



GLOBAL CENTER
for the Development of *the Whole Child*

Capturing local understanding and definitions of social and emotional learning skills for Peruvian rural youth

The Global Center for the Development of the Whole Child is contributing to the growing body of knowledge in Peru around social and emotional learning by conducting research to understand local perceptions and measurement of social and emotional skills in different contexts, as well as to promote spaces to share knowledge about this topic.

Background

After decades of curriculum revolving around standardized tests, a movement has been created to focus on the whole child and their social and emotional well-being. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs have their beginnings in several academic theories or movements ranging from emotional literacy,¹ emotional intelligence, and whole-child approaches to learning. SEL programs have grown significantly in the past ten years and are being mainstreamed into national curricula and support programs for students, teachers, and school districts. Research increasingly suggests that SEL can significantly contribute to academic success in school and in work-force development, as well as increased income-earning possibilities later in life.

Consequently, in the past two decades, there has been a significant rise in interest in SEL, and multiple frameworks and packages, largely designed in the United States and Europe, have been exported to countries in the Global South. SEL programs can be taught in schools and communities, but the applicability of largely Western constructs in SEL has led to more local efforts to try to contextualize programs to the needs and values of its participants. How to best foster SEL outcomes and measure them is of growing interest as such programs expand globally.

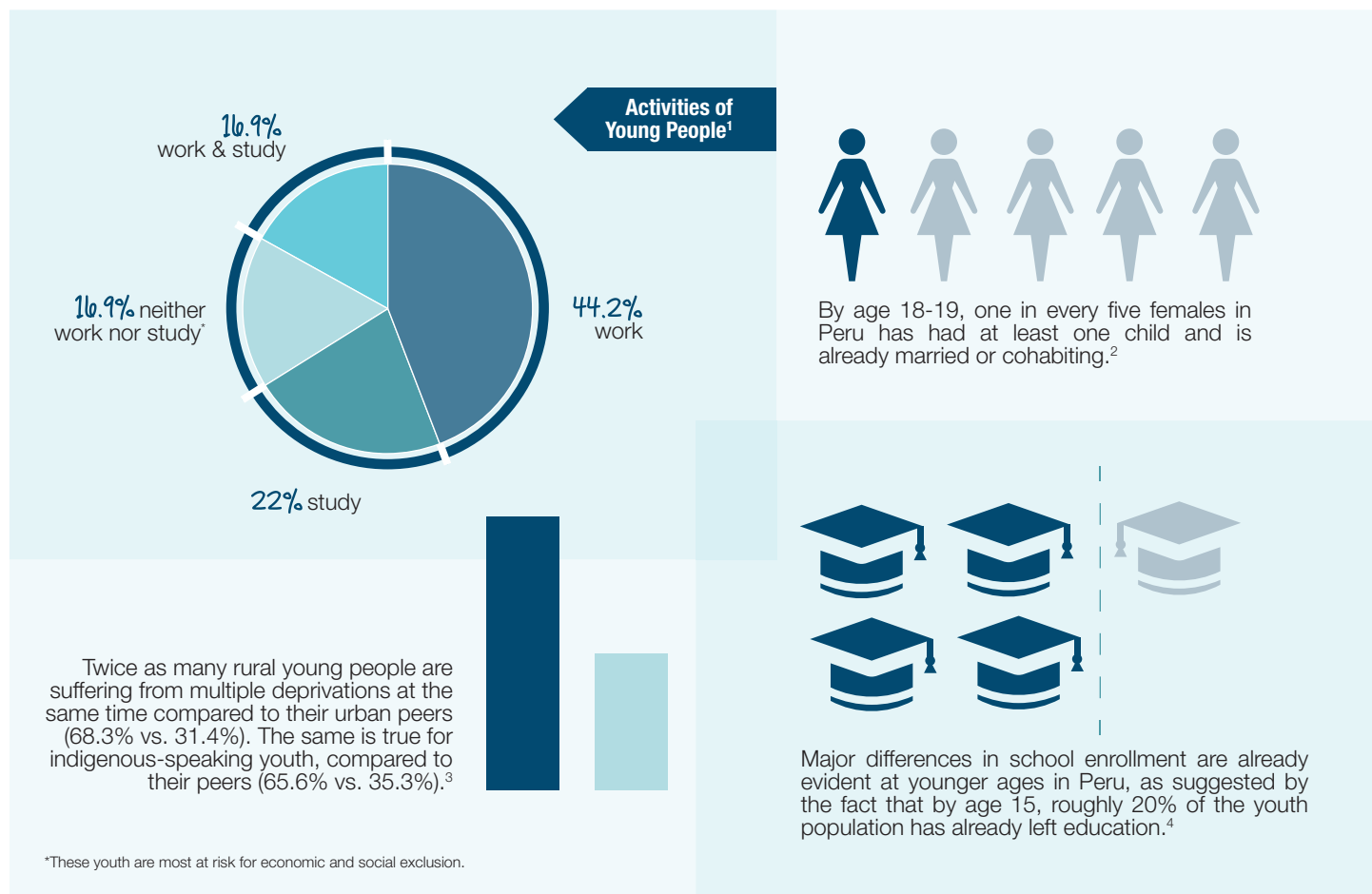
There are still many challenges around SEL measurement. First, there is a lack of consensus around SEL theory, which leads to different frameworks and terms for social and emotional skills.² Second, there are numerous questions around the adaptation of frameworks and tools to different contexts³ and ages, specifically for adolescents.⁴ Third, there is a need to develop different ways to measure social and emotional skills⁵ that contribute to interventions and understandings of SEL interventions and policy.

1. Claude Steiner coined the phrase emotional literacy
2. See: Abrahams et al., 2019; INEED, 2018; Ortega, 2016; USAID 2019.
3. See: Abrahams et al., 2019; Elias and Hatzichristou, 2016
4. See: Kim and Ross, 2019; Ross et al. 2019
5. See: Abrahams et al., 2019; Elias and Hatzichristou, 2016; Pancorbo and Arie, 2017.



Peru: Rural Youth and Social and Emotional Learning in Schools

According to the Youth Well-being Policy Review of Peru, there exist large discrepancies within the youth Peruvian population: indigenous-speaking, rural, and extremely poor youth are especially disadvantaged.



Faced with these challenges, the education sector in Peru is exploring how to adequately meet the education and livelihood needs of Peruvian youth. Social and emotional learning programs, which aim to help youth develop 21st century skills, such as the ability to think critically, make responsible decisions, and define life goals, are now being implemented in formal and non-formal settings.

In Peru, UNESCO's Horizontes program is working with local partners to improve the education and social and emotional outcomes of young people in secondary schools in rural, at-risk communities in four regions of Peru (Piura, Cusco, Amazonas, and Ayacucho). A portion of UNESCO's programming offers an educational curriculum for high school students, promoting the professional development of teachers and introducing the development

of social and emotional skills, as well as risk prevention. Program activities are based on local culture, family, and community heritage to better influence student outcomes.

In partnership with Horizontes, the Global Center for the Development of the Whole Child (GC-DWC) at the University of Notre Dame has launched a working group on social and emotional learning with several organizations in Peru to help mobilize a community of practice and a platform for sharing local experiences in the programming, measurement, and advocacy around SEL programs. In addition to the working group, we are conducting research in two departments in Peru to develop local definitions, indicators, and a measurement tool that is grounded in community understanding of SEL.

1. Youth Well-being Review of Peru © OECD 2017. See: https://www.oecd.org/countries/peru/PERU%20Assessment%20and%20recommendations_web.pdf

2. Ibid.

3. Centro de Desarrollo de la OCDE (2017), "Estudio de bienestar y políticas de juventud en el Perú", Proyecto OCDE-UE Inclusión juvenil, París.

4. OCDE (2019), Investing in Youth: Peru, Investing in Youth, Éditions OCDE, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264305823-en>.

Our research

The GC-DWC in collaboration with UNESCO Peru is conducting research to understand the local perceptions about social and emotional skills as well as the skills that are considered more important in different communities. Considering these local perceptions, we will develop and pilot a new, alternative instrument(s) for measuring social and emotional skills that are specific to indigenous populations in rural Peru.

The hypothesis is that many current social and emotional learning frameworks, definitions, and measurement tools were designed for populations in the Global North, and their applicability in the Global South and rural communities need further understanding. Indigenous communities may define and value social and emotional skills differently; it is important to understand the cultural and social drivers of this difference. By better understanding culturally relevant definitions and indicators of social and emotional skills, more accurate and culturally appropriate measurement instruments may better reflect a student's development of these skills.

Methodology

This research has three phases. In the first phase, we conducted secondary research on resilience and social and emotional skills (July - November 2019). This secondary research reviewed methodologies and instruments used to evaluate social and emotional skills, highlighting advantages and limitations of global frameworks and tools in contexts where youth are indigenous and are challenged by low-literacy levels or are at risk for not finishing their secondary school education.

Following the secondary research, the GC-DWC team used an adapted version of the Hubbard methodology. The methodology was applied with students, parents, teachers, and directors in two regions of rural Peru: Piura and Cusco. Each interviewee was asked to identify the social and emotional skills needed to a) remain in school and be successful; b) to be successful in some form of higher education; and c) to gain employment in their community or department.

The result of this study will be a locally-generated and contextualized set of definitions and rankings of social and emotional skills from the perspective of local actors from secondary schools that participate in the Horizontes program in Cusco (South of Peru) and Piura (North of Peru).

In total, 135 individuals from 6 schools participated in the study. The findings will be analyzed to inform the development of a localized measurement tool for prominent social and emotional skills. In the last phase of the research, the qualitative research will contribute to creating or adapting a set of measurement tools that are more culturally appropriate for the use of measuring social and emotional abilities in indigenous, rural, and low-literate areas. This experience will also inform the development of a practical guide for practitioners interested in adapting or localizing SEL frameworks, interventions, or program tools.

Key questions that will be explored are:

1. What social and emotional skills are defined and prioritized for adolescents and their school communities as important for achieving their life goals post-graduation?
2. What are the associated factors (school, family, locality) that promote social and emotional skills development in Peru?
3. What non-traditional tools exist or can be tested to assess social and emotional skills in communities with low-literacy and/or indigenous populations?

The Hubbard methodology is a rapid ethnographic qualitative approach that uses semi-structured interviews centered around one question or topic to systematically collect information about local perceptions, beliefs, or needs.¹

1. Hubbard (nd). Working paper: Using brief ethnographic interviewing as a method for understanding an issue, problem or idea from a local perspective. / Hubbard, J. & Miller, K. (2004). Ecological mental health interventions in refugee communities. In: K. Miller, & L. Rasco (Eds.), The mental health of refugees: ecological approaches to healing and adaption (1st ed.). Mahwah, New Jersey Lawrence Erlbaum.

The Social and Emotional Learning Group

Photo by Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, Peru



The GC-DWC, UNESCO Peru, UNESCO, and the Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya launched an SEL community of practice in March 2020 with the objective of bringing together academics, public policy makers, and education practitioners around the theme of social and emotional learning in Peru. The group will help generate and disseminate relevant information across the community members. The group meets monthly.

Desired Outcomes

The collaboration in Peru on both research and in the community of practice will contribute to the development of culturally relevant and more local understandings of social and emotional learning and its challenges in relation to implementation and measurement.

By the end of this collaboration, we seek to have a greater understanding of:

1. The strengths and limitations of the construct of social and emotional skills in the Peruvian rural and indigenous educational context;
2. Local knowledge about how communities define social and emotional skills from a variety of perspectives (teachers, students, parents) and cultural characteristics;
3. An alternative instrument to measure social and emotional skills in contexts of low-literacy and/or indigenous populations, that includes:
 - A tool for assessing social and emotional skills in low-literacy populations
 - An instrument or tool to collect information on factors associated with social and emotional skills

Finally, we aim that the SEL group will have regular meetings and develop recommendations to promote SEL policy, interventions, and research in Peru.



Photo by Patricia Cabrerizo, Peru