

Foreword

Young people today face unprecedented opportunities and unprecedented challenges. Globalisation brings innovation, new experiences and higher living standards, but it has also contributed to economic inequity and social division. While the affluent commute between continents, millions of migrants are struggling to adapt and settle in countries they do not know. In the face of declining social capital, civil society is under strain.

In coming to terms with globalisation, this generation requires new capacities. Whether in traditional or more entrepreneurial work environments, young people need to collaborate with people from different disciplines, cultures and value systems, in a way that solves complex problems and creates economic and social value. They need to bring judgment and action to difficult situations in which people's values and perspectives can be at odds.

Schools need to help students learn to be autonomous in their thinking and fully aware of the pluralism of modern living. At work, at home and in the community, people will need a broad comprehension of how others live, in different cultures and traditions, and how others think, be they scientists, mathematicians, social scientists or artists. The ability to read and understand diversity and to recognise core liberal values of our societies, such as tolerance and empathy, may also help respond to extremism and radicalisation.

For some years, educators have been discussing how best to build these capacities. Is there a distinctive competence that equips young people for the culturally diverse and digitally-connected communities in which they work and socialise? If so, how should it be developed? Can students learn to mobilise knowledge, cognitive and creative skills, and values and attitudes to act creatively, collaboratively and ethically? Open and flexible attitudes will be vital if young people are to co-exist and interact with people from other faiths and countries. So too will be the common human values that unite us.

The PISA concept of global competence seeks to provide some answers to such questions. It includes the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding of global and intercultural issues, the ability to learn from and live with people from diverse backgrounds, and the attitudes and values necessary to interact respectfully with others. Globally competent individuals can examine local, global and intercultural issues. They can understand and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews and interact successfully and respectfully with others. And they can take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being. The driving ideas are that cross-cultural engagement should balance clear communication with sensitivity to multiple perspectives and that global competence should equip young people not just to understand but also to act.

The PISA 2018 assessment of global competence represents a first-of-a-kind, ambitious and still experimental approach to measure this concept of global competence. Its emphasis on attitudes and values is novel in comparative assessment. Respect and a belief in human dignity mark the importance of right and wrong and offer a counterweight to the risk that sensitivity to other viewpoints may descend into cultural relativism. The dilemma at the heart of a globalised world is how we strike the balance between strengthening common values that cannot be compromised and appreciating the diversity of "proprietary" values. Leaning too far in either direction is risky. Enforcing artificial uniformity of values can damage people's capacity to acknowledge different perspectives, and overemphasising diversity can undermine the legitimacy of holding any core values at all.

This volume summarises first results from the assessment. It covers the assessment of knowledge and skills in global competence, as well as self-reported data on students' attitudes, learning opportunities at school, the existence of a dedicated curriculum, and information from schools, teachers and parents on activities to promote global competence.

It seeks to answer a number of questions. How well are students prepared for life and employment in culturally diverse societies and in a globalised world? How much are students exposed to global news? How do they understand and critically analyse intercultural and global issues? What approaches to multicultural, intercultural and global education are used at school? What approaches are used to educate culturally diverse students? How are schools leveraging this diversity to develop students' global competence? What approaches are used to stimulate peer-to-peer learning between students from different cultures?

The volume also highlights important interrelationships between the context in which students live and learn and their global competence. For example, the results show positive associations between students having contact with people from other countries and their attitudes and dispositions. Indices that were highly associated with contact with people from other countries at school are students' cognitive adaptability, awareness of and self-efficacy regarding global issues, and interest in learning about other cultures.

Schools can play an important role in developing global competence. They can provide opportunities for young people to learn about global developments of significance to the world and to their lives. They can equip learners with the means of accessing and analysing a broad range of cultural practices and meanings. They can let students engage in experiences that facilitate international and intercultural relations and encourage them to reflect upon the learning outcomes from such experiences. And schools can foster the value of the diversity of peoples, languages and cultures, encouraging intercultural sensitivity, respect and appreciation.

Some schools face more pressure than others, perhaps because they need to integrate a larger number of disadvantaged school-aged immigrants or because their communities are more fragmented and have a history of violence along ethnic or religious lines. But no school should fail to educate its students to understand and respect cultural diversity. All young people should be able to challenge cultural stereotypes, to reflect on the causes and solutions of racial, religious and hate-based violence and to help create tolerant, integrated societies.

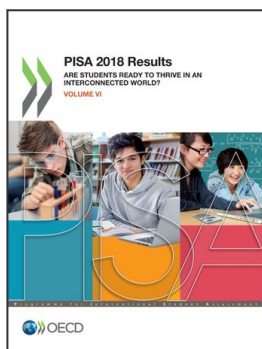
Last but not least, in developing global competence, schools may also contribute to employability. Effective and appropriate communication and behaviour, within diverse teams, are already components of success in the majority of jobs, and are likely to become more important in the years ahead.

Policy makers, educators and employers clearly need an evidence-based approach to developing and assessing global competence. This is what PISA is about, providing an opportunity to work together across borders to create a better and more humane world.



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From:

PISA 2018 Results (Volume VI)

Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World?

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/d5f68679-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2020), "Foreword", in *PISA 2018 Results (Volume VI): Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World?*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/766ac964-en>

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