

For Immediate release

21st century skills and why they are more important than ever

Over the past year, as schools have closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it has become more critical than ever for education systems to understand how the opportunity to develop a wider range of skills will improve education quality. As many students have been learning from home, they have been called upon to direct their own studies to a greater extent, to solve problems without immediate support from teachers, to motivate themselves, to create new ways to learn, and to be accountable for their learning.

These are precisely the transferable skills that are targeted in holistic models of education - and that IEA's 21st Century Skills Mapping Study, **21CS MAP**, is designed to review. Currently, there lacks an international consensus on what is meant by 21st century skills and how these are taught around the world. 21CS MAP intends to explore, describe and analyze the intended curricular opportunities for students to meet 21CS learning goals, such as **problem solving, decision making, communication or critical thinking.**

The study is focused on opportunities to learn and so, unlike other IEA studies, it does not have a student assessment component. Instead, the study entails a **curriculum review**, making it comparatively straightforward to administer and entailing relatively low international costs. By joining the study, countries will be able to contribute to an international framework for comparing 21CS scope, and learn from international approaches. IEA's [21CS MAP study page](#) contains more information about the study and country participation.

Commenting on the study's importance, **IEA Executive Director, Dr Dirk Hastedt** said:

"Everyone wants to ensure young people are equipped to **think critically and creatively, to solve problems** in an increasingly changing and globalized world. For many years, 21st century skills have been discussed without a precise definition of what these skills are and how they should be taught. As 21st century skills are needed more and more, it is crucial they are better understood and 21CS MAP will help countries meet the challenge of designing education systems to equip young people for their future."

Study director, **Dr Esther Care, Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne** continued:

"Our previous research has provided convincing evidence of a **global shift towards the incorporation of 21st century skills into educational aspirations**, however to date the information has not shown the actual impact on curriculum change. By working with IEA, using their approach of having participating countries really embedded in designing the study framework and survey, we will produce the first multiple country dataset to give a **common definition of 21st century skills**, with the connections between them and core subjects, as well as **demonstrating how these are represented within the subjects.**"

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Notes to Editors:

About 21CS MAP

The study entails a curriculum review, designed to identify what capabilities or skills, and what levels of these, are described by education systems. The study will be conducted for both grades 4 and 8. Information will be collected by participating countries from their formal education documentation (national curriculum and/or comparable documents). Results will be descriptive, identifying the different ways countries approach 21CS integration.

More information about 21CS MAP can be found on the IEA website [here](#), or in a recent Brookings Institute blog article [here](#).

About the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)

IEA is an independent, international cooperative of national research institutions, governmental research agencies, scholars, and analysts working to research, understand, and improve education worldwide. It conducts high-quality, large-scale comparative studies of educational achievement and other educational aspects, across the globe in order to provide educators, policymakers, and parents with insights into how students perform.