

Back to School ... "Back to the Future of Education"

The pandemic has seen children as young as 3 years learn online from teachers around the world in what is now an unstoppable trend. In "Back to the Future of Education", the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) presents a set of four possible scenarios on the future of schooling. These scenarios ask **what the future of education will look like** and how parents, educators and lifelong learners can equip themselves for this rapidly changing world.

We are reminded that **education is an ever changing system** that is constantly evolving. As it must support individuals to develop as persons, citizens and professionals under any circumstances, it must adapt to changes in society. This is been particularly true under the pandemic when the world has had to experiment with different teaching and learning styles.

To deliver its mission and develop the next generation as active and contributing members of society, education must teach skills and competencies relevant to the 21st century. While the rise of technology and artificial intelligence makes more difficult to predict what skills will become key, we can better **understand the future** through discussions instead of passive observation.

The rapidly changing world offers countless possibilities and there are several plausible futures. The experts of OECD foresee four possible scenarios:

Scenario 1 - "Schooling Extended": Formal certificates continue to be important to economic and social success. Greater demand for high-quality and flexible education leads to more public-private collaboration and online learning.

Scenario 2 - "Education Outsourced": More parental involvement creates hybrid learning modes including a mix of home-schooling, tutoring, online learning, community-based teaching and private educational organizations.

Scenario 3 - "School as Learning Hubs": Schools remain the main source of learning but courses that promote skills not included in traditional school curricula, such as leadership, emotional intelligence and communication, become popular as parents seek alternative ways for their children to acquire critical values and knowledge. Learning for students becomes more personalized and educators experiment with new teaching methods.

Scenario 4 - "Learn-As-You-Go": Education is highly dependent on technology and artificial intelligence to leverage on collective intelligence to solve real life problems. The established curriculum declines and the formal school system is dismantled as the lines between education, work and pleasure become hazy. There may be no more physical schools.

No "one" future and no single path guarantees academic success. All four scenarios suggest that education will become less centralized and more flexible, with more resources from the private sector. We see evidence of scenarios 1, 2 and 3 in Hong Kong right now. As parents, educators and fellow learners, it is important to consider the changes that appear most likely and ones that no one sees coming. The best way to **be prepared for the future** is to have an open mind and always be ready to learn.

Adapted from:

<https://www.oecd.org/education/back-to-the-future-s-of-education-178ef527-en.htm>

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