

E ducation Policy Is Today a Global Challenge

By Japan SPOTLIGHT

A country's education has to be considered in the light of its historical and cultural background, since it has been generally provided only in the national language. The objective of a national education used to be raising a human being who would be well adjusted to the country's culture and respected as an individual contributing to the country's wealth and prosperity.

As globalization proceeds, education has taken on an additional mission, which is to raise a human being who can be respected as an international citizen contributing to the world's wealth and prosperity as well. Globalization has also brought about common challenges among nations, even in their domestic policy arenas. This is because globalization has caused significant simultaneity in economic as well as political developments.

So we now face an increasing need to learn about other countries' education policy agendas and how they are coping with them to achieve their goals. We are also today the great beneficiaries of well-organized and rapid communication among countries. International communication on any domestic policy including education can be realized not only by the Internet but also by face-to-face communication among delegates at international organizations.

The OECD, the largest think-tank in the world and also an international economic organization working on a wide range of policy issues, is a good venue providing such opportunities for exchange of information and views on domestic policy agendas that have international implications.

OECD Education Policy Committee

The venues of education policy research and policy recommendation-related activities in the OECD are the Education Policy Committee (EDPC) and the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). The EDPC is a unique policy discussion forum where OECD member countries' delegations consisting of education policy practitioners from each member country exchange views and information on common issues in the context of the impact of education upon economy and society. They also provide policy recommendations on those issues. The origin of this committee was the Committee of Scientists and Engineers which used to discuss issues of human resource development and training of science and technology experts for promotion of economic growth before 1970. This demonstrates that the OECD has been tackling the issue of education in the context of its economic impact. This

committee was reformed into the EDPC in 1970. The secretariat in charge of this reformed committee is the Directorate for Education and Skills.

PISA — Program for International Assessment

In addition to the EDPC and CERI, there are some research programs for which the costs are shared by some of the member countries interested in them. One of them is called the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), an attempt to assess each member nation's education performance by looking into the academic achievements of students over 15 years old concerning reading and comprehension capacity, mathematical literacy, scientific literacy, etc. The assessment is organized every three years. This exercise maximizes the benefits of OECD member countries, as a peer review of each nation's education performance is made possible. You can use this international comparison to assess the outcomes of your own country's education policies.

The latest PISA in 2015 offered a new assessment on how well students collaborate with each other, in the light of increasing demand in today's workplaces to solve problems in concert with others. With its first ever assessment of collaborative problem solving, PISA 2015 allows countries and economies to see where their students stand in relation to those in other education systems. Some 32 OECD countries and 20 partner countries and economies participated in this collaborative problem-solving assessment (*Chart 1*). There are several interesting observations from this assessment.

One is that girls perform significantly better than boys in collaborative problem solving in every country and economy that participated in the assessment (*Chart 2*). We also learn that physical education provides many natural opportunities to embed collaborative activities and to develop social skills and attitudes towards collaboration. Exposure to diversity in the classroom is associated with better collaboration skills, according to the PISA results.

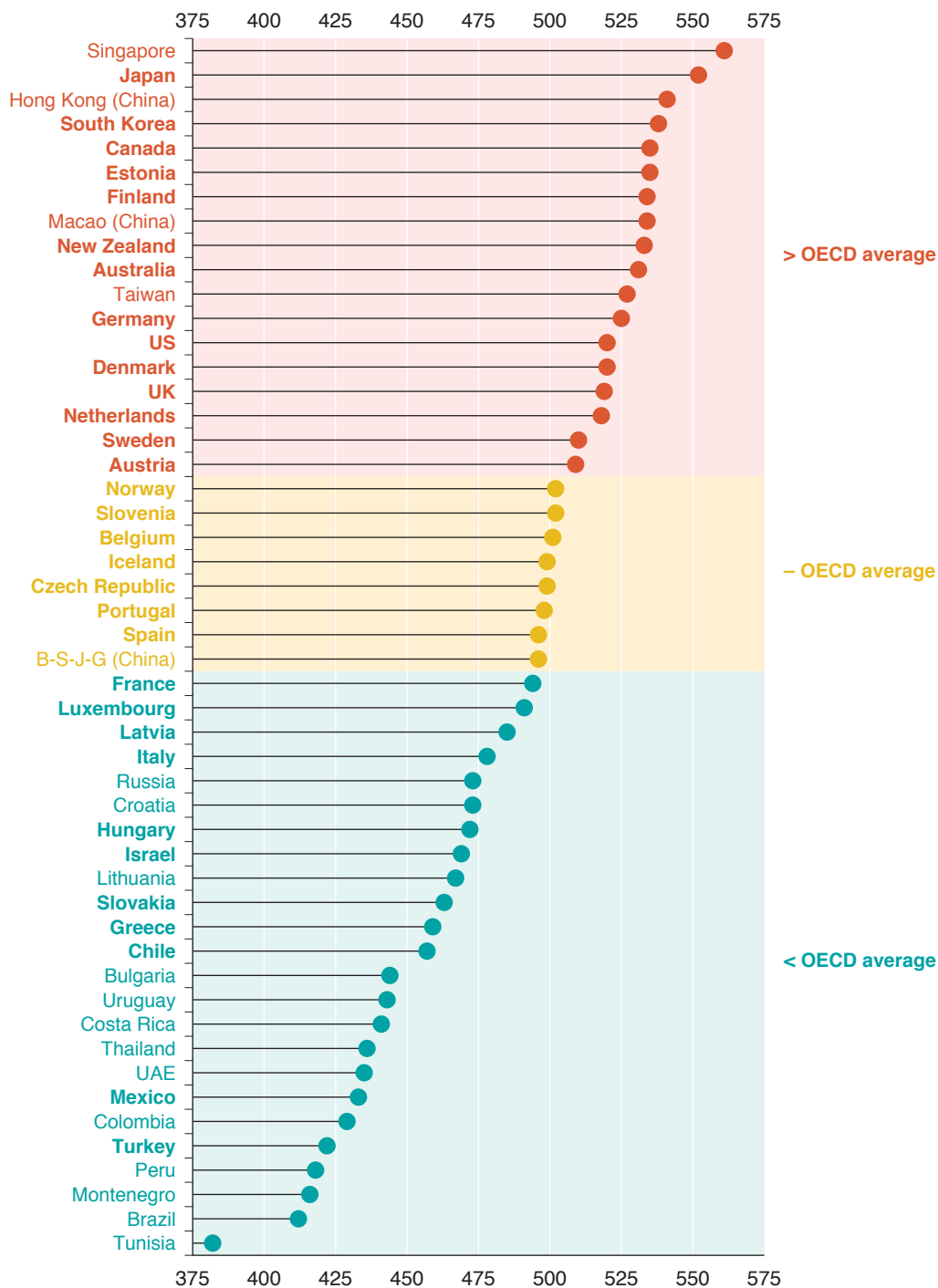
Social & Emotional Skills — Well-being, Connectedness & Success

Education is often discussed today in the light of capacity building in response to the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including AI and IoT, or labor market reform to enhancing labor

CHART 1

Comparing students' collaborative problem-solving skills

Average performance, all PISA-participating countries & economies



B-S-J-G (China) refers to the four participating Chinese provinces: Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Guangdong.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

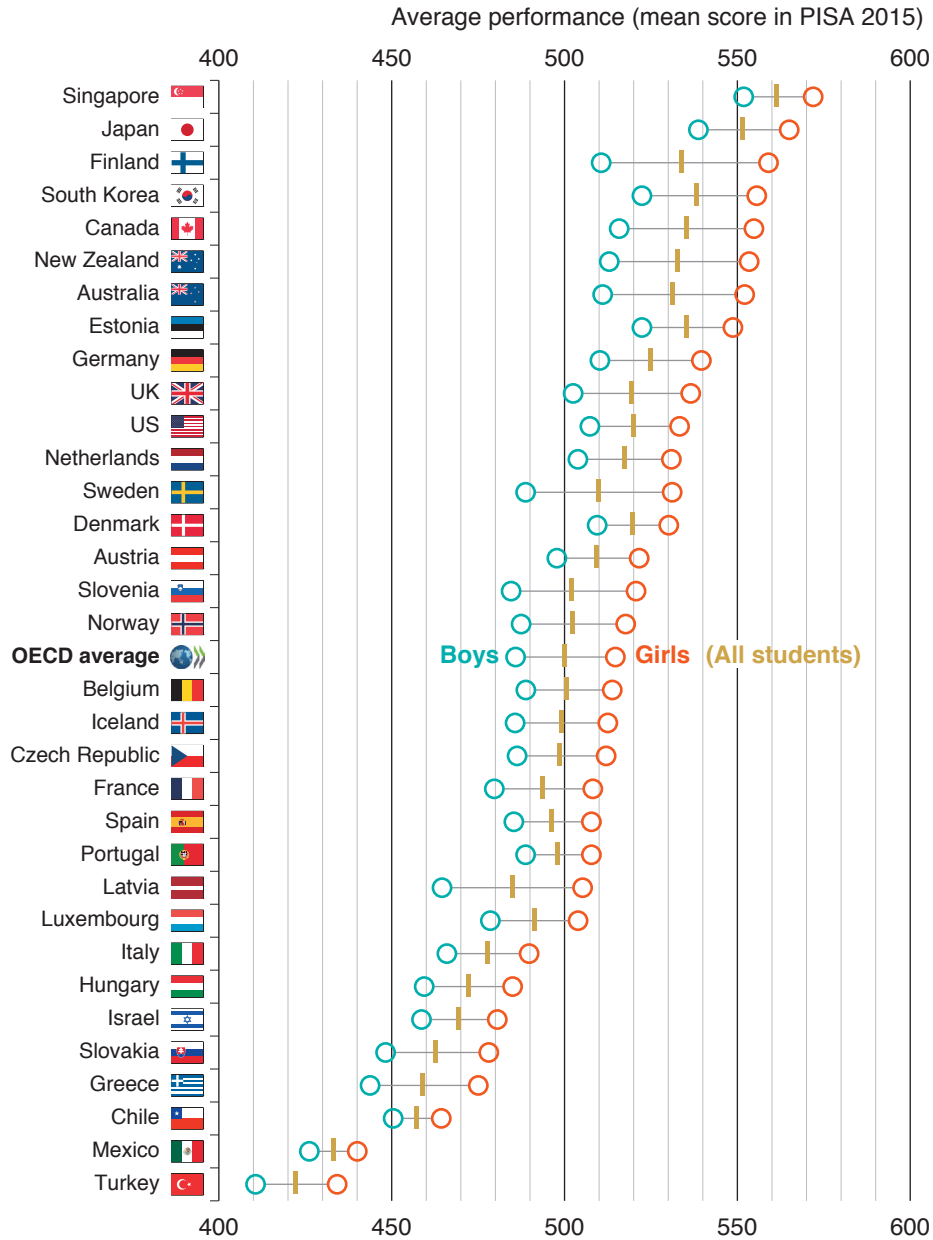
OECD member countries are indicated in bold.

Source: PISA 2015 Results (Volume V): Collaborative Problem Solving, Fig. V.3.3.

CHART 2

Girls outperform boys in collaborative problem solving

OECD countries & top performer Singapore



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Source: PISA 2015 Results (Volume V): Collaborative Problem Solving, Fig. V.4.3.

mobility in advancing structural economic reforms. Both would increase unemployment without relevant education for capacity building. In addition, in light of people’s growing interest in well-being and happiness rather than material GDP growth, it is also important to analyze the role of education in enhancing well-being. The latest OECD report issued on Dec. 5, 2017 titled “Social and Emotional Skills: Well-being, Connectedness and Success” is

highlighted in this issue.

Andreas Klaus Reinhold Schleicher, OECD director, Education and Skills, explains why the OECD has launched this research project on enhancing the skills for acquiring well-being as follows:

“In these times, digitalization is connecting people, cities and continents to bring together a majority of the world’s population in ways that vastly increase our individual and collective potential. But

TABLE

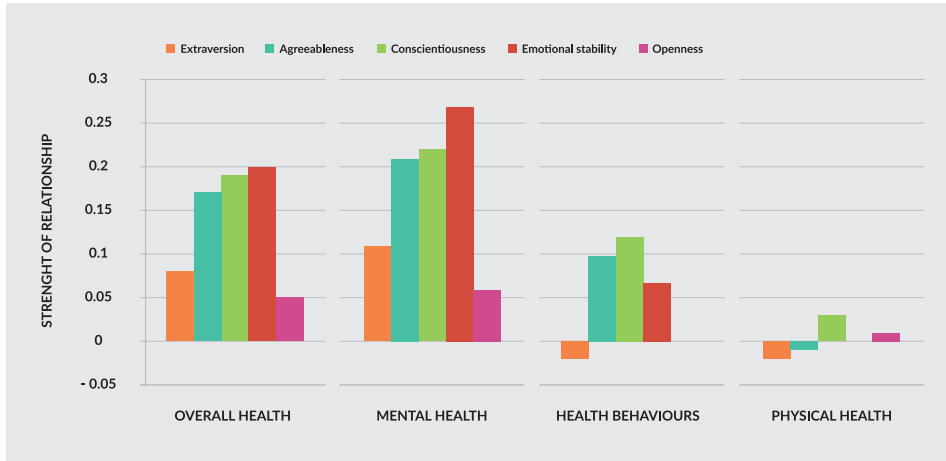
Description of skills included in OECD study on Social & Emotional Skills

| "BIG FIVE" DOMAINS | SKILLS | DESCRIPTION | BEHAVIOURAL EXAMPLES |
|---|-------------------------|---|---|
| TASK PERFORMANCE (Conscientiousness) | ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION | Setting high standards for oneself and working hard to meet them. | Enjoys reaching a high level of mastery in some activity. Opposite: uninterested in career development. |
| | RESPONSIBILITY | Able to honor commitments, and be punctual and reliable. | Arrives on time for appointments, gets chores done right away. Opposite: doesn't follow through on agreements/promises. |
| | SELF-CONTROL | Able to avoid distractions and focus attention on the current task in order to achieve personal goals. | Doesn't rush into things, is cautious and risk averse. Opposite: is prone to impulsive shopping or binge drinking. |
| | PERSISTENCE | Persevering in tasks and activities until they get done. | Finishes homework projects or work once started. Opposite: gives up easily when confronted with obstacles/distractions. |
| EMOTION REGULATION (Emotional stability) | STRESS RESISTANCE | Effectiveness in modulating anxiety and able to calmly solve problems (is relaxed, handles stress well). | Is relaxed most of the time, performs well in high-pressure situations. Opposite: worries about things, difficulties sleeping. |
| | OPTIMISM | Positive and optimistic expectations for self and life in general. | Generally in good mood. Opposite: often feels sad, tends to feel insecure. |
| | EMOTIONAL CONTROL | Effective strategies for regulating temper, anger and irritation in the face of frustrations. | Controls emotions in situations of conflict. Opposite: gets upset easily; is moody. |
| COLLABORATION (Agreeableness) | EMPATHY | Kindness and caring for others and their well-being that leads to valuing and investing in close relationships. | Consoles a friend who is upset, Sympathizes with the homeless. Opposite: tends to disregard other person's feelings. |
| | TRUST | Assuming that others generally have good intentions and forgiving those who have done wrong. | Lends things to people, avoids being harsh or judgmental. Opposite: is suspicious of people's intentions. |
| | COOPERATION | Living in harmony with others and valuing interconnectedness among all people. | Finds it easy to get along with people, respects decisions made by a group. Opposite: has a sharp tongue, is not prone to compromises. |

Source: "Social and Emotional Skills: Well-being, Connectedness and Success", OECD, Dec. 5, 2017

CHART 3

Average correlation estimates for life outcome categories & each Big Five factor



Note: Strength of relationship represents average correlation across studies.
Source: Strickhouser, Zell and Krizan (2017)

CHART 4

Average correlations of Big Five dimensions with life & job satisfaction



Note: Strength of relationship represents average correlation across studies.
Source: Judge, Heller and Mount (2002)

the same forces have made the world also more volatile, more complex, and more uncertain. And when fast gets really fast, being slow to adapt makes education systems really slow. The rolling processes of automation, hollowing out jobs, particularly for routine tasks, have radically altered the nature of work and life and thus the skills that are needed for success. For those with the right human capacities, this is liberating and exciting. But for those who are insufficiently prepared, it can mean the scourge of vulnerable and insecure work, and life without prospects.

“We know that preparing students with technical or academic skills alone will not be enough for them to achieve success, connectedness and well-being whatever endeavours they wish to pursue. Social and emotional skills, such as perseverance, empathy,

mindfulness, courage or leadership are central to this. We are born with what political scientist Robert Putnam calls bonding social capital, a sense of belonging to our family or other people with shared experiences, cultural norms, common purposes or pursuits. But it requires deliberate and continuous effort to create the kind of binding social capital through which we can share experiences, ideas and innovation and build a shared understanding among groups with diverse experiences and interests, thus increasing our radius of trust to strangers and institutions.

“Over the last years, social and emotional skills have been rising on the education policy agenda and in the public debate. But for the majority of students, their development remains a matter of luck, depending on whether this is a priority for their teacher and their school. A major barrier is the absence of reliable metrics in this field that allow educators and policy-makers to make progress visible, and to address shortcomings.

“This is why the OECD is now developing a comprehensive international assessment of the social and emotional skills of students. The study will help education leaders and practitioners better support students in the development of these critical skills.”

The [Table](#) describes exactly what are the social and emotional skills

included in the OECD’s study. [Chart 3 & 4](#) present a correlation between health and those skills, and a correlation between life and job satisfaction and those skills. You can see from this how important raising those skills is for promoting well-being. **JS**

Formatted by Naoyuki Haraoka, editor-in-chief of *Japan SPOTLIGHT* & executive managing director of the Japan Economic Foundation (JEF).