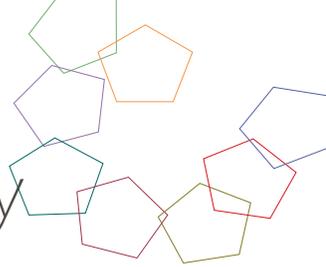


Executive Summary



Countries need an increasingly educated and skilled workforce to succeed in today's knowledge economy. That means good basic education in childhood and adolescence that equips people not just for the jobs of today, but with the ability to learn new skills for the jobs of tomorrow right through their lifetime.

Education is for life, not for the classroom. Indeed, some of the most important skills for life and learning may be acquired before, after and outside school. The latest research shows that pupils who took part in pre-primary school programmes are more likely to have better educational outcomes at age 15. In the majority of OECD countries, most children benefit from pre-primary education before they are five, but it is important to ensure that it delivers quality care with equity of access, and that is a question of funding and organisation.

Increasing numbers of young people are completing secondary education, with girls overtaking boys, and tertiary education is also on the rise. For many countries the question now is not so much providing education, but ensuring its quality and equity of access regardless of gender and socio-economic status.

Teachers have a key role to play in delivering quality education, and feedback is increasingly important to help them cope with changing demands and curricula. The quality of programmes is driven by the need for foundation skills plus adaptability and ability to learn going forward; increasingly too education is not just a matter of national standards but ensuring quality in cross-border offerings.

And there is the crucial question of ensuring that education, whether secondary, vocational or tertiary, equips people with the skills actually needed in the workplace. Increasingly these are not just technical or job-specific skills, but “soft” skills such as the ability to adapt to change and the ability to learn.

With ageing populations and the need for people to retire later as life expectancy increases, we need to know if older people can adapt and keep learning. Brain research says yes, but only 1.5% of over-40s are enrolled in formal education, compared with 6% of 30-39 year-olds. We can no longer afford this reluctance: a cultural shift is needed by policy makers, employers and the employees themselves to make best use of their talents. If someone starts work at age 22 and is going to work up to an official retirement age of 66, for example, they will still have a quarter of their working life ahead of them at 55. A lot of change can happen in those 11 years, so people will need to stay ready to learn, and employers will need to be ready to retrain them.

POLICY DIRECTIONS

Early Childhood Education and Care

- Place well-being, early development and learning at the core of early childhood approaches
- Provide autonomy, funding and support to early childhood services, linked to delivery of quality services
- Improve staff qualifications, training and working conditions
- Engage families and communities

Schooling: Investments, Organisation and Learners

- Develop skills for effective school leadership and make it an attractive profession
- Increase job differentiation between new and experienced teachers to improve effectiveness
- Promote greater computer use at school and experimental research on its effects

Transition Beyond Initial Education

- Ensure that vocational education provides the right mix of skills for the labour market
- Reform career guidance to develop well-informed career advice for all
- Make full use of workplace learning

Higher Education

- Develop a vision for tertiary education and sound instruments for implementing that vision
- Use cost-sharing between state and students as the principle for tertiary education funding
- Improve cost-effectiveness
- Improve the quality of teaching

Lifelong Learning and Adults

- Develop system-level policies for effective adult learning
- Ensure successful co-financing of adult learning
- Promote active debate on the nature of teaching, learning and assessment
- Devote the necessary resources of people, time and money

Outcomes, Benefits and Returns

- Foster student interest in science, mathematics and technology
- Aim to secure similar student performance among schools
- Clarify returns to training by augmenting information and removing structural barriers
- Parental engagement in a child's education needs to be continuous and start at birth

Equity and Equality of Opportunity

- Eliminate grade repetition
- Manage school choice to avoid segregation and increased inequities
- Reinforce learning the host language for immigrant children
- Target low performance regardless of background

Innovation and Knowledge Management

- Equip people with skills for innovation
- Enable women to play a larger role in the innovation process
- Make better links between educational research, policy and practice



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