

Review of: "Empowering Future Workforces: Reframing Education to Develop Essential Skills for a Dynamic Labor Market"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article entitled "Empowering Future Workforces: Reframing Education to Develop Essential Skills for a Dynamic Labor Market" touches upon a very significant challenge that modern educational institutions face. Indeed, current research but also empirical evidence point out to the fact that educational curricula need to become more robust and more modern, while at the same time following closely the evolution of the labour market that their graduates are projected to enter so that a) the curriculum does not become deprecated and b) graduates are well prepared to enter the labour market and become efficient workers.

On the positive notes, the article is very well written and structured and describes in a concise but understandable and convincing way why crucial "soft skills" such as communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving should be introduced and emphasized in educational curricula to increase the robustness of the education system.

Given that the paper is not too lengthy I would not like to refer to negative notes or shortcomings but rather suggestions for future research provided that the author would like to follow up on this article. Some suggestions and recommendations are listed below:

1. The author makes mention about the Covid-19 pandemic and the learning/working paradigm shift that it brought about, as a motive for reframing educational approaches towards more universal skills. In actuality, the Covid-19 pandemic showed the need for better digital literacy among existing workers, many of who could not cope in a new digital reality of remote working. Given that the nature of learning and working during Covid-19 was only affected in this way, more evidence needs to be cited to support the claim that the pandemic showed the need for greater levels of communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving among learners and workers. Also, the main idea of the paper is much more universal and touches upon many different domains and settings instead on focusing on how the pandemic affected education and the labour market. The author should maybe consider disconnecting the main idea of their research from the paradigm shift of Covid-19 unless more evidence can be gathered that correlates the two better.
2. In some parts of the paper, the author refers to education systems in general. However, given that the main concern of the paper is developing skills that would be useful for the labour market, a clear distinction needs to be made between education systems in general and those education systems that directly prepare students to enter the labour market in

a specific field (i.e., higher education institutions/universities, technical colleges and so on).

3. Another main point of the research has to do with the “shift from job-specific knowledge to fostering transferable skills that remain valuable regardless of the job specifics”. While there is truth to this statement, it is also not a very simple matter to generalise on and a greater level of analysis is needed. The skills of communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving are presented in a general way but we must also not forget that these skills might have different meanings and interpretations depending on the domain and nature of an education program and a subsequent job position. For example, if one wants to become a teacher, communication should be the most important skill out of the three. If one wants to become a journalist perhaps critical thinking is the most important. Finally, if one wants to be an ICT system architect or a software developer problem-solving would be the top priority. It is suggested that the author specifies this research to a specific domain (or a group of domains) and provide a better level of analysis of what is actually needed in each case, when it comes to more universal skills.
4. An additional point concerning the three universal skills proposed from the author (communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving) is that depending on the field of an education institution, usually all three of these universal skills are indirectly taught to the student. Communication (and teamwork) is promoted both in the classroom but also in team exercises in the context of a course. Critical thinking and problem solving are also taught to some extent (e.g., a literature student would improve their critical thinking by reading and analysing a text, a software student would improve their problem-solving skills through coding, algorithmic techniques etc.). The point here is that the traditional skills that are being taught by current education curricula need to be further analysed so that the full spectrum of skills that are offered to students can be presented with greater clarity.
5. Stemming from the previous point (4), and if we accept that the three universal skills mentioned by the author are already being instilled on students (even indirectly), a major issue that arises is how can graduates prove to a potential employer that they possess these skills (in the previous point an ICT-oriented curriculum produces a degree/certification, which proves that a graduate is good at coding, instead of proving that a graduate is good at coding and problem-solving). In this case, another challenge is to convince education institutions to include these soft, universal skills in their certifications in some way (indicatively through student skill profiles and microaccreditations).
6. As a final note, while the main concept of the article, is that the three skills of communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving would greatly improve the potential of current students in an ever-changing labour market, very few references are cited as evidence. In fact any evidence cited is mostly theoretical and lacks any sort of statistics or experiments that could help prove this point. It is suggested that the author delves deeper in the respective literature and try to find research articles that would support the author's proposal beyond any reasonable doubt. Alternatively, the author could organise a small-scale experiment with students and showcase the results.

All in all, the article touches upon a very interesting subject and the future pathways that can be explored are very promising. If these pathways are combined with an appropriate level of research and analysis, I am sure that the author will have great success in their future endeavours.