OECD and KidZania collaborate to shape the citizens of tomorrow

What knowledge, skills, attitudes and values will today’s students need to thrive and shape their world in 2030? How can we help children to get ready for that world? These are the main questions raised by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) regarding the future of education and skills that younger generations will need to be successful in the upcoming years.

Driven by accelerating globalization and fast-paced technological developments due to the environmental, economic and social challenges that the world faces nowadays, the OECD developed the Education 2030 project, being one of its main objectives to promote the creation of a new learning ecosystem that offers a broader education in order to prepare children to overcome the demanding tasks of the changing world they are going to live in.

In alignment with this important intergovernmental program, KidZania, one of the most innovative and fastest growing family edutainment concepts globally, has been invited, through its Global Director of Education, to be represented on one of the working groups of the OECD Education 2030 project as one of the many stakeholders contributing to this new learning framework.

In the position paper, The Future We Want: The Future of Education and Skills - Education 2030, the OECD describes this ecosystem as an environment that should foster learner’s agency, help them to gain knowledge, develop skills, values and attitudes, and recognize their individuality, while acknowledging the wider set of relationships that influence children’s learning.
The ultimate purpose of these characteristics is to shape best prepared students, who can become change agents that can have a positive impact in their surroundings. As noted by OECD: education can equip learners with agency and a sense of purpose, and the competencies they need, to shape their own lives and contribute to the lives of others and attain individual and collective well-being (OECD, 2018).

“Education should be considered as an ecosystem with many stakeholders. Since its creation”

OECD 2030 Education Strategy

KidZania helps making learning visible

Since its creation in 1999, KidZania has been designed to empower and inspire children by providing world-of-work related, hands-on learning experiences with the aim of expanding knowledge, promoting values and developing skills among its visitors.

Through experience-based learning approaches, KidZania seeks to foster children’s independence, raise aspirations, develop skills and knowledge, encourage both individuality and teamwork, and fuel their curiosity by letting them explore each KidZania city in a safe way. Children become active participants in their learning process when they participate in the more than 60 realistic role-playing activities they can perform.

One of the key contributory factors to children’s successful learning of the KidZania concept is that it makes learning visible. At school, children are taught courses such as mathematics and English; when visiting KidZania they can reinforce those abstract concepts with hands-on practice, while having fun. In learning terms, KidZania is ‘the appliance of science’.
KidZania makes learning visible through experience-based learning, by providing a sense of purpose and by bridging theory and practice.”

Dr. Ger Graus OBE - Global Director of Education at KidZania

As each individual KidZania is themed as a kid-sized city, children can learn how a city works, about financial literacy, the world of work, gain expertise about various careers and practice good habits that will aid them become active, responsible and engaged citizens in the future, raise their aspirations and write their own narrative of the possible.

All these learning areas reinforce knowledge acquired from formal environments and help children to understand the world around them, prepare to improve it and become the kind of citizens that can have a positive impact on their world. As a part of this learning process, children will test their resilience and grow their self-confidence. Thus, KidZania performs its role as a stakeholder that can contribute to the co-agency learning framework proposed by the OECD by facilitating an environment that bridges theory and practice.

As it was highlighted in the OECD’s 2030 Education Strategy, students will need to apply their knowledge in unknown and evolving circumstances. For this, they will need a broad range of different types of skills and mediate them by attitudes and values (OECD, 2018).

KidZania contributes to involve children in a new learning ecosystem

When children visit KidZania and participate in role-playing activities such as writing an article for the newspaper, perform surgery at the hospital, work at a factory, become a fire-fighter, participate in a trial at the courthouse, fly an airplane or be a YouTuber, they further develop skills such as communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, motor skills and self-knowledge and also put into practice values such as generosity, gratitude, honesty, integrity, justice, loyalty, respect, responsibility and solidarity.
The aforementioned are just some of the skills and values that OECD recognizes as essential to help children understand others’ actions and feelings, anticipate the short and long-term consequences of their actions and cope with the challenges they will face in the future.

“Students need competencies to shape the future. It is about acting rather than to be acted upon, shaping rather than to be shaped and choosing rather than to accept choices decided by others.”

OECD 2030 Education Strategy

As KidZania’s Global Director of Education, Dr. Ger Graus OBE, has stated, if we broaden what children know, they can aspire to more, since a wider menu of experiences equals a better education and leads to wider horizons. In the end: “Children can only aspire to what they know exists”.

Allowing children to experience new things, in personalized environments that nurture passions, make connections between different learning experiences and have as a focus self-initiated, self-directed and self-sustained learning, will enable and empower their agency development as committed, responsible citizens that will strive to achieving individual and societal well-being.

Moving forward towards extending and reassessing the schooling system

One of the key objectives of the holistic framework proposed by the OECD is to reach teachers and school leaders, policy makers, academic experts and social and business partners in an attempt to re-think the current schooling system and the common challenges it faces.
KidZania both globally and nationally contributes to this discussion by facilitating opportunities to extend the school curriculum into an education curriculum, by providing a diverse range of accessible and challenging activities for all children from different age ranges and by empowering them with the freedom to make their own choices.

Moreover, KidZanias around the world develop materials and resources with and for teachers through the KidZania Ambassador Schools program, where we aim to work in collaboration to develop provision that is relevant to local learning agendas, making it easier to link what is taught in the classroom to the role-playing activities in which their students participate at KidZania.

In a further attempt to enhance the dialogue about the need to reassess the current education system, besides collaborating closely with the OECD, KidZania has developed strategic alliances with relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations such as the Council of Europe, Ashoka, Junior Achievement Worldwide, World Innovation Summit in Education (WISE), #EdCrunch Russia, Bett Shows, International Positive Education Network (IPEN), TutuDesk Campaign, Binc, Early Childhood Association and Reggio Children.

The involvement of diverse entities and stakeholders related to education and learning worldwide amplifies the effect of this global effort, where the ultimate objective is to enable people to contribute to and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future.

It is important to reinforce the idea that education is an eco-system, not a one-way road. This is why KidZania will continue to work hand in hand with different public and private entities to address the imperative need to drive synergies among stakeholders to create an “education revolution” and nurture an “education evolution”.

Special ZanKs

Special thanks to Professor Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, and Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for his guidance in producing this document.

About KidZania

KidZania is an interactive kids’ city combining inspiration, fun and learning through realistic role-play for children aged 1 to 14. Children independently explore a kid-sized city with over 60 exciting careers. Each ultra-realistic experience is designed to empower, giving children the confidence to be their best selves, and inspiration to be great global citizens. With 24 locations in 19 countries and 12 more under development in markets such as USA, Costa Rica, South Africa and Qatar, KidZania is one of the most innovative and fastest growing global learning and entertainment brands in the world.

KidZania Inc., based in Mexico, was founded in 1997, opened its first center in 1999, and is privately held. For more information about KidZania, visit kidzania.com, follow us at facebook.com/KidZaniaOfficial, or on twitter as @KidZania.

About OECD

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a non-governmental organization devoted to promoting policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. The OECD provides a forum in which governments can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common economic, social and environmental problems.

Founded in 1961, the OECD is headquartered in Paris, France and has a membership of 35 countries. The OECD uses its wealth of information on a broad range of topics to help governments foster prosperity and fight poverty through economic growth and financial stability.

References
