

A New Educational Framework for Responsible Leaders

Reflections from the 5th OECD Informal Working Group on Skills & Education

16-18 May 2017 | Lisbon, Portugal

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There is always an on-going discourse on the kind of future world we want, and the need for a new empowered generation to build it. Public opinion, policy-makers and civil society are often following the fast-track line of producing ideas like headlines. Researchers and academics work on, conceptualize and test the knowledge and evidence that could fill these fast ideas with a positive meaning.

In the real world, policy and research are often disconnected. This could easily lead society to an empty policy formulation splashed with the political interest of the moment, as well as to knowledge-based work that is never consulted by policy-makers, which gets stuck in the long corridors of the university forum.

The OECD informal working group on skills and education is a very good example of “positive triangulation” ensuring that policy-makers, researchers and civil society come together when discussing and putting into practice the new educational framework that will inspire and lead generations to come.

Currently, there is an increasing recognition that an economic narrative is not sufficient when measuring growth. There is a need for a redefinition of the growth narrative, which puts “well-being” at the core of new growth frameworks. According to the OECD, in

this new framework for measuring well-being, addressing the area of education and skills is one of the top three priorities associated with achieving individual well-being. Education has thus, a huge role to play in advancing the well-being agenda for both individuals and societies.

That is why the OECD is committed to define a new learning framework for 2030. This framework should fit the needs of a 21st century immersed in a new production revolution and facing different global challenges for which our current education system it not prepared.

The most important shift of focus in the articulation of the competences that students need in order to shape the future relies on “learning to live successfully and responsibly” in the world to come.

In the definition of this new framework for education, the OECD, through its Informal Working Group on Education and Skills is focused on three main areas of reflection: firstly, the competencies that people will need to shape the “future we want”; secondly, the introduction of the “student agency” as the underlying concept for this new

framework; and thirdly, the definition of transformative competencies to shape this future.

When reflecting on the competences to be included in this new framework, “values” arise as the core spine of the new education system. The most important shift of focus in the articulation of the competences that students need in order to shape the future relies on “learning to live successfully and responsibly” in the world to come. From the general audience, it was refreshing to observe how a pure knowledge-based education is regarded as becoming obsolete, creating space for system geared towards emotional intelligence. Resilience, innovation & sustainability will be basic “must haves” in a world that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

Student agency in this context aims at locating students at the very core of the education system; focusing all effort on empowering them to be able to navigate across unfamiliar contexts. It is important that with accelerating digitalisation, migration and growing inequality, that today’s students hold social and digital literacy skills that guides them to lead their lives in a responsible manner. Our new generations will need to find solutions to economic, social and cultural challenges that we may not have even recognised yet. This calls for a continuous cycle of “anticipation-action-reflection” in which youngsters

will need to be life-long, self-directed learners.

So, how does the OECD envision this new empowered young learner?

Through three cross-cutting, inter-related and transformative competences that will ensure a new model of students who are able to use tools interactively, to act autonomously and to interact in heterogeneous groups.

The first of these three competencies is designed to create new value. Through their education, students should be prepared to work with new narratives and innovate to create and adapt to new demands, new jobs, new products, new services, tools, processes, and new ways of thinking. With this approach, students will be more capable of deriving greater meaning from their actions.

The second of these competences will empower youngsters to cope with tensions, dilemmas, trade-offs, contradictions and ambiguity by learning to think and act in a more integrated way, adjusting their reality to the different circumstances and embracing change through problem-solving and long-term perspective solutions.

Finally, and most important, youngsters should be empowered to take responsibility. In this new world of fast changes, innovation and tensions, proactivity and action should always be accompanied with ethics and a sense of responsibility, and moral and intellectual maturity. Good actions, discoveries, solutions and creation cannot be isolated any more. Youngsters should lead their lives with the conviction that everything we do should bring a positive outcome for others and the world; that our mission in life is interrelated with

the missions of others; that we grow by lifting up others.

This new educational system should not be rooted in the current one. Starting from scratch, it should embrace new disruptive methodologies, approaches and angles. It should fully prepare the student for understanding the world around them by applying concepts to the creation of solutions and innovation. It should prepare a new generation of responsible leaders eager to put their talents at the service of a common good that it is never at odds with personal success and growth.

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Education

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Published on 14 June 2017

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