

IC Forum 2023

Education for the Future

15–16 February 2023

International Conference Center Geneva (CICG)

Take Aways

Introduction

In 2023, the IC Forum Switzerland and its partners focused on the topic of "Education for the Future", because good basic education and vocational training are crucial for sustainable development. The Forum focused on the following questions:

- What were the consequences of the disruption of school systems?
- What can we learn for the future from the school closures of the last two years?
- And how can we make education systems more resilient and better equipped for future challenges and the consequences of climate change?

With "Youth for Solutions" the IC Forum Switzerland put young people at the centre of solutions. Together with them we worked on ideas and approaches to

- promote concrete individual and collective actions for a sustainable future,
- strengthen the leadership role of young people in negotiations and decision-making processes, and
- stimulate innovative solutions for cooperation.

During the IC Forum's days on **15 and 16 February 2023**, there were exciting discussions between experts and representatives of international cooperation organisations, governments, NGOs, philanthropy, business and youth representatives. Onsite and online participants from around 120 countries also took part.

The following summary is a summary of the various inputs during the forum (with the methodology Start, Change, Continue) and the participants (answers to the questions incl. percentage). These inputs can be used as inspiration for the transformation of the topics.

KEY TAKEAWAYS – Plenary 1:

EDUCATION 4 FUTURE – Building the Future

Start

- Proactively seek the engagement of the private sector in financing international education cooperation
- Build consensus and ensure broad commitment from all stakeholders (internal and external) to obtain a broad basis of support for a strengthened education system (public, private, teachers, learners, parents, communities, etc.)
- Promote equal access to connectivity across all countries
- Promote soft skills in formal education
- Facilitate school outreach programs to local communities (even though in real life the outreach is intended both ways, e.g. when it is about hygiene, environment, waste management ...)

Change

- Improve salaries for educational staff
- Use affordable digital technologies for accessibility and resilient education systems
- Include workplace learning at all levels of education
- Develop ways to humanise education (i.e. facilitate access by bringing education to the students, especially if they can not physically go to a school.)
- Expand the need for evidence of good practices to better inform decision makers (same participants felt it was not the case within their context).

Continue

- Ensuring that education is seen as a basic human right
- Collaboration between National and International partners
- Capitalise on good practice and positive experiences with technologies and methods used during Covid lockdowns

What is needed to make school systems more resilient to future changes?

- Investment
- Innovation
- Funding
- Technology
- Collaboration
- Soft skills
- Teacher training

Which future skills are needed to prepare for the uncertain futures we face? Digital skills

- Soft skills
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Resilience and adaptability
- Creativity and leadership

KEY TAKEAWAYS – Working Session 1:

TOGETHER FOR INNOVATIVE INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

Start

- Raise additional funds from existing and new sources of funding, while avoiding crowding out traditional financing, notably through: Social Finance, Impact Bonds, Impact investment, Venture Philanthropy, Microfinance, Blended finance, Income share Agreements, Crowdfunding, Debt swaps
- Building financial structures as solutions to education challenges: Use creative financing structures or arrangements to facilitate the movement of funds from sources that are interested in giving funds for a particular purpose to domains or sectors that need funds to carry on their activities
- Create better awareness of successful practices and reward education initiatives/companies for the social value they create: Building portfolios of high-impact organisations that improve learning outcomes of young and vulnerable students
- Focus impact assessments on: Improved learning outcomes, Improved access and retention, Evidence-based impact research and decision-making, Contribution to the reduction of child labour, Increased cross-sector collaboration

Change

- Education is the most underfunded SDG
- Lack of public funds
- Low efficiency and efficacy
- Lack of data transparency
- Counter the threats of lost generations by strengthening the resilience of education systems around the world

Continue

- Make use of funding for: Scaling effective teaching practices, Building school infrastructure, Involving parents and communities, Research and evaluation
- Foster collaboration between actors: Private Investors, Philanthropies, Development Finance and Institutions for the sharing of Costs, Risks, Returns, Responsibility
- Support access and quality of education: Free schools/low-cost private schools and fostering teacher training in the most vulnerable communities, notably to address the root causes of child labour and ensure education of crisis-affected children
- Focus on Results: Measurable social outcomes for empirical evidence to monitor the impact on equity, Results-based financing and encourage more focus on vulnerable children and youth
- Maximise efficiency and effectiveness of the available funds to reach the intended results
- Beyond financing, education requires an acceleration of technologies, social innovation etc. to ensure that children and youth can develop to their full potential
- Create a new legal and financial regulations for a more enabling education finance environments

What are the key opportunities to achieve more sustainable financing for quality education?

- Innovative Financing Instruments (16%)
- Addressing Inefficient Use of Resources (15%)

- Improving Education funding opportunities (13%)
- Utilizing Technology (12%)
- Mobilizing Domestic Resources (12%)
- Increasing International Cooperation (10%)
- Leveraging Private Sector Investment (7%)
- Encouraging Philanthropy (7%)
- Promoting Financial Literacy (6%)

What are the key risks we are facing in building more sustainable financing for quality education?

- Inadequate capacity to manage education financing (16%)
- Dependence on external financial resources (16%)
- Lack of Transparency and Accountability (16%)
- Inadequate Data and Information (13%)
- Resistance to Change (13%)
- Lack of Political Will (13%)
- Mismanagement of Funds (10%)
- Economic Volatility (3%)

KEY TAKEAWAYS – Working Session 2:

INCLUSIVITY AT THE HEART OF DIGITALISATION

Start

- The learner should always be at the center! Education should be adapted to learners, their capabilities, ambitions, and goals.
- ICT-supported learning is important, complex and dynamic.
- Assess local context and feasible options BEFORE deploying solutions. Needs vary, and solutions need to be locally adapted and appropriate.
- Considering and discuss data ownership and use. Students own their own data, and should share in any benefits (monetary or otherwise) of the use of that data.
- Invest in, and develop perception-based technology (fuzzy logic as opposed to binary logic); This increases flexibility and local uptake of proposed solutions.

Change

- Engage parents more in education (also using technology); the role of parents is crucial, however, they need the skills to accompany their children
- AI-powered, responsive ICT-solutions: Technology should be responsive to the learner, not just a set of tools, it should help to co- create and develop ideas; Open E-content development
- An organic pathway is needed on how to apply new technologies

Continue

- The learner should always be at the center!
- Maintain (and develop) digital tools/systems deployed during Covid
- Innovation management, support of strategic analysis and project selection
- Decision takers need to define clear criteria and priorities regarding digitalization in education
- Address data privacy and digital divide
- Skills training of key stakeholders of the ecosystem (ped/e-skills/management)

What are the most promising innovative methods to foster inclusive digitalization?

- Intergenerational learning: involve parents (and grandparents) in learning (at school and beyond)
- Online learning, including learning material compatible with smart phones for populations who do not have computers and with low bandwidth
- Collaborative interaction

What are the key opportunities to achieve more inclusiveness in digitalisation?

- Accessible technology (17%)
- Open-source technology (17%)
- Community-based initiatives (13%)
- Bridging the digital divide (12%)
- Government support (12%)
- Mobile technology (11%)
- Gender-inclusive digitalization (10%)
- Public-private partnerships (7%)
- Other suggestions: Access for persons with disabilities, lower costs of technology, rural roll-out of technology, recycling of e-waste, use of technology for social good

What are the key risks we are facing in building more inclusiveness in digitalization?

- Digital literacy gap (18%)
- Cybercrime and online exploitation (18%)
- Infrastructure and technological limitations (16%)
- Data privacy and security (13%)
- Bias in algorithms and artificial intelligence (13%)
- Digital divide persistence (13%)
- Economic impacts (8%)
- Other suggestions: Knowledge about digital sources and misinformation, growing role of a small number of big ICT companies as opposed to locally developed solutions, information overload

KEY TAKEAWAYS – Working Session 3:

FUTURE-ORIENTED SKILLS MEET DEVELOPMENT

Start

- It is crucial to consider the context when analysing labour markets, both current and future, as they are shaped by their economic, social, and political circumstances. Therefore, it is essential to avoid examining the development of skills and labour markets in isolation but as a part of a wider framework of complex systems. By employing sectoral approaches, the challenges that arise within these systems can be more effectively addressed.
- **Partnerships are key!** Even if we have better tools for skills anticipation (like Big Data and AI) predictability in these complex systems remains a challenge. For a just transition to a green economy and future labor markets we need social dialogue and strong long-term partnerships, especially with the private sector. It is more about creating networks to improve the **adaptability of a system** than a precise description of future skills.

- Systems should include an enabling environment for employment to create opportunities (e.g. policies, services, access to finance, coaching, peer-learning, and access to know how, career guidance) and efforts should be made to adapt continuously.
- We need less silos and separate projects, but **more integrated systematic approaches and complex long-term interventions.**
- Stronger advocacy from the public sector to the private sector, as the private sector possesses knowledge of the market and the skills that are in demand
- Promote green skills to achieve sustainable development

Change

- Treat digitalisation, technology, and social and climate change as opportunities rather than threats for skills development
- Don't underestimate the importance of skills development in vocational training, as critical jobs, e.g. plumbing, cannot be automated through technology
- Improve engagement between public and private actors by aligning terminology, investing in understanding and common objectives to realise transparent long-term partnerships
- Adapt the tools and processes to be contextually relevant instead of generic implementation
The models in Europe do not work in other regions due to differing public-private relationships and levels of institutional trust/support
- Invest in women's skill development
- Cease implementing projects with short-term measurable outcomes - Realise that the solution is not always about developing skills, upskilling or reskilling communities in different regions
Instead, the problem at hand should be focused on and intervened in with the correct measure to the context, e.g. by improving economic relations and infrastructure
Example: garment workers in low-income countries already possess their skills
- Policies, services, coaching, career guidance, and funding should be modelled for constant adaptation to ensure an enabling environment for skills development and employment

Continue

- Adapting skills for the future, soft, green and transferable technical skills
- Offering career guidance, work-based learning and support structures
- Facilitating and creating opportunities for persons to learn, develop new skills and start businesses, etc
- Investing in green skills to build a sustainable future. By developing an understanding of green skills and their applications, one can stay ahead of the curve and create a stronger workforce for generations to come.

What are the most promising future oriented skills to meet development?

- Life long learning
- Critical and creative thinking, Problem solving
- Project management and sustainability skills
- Soft skills and Emotional Intelligence
- "STEM"= science, technology, engineering, and maths
- Transcultural communication, collaboration and multilingualism

What are the key opportunities to build future oriented skills to meet development?

- Continuous education and training (17%)
- Mentorship and coaching (17%)
- Multidisciplinary collaboration (16%)
- Building community development and engagement (14%)
- Technology adoption and artificial intelligence (13%)
- Research and analysis (13%)
- Fostering cross-cultural understanding (12%)
- Other suggestions: Experiential learning or "learning by doing", Skills anticipation methodologies, Inter-regional collaboration in curriculum development and skills development, Adapting education to the needs of small communities in their native language, fostering more student exchanges/ training programs/bootcamps/seminars/workshops/conferences, interactive and artificial intelligence based adaptive learning tailored to local and individual needs.

What are the key risks we are facing in fostering future oriented skills for development?

- Lack of access to quality education and training (20%)
- Lack of methods to measure effectiveness of skills development initiatives (16%)
- Funding constraints (13%)
- Political instability and conflict (12%)
- Resistance to change (12%)
- Inadequate infrastructure (11%)
- Digital divide (9%)
- Cultural and language barriers (7%)
- Other suggestions: Gaps in education will continue generating inequality, changes in technology and needs

KEY TAKEAWAYS – Working Session 4:

MARKET-ORIENTED SKILLS FOR COMPETITIVENESS

Start

- Create incentives for the private sector to engage in education, e.g. through fiscal measures as it was done in Indonesia
- Build a multi-stakeholder approach, an ecosystem with all stakeholders (with the contribution of companies, governments, professional schools trade unions, , , civil society)
- Create strategic policies for vocational training through the development of industry-based curriculum with corporate experts contributing to the curriculum

Change

- Change the way companies consider their involvement in education, towards actively engaging in shaping the education in order to provide the skills needed
- Vocational training systems should prepare for future challenges, by giving greater importance to innovation and fostering green skills, e.g. in the field of renewable energy or resource efficiency

- Develop consistent models for internships and raise awareness of companies on the benefits of offering quality of internships, and create opportunities to gain feedback on these internship opportunities

Continue

- Prepare students for future labor market requirements and prepare for uncertainties and challenges through vocational education and trainings
- Bring together the public and private sector to develop curricula, long training models, form lecturers and enhance educational facilities and infrastructures, apprenticeship programs and partnerships with relevant industries
- Encourage dual vocational education systems combining education and trainings

What are the most marked-oriented skills to meet competitiveness?

- The skill to learn
- Problem-solving skills, network-thinking, digital skills, skills to find information and employability skills
- Digital market skills, Time management skills, AI skills
- Innovating in times of disruption
- Working across cultures and geographical regions and the ability to adjust your state and skills according to the current social background

What are the key opportunities to build market-oriented skills to meet competitiveness?

- Multidisciplinary collaboration (24%)
- Entrepreneurship programs (15%)
- Business incubators and accelerators (15%)
- Peer networking (15%)
- Technology adoption and artificial intelligence (15%)
- Research and analysis (12%)
- Online forums and communities (6%)
- Other suggestions: Focusing more on the emotional side of learning not just content, A customer-centered approach, the role of Economic Chambers in promoting skills development at training places, Reflecting on customs/ways of acting/ways of interacting/visions of the world

What are the key risks we are facing in fostering market-oriented skills to meet competitiveness?

- Unequal access to opportunities (24%)
- Limited resources and infrastructure (18%)
- Lack of alignment with labor market needs (18%)
- Economic Volatility (18%)
- Cultural barriers (12%)
- Over-regulation (6%)
- Dependence on a single economic sector (6%)
- Other suggestions: Ensuring learning is not perceived as a disappointing experience/avoiding educational disenchantment