

Institution: University College London		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 23 Education		
Title of case study: Putting social and emotional skills at the heart of education policy		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 1 September 2007 to March 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Ingrid Schoon	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Human Development and Social Policy	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: October 2007 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: November 2013 to 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Ingrid Schoon's research on the conceptualisation of social and emotional skills, undertaken at UCL Institute of Education, has had a powerful influence on education policy development at a national and international level. It has underpinned significant innovation in strategies for curriculum development and the assessment of early learning adopted by the OECD 2030 Education and Skills Framework and the UNESCO 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report. Evidence from the research has also underpinned major curricular initiatives in the UK to promote 'character' education. The research has significantly influenced global teaching practice and enhanced the educational experience of millions of children in over 40 countries.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Schoon's sustained research on the conceptualisation and measurement of social and emotional skills has provided much needed clarification of: how to measure what some call 'non-cognitive' or 'soft' skills; how these skills predict later life outcomes; and the importance of continued support for building and maintaining such key competences. The term 'non-cognitive skills' refers to a set of attitudes, behaviours, and strategies that are thought to underpin success at school and in the work-place, including motivation, perseverance, self-control and resilience. They are usually contrasted with the 'hard skills' of cognitive ability in areas such as literacy and numeracy, which are measured by academic tests. Non-cognitive skills are increasingly considered to be as important as, or more important than, cognitive skills or IQ in explaining educational and employment outcomes. Indeed, in recent years, there has been growing attention from policymakers on how such 'character' or 'soft' skills can be developed in children and young people.</p> <p>In collaboration with and building on the work of other experts, Schoon's research has addressed the lack of clarity and consensus regarding the definition and specification of the key competences associated with successful development. In particular, her research 1) unpacked the black box concept of 'non-cognitive skills' and provided a comprehensive conceptualisation of key competences (R1, R2, R3, R4); 2) identified key skills associated with valued outcomes across different domains (education, work, health, and social relationships) (R1, R2, R3); and 3) specified conditions that enable the acquisition and expression of these skills and effective interventions to support them (R1-6). A crucial insight gained from the research (and adopted by policy makers) was the need to consider a range of social and emotional as well as cognitive capabilities and the fact that these competences cross-fertilise and build on each other.</p> <p>In 2013, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), in collaboration with the Cabinet Office, commissioned Gutman and Schoon to undertake a review of the evidence. The resulting</p>		

research report **(R1)** provided much needed clarification of how to conceptualise and measure social and emotional skills, as well as evaluating the empirical evidence on the causal link between the development of these skills in childhood and later life outcomes. The report also assessed the role of interventions and evidence on their causal impact in improving social and emotional skills in children and adolescents. The findings indicated that non-cognitive skills were associated with positive outcomes for young people and that no single non-cognitive skill predicts long-term outcomes. Rather, key skills are inter-related and need to be developed in combination with each other, and that, within school, the institutional environment and social and emotional learning programmes can play an important role in developing non-cognitive skills.

In 2014–15, the OECD commissioned Schoon to undertake further research to clarify the importance of early social and emotional competences and to assess their relative impact on later outcomes. The research included a literature review as well as an empirical investigation using data collected for the nationally representative British Cohort Study (BCS70). BCS70, hosted at UCL, is following the lives of more than 10,000 individuals born in 1970. Multivariate regression analysis of the cohort data enabled the longitudinal assessment of social and emotional skills evident by the age of 5 to outcomes at ages 32, 42 (and later ages); and assessment of the impact of childhood social and emotional competences over and above the influence of directly measured cognitive skills (IQ) and family social background factors. The resulting report **(R2)** offered rigorous empirical evidence on the role of different early competencies in shaping life-course development across a range of outcomes. By taking into account the simultaneous influence of multiple skills, the research provided a more informed understanding of the underlying processes which in turn can inform social policies aiming to promote the positive development and wellbeing of children and the design of interventions. The findings informed the OECD 2030 Education and Skills Framework, which has been adopted and implemented across many countries.

In subsequent OECD commissioned research, Schoon was asked to review the concept of agency **(R3)**. In doing this, she introduced a socio-ecological developmental approach for conceptualising learner agency, which was incorporated into the OECD 2030 Education and Skills Framework, shaping the conceptualisation of the “Learning Compass”. Her approach to conceptualising agency is informed by expectancy-value models of human behaviour, theories of developmental regulation and ecological theories of life course development (see also the review article **R4**).

Examining potential support structures to facilitate the expression of agency, Schoon and colleagues used data from the PISA 2003 database in one of the largest international comparisons of the relative importance of primary versus secondary effects in explaining the relationship between socioeconomic status and educational expectations. The findings provided broad support for the hypothesis that socioeconomic status differentials in educational opportunities are larger in countries with ability or curricular stratification. In addition, primary effects (i.e., socioeconomic status differentials in academic achievement) are more important (proportionately) in countries that have either high curricular tracking or ability stratification. Crucially this suggests that in countries with high stratification, children from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds may have their educational expectations more strongly determined by achievement, often at a relatively young age, leaving less room for agency and choice processes **(R5)**.

In further research, Schoon examined the role of structure and agency in shaping youth transitions **(R6)**. Using data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, sequence analysis of monthly activity data was employed to identify differences in the timing and sequencing of education and employment transitions. The findings demonstrated that transition experiences are influenced by both socioeconomic and psycho-social resources and that in addition to considering structural constraints it is important to conceptualise the role of the agent for a better understanding of variations in youth transitions.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1** Gutman, L. & Schoon, I. (2013) *The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people. A literature review*. Education Endowment Foundation in collaboration with the Cabinet Office. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Presentations/Publications/Non-cognitive_skills_literature_review_1.pdf
- R2** Schoon, I., Nasim, B., Shemi, R. & Cook, R. (2015) *The impact of early life skills on later outcomes*. Report for the OECD (Early Childhood Education and Care). EDU/EDPC(2015)26 JT03384682. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10051902/>
- R3** Schoon, I. (2018) *Conceptualising learner agency: A socio-ecological developmental approach*. Published by the Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies as Working Paper No 64. <https://www.llakes.ac.uk/sites/default/files/LLAKES%20Research%20Paper%2064%20-%20Schoon%2C%20I.pdf>
- R4** Schoon, I., & Heckhausen, J. (2019) Conceptualizing individual agency in the transition from school to work: A socio-ecological developmental perspective, *Adolescent Research Review*, 4(4), 135–148. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-019-00111-3>
- R5** Parker, P. D., Jerrim, J., Schoon, I. & Marsh, H. W. (2016) A multination study of socioeconomic inequality in expectations for progression to Higher Education: The role of between-school tracking and ability stratification, *American Educational Research Journal*, 53(1), 632. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831215621786>
- R6** Schoon I. & Lyons-Amos, M. (2017) A socio-ecological model of agency. The role of psychosocial and socio-economic resources in shaping education and employment transitions in England, *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, 8(1), 35–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14301/llcs.v8i1.404>

Quality indicators: research outputs have been through a rigorous peer-review process and through the succession of projects funded by EEF, the Cabinet Office, OECD and others.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research by Schoon and her team was commissioned by a number of key institutions involved in education policy, including the EEF, the Cabinet Office, Parliament, and the OECD. Schoon's contribution has been underpinned by close, sustained working relationships with these key policy making bodies.

Her research has contributed towards: 1) a comprehensive conceptualisation of social and emotional skills now embedded in a variety of policy frameworks; and 2) ways of translating these insights into practice to support the development of social and emotional skills both in school and family contexts, in particular, regarding aspects of resilience and motivation (agency) which were often missing from other skill frameworks. The research has influenced practitioners and professional services, shaping the education and training of millions of children and young people. Beneficiaries also include: parents; young people themselves by providing them with a better understanding of the importance of their own social and emotional skills; employers who report a growing need for these skills in an increasingly automated workplace, and society as a whole for which these skills help to promote greater equality of conditions and opportunity.

A. Conceptualising social and emotional skills and specification of key competences

The research findings (**R1**) were integral to the background paper prepared for the UNESCO 2016 Education Monitoring Report (p248ff), specifying key competences and skills for work (**S1**). This report is a vital mechanism used to monitor and report the progress and implementation made towards the United Nation's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. It (**S1**) is disseminated among the 193 member states of the United Nations and is used as a tool to further education and training policy development.

Moreover, the identification and specification of key competences such as self-regulation, self-awareness, social skills, resilience (**R1, R2**) and student agency (**R3, R4**) have been central to

the development of the OECD 2030 Education and Skills Framework (**S2**), as acknowledged by the Project Leader at the OECD's Directorate for Education and Skills:

'UCL's findings were used to select the domains that were to be included in the study, both for the direct assessment of children and for indirect assessment by children's parents and teachers. Thus, UCL's work greatly influenced the final shape of the conceptual framework for the study, including a balance within the study across social and emotional skills and cognitive development. For example, a focus on children's developing trust and empathy is included in the study because these were highlighted in the UCL report' (S3).

Schoon has been identified as a "Thought Leader" regarding the conceptualisation of social and emotional skills, as evidenced in a video of her explaining the concept, which is hosted on the OCED website (**S4**). Moreover, Schoon's conceptualisation of student agency within a contextualised developmental approach (**R3, R4**) underpinned the development of the OECD Learning Compass (**S5**), an evolving learning framework that sets out an aspirational vision for the future of education. The Learning Compass was created to translate empirical findings into practice, 'to help students orient themselves and navigate through uncertainty towards well-being for themselves, their community and the planet' and 'to develop a common language and understanding that is globally relevant and informed'. The Learning Compass has stakeholders in over 40 countries including China, USA, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia and the UK (**S5**). Schoon's contribution is also acknowledged by the Project Manager responsible for the OECD 2030 Education and Skills Framework, Early Childhood and School Division:

'Thank you very much once again for your contributions to further concept-making of our learning framework! The concept of student agency/ co-agency is fundamentally important, as was discussed already at the 5th and 6th meetings. To rationalise that our framework is to be labelled as "Learning Compass" – to be able to navigate oneself in the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous landscape towards well-being (goal-orientation)' (S6).

At the national level, the research contributed to work conducted in 2018/19 by the Office of the Children's Commissioner towards a framework for measuring and monitoring vulnerability in children. The Director of Evidence at the Children's Commissioner Office states that:

'Prof Ingrid Schoon has provided great intellectual contribution to the Children's Commissioner's vulnerability framework. This framework is used by the Office in its annual report to Parliament on the wellbeing and welfare of children, and is an innovative approach to reporting on children's wellbeing... As a member of the Advisory Group Prof Schoon argued very strongly that although a focus on vulnerability may be required, it cannot ignore assets and strengths, not least as these will mitigate and moderate vulnerability. Therefore, we reviewed the literature on strengths finding that measurement of the strengths and assets of children in England is weaker than that on vulnerability, that existing theoretical frameworks are not immediately operationalizable or measurable in existing UK datasets and that this gap must be a priority for ongoing work, including that of the ESRC/ONS project Data for Children, in its work on linking and matching administrative and government data about children in England...Prof Schoon's impact was substantive and important for this work. I am very grateful to her and hope she will continue to work with the CCO on this and other issues' (S7).

B. Supporting the development of social and emotional skills in the school and family context

As well as having a profound impact on global and national educational policy frameworks, Schoon's research has also significantly impacted on policy developments in the UK, foregrounding the importance of the development of children's social and emotional skills in education, training and health settings. The findings were incorporated into a 'POSTnote' publication on 'Developing Non-Academic Skills' (**S8**), providing crucial evidence on key social

and emotional competences, and ways of supporting their development and maintenance over time through education and training. The publications from the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology are used to inform members of parliament about key scientific and development issues before they reach the top of the political agenda.

The research has also informed national strategies for reducing health inequalities from Public Health England (PHE), an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care (**S9**). The PHE report on 'Local action on health inequalities: Building children and young people's resilience in schools' and subsequent briefing draw on and refer to Gutman and Schoon's research on socio-emotional competences and resilience (**R1**) in defining the relationship between resilience and health inequality (p.9), and specifying how schools can support the development of resilience.

Furthermore, the research (**R1**) (in particular contributions towards the specification of resilience and motivation) informed the Department for Education's Non-statutory guidance to schools on character education and development for pupils (**S10**). The guidance was aimed at supporting schools for the 2019 Ofsted inspection framework, and in preparation for the introduction of 'Relationships education' and 'Health education' in primary schools, and 'Relationships, sex and health education' in secondary schools. In referencing **R1**, it specifically highlights four key aspects of socio-emotional competences identified in Gutman and Schoon's research: motivation, perseverance, self-control and resilience (p.7). These are reinforced in Ofsted's new inspection framework, launched in 2019.

Taken together, these developments evidence how the research has significantly influenced UK and global policy, focusing attention on the importance of social and emotional skills, both in terms of how children's development is understood, and in the tools and instruments used to monitor educational outcomes.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1 2016 [UNESCO Global Education Monitoring report](#) (p.248ff).

S2 OECD Education 2030 project Position Paper - [The future of education and skills Education 2030](#)

S3 Testimonial from Project Leader at the OECD's Directorate for Education and Skills.

S4 [Video identifying Schoon as a 'Thought Leader'](#) regarding the conceptualisation of social and emotional skills, (OECD).

S5 OECD [Future of Education & Skills 2030 Conceptual Learning Framework](#)

S6 Testimonial from Project Manager for the OECD 2030 Education and Skills Framework.

S7 Testimonial from Director of Evidence at the Children's Commissioner Office.

S8 House of Parliament – [POSTnote - Developing Non-Academic Skills](#)

S9 Public Health England – Report - [Local action on health inequalities: Building children and young people's resilience in schools](#) (References pages 14, 23, 37,51, 87) .

S10 Department for Education – [Character Education: Framework Guidance](#) (p.7).