



EERA's response to the HLG recommendations in Lab-Fab-App

The central message of the response of the European Educational Research Association (EERA) to the High Level Group's recommendations is that EERA is happy with the inclusion of the third recommendation about education. However, we consider that the background of this recommendation is too limited and that, unfortunately, the vital role of educational research for improving education and society has been ignored. We believe an opportunity is being missed to incorporate within the 9th Framework the role of education and educational research as a critical source of solutions for the great societal challenges of our times; (youth) unemployment, migration, terrorism, (social) inequalities, and political extremism.

In their report "Investing in the European future we want", published on July 3rd 2017, the High Level Group appointed by the European Commission and chaired by Pascal Lamy set out recommendations for the preparation for the 9th Framework Programme. The High Level Group's third recommendation points out the importance of educational reforms for stimulating creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in Europe. This recommendation has to be applauded because it rightly recognizes the important role education has to play in the future of the European society and community. However, if the aim of the High Level Group in addressing the challenges faced by European citizens is seriously considered, it becomes clear that education's role should be much broader than that.

Not only can education help creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship but it also enables young citizens to cope with a range of other highly important matters that concern European citizens, for example, in responding to the challenges of (youth) unemployment, migration, terrorism, (social) inequalities, and political extremism. These have been listed in the 2015 FP7 ex-post High Level Group report, in the DGRI issue papers presented to the Lamy Group and, recently, in the Eurobarometer as central challenges from the citizens' perspective.

The problems that afflict humankind today are complex, pervasive, and affect all of us. We have legitimate ambitions for a happier, fairer and more humane life, including sustainable developmental goals as mentioned in the United Nations Sustainable Development Programme. Addressing these issues represents a major challenge that calls upon the active and collaborative effort of all sectors of society, and a clear awareness of the central role of education. Education is crucial in helping people at all age levels to participate fully and responsibly in a democratic society, in its discourse and its institutions. Education for such European citizenship, or even better for world citizenship, needs to address increasing challenges of student engagement and to include the competence to participate and deliberate. Essential elements of education for world citizenship are knowledge, skills and attitudes that help students become fully informed through an open flow of ideas, and help them to be prepared for life long learning. Students must be empowered to use critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems and policies and become drivers of ethical social and economic development. They need to develop a concern for the welfare of others, the common good, and for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.

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More research is needed on the development of education that will help students to become active and critical citizens in a challenging and changing world.

The third recommendation of the High Level Group also misses the crucial link between educational reform and effects envisaged: educational research. Only educational reforms that are based on sound educational research can lead to the societal changes we all strive for. Educational research in many domains has already demonstrated the capacity to improve student learning and overall development including well-being and develop more efficient approaches. An example is the area of education for key competencies in Europe. Educational research has shown clear evidence of the essential role of well being and social and emotional competencies in pupils' school success and success in later life (e.g. employment, active citizenship and personal fulfilment). The development of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is another example that wouldn't have been possible without educational research. This framework encourages educational practices towards the development of tolerance, respect towards otherness and the value of cultural diversity, and thus to diminish phenomena of human conflict, racism or xenophobia.

The capacity of educational research moves beyond a narrow focus on empirical research and statistical results. It also has the capacity to look behind the statistics and to answer through qualitative and mixed methods research questions on key processes in education. Why and under what conditions do some interventions work and others not? Which approaches work best with which students and why? The fact that education in so many different countries has been at the forefront of policy experimentation means that there has been ample opportunity for educational research to learn about system change, and the differences that national contexts make. Thus educational research results can be of great help in realising the introduction of an educational agenda for world citizenship.

Problems in education often can be recognised as complex, multidimensional and contextualized and to solve such problems interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches are needed. Educational research by its very nature is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary bringing together insights from among others politics, economy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology and applying them to the educational sciences. Thus educational research makes an essential contribution to solving the wicked problems in educational reform and society.

To sum up, EERA urges the High Level Group for the future of a better Europe to take education as a tool not only for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, but also for the important societal challenges European citizens are facing: (youth) unemployment, migration, terrorism, (social) inequalities, and political extremism. We have shown that further educational research is essential in order to build approaches in education that can fully address these challenges. EERA will be happy to work with the HLG and the Commission to ensure that the next Framework Programme will include educational research in such a way that it will help ensure high quality education for the future of European democracies and societies.