
What do we educate for?

A Study of the Basic Principles for a Broad Framework of “Academic Success”





This report has been driven by an alliance formed by Ashoka, the PwC foundation in Spain, the public Rey Juan Carlos' University's Education Observatory, and COTEC Foundation. Education is everyone's duty and requires the alliance of different agents from both the public and the private spheres.



Headlines:

The educational key players (students, parents and teachers), as well as society as a whole, are calling for a renewed, broader concept of “academic success”, one that is based on helping students develop as active contributors to society.

This study is based on evidence. We have analyzed the schools that are setting a new path to find the common patterns between them and identify their assessment methods.

Our study has enabled us to establish 5 dimensions that are necessary to adapt and expand the concept of “academic success” to the needs of today’s society. Each one represents a series of common aspects or indicators of the schools we analyzed, and could serve as guidelines for schools that seek to develop each dimension:

- **Personal and social development of the student, making him/her a “changemaker”:** Personal growth, social abilities, changemaking
- **Enhancing professional success: both for changing arenas and new occupations:** learning to learn, developing autonomy and responsibility, preparing for an ever-changing world
- **Development of competences:** assessment of competences, positive evolution of competences
- **Educating for diversity and individualizing learning processes:** individualizing education, diversity in the student body, preparing students for a diverse world
- **Active learning in all its stages:** Awareness of the learning process, eagerness to learn, active participation in the process

The “levers” that can be used to make this possible in the schools we analyzed are as follows:



Goals of the study

The goal is to start a systematic study that is based on empirical evidence and real practices on the new realities

and educational demands, as well as their impact on both assessment and educational models.

The general goal of our work is to create a new, expanded framework for the concept of “academic success”, one that includes other dimensions beyond academic results and is in line with current demands and needs in the educational landscape.

Why

How do we know when a school is working? What determines the success of a school? What proves that the students' time at the school has been satisfactory? What variables can parents use to know if their children are doing “well” at school?

Indicators of academic progress are traditionally based on the knowledge of certain subjects, and are usually collected through exams and written assignments, or, in few cases, projects and presentations. Very rarely do we bring into the equation other values and transdisciplinary competences that compliment academic content in the different subjects.

However, a person's education cannot be reduced to an academic institution. In school we learn other abilities that are fundamental to make us capable

and competent in today's world: how to relate with each other, make decisions, collaborate, solve problematic situations with alternative, creative solutions... but also learn how to respect the environment, think critically and be the person who innovates and changes paradigms. The tendency is for schools to become increasingly aware of their role to educate students in all aspects and in line with the demands of families and social agents. Innovation in education is starting to incorporate new tools, methodologies and techniques. From this new, more utilitarian vision of education, the professional world is demanding more and more change-making skills.

The current educational model should use these new tools and methodologies to help compliment its purpose. In the

same way, the main goal of this report is to set the basic principles for a broader framework of academic success, one that includes other dimensions beyond those based on performance and academic competences of students. This study seeks to promote a positive debate that is based on evidence and can prove that developing and expanding the actual model is not only possible but also necessary. It is the only way to give students a complete, well-rounded education for their future. Through the research that was carried out for this report, we have identified the needs of the main agents in the educational process. In order to do so, we have presented a series of specific experiences we had in schools that seek an expanded concept of academic success.

Methodology

We have analyzed how different schools in Spain are addressing the issue (Ashoka Changemaker Schools).

The process is divided into three phases:

1. Analysis of reality. Know the educational context and identify the current demands on education. –Bibliographical revision and documentary revision.

2. Principles of a “broad” framework for school success. Share the key aspects to be developed and the pillars that should guide the education system. - Working sessions with collaborating experts in this report and other agents (e.g. Ministry of Education).

3. Identification of levers for wider school success. Present different forms of innovation in the system for a more comprehensive education. - In-depth interviews with 11 reference schools in Spain to know their vision and their evaluation models.

Following steps

The study is considered a first phase of a larger project. From here we want to contrast this “hypothesis” with a wider sample of schools in Spain.

We are working with the MECD (Ministry of Education) and OECD (PISA) to involve them in this work and invite them to participate in the following phases.

In the coming months we will organize working sessions with different interest groups to share and reflect on the results (teachers, families, students, administration, companies, among other players).



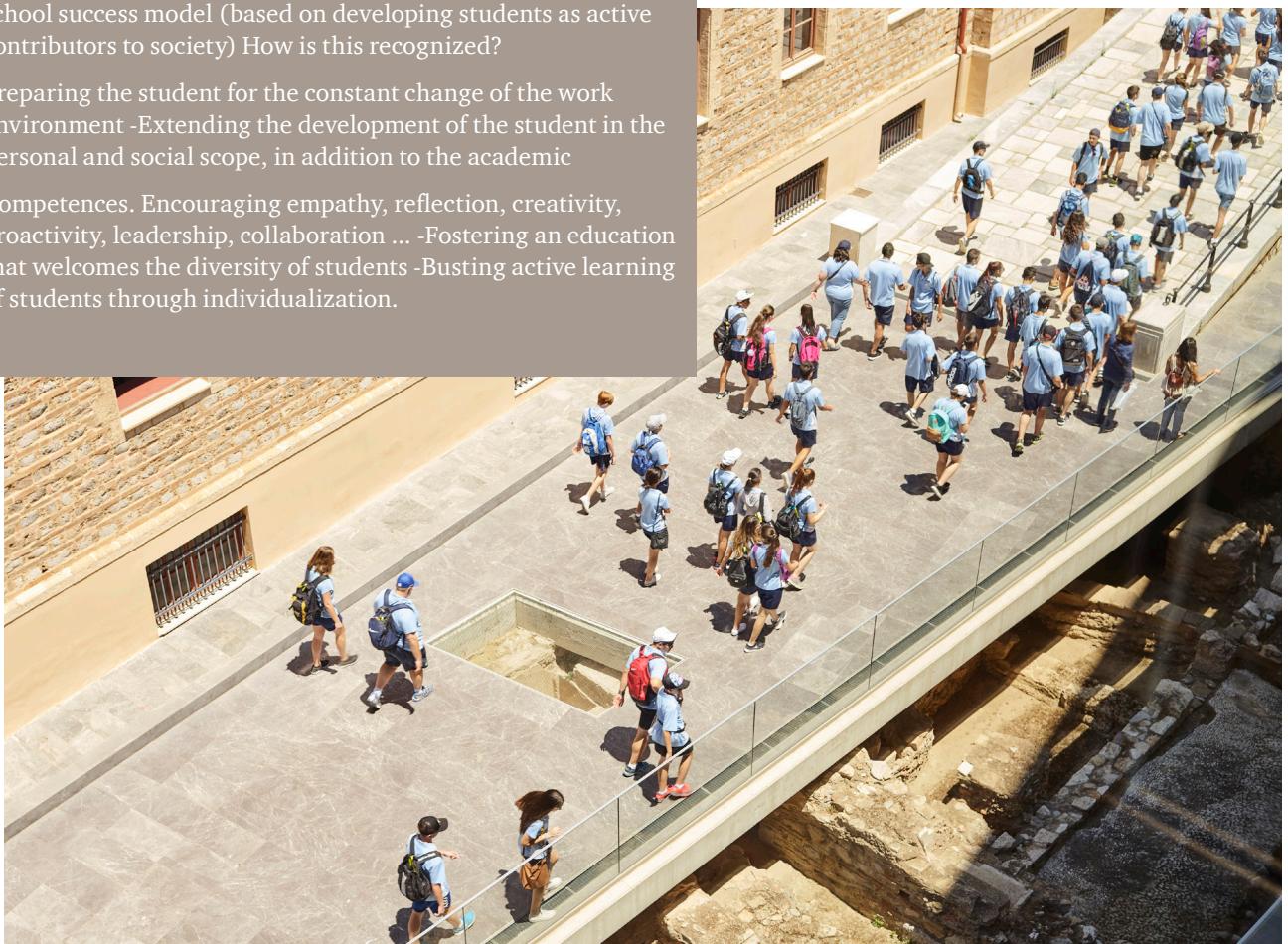
Analysis of the context

In the original concept, education had the sole purpose of transmitting knowledge, while nowadays this is very different. Now, the aim is to train citizens with active participation in an increasingly diverse society, where

training encompasses skills and abilities that go beyond pure knowledge, requiring a revision and adaptation of traditional teaching methods to the new needs.

Some examples:

- Families are looking for possible solutions to cope with high failure rate and school dropout, such as creating more “gateways” or achieving a better adaptation of the curriculum with flexible alternatives to avoid the exit of these students from the education system, and thus encourage everyone to develop their qualities to the maximum.
- The academic record does not serve as the main scale for selecting the future workers.
- Key players in education (students, experts, families, regulators and designers, professionals, other indirect recipients, such as companies) ask for an educational model that pursues a broader school success model (based on developing students as active contributors to society) How is this recognized?
- Preparing the student for the constant change of the work environment -Extending the development of the student in the personal and social scope, in addition to the academic
- Competences. Encouraging empathy, reflection, creativity, proactivity, leadership, collaboration ... -Fostering an education that welcomes the diversity of students -Busting active learning of students through individualization.



Conclusions

This work has allowed us to identify 5 dimensions that should be developed to extend and adapt the concept of “school success” to today’s society.

Each of these dimensions includes certain common aspects or indicators that evaluate the educational centers analyzed, which could serve as a guide for centers that seek to develop each dimension.

1. Personal and social development of students, making them “agents of change”:

- Personal growth (e.g. happiness or enthusiasm with which the student goes to school) (e.g. tutoring)
- Social skills (e.g. ability to communicate constructively in different environments) (e.g. student performance in group activities)
- Change agents (e.g. community / society membership awareness) (e.g. Initiative capacity) (e.g. level of involvement within the environment)

2. Developing the potential for job success, both for changing environments and for new professions

- Learning to learn (e.g. motivation to learn) (e.g. ability to plan and adjust to the learning process) (e.g. ability to self-assess progress)
- Developing autonomy and responsibility (e.g. ability to meet commitments) (e.g., autonomous work capacity)
- Preparation for changing environments (e.g. ability to solve problems) (e.g. skill level to deal with new materials, activities or contents)

3. Development by competences

- Assessment by competences
- Positive evolution of skills

4. Education for diversity and individualization of learning

- Individualization of education
- Diversity of students
- Preparation for a diverse world

5. Active learning in all stages

- Awareness of the learning process itself
- Interest in learning
- Active participation in your learning process

Common elements identified (“patterns”)

- Student as active subject and teacher as facilitator
- Cooperative learning with flexible groupings
- Project-based learning
- Inclusion and attention to diversity
- Focus on mentoring
- Cooperation between the school, families and community
- Competency assessment
- Evaluation not as an end in itself but as an instrument of learning
- Self-assessment, peer-to-peer evaluation

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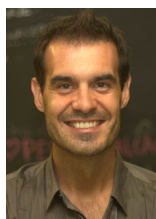
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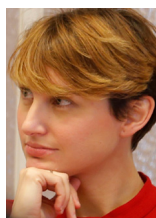
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