

# Review of: "Agile Learning: An innovative curriculum for educators"

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The paper "Agile Learning: An Innovative Curriculum for Educators" provides a good overview of agile learning approaches and the Agile2Learn project. It was clearly written, informative, and interesting in its application of agile software development approaches for the purposes of educational innovation. However, it would be useful to provide a more critical perspective on the applicability of approaches used in corporate, industrial, and engineering environments for software development to educational settings. The authors might also consider the broader purposes and contexts of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the extent to which agile learning prepares educators for a more comprehensive range of 21<sup>st</sup> century demands.

There is a long history of education serving industrial, workforce, and corporate capitalism's needs and preparing educators and young people for ever-changing economic realities, new technologies, and the anticipated demands of workplaces and industrial-corporate management. There is also quite a bit of critique of these relatively narrow educational purposes that tend to reproduce social relations, maintain divisions of labor and educational attainment, and limit possibilities for more transformative possibilities in education and society. Historically, education has served at least three broad purposes (e.g., see Labaree, 2010): 1.) civic equality and empowerment – the political goal to educate citizens and create civic communities; 2.) social efficiency – the economic goal to develop human capital development for economic productivity and growth; and 3.) social mobility for individuals to gain social status, access and advantage in society. In other words, education serves multiple purposes – to promote social democracy, social inclusion and cohesion, individual betterment, and well-being, as well as human capital development and prosperity. Agile learning seems to mainly emphasize efficiency (with some focus on addressing learners' needs and goals) in terms of continuous improvement and adaptable learning approaches. It does so by drawing on corporate approaches to management, efficiency, and productivity in workplaces. While Scrum, Kanban, Extreme Programming, and Lean Management all sound like great approaches for workplace collaboration and manufacturing efficiency, there has been a fair bit of critique directed toward creating classrooms based on industrial work and management practices. These approaches have largely dominated education making it a sub-sector of the economy, with aspects of accountability, management, quality control, and measurement borrowed from industry (McLaren, 2007).

To what extent might agile learning support other educational aims? This is an especially important question if we think about the global polycrises of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, characterized by climate crisis and environmental destruction, a crisis of democracy and the erosion of social cohesion, large scale involuntary migration, and runaway technologies (due to

unintended consequences that cause individual and social harm often due to software development!), to name a few. Can agile learning prepare citizens who are able to collectively understand and address these issues or change the economic, political, and institutional structures that are producing them? The authors might consider to what extent the curriculum and training provided by Agile2Learn, and the forms of agile and transformative learning outcomes that are intended, might address some of the issues that people and planet are facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Can the forms of education suggested in the paper address other dimensions of human experience, develop the full range of human capacities and competencies, and address societal issues?

The OECD 2030 Framework (2018) offers one model (among many) for what this might entail. While the processes offered by lean thinking, project-based learning and flipped classrooms can create more dynamic, flexible, and effective learning environments to help teachers and learners adapt to some of the evolving demands we face, the purposes and content that these processes are directed toward matter too. OECD's position paper makes a case for rethinking the purposes of education, that unless steered with purpose, innovation, technology and learning may widen inequities, exacerbate social fragmentation, and reinforce a host of social problems. To what extent and in what ways might the Agile2Learn curriculum and agile learning, transversal and digital competencies outlined in the paper equip educators with a more holistic skill set and reservoir of knowledge that not only transcends traditional teaching methods but prepares educators to truly prepare young people for the many demands we are facing in 21<sup>st</sup> century contexts? It would be good to hear how agile learning and the curriculum can also help educators create learning environments that address the stark realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and enable students to shape the future in ways that are more just, sustainable, and peaceful.