

Executive Summary

What does it mean for education that our societies are becoming more diverse? What role do new technologies play in our lives, and how can they be best exploited by our schools? What skills should education provide for our increasingly knowledge-intensive societies?

This book examines major trends that are affecting the future of education and setting challenges for policy makers and education providers alike. It does not give conclusive answers: it is not an analytical report nor is it a statistical compendium, and it is certainly not a statement of OECD policy on these different developments. It is instead a stimulus for discussion about major tendencies that have the potential to influence education. While the trends are robust, the questions raised for education in this book are intended to be illustrative and suggestive. We invite users to look further and include examples of developments from their own countries or regions in their discussions.

WHAT CAN BE FOUND IN THIS PUBLICATION?

This resource contains 35 subjects each illustrated by two figures on specific trends. The material is organised in five main chapters focusing on globalisation, well-being and lifestyle, skills and the labour market, modern families, and new technologies. In each section a series of questions are posed linking the trend to education, from the level of early childhood education and care through to tertiary education and lifelong learning. While all the trends included are relevant to education, not all relevant trends are in this resource – it is necessarily highly selective. As well as relevance for education, the criterion for selecting trends was the availability of internationally comparable, long-term evidence. The diversity of the topics covered means that in some cases the trends are charted over a short decade; in others, longer-term trends are available. The trends that cover the shortest amount of time look at emerging trends in new technologies.

The focus is primarily on OECD countries and emerging economies identified as a priority for OECD work: Brazil, China, India, and the Russian Federation. Where they are available, broader global data are used that include, for example, Indonesia and South Africa. The recent global financial crisis is largely outside the scope of this book, given our focus on trends over a longer time frame. We refer, however, to the crisis when it is likely to have had an impact on particular figures under discussion such as those related to economic growth, poverty, or household income data.

This book has been written in a deliberately accessible manner with a broad audience in mind. This resource is relevant for anyone active in the field of education, including policy makers, officials, advisors, researchers and policy analysts; leaders of educational institutions and other stakeholders; teacher educators; teachers; and parents and students.

TRENDS SHAPING EDUCATION 2013

The trends in this book start with “big picture” global changes before honing in on societies and labour markets, and then turn to the more “micro” level of families and children. New technologies affect all these different layers but are presented in a stand-alone separate chapter.

The dynamics of globalisation: New economic balances, more diverse populations, and environmental challenges including climate change

Chapter One looks at the important and pervasive trend of globalisation. In essence, globalisation is the widening, deepening and speeding up of connections across national borders. One of the key areas where this occurs is trade: ever greater quantities of goods, services and capital are bought and sold around the globe. People are moving more freely across borders and continents, bringing greater ethnic and cultural diversity to OECD countries. Facilitated by fast-changing technology and decreasing transport costs, individuals and information flow more freely across the globe than ever before.

The global economic balance is also changing. The emerging economies of China, India, and the Russian Federation now sit comfortably among the world’s eight largest economies. These countries have large and quickly developing economies and play an increasingly important political role in global affairs, for example, through the G20. These changes are not just cosmetic, but rather a fundamental transformation in the balance of economic power and world finance. Despite this, the magnitude of global inequality – the gap between richer and poorer world regions – is still increasing.

Global challenges – for example, climate change – call for global solutions. *Trends Shaping Education 2013* examines evidence of increasing numbers of natural disasters and decreasing biodiversity in the last 20 to 30 years. It also looks at promising national initiatives to preserve natural resources, for example, protecting increasingly large marine and terrestrial areas and the push to invest in renewable energy. Education can and does play a key role in raising awareness of environmental challenges, while also shaping the attitudes and behaviours that make a difference.

Transforming our societies: The rise of the megacity, improving security and safety, and reinforcing democracy

At the same time as globalisation is transforming the world at large, societies are also experiencing significant change. **Chapter Two** investigates this, firstly through the lens of urban living and the rise of the megacity. By the year 2050 around 85% of the OECD’s population is expected to live in cities. Just as the global economic balance is shifting, so too is the profile of the megacity: in 1950, six of the ten largest world cities were located in current OECD countries. By 2025, only three of the top ten will be in current OECD countries, with the rest coming from Brazil, China, and South Asia (Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan).

City life has a distinct quality compared with rural life in that cities in two very different countries, such as New York City and Shanghai, will tend to have more in common than each would have with rural communities in their own country. People flock

to cities because they are the powerhouses of the economy, the places where jobs and wealth are created. They are also associated, however, with the potential for increased alienation, and high traffic density is linked to higher pollution, which in turn creates challenges, including risks for respiratory health. Well-being in an urban landscape is thus a pressing concern, and our urban schools are taking a more active role in promoting mental and physical health for their students.

In many OECD countries, one of the most significant negative trends is rising obesity among adults and children, which threatens to grow into a severe public health crisis in many OECD countries. In 2008, the majority of OECD countries had an average Body Mass Index (BMI) that fell in the “overweight” range, and given current estimates of daily caloric consumption, this trend does not look like it will slow down anytime soon. From an economic perspective, these figures are especially alarming in light of increasing health and pension expenditures, already on the rise due to ageing populations and increased longevity. These issues also raise questions about the role of the elderly in societies more generally.

What sort of society and community do we live in? Do we feel safe going about our daily lives and social interactions? In many OECD countries, improving safety and security by being tough on crime and encouraging road safety are high on the political agenda. Ensuring national security in an era of increasing globalisation, shifting community structures, and the development of new technologies also has an impact on the quality of life. Yet in many countries across the OECD, measures of democracy and civic engagement, such as voter turnout, have fallen throughout the last half-century. What role can education and schools play in improving civic participation and well-being in our modern societies?

The changing world of skills and work: Reconciling family and work, embracing the knowledge intensity of our economies, and continuing income inequality

Chapter Three examines one of the most profound long-term trends in OECD societies in the last century: the changing role of women. The number of women active in the labour market has risen considerably since the 1960s. However, there are persistent challenges: the continuing difficulty of reconciling family and working life, unequal representation of women in higher level jobs, and a persistent gender wage gap. Although traditionally it has seemed that women have had to choose between career and children, one of the most interesting recent trends across OECD countries challenges that trade-off: in 2010, those with higher female employment rates were also more likely to have higher fertility rates on average.

Skills have become the global currency of twenty-first century economies. Without sufficient investment in skills, people languish on the margins of society, technological progress does not translate into productivity growth, and countries can no longer compete in an increasingly knowledge-based global economy. As transport prices have fallen and trade barriers are lifted, a substantial share of the production of basic goods has been taken over by developing countries with lower wage costs. This has tended to drive OECD countries seeking to maintain their competitive edge towards the production of goods and services that require high levels of knowledge and skill, creativity and innovation. Growing investment in research and development, increasing numbers of patents filed, as well as the increasing numbers of researchers across the OECD area all reflect this shift.

Despite these advances, income inequality is rising across most (but not all) OECD countries. This is not due to a growing divide between the poor and middle class, but rather a growing divide in many OECD countries between the middle class and the rich. At the same time, spending on social programmes has increased in every OECD member country. Increased inequality is associated with social exclusion and vulnerability in the labour market. Education can stimulate social mobility by providing opportunities, but it also plays a role in reproducing inequalities when, for example, the already privileged have better access to top tertiary institutions. Can education be designed in such a way that it does not reinforce inequalities?

Modern families: The transformation of childhood, balancing household budgets, and the resilience of childhood expectations

The dominant family model in the twentieth century – characterised by a breadwinning father and a mother taking care of the household and a number of children – has changed. **Chapter Four** takes a look at this transformation over the past fifty years: families have become smaller, parents are older, and, on average, more prosperous. At the same time, however, both parents are more likely to be active in the labour market, further increasing family resources, but potentially reducing the amount of time available for children. Individuals are getting married less often while the prevalence of divorce grows. Women are having babies at a later age than ever before, in part driving an increase in the numbers of children in early education and care.

Modern families also face risks. In general across OECD countries, the average family budget has increased since the 1980s. The recent financial crisis heavily damaged banks and some national economies, but it also affected the everyday spending and income of families and households. Across the OECD area, the rate of teenage pregnancy is decreasing, due to a number of factors including changing expectations about the ideal age for motherhood, improved access to contraception, as well as the impact of campaigns to reduce teenage pregnancy. However, the numbers of babies born with low birth weights are increasing. Advances in medical technology and awareness of risky behaviours during pregnancy both need additional attention from policy makers and health sector workers.

Children's life chances are shaped and influenced by the conditions into which they are born and develop. On average across OECD countries, child poverty has continued to rise slightly. Despite this, children's expectations of success – their hopes and dreams for school and career – are rather resilient. As measured by the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), students from more disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely than before to expect to earn a university degree. The importance of social background in shaping attainment remains one of the most well-charted relationships in educational and social research.

Infinite connection: Universal Internet access, the rise of portable devices and social media, and the dark side of cyber space – bullying and fraud

In contrast with many of the trends in this book that are relatively gradual and often linear, the pace of technological development is exponential and its influence often

unpredictable. **Chapter Five** looks at how the Internet has transformed our lives. More and more people use it on a daily basis to find information; communicate via email, audio or visual conferencing; make use of online services such as banking and shopping; and take advantage of the massive amount of multi-media entertainment on offer. With the emergence of platforms built to enable user-generated content, Internet users increasingly interact, collaborate and create their own materials online. The growth in the availability of portable devices means that access to a computer and the Internet is no longer restricted to a location but is available almost everywhere. The Internet is increasingly a truly global phenomenon: content can now be found in over 250 languages.

The full potential of information and communication technologies – from computers to mobile phones to user-generated content online – will continue to evolve. Most recently, with the combination of these technologies, increasing numbers of users have the ability to engage with *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and other online social applications. Two of the most interesting recent changes are the rise of downloadable applications, or “apps”, and the emergence of cloud computing, or the use of hardware and software services delivered over the Internet. Recent global events demonstrate the impact that new technologies can have: during the spring of 2011, for instance, the use of social media more than doubled in Arab countries during the Arab Spring uprisings. These technologies played a key role in organising times and meeting points for demonstrations, publishing crackdowns and abuses on citizens, and raising awareness throughout the world by providing constantly updated information.

Despite the enormous potential of the Internet to reshape our world and communities, there is a downside to infinite connectivity and universal access. New challenges, for example, the rise of Internet fraud, online privacy concerns and identity theft, and the transmission of false or misleading information are all part of a new global online world. For parents and children, there are also specific concerns: cyber bullying and worries about protecting our young from explicit content and virtual predators. Today’s students, willingly or unwillingly, are exposed to a whole new set of dangers, and parents and educators are not always sure how best to protect them. Guides to monitoring and protecting Internet users – of all ages – make it clear that the best preventive strategies involve awareness, constant vigilance, and, in terms of protecting children, an open dialogue about their concerns and online lives.

Trends Shaping Education 2013 covers a rich set of topics related to globalisation, society and well-being, work and skills, modern families, and new technologies. In each section, a series of questions are put forward linking the trend to education, from the level of early childhood education and care through to tertiary education and lifelong learning. But it is important to remember that these trends are themselves shaped by education and manifest within it. This publication is intended to complement the educational indicators that measure the developments taking place within education and training systems themselves. For policy makers, teacher educators, practitioners, and any others interested in education, we hope that this publication of *Trends Shaping Education 2013* can act as an inspiring and stimulating resource to inform thinking about the future of education. We invite all readers to ask themselves: “What does this trend mean for my education system and my work?”



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