



**BUSINESS**at**OECD**

Business and Industry Advisory  
Committee to the OECD

# Education for a More Resilient Future

Business Priorities for the  
Future of Education and Learning Systems

Vision Paper  
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# Introduction

Thriving, resilient and inclusive economies and societies, now and in the future, will need the key ingredient of quality education at all levels, from early childhood education onwards, that delivers relevant knowledge, skills, character and meta-learning abilities.

Rapid technological innovation, including AI and shifting global markets, coupled with changing workforce expectations, underscore the critical importance of modern education curricula and a culture and mindset of lifelong learning, including through upskilling and reskilling, as an economic and social imperative. Furthermore, AI and other technologies can and should be introduced in developmentally appropriate ways from early childhood through adulthood.

Education systems have been significantly impacted in recent history. The COVID-19 pandemic created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and across all continents.

During the COVID-19 experience, digital technologies enabled the continuity of education systems, shedding light on the importance of strong digital competencies.

Looking ahead, frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) will significantly transform how children, young people and adults learn. However, OECD evidence also shows that these benefits will only be realised if AI is deployed to support human learning, judgement and agency rather than to substitute for them. Education systems should therefore pursue AI adoption in ways that

strengthen learning outcomes, inclusion, teacher agency and trust.

With uncertainty surrounding the potential effect of AI on jobs, education and broader society, there is an immediate need for smart, agile transitions from traditional education models to curricula adapted for the needs of today.

Addressing education transformation will also require a determined investment in secure and affordable digital infrastructure that is accessible for all, and a commitment to engaging in lifelong learning more deeply across all stages of life.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to address skills gaps and broad economic needs. It will be important to advance dialogue between all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, while recognizing the diversity of educational systems in this context.

Thriving economies and societies need to ensure that individuals have access to quality education that delivers relevant competencies to boost employability in dynamic labour markets and navigate the digital and green transformations of our economies and societies.

On the occasion of the 2026 OECD Skills Summit in Istanbul, our Education Committee Vision paper outlines business priorities for learning and education systems, the role business can play and the role of OECD as we face unprecedented technological change, and global uncertainty in our economies and societies to which our learning systems must adapt.

# 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. Furthermore, access to lifelong learning, including for vocational education and training, and work-based learning through apprenticeships, are imperative for competitive, resilient and inclusive economies and societies.

From a practical perspective, education systems must equip learners with the capacity to design, build, maintain and govern the technologies, infrastructure and industrial systems that will underpin the digital and green transitions.

We encourage policymakers to deepen their collaboration with business to ensure that the skills taught in the classroom are those needed in the labour market. The following are key business recommendations in this context.

## 1. Modernise Education Curricula

Traditional disciplines, such as mathematics and science, must be updated to reflect a rapidly changing world. Modern disciplines such as technology and engineering, social sciences, and entrepreneurship, need to be an intrinsic part of a modernised curriculum. Education systems, including academic programmes, and vocational education and training, should lay the foundation for competencies such as curiosity, critical thinking and adaptability from an early age.

In the first stages of education systems – for early childhood, there must be a focus on strengthening the basic literacy and numeracy of all children, and addressing relational, gross and fine motor skills.

A further key challenge and concern, that needs to be acknowledged in the context of

curricula reform is the impact of university entrance requirements. College and university entrance exams and requirements across countries should no longer reflect the past nor impede education reform. They should be updated for a modern world.

In this context, we call on countries to make the necessary investment to advance modern curricula, which should:

- **Deliver the necessary foundational skills and knowledge** to drive innovation and economic and societal progress including with respect to sustainability, artificial intelligence, and job market realities.
- **Focus on overall human development starting with early childhood education.** A culture and mindset for lifelong learning that fosters resilience must start with early childhood education, all the more critical for individuals to thrive given the impacts of AI on society, education, and work.
- **Emphasise the importance of competencies** such as critical thinking and problem-solving, resilience, ethics/civics, which are needed to thrive in today's work and life environment.
- **Advance necessary data and assessment** structures needed to measure modern competencies.
- **Strengthen partnerships between business, governments and academia** for practical development including through technical and vocational training opportunities such as apprenticeships, re-skilling and up-skilling, and blended learning methods.
- **Address skill mismatches** through determined and concrete action by fostering cooperation amongst education and training institutions, companies, and employers.

- **Address alignment of university requirements and exams** to align with knowledge and key competencies critical to employability in today's labour market.

**See also:** *Boosting Productivity and Business Growth: [The Role of Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Skills](#), Business at OECD, February 2025.*

## 2. Invest and Elevate the Teaching Profession Modernise Education Curricula

There is an urgent need to reinforce investment in the teaching profession to ensure that teachers have both the recognition and the capacity to effectively teach in changing learning environments and evolving economic and societal contexts.

The teaching profession has been and will continue to be significantly impacted by the growing use of digital technologies, including AI. The use of AI by teachers holds great potential for enhanced productivity, including by automating repetitive tasks or augmenting the efficacy of their curriculum.

However, AI also poses significant challenges and potential risks, including the use of AI by students as a replacement for critical thinking. AI can make detecting cheating or plagiarism more difficult as well, in addition to confronting issues that may arise concerning data privacy, online safety and exclusion of those not having access to digital tools.

Thus, teachers must not only be equipped with the necessary competencies to manage new technologies, but also to ensure "[teachers in the lead](#)" in the development and deployment of AI tools in education systems. This ensures that educators are fully empowered to determine if and how AI is utilized and ensure positive impact.

With respect to AI in education, we need to enable learning, productive struggle, critical

thinking and decision making, even if or when supported by AI.

Toward elevating teachers, business recommends that education and skills systems:

- **Devote adequate national resources to ensure teachers are equipped with the digital skills and competencies needed for AI and online learning environments.** This includes learning to adapt methods for an age where large language models, and online platforms, are easily accessible.
- **Raise the social status of teaching** by informing and reinforcing the critical importance of teachers for the wellbeing and advancement of our economies and societies.
- **Recruit and retain teachers by providing adequate incentives to enter the profession** and by providing continued professional development opportunities.
- **Ensure sound practice-oriented degrees for management functions and high-quality technical education for early childhood education specialists,** including language and STEM promotion as part of the qualifications.
- **Use AI tools to support teachers' professional work only where their pedagogical value, safety, transparency and data governance has been carefully assessed,** and always in ways that reinforce rather than replace teachers' professional judgement and relationships with learners.
- **Ensuring "teachers in the lead"** in the development and deployment of AI tools in education systems.

### 3. Reinforce Foundations for Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is essential for ensuring employment opportunities across all sectors and at all ages. While this conversation has been ongoing for decades, rapid technological innovation and shifting global markets have instilled a new sense of urgency in finding a solution.

Coupled with changing workforce expectations, the need for a culture and mindset of lifelong learning has become an economic and social imperative. Companies and business federations are investing in skilling, upskilling and reskilling and engaging in partnerships with education and public institutions to advance this important objective, essential to competitiveness.

The formation and development of a mindset that values continuous growth and learning and embraces change is essential in today's world of digital transformation. Education systems that cultivate curiosity, critical thinking and adaptability from an early age with an appreciation of the importance and value of lifelong learning are important for laying the foundation of such a mindset.

For regulated, safety-critical and fast-evolving professions such as engineering, lifelong learning must include structured continuing professional development (CPD), recognised pathways for updating competence, and trusted mechanisms for documenting and communicating these competences across borders and sectors.

Employers' organizations and companies alike are implementing partnerships across sectors and levels of education. These diverse models enable schools and businesses to embed real-world problem solving, entrepreneurial mindsets and continuous professional development into the education system.

With the objective of advancing practical approaches to foster a culture of lifelong learning we recommend:

- **Instilling a culture of lifelong learning in education systems** from early education, including through leveraging vocational education systems.
- **Maintain a close dialogue with employers** to ensure that relevant learning opportunities are available and match labour market needs.
- **Expand public-private partnerships** in workforce development. Governments should leverage the expertise and practical experience of the private sector to co-design relevant learning programmes and identify emerging skill needs.
- **Increase effective funding mechanisms** to make learning opportunities accessible to all, regardless of geographic location or socioeconomic status.
- **Promote high-quality, stackable micro-credentials and interoperable recognition frameworks** that enable learners and professionals to build and update competences over time, including in digital, green, entrepreneurial and transversal skill areas.
- **Integrate AI and data literacy** into national curricula, ensuring that all learners, from primary school students to mid-career professionals, gain familiarity with the technologies that are reshaping the economy.
- **Promote a skills-first approach to hiring**, focused on the specific capabilities an individual possesses and those an organisation needs, rather than relying solely on credentials, qualifications or job titles.

**See also:** [\*Nurturing Engaged and Resilient Lifelong Learners in a World of Digital Transformation\*](#), Business at OECD November 2025.

## 4. Emphasise Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Work-based Learning

To facilitate a smooth transition from school to work, education institutions need to be in close contact with businesses. In this regard, the OECD International Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Assessment (OECD PISA VET) project is an opportunity to provide an objective assessment of the wide range of systems in place and help raise the visibility and attractiveness of TVET in partnership with business and work-based learning opportunities.

Many countries continue to experience labour shortages and a lack of skilled workers – an issue exacerbated by digital and green transitions' impact on labour markets. As such, it is important that TVET systems reflect the reality and demands of the digital and green transitions impacting labour markets and skills needs.

In the context of the green transition promoting accessible skills development and vocational training is critical in pursuing competitive and scalable green solutions for our economies. This includes the need to provide open access training initiatives and market-led work-based learning opportunities to foster readiness for formal employment in service of the green transition.

This is particularly important in sectors such as construction, manufacturing, transport, energy, digital infrastructure and the built environment, where technician and engineering-related competences are essential to productivity, resilience and decarbonisation.

It is also important that we can raise the profile and attractiveness of TVET systems to ensure they are not seen as lesser learning pathways. The OECD PISA VET initiative remains critically

important to ensuring TVET programmes' quality and success.

By underlining the importance of work-based learning across sectors, [GAN Global](#) is working to mobilize companies, international organizations, and country networks to advance quality apprenticeships globally and locally. The initiative highlights the critical importance of bringing together public and private sectors to allow people to gain future-ready skills and employers access the talent they need.

To elevate and advance TVET and work-based learning business recommends to:

- **Strengthen the evidence base around the value of TVET, through the OECD PISA VET project and by actively engaging with** businesses on effective policy making, systems improvement and VET system reform, with the broader aim to improve VET systems and outcomes.
- **Advance opportunities for work-based learning** across sectors through partnership with business.
- **Ensure that policy frameworks support and do not impede work-based learning, including apprenticeship opportunities.**
- **Promote accessible skills development, vocational training and work-based learning for the green transition** that enables business to upskill their workforce and support transition from traditional industries to roles addressing green transition and technologies.
- **Ensure career guidance** that takes into consideration the learning and potential work opportunities in conjunction with TVET and apprenticeship opportunities.
- **Ensure permeability between VET, higher education and professional pathways**, so that learners can progress from technician-level qualifications to higher engineering studies and continuing professional development throughout their careers.

**See also:** [\*Forging Green Talents: Developing Worker's Skills for the Green Transition through the Vocational Training\*](#), Joint Publication of Business at OECD and the International Organisation for Employers, April 2025.

- **Invest in research** that helps us better understand what developmentally appropriate AI exposure and use looks like for children and all ages.

## 5. Invest in Digital Infrastructure and Capacity of our Education and Learning Systems

Modern, accessible digital and connectivity infrastructure is crucial for education systems to effectively lead in the rapidly digitalising world being transformed by AI and emerging technologies.

Likewise affordable access to connectivity and the internet, relevant hardware and access to learning - upskilling and reskilling to use emerging technologies, and related credentials, are critical to include education and lifelong learning and reducing the digital divides in our economies and societies.

Towards these goals business recommends:

- **Invest in connectivity and hardware infrastructure** to equip both teachers and students with the resources to learn, including internet access, devices, and online tools.
- **Invest in verifiable and interoperable digital skills**, which are increasingly important as AI becomes embedded in the way that business, administration and education is done.
- **Recognise trusted and meaningful digital credentials** as a useful mechanism to empower learners to advance their digital skills.
- **Advance responsible EdTech** for personalized learning and training.

## Spotlight: Building AI and Digital Literacy over a Lifetime

As AI technologies increasingly shape every sector, AI and data literacy are emerging as foundational skills. The 2025 *Business at OECD* report, [“Boosting Productivity and Business Growth: The Role of AI Skills”](#), highlights how businesses are responding to this need by investing in continuous workforce development. The report includes use cases, which show that training needs to range from foundational digital literacy and responsible AI use to advanced, industry-specific applications. Across sectors, companies are launching various initiatives, both independently and collaboratively, between businesses, educational institutions and public agencies. These can take the forms of:

- **Online courses** focused on core AI concepts and practical use cases;
- **Workshops and learning fairs** to promote ethical and responsible AI use;
- **Certification programmes** tailored to the needs of employees, students, job seekers and professionals in specific sectors.

For example, how social partners have responded to AI in Denmark and Sweden demonstrates how employers and employees on different levels have found solutions to ensure digital training and development for employees <sup>1</sup>. In Denmark this included the establishment of a strategic tripartite forum at national level, advancing social dialogue and collective bargaining in the development, deployment and monitoring of AI, initiatives for competence building and knowledge

sharing and the promotion of research and development collaborations with the participation of social partners. In addition, the cooperation agreement between The Confederation of Danish Employers and the Danish Trade Union Confederation ensures focus on employee involvement and re-skilling <sup>2</sup>.

From a business standpoint, this investment serves multiple goals: improving productivity, ensuring workforce relevance and addressing the ethical and practical dimensions of AI adoption. However, realizing the full potential of these efforts requires systemic support.

As digitalization continues across sectors, both public and private, AI and data literacy, together with the development of relevant competencies such as critical thinking and creativity, should be embedded throughout the education continuum – starting from primary school and extending through secondary, vocational and higher education. Early exposure to AI concepts, ethics and applications prepares students for the world they will inherit and work in. In parallel, vocational training and university programmes must equip learners with job-ready, sector-specific AI competencies that align with labour market needs.

Importantly, lifelong learning opportunities must be accessible and affordable for all. Governments and institutions should ensure underserved populations and regions have access to lifelong learning opportunities, which includes providing access to digital tools, infrastructure and instruction. AI-powered platforms—such as career navigation tools and accessibility-enhancing technologies can play a vital role in creating inclusive and adaptable labour markets.

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<sup>1</sup> [Negotiating about Algorithms: Social Partner Responses to AI in Denmark and Sweden - Anna Ilsøe, Trine Pernille Larsen, Christopher Mathieu, Bertil Rolandsson, 2024](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Confederation of Danish Employers and The Danish Trade Union Confederation,

The Cooperation Agreement (Copenhagen: Samarbejdsnævnet, 2008), [https://samarbejdsnaevnet.dk/media/dapko24n/the\\_cooperation\\_agreement.pdf](https://samarbejdsnaevnet.dk/media/dapko24n/the_cooperation_agreement.pdf).

# Advancing Stakeholder Collaboration

No single actor can address the learning challenges of the future alone. Governments, educational institutions, businesses and international organizations must work together to build an agile, inclusive and future-ready learning ecosystem.

## Role of Business

Business has a key role in supporting the development of education and training systems by making explicit their needs for modernized knowledge and competencies.

Business can continue to help shape education systems through:

- **Partnering 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.
- **Deploying and delivering technology solutions and digital infrastructure**, including connectivity and affordable access to high-quality hardware and devices, for both teachers and learners.
- **Extending support for reskilling and upskilling for all ages**, including through apprenticeships, work-based learning, and vocational training.
- **Supporting the upskilling of teachers** by offering opportunities for private sector exposure.

## Role of the OECD

Business looks to the OECD as an important forum for dialogue and for the collection of data on learning systems. This serves to improve the effectiveness of programmes and partnerships between relevant stakeholders.

The continued gathering and dissemination of OECD data supports the availability for accessible, quality information to be used in advancing meaningful, evidence-based educational policies and strategies.

The following are recommendations to shape further OECD work:

- **Continue to build the evidence base** on the need and development of digital literacy and competencies for the digitalising economy including the advancement of modernised curricula and education systems reform.
- **Develop stronger comparative analysis** on how countries build engineering, technical and infrastructure-related capabilities through schools, VET, higher education and lifelong learning, including in regulated and safety-critical professions
- **Emphasise the importance of lifelong learning** by highlighting the impacts and outcomes of investments in lifelong learning programmes, including at Ministerial level to deepen international cooperation, share best practices and further integrate the business voice into education policy design and implementation.
- **Encourage business partnership with government and academic institutions** to ensure that educational systems provide the necessary foundational skills needed for individuals to enhance their employability in a dynamic work environment.
- **Underline the need for support of reskilling and upskilling for all** to cope with the digital transformation of our economies and jobs through apprenticeships, work-based learning and VET.
- **Identify effective technology solutions by working with businesses, including**

**SMEs** that support learning and work continuity and seek to leverage connectivity infrastructure and hardware for those without access.

- **Underline the importance of career guidance to help students navigate today's labour markets.** The OECD work on skills anticipation is particularly important in this respect. Career guidance also involves making science and engineering careers attractive and addressing social norms influencing career choices.

**In light of the above recommendations, Business at OECD further recommends that the OECD consider development of an OECD Framework for Lifelong Learning.**

An OECD Comparative Lifelong Learning Framework could draw upon lessons from international approaches, to guide countries in designing a framework that would address such issues as:

- **Portable funding accounts for individuals** to access learning throughout their life, whether that be higher education, VET or micro credentials;
- **Cross-sector credit recognition systems** linking together higher education, VET and micro credentials to enhance their interoperability;
- **Model credentials** that help ensure access, quality and return on investment;
- **Metrics and data** on individual, business and national outcomes following lifelong learning investments.
- **Mechanisms for recognising** prior learning, continuing professional development and stackable micro-credentials, including trusted approaches for documenting competence over time and across borders.

## Role of Governments

Governments can help ensure that the skills and competencies are prioritized in learning pathways remain relevant in an increasingly digitalised world. Importantly we look to governments to ensure timely updates and reform that enable education and training systems to remain aligned with labor market needs.

Recommendations:

- **Advance policy frameworks for students** to engage in work-based learning as part of their curricula, to learn new skills, explore career paths and gain work and life experiences.
- **Allocate sufficient resources** to ensure teacher capacity and capability to prepare students for a changing world of work, including by providing career advice and nurturing modern skills and capabilities.
- **Encourage jurisdictions** to develop employment requirement databases to help the fluidity of the labour market.
- **Support the development of basic digital skills** for all ages and empower learners to have a lifelong learning mindset.
- **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.
- **Support transparent recognition of qualifications** and professional competences, including cross-border mobility frameworks, so that learners and professionals can move more easily between education systems, sectors and countries while maintaining trust in quality and standards.

- **Tackle persistent gender and social barriers** in STEM and engineering pathways through earlier exposure, inclusive career guidance, visible role models and targeted support for underrepresented learners.
- **Update the profile of educators** to evolve in the era of AI.

# Looking Ahead

Whatever we do to address the unprecedented challenges students and employees 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 workers what the real demands in the labour market are. Ensuring that all are equipped to face the transformation new technologies will bring to society is essential.

For young people about to enter the labour market or preparing for higher education, it is essential to have a better understanding of what job opportunities specific academic and vocational pathways might offer, where job opportunities exist and what current and future skills requirements are.

Access to early work experience with the explicit goal of enabling the exploration of 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 essential in giving young people a chance of success, boosting the talent pipeline and building stronger and more agile and resilient businesses, economies and societies.

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Costa Rica	<b>CICR: Chamber of Industries of Costa Rica</b>
Czech Republic	<b>SP: Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic</b>
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Poland	<b>Polish Confederation Lewiatan</b>
Slovakia	<b>RÚZ: Slovak Employers' Federation</b>
Slovenia	<b>ZDS: Association of Employers of Slovenia</b>
Spain	<b>CEOE: Confederation of Employers and Industries of Spain</b>
Sweden	<b>Svenskt Näringsliv: Confederation of Swedish Enterprise</b>
Switzerland	<b>economiesuisse: Swiss Business Federation</b>
Switzerland	<b>Swiss Employers Confederation</b>
Türkiye	<b>TİSK: Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations</b>
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