Effective Education for Employment: A global perspective
Effective Education for Employment:

Unprecedented change, competition and uncertainty is inevitable. We are facing complex challenges such as globalisation, rapid technological developments and an increasingly competitive global skills race. There is already convincing evidence that the skills race is real, human capital is the key to success and that education has a vital role to play.

In order to begin to understand the key issues that professional and vocational education faces across the globe, Edexcel sponsored an extensive research project titled Effective Education for Employment (EEE). The project is essential to, not only providing education that will contribute towards the development of a highly skilled, capable and adaptable workforce, but achieving our ambition of becoming a leading innovator in the provision of education solutions around the world.

The project results have been developed into a report, which identifies how we can all begin to address this challenge. The report provides insight into the expectations of employers and the direction that is needed to stay in touch with and meet increasing business demands. It therefore introduces qualities valued by modern-day employers.

The report is an ideal platform for key stakeholders to get involved and take a position on the future of education. We hope the research findings will initiate positive action and generate ongoing discussion and research, engaging stakeholders and facilitating debate about effective education for employment.

Research background

Based on the feedback and comments of a wide range of stakeholders, including government representatives, leading thinkers, educators, employers, employees and learners, the research focussed on answering two pivotal questions:

1. What are the key challenges involved in developing workforces that fulfil the needs of businesses, organisations, industry sectors and economies around the world?

2. How can we start to build practical solutions that result in truly effective education for employment provision?

With these questions in mind, research was undertaken throughout 25 countries with focus on the five emerging economies of Brazil, China, India, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.

The report therefore offer a holistic view. Covering all angles, it offers a range of information and opinion by bringing people together to discuss the challenges at hand. It is envisioned that the research findings will initiate contribution to the debate on effective education for employment.
Research activity

In order to obtain opinions from a broad range of industry stakeholders, almost 2,000 respondents took part in primary, secondary and round-table research.

To provide a focus for the research, we developed a commonly understood concept that would resonate with respondents. The concept of ‘qualities valued by employers’ provided us with a simple route into discussing key issues around education for employment. It also helped define common characteristics, which both employers and learners/employees value and aspire to.

Research methods included qualitative in-depth interviews, quantitative and qualitative bulletin boards and extensive online surveys. We also ran round-table discussions to capture the thoughts of leading individuals involved with education and employment. Those who took part were carefully selected for their depth of expertise, insight into the challenges and their interest in helping shape the future of education for employment in their own country.

What we found

The findings offer some local variation in trends, but largely paint a picture of common global challenges and opportunities.

A global challenge

Interview feedback has drawn our attention to one key point: there is significant disconnection between current education systems and the needs of 21st century business. Education systems are struggling to develop a sufficient level of appropriately skilled workers.

We also discovered that businesses in different countries are looking for individuals with a similar set of foundation qualities that can be used universally; that is, in any job, in any sector and in any country.

The skills race

The global ‘skills race’ is real and it is intensifying. Education and skills are vital to competing in the race, and they will undoubtedly determine the economic fortunes of many countries.

Many education challenges are now related to employee behaviours. It is therefore becoming increasingly important for workers to have the right attitude, a willingness to learn and an understanding of how to conduct themselves in the workplace.

The key challenges

To deliver effective education for employment we face a number of challenges, including:

- incorporating knowledge, skills and behaviours into training programmes
- building programmes that stretch and develop these qualities for use in the real world
- building comprehensive, progressive learning frameworks
- developing and extending the quality of teaching
- assessing and certificating learners appropriately
- sharing and promoting best practice.

It’s very important for me as an employer to find candidates who have learnt how to learn. //

Employer, India

The difference between a successful candidate and an unsuccessful candidate is the type of training the individual has undertaken during their career path. //

Employer, RSA
The result

Edexcel has taken the research findings onboard. We are now committed to conducting further research, involving key stakeholders and developing solutions that measure up to the challenges faced by governments, businesses, industries, educators, employees and learners.

Effective education for employment can only be achieved if we all work together. We hope the issues identified in the report – and the ideas that are presented as a result – are seen as a starting point for further discussions, for subsequent research and, above all, for positive action.

Play your part

For more information and copies of the report ‘Effective Education for Employment: A global perspective’ contact Edexcel International Director, Ross Hall, at ross.hall@edexcel.com.

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