Literature review on non-cognitive skills

The term ‘non-cognitive skills’ refers to a set of attitudes, behaviours, and strategies that are thought to underpin success in school and at work, such as motivation, perseverance, and self-control. 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 even more important than—cognitive skills or IQ in determining academic and employment outcomes. Indeed, there is now growing attention from policymakers on how such ‘character’ or ‘soft’ skills can be developed in children and young people.

However, despite growing interest in this topic, the causal relationship between non-cognitive skills and later outcomes is not well established. This rapid literature review is intended to summarise the existing evidence on how ‘non-cognitive skills’ can be defined and measured; assess the evidence that such skills have a causal impact on later outcomes; and the role of select interventions that aim to improve non-cognitive skills in children and young people. It has been conducted by the Institute of Education, and was commissioned by the Education Endowment Foundation and Cabinet Office to inform future work in this area.

You can read the full report online here.