

FIRST-EVER GLOBAL STUDY ON LEARNING ECOSYSTEMS SHOWS LACK OF ACTION BEYOND THE CLASSROOM TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING AND WELLBEING

Zurich, October 17, 2022: Economist Impact's Learning Ecosystems Framework, commissioned by the Jacobs Foundation and launched today, offers a tool to understand the enabling factors of effective learning ecosystems that can provide opportunities to benefit children's learning and wellbeing. The framework has been applied to 20 countries covering almost 50% of the world's children. The findings are based on a survey conducted by Economist Impact of 2,000 teachers and young people (aged 18–20), and supplemented by additional data and desk-based research.

- Most teachers polled (70%) feel encouraged by their school to personalise instruction to the needs of individual students, but only 50% report they have adequate time to spend with each pupil.
- On average, 33% of young people felt that their family's finances prevented them from accessing education resources, such as computers or educational books, while 30% reported an interruption to participation in school activities.
- Across the countries studied, data from UN Habitat shows that open spaces are available to approximately 60% of the population. However, only a third of young people surveyed report easy access to green spaces, play facilities and pedestrian spaces in their communities growing up.
- One in five young people do not engage in any form of community-based or after-school activity, including extracurricular activities, summer learning programmes, work-based learning, environmental protection activities, community service activities and cultural activities.

Although a majority of teachers surveyed across 20 countries included in this study (70%) feel encouraged to personalise instruction to the diverse individual needs of students, just half report they have adequate time to spend with each child. This creates a risk for student motivation, as the research also shows that students in countries where teachers have more time for one-on-one interactions are among the most likely to report that they tried hard in school. These were some of the key findings of the Learning Ecosystems Framework, launched today. The framework was developed by Economist Impact, The Economist Group's bespoke research service, and commissioned by the Jacobs Foundation.

Amid renewed momentum to 'reimagine education', after the Covid-19 pandemic impacted 1.6 billion learners around the world, this research aims to encourage policymakers to consider education beyond the classroom.

This framework, the first of its kind, provides a diagnostic tool for understanding the strengths of different environments – the school, the home, and the wider community – that together contribute to young people’s learning and wellbeing. Consisting of almost 200 indicators and sub-indicators, identified based on interviews with over 20 experts, and a review of more than 70 sources of literature, it assesses the key factors that enable learning ecosystems to develop and thrive. It offers countries a way to measure how their own learning ecosystems are performing – and how to develop them further.

The framework was tested and applied to 20 diverse countries covering 50% of the world’s children, based on a survey of 1,000 teachers and 1,000 young people (aged 18-20) and additional data and desk-based research.

The research also found that in the home, one-third (33%) of students surveyed felt that their family’s finances prevented them from accessing education resources, such as computers or educational books, while 30% reported an interruption to participation in school activities. This, says the report, shows a need for governments to better support low-income families. In many of the countries studied, a lack of access to education resources at home correlates to poorer learning outcomes, such as [lower levels of reading proficiency](#).

Outside the classroom, community facilities such as green spaces and play areas have been linked to children’s [physical](#), social, and emotional wellbeing, [while also contributing](#) to their problem-solving, decision-making, and creative thinking skills. However, just one-third of the young people polled had access to these types of facilities growing up, despite [UN Habitat](#) data showing that open and green spaces are available to 60% of populations across the countries studied. Urban infrastructural development must therefore do more to cater to the needs of young people.

Moreover, one in five young people polled do not engage in any form of community-based or after-school activity, such as extracurricular activities, summer learning programmes, work-based learning, environmental protection activities, community service activities or cultural activities. One way to remedy this could be to introduce policies to encourage participation. The study showed that almost half of the countries assessed do not have policies in place on extracurricular learning.

The study also showed that education policy is evolving beyond traditional academics, and the vast majority of countries studied (more than 80%) are expanding curricula to essential 21st century competences, like digital skills, creativity, critical thinking, global citizenship, collaboration and sustainability.

However, progress lags on supporting children’s learning and wellbeing outside the classroom. While schools see the value in collaborating with external institutions, less than 20% of teachers polled say their school is actively engaging with outside actors.

Fabio Segura and Simon Sommer, co-CEOs of the Jacobs Foundation, said:

“We hope that this Learning Ecosystems Framework will help countries understand how well their learning ecosystems are performing and how they can be supported to further evolve. But this framework is only the first step in a long process. We are calling on governments to collect and share more data and evidence on how different environments contribute to students’ learning and wellbeing. Only then will we be able to ensure that all children can realize their full learning potential and thrive.”

Key global findings from the Learning Ecosystems Framework:

- Most teachers polled (70%) feel encouraged by their school to personalise instruction to the needs of individual students, but only 50% report they have adequate time to spend with each pupil.
- Although four in five teachers see the value of collaborating with external partners beyond the school, less than 20% report that their school is actively engaging with external institutions and actors.
- On average, one in five young people (18%) do not engage in any form of community-based or after-school activity, including extracurricular activities, summer learning programmes, work-based learning, environmental protection activities, community service activities and cultural activities. These findings vary substantially across countries, from only 2% not engaging in such activities in China, to 32% in the UK.
- Across the countries studied, open and green spaces are available to approximately 60% of the population. However, only a third of young people report easy access to green spaces, play facilities and pedestrian spaces in their communities growing up.
- 33% of young people felt that their family's finances prevented them from accessing education resources, such as educational books, while 30% reported an interruption to participation in school activities.
- A large majority of countries (more than 80%) are expanding curricula to essential 21st century competences, like digital skills, creativity, critical thinking, global citizenship, collaboration and sustainability.
- Fewer than half of countries studied have taken action to make corporal punishment in the home setting unlawful.
- Just four countries (Finland, New Zealand, Spain and the UK) have legally enacted flexible working options beyond temporary measures introduced during Covid lockdowns.
- While a large majority of countries have enacted four weeks of paid leave for mothers of new infants, few countries provide similar benefits to fathers or guarantee income security for mothers of infants. Finland is particularly ahead of the curve, providing both parents with an equal quota of 164 daily allowance days. The US is the only country without any national policy mandate to provide working mothers or fathers with paid leave.

Although there is a long way to go in creating thriving learning ecosystems, the research charts a way forward for policymakers and schools. At a basic level, schools need to forge closer bonds with parents and communities, and policymakers need to foster supportive relationships with schools. Teachers must be given the time and resources to pay attention to students' diverse individual needs, while also managing their own wellbeing.

Above all, the Learning Ecosystems Framework highlights that a lack of data is hindering education systems' ability to evolve into education ecosystems. It is therefore essential that countries develop comprehensive strategies that help policymakers understand how each learning environment contributes to children's wellbeing. Without this, warns the report, we will continue to measure what we can easily observe, perpetuating a system where educational success is measured one-dimensionally.

This work forms part of the Jacobs Foundation's Strategy 2030, a \$500 million commitment to fund education research, support school systems, and generate the evidence needed to help build adaptive learning ecosystems.

About the Jacobs Foundation

The Jacobs Foundation is active worldwide in promoting child and youth development and learning. The Foundation was founded in Zurich by entrepreneur Klaus J. Jacobs in 1989. As part of its Strategy 2030, it has committed 500 million Swiss francs to advance evidence-based ideas for learning, to support schools in offering quality education, and to transform education ecosystems around the world. <https://jacobsfoundation.org/en/>

About the research

The Learning Ecosystems Framework was developed by Economist Impact and commissioned by the Jacobs Foundation. The research covers Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, Côte D'Ivoire, Egypt, Finland, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, New Zealand, Poland, Qatar, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and US.

During the Learning Ecosystems Framework development process, Economist Impact reviewed over 70 sources of literature, and conducted interviews with more than 20 stakeholders representing international organisations and education foundations to understand what factors enable successful learning ecosystems at the national level. Economist Impact conducted country-level research and analysis through data collection and surveys with 1,000 teachers in public and private school settings, and 1,000 young people (aged 18-20).

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