with age, personality and context.</p>	<p>Meta-analyses suggest that there is no causal evidence that coping skills have significant effects on the outcomes of children and adolescents other than their psychological functioning.</p>	<p>Interventions have focused on teaching young people positive coping skills, such as social problem-solving and optimistic thinking. A recent meta-analysis of high quality evidence examined school programmes targeting stress management or coping skills in children and adolescents (Kraaijenhagen, Zeegers, Hosman, & Abi-Saad, 2006). The findings indicate that young people can be taught to use fewer non-productive coping skills such as worry, wishful thinking, not coping, or ignoring the problem.</p>

All taken from Gutman and Schoon, op cit, including extensive quotation with objective of summarizing findings of the report.

The Cabinet Office has responsibility for Youth Policy and is undertaking work to assist LAs in measuring the outcomes of programmes that they support in the enhancement of skills for life and work. This notion is defined in terms of four competence 'clusters', primarily drawn from the work by the Young Foundation² and EEF, cited above. As set out in a recent Cabinet Office discussion paper these are defined as follows:

Resilience: Important link between resilience and time; "the resilient individual continues to proceed, despite the duration of risk."

Self-direction: "The ability to make decisions about the direction of his/her own learning (Wilson-Ahlstrom et. al, 2014). It involves interplay between the concepts of self-efficacy, self-awareness, self-control and critical thinking. Young people who exercise self-direction can determine whether or not they have the ability to succeed at a given task, at a particular point in time (Bandura, 2001)."

Communication: "...interplay between the skills that afford effective self-expression, for example, listening, recognising non-verbal cues, public speaking, explaining, presenting and questioning (McNeil, Reeder & Rich, 2012; Wilson-Ahlstrom et.al, 2014)."

Forging relationships: "The ability to forge relationships involves collaboration, underpinned by well-developed emotional skills. Forging a relationship involves both developing and maintaining a relationship, which requires the young person to have an understanding of empathy; 'the ability to put oneself in other people's shoes and be sensitive to their needs and views' (Paterson, Tyler & Lexmond, 2014). The ability to manage feelings in this way is thought to correlate with higher wages (McNeil, Reeder & Rich, 2012). It is thought that many social intervention programmes have a focus on collaboration and relationship-building."

Character

A fourth, related framework for comes from emerging work on character being taken forward at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtue. In a presentation at the EIF, James O'Shaughnessy from Floreat Education provided the following typology of character virtues:

- Intellectual virtues, e.g. curiosity and studiousness;
- Performance virtues, e.g. perseverance and optimism;
- Moral virtues, e.g. honesty and integrity;
- Civic virtues, e.g. service, taking part.

The philosophical foundations for this framework is rooted in Aristotle and moral philosophy in contrast to the psychological science underpinnings of non-cognitive skills. This leads to substantial difference of meaning and focus, even though many of the identified elements, such as perseverance, are identical.

Discussion

This descriptive analysis makes clear that there are a range of ways of defining social and emotional skills and that there is a broad set of related notions that are important in the debate about the contribution of schools and other settings in children's broad development beyond literacy, numeracy and exam success.

² McNeil, B. Reeder, N. & Rich, J. (2012). *A framework of outcomes for young people*. London: The Young Foundation.

The recent seminar event with Save the Children indicated that there are big political differences about how to develop and implement policy on this issue. However, there is broad agreement that learning is not just about literacy and numeracy. What are the implications of this for early intervention, youth policy, child poverty and social mobility?

An analytical response would seek data on the causal impact of different elements of this broad set of skills on outcomes of concern, but genuinely causal data in this terrain is in short supply because there have been so few experimental studies with sufficient duration and sample size. There are rich data on the correlations between different skills and outcomes of concern, also conditioning on other factors and these can be useful for assessing risk in populations because risk is distinct from causation. This descriptive data about the relationship between variables is useful in developing outcomes frameworks but does not answer the question about the causal importance of variables.

A further difficulty is complexity of causal pathway by which non-cognitive skills exert impact. There is a rich array of structural models, of which a classic is the Eccles Expectancy Value model, which clarify the complex causal pathways by which various features of children’s context, cognition, identity and behaviour interact to influence outcomes such as HE participation or career choice. The complexity of these models makes forecasting from them difficult as there are few main effects and there are substantial degrees of heterogeneity, interaction between variables and non-linearity. It is also important to note that although as set out in Table 2 many of the terms used have metrics that have been tested and developed for assessing a component construct, notions such as self-awareness are much broader than any single scale can assess. Therefore, most formal financial models of impact of policy action in childhood, such as the Greater Manchester model, necessarily ignore important potential channels of impact. Notions of character and virtue are even more removed from observed behaviour and so much less easily studied in social science. However, progress can be made.

The EIF interest is in the question of what works for social and emotional skills as defined broadly in the SEAL definition in Table 1. If the projects are to undertake comparative analysis across sectors common definitions are required but achieving this type of consensus might substantially slow down the work.

Table 3 sets out some broad comparisons across frameworks.

Table 3. Definitions and themes of interest across partners

EEF	SEAL	CO
Self-Perceptions	Self- awareness	Self-direction
Motivation	Motivation	
Perseverance		
Self-Control	Self- regulation	
Metacognitive Strategies		
Social Competencies	Social skills; Empathy	Forging relationships; Communication
Resilience and Coping		Resilience
Creativity		

This is an imprecise exercise because terms are used somewhat differently in different approaches, constructs are used both broadly and narrowly and there are themes for which

the same word is used but something different meant (homonyms) and for which different words are used for similar constructs (synonyms).

Nonetheless, it is clear there is broad common interest in:

- Self-perceptions, self-awareness and self-direction (very broadly aspects of identity in determining outcomes³);
- Motivation (also an aspect of identity);
- Self control/self-regulation;
- Social skills, including relationship skills and communication skills
- Resilience and coping

We do not intend to create an over-arching core set of common definitions but would like bidders to explain how their proposed approach will provide relevant and tractable results addressing the core concerns of the three organisations.

³E.g. Erikson, E.H. (1968). Identity: Youth and Crisis. New York: Norton.

Annex 2. The EIF and the Pioneering Early Intervention Places

Our Purpose

The Early Intervention Foundation's mission is for every baby, child and young person to realise their potential by having the basic social and emotional skills that most take for granted.

We want to change the culture from one of late reaction to Early Intervention. By addressing a problem's root causes rather than its symptoms, we can pre-empt a problem becoming entrenched, which can lead to a stronger foundation for learning at school, an easier transition into adulthood with better job prospects, healthier relationships and improved mental and physical health. It can also mean the next generation of parents are better equipped to raise their own children.

We can, therefore, help to break the intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and dysfunction, reduce the cost to the taxpayer and strengthen local communities.

As a charity and a 'What Works Centre', we are the 'go-to' organisation for evidence and advice on Early Intervention.

- We assess the evidence of what works, to determine the best Early Interventions available and their relative value for money.
- We use our analysis of the evidence to advise local authorities, charities and potential investors on how to implement Early Intervention to best effect in order to make the most impact for children and families.
- And because we want to see a culture change we advocate for Early Intervention to key decision makers nationally, locally, in public, private and philanthropic sectors, making the case for a pre-emptive approach to social problems and demonstrating why a solid social and emotional foundation for children and young people is so important for individuals, communities and society at large.

Our Work

The Early Intervention Foundation's focus is on the flow of evidence between research, policy and practice, with the goal of driving improvements to children's outcomes and breaking intergenerational patterns of disadvantage and dysfunction.

We intend to be a catalyst for culture change nationally and locally to move from late to Early Intervention. A pre-emptive, early approach not only has the potential to improve the lives of children and families, but also represents an intelligent approach to spending – with possible long term savings as a result.

We provide independent, authoritative and accessible advice through:

- Assessment of the evidence on what works – to determine both the best early interventions available and their relative value for money;
- Advice to all on the best practical, evidence-based measures, and how to deliver them effectively to make the most impact for children and families;
- Advocacy for Early Intervention as a serious alternative to expensive and often ineffective late intervention.

In addition, we seek to:

- Convene all who wish to promote evidence-based Early Intervention with the aim of helping to take it from niche to critical mass;
- Grow and improve the UK evidence base for Early Intervention;
- Provide a single source of independent, comprehensive and authoritative advice on Early Intervention – to decision makers, local commissioners, investors and others;
- Aim to be a thought leader for Early Intervention, to which others will turn for inspiration and advice.

We focus on interventions which provide children with a solid social and emotional foundation – improving their ability to form good relationships, communicate, manage their own behaviour and their mental health. Our work is not only focused on the early years but focuses on conception up to young adulthood.

Pioneering Places

EIF is working closely with 20 Early Intervention “pioneering places” across the country. These places were selected on the basis of the strength of commitment among the local partnership to Early Innovation, progress that had been made on this agenda and also their interest in working closely with EIF.

Committed individuals in these places are all trying to make Early Intervention a reality through all levels of local activity, from governance structures and commissioning, development of strategies and business cases through to reviewing programmes and practice on the ground.

EIF is supporting each of these places, providing bespoke expertise, advice and evidence. EI places come together on a regular basis and are learning from each other as they share their experiences of putting Early Intervention into practice in the current financial climate.

- Blackburn with Darwen
- Cheshire West & Chester
- Croydon
- Dorset
- Essex
- Gateshead
- Hertfordshire
- Islington
- Lancashire PCC
- Greater Manchester
- Newcastle
- Nottingham
- Poole
- Plymouth
- Solihull
- Staffordshire PCC

- London Tri-borough
- Wiltshire & Swindon
- Worcestershire