



Business at OECD (BIAC) **Education Committee Vision Paper:** **Education for a more resilient future**

Established in 1962, *Business at OECD (BIAC)* stands for policies that enable businesses of all sizes to contribute to growth, economic development and societal prosperity. Through *Business at OECD*, national businesses and employers' federations representing over 7 million companies and international sectoral federations provide and receive expertise via our participation with the OECD and governments promoting competitive economies and better business.

Introduction

Thriving, resilient and inclusive economies and societies, now and in the future, will need the key ingredient of quality education at all levels, including early education and continuing education that delivers relevant knowledge, skills and character abilities (aka competencies).

Education systems have been impacted in an unprecedented way by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94 % of the world's student population, and up to 99 % in low and lower-middle income countries.¹ In the OECD-Harvard Graduate School of Education Survey, the impact of school closures on education continuity was estimated to be at least 2 months of instruction for half of the primary and secondary school students.²

In the COVID-19 experience, digital technologies enabled the continuity of education systems, shedding even greater light on the importance of strong foundational competencies that will be necessary as we exit the crisis and adapt to a new normal and new expectations for work and life. It is also important to note that these competencies were needed before the pandemic and highlighted by BIAC^{3, 4}, and the pandemic has put the spotlight on them like never before.

Our youth have been particularly hard hit by the crisis - it is critically important that we avoid a lost "COVID Generation". Lockdown measures including school closures had immediate effects on Education systems with consequences for youth and children's education and vocational opportunities.⁵

As we look forward in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an immediate need for smart, agile transitions to utilizing the tools for remote learning for all ages and disciplines even after students return to the classroom. Addressing education transformation will require a determined investment in secure and affordable digital infrastructure that is accessible for all – this will be critical to reduce digital divides and subsequent education/skill divides.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to address gaps and student needs. It will be important to advance dialogue between all the stakeholders and recognize the diversity of education systems in this context.

Our statement outlines business priorities for learning and education systems, the role business can play, and the role of OECD as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. We also point to specific business initiatives included in our Business for Youth Campaign.⁶

¹ [Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond](#), United Nations (2020)

² [Education and COVID-19: Focusing on the long-term impact of school closures](#), OECD (2020)

³ http://biac.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/130605_BIAC_Education_Survey_PREMIUM.pdf

⁴ <http://biac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/15-06-Synthesis-BIAC-Character-Survey1.pdf>

⁵ [The Updated OECD Youth Action Plan](#), OECD (2020)

⁶ [Business for Youth Campaign](#), Business at OECD (BIAC) (2021)

Business priorities for the future of education and learning systems

As an overall priority, we underline the critical importance of access to quality and affordable education from the start for all. Our education systems need to prepare people to learn for life, to be agile and able to adapt at all skills levels across sectors and in the face of opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, including those brought on by digital transformation and environmental/climate challenges. The following are specific recommendations in this context.

1. We need to redesign education curricula

Modern disciplines addressing new technologies, engineering, and entrepreneurship, need to be an intrinsic part of a modernized curriculum⁷. Traditional disciplines must be updated to reflect a much-changed world.

- **Deliver the necessary foundational skills and knowledge** to drive innovation and economic and societal progress including with respect to the environment and climate change.
- **Emphasize the importance of competencies**⁸ such as critical thinking/problem-solving, resilience and ethics/civics, needed to thrive in today's work and life environment - including to advance data sources identifying the needed competences in support of this objective.
- **Advance partnership of business** with governments and academia for practical development of our education and learning systems including to ensure technical/vocational training opportunities including apprenticeship, re-skilling and up-skilling, and blended learning including on the job training for adults.
- **Address skill mismatches** through determined and concrete action by fostering cooperation among education and training institutions, companies and employers.
- **Focus on overall human development starting with early education.** Access to quality education from the start for all, including resilience of individuals and a culture of lifelong learning must start from early education. In this context, competencies (such as creativity, resilience and ethics) needed to thrive in today's work environment, are all the more critical in light of the impacts of COVID-19 on life, education and work.

2. We need to invest in teaching and elevate the teaching profession

Teachers were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis as they worked to deliver education in uncertain times and transformed remote working environments, with students of all ages. Data from the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) show that, on average across the OECD countries that took part, *only 26% of teachers agree that their profession is valued in society*⁹ (for instance, in some jurisdictions in the US, teachers are being driven to resign because of debates over vaccines and masks). This highlights the urgent need to reinforce the focus on investment in teaching to ensure teachers have the recognition and competencies to effectively teach in changing learning environments and to address new and emerging issues.

⁷ http://biac.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/130605_BIAC_Education_Survey_PREMIUM.pdf

⁸ <http://biac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/15-06-Synthesis-BIAC-Character-Survey1.pdf>

⁹ [TALIS 2018 Insights and Interpretations](#), OECD (2020)

- **Devote significantly increased national/jurisdictional resources for effective competency training for teachers** through access to quality training throughout teacher’s careers, in their disciplinary knowledge, and in competencies.
- **Equip teachers with digital skills and competencies for new and remote learning environments**. This includes the need to narrow the gap between pre-COVID and post-COVID learning environments and teaching methods.
- **Raise the social status of teaching** by informing and reinforcing to parents and to the general population about the critical importance of teachers, including their professional development for the wellbeing and advancement of our economies and societies.
- **Recruit and retain teachers** by providing incentives to enter the profession and by providing continued professional development.

3. We need to invest in the digital infrastructure and capacity of our education and learning systems

Modernized knowledge and competencies for navigating a rapidly transforming digital economy will be key to competitiveness and recovery of our economies and societies from the COVID-19 crisis. Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) will impact employability, and require modernized knowledge and competencies to navigate.

- **Invest in connectivity and hardware** to equip both teachers and students with the resources to learn in transforming learning environments, including internet access, hardware devices, and online tools.
- **Invest in digital skills**. Digital literacy and computer science for all students will be even more important as digital tools become increasingly incorporated in education systems, learning and administrative tools, including digital credentials to empower learners to advance their digital skills including for continued learning and life.
- **Advance EdTech**, including AI, for personalized learning and training.

Role of Businesses

Business has a key role in supporting the development of education and training systems in cooperation with governments, academia, and relevant stakeholders, by making explicit their needs for modernized knowledge and competencies, with a view on employability and skills demand. About one-third of all students in upper secondary vocational education are enrolled in combined school- and work-based programs on average across the OECD.¹⁰ Significant transformation to distance learning caused by the pandemic was lead and supported by successful public and private partnerships. Business plays a key role in helping to shape education systems through:

- **Partnership with government and academic institutions** to ensure that education systems deliver the relevant knowledge and competencies to enhance employability in an increasingly dynamic work environment.
- **Delivering digital infrastructure** including connectivity and affordable and high-quality hardware and devices to both teachers and learners.
- **Extending support for reskilling and upskilling** for all ages to cope with the digital transformation of our economies and jobs, including through apprenticeships, work based learning and vocational training.
- **Deploying technology solutions**, working with schools, education and training institutions and businesses including SMEs to support learning and work continuity, and leveraging connectivity infrastructure and hardware for those who currently do not have access to it.
- **Active engagement in social dialogue** to ensure that policies in the COVID-19 crisis respond to immediate needs of business and employees.

Role of the OECD

The OECD provides an important evidence base to share best practices and learnings from education systems. With a view towards recovery from COVID-19, the cross-cutting multidisciplinary approach to educations and skills will be ever more important. In this context, we look to the OECD to:

1. **Deliver cross-cutting evidence and analysis of concrete measures being taken and lessons learned with respect to education in the COVID-19 crisis**
 - **Provide evidence** to understand what is working on the ground with consideration for the future.
2. **Foster cross-cutting and multi-stakeholder approaches and cooperation for education**
 - **Encourage cooperation** regarding education policy across relevant ministries, including education, employment, innovation and digital, health, environment.

¹⁰ [Education at a Glance 2020](#), OECD (2020)

- **Engage the relevant stakeholders** such as business, academia, and workers in dialogue on education and training.

Role of Governments

1. Address skills mismatches

- **Ensure that the skills prioritized in learning pathways** are those that are most relevant in a post-pandemic world where patterns and growth sectors have shifted.
- **Encourage jurisdictions to develop employment requirements databases** to help the fluidity of demand/supply.
- **Support the development of basic digital skills** for all ages and empower learners to have a lifelong learning mind-set.
- **Significantly boost funding for teacher professional development, and actively work at improving the social respect and recognition for teachers.**

2. Focus on youth employability

- **Assist members to develop tools** to address and reduce school dropout rates.
- **Foster the ability for young people** to be better prepared for their educational choice and prioritize early communication and career advice.
- **Advance policy frameworks** for high-school students to engage in work experiences before graduating, with the objective to learn new skills, explore career paths and gain both work and life experiences.
- **Encourage the infusion of entrepreneurial thinking** into non-business disciplines at all levels of the education system from an early age and help nurture students' entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, and motivations.

Looking ahead

Whatever we do to address the unprecedented challenges young people are facing, we need dialogue between governments, educational institutions, businesses and key stakeholders. Cooperation is essential to tailor career orientation, bridge the skills gap, and show future students what the real demands in the labor market are. Helping students with a smooth school to work transition is essential.

As young people are about to enter the labor market or preparing for higher education, it is essential for them to have a better understanding of what job opportunities specific academic and vocational pathways might offer, where job opportunities exist, in particular in light of the economic shifts related to the pandemic, and what current and future skills requirements are.

Access to early work experience with the objective to explore different career paths should be a critical part of educational institutions. Effective continuous dialogue between education institutions, the private and the public sector will be critical to giving young people a chance, boosting the talent pipeline and building stronger businesses, economies and societies.



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