



# 2015 WISE EDUCATION SURVEY : CONNECTING EDUCATION TO THE REAL WORLD

Three quarters of WISE education experts around the world are dissatisfied with the educational system in their respective countries and barely one third believe their country's educational system has improved in the past decade. Further, just 12% consider their educational system to be innovative, including a mere 1% rating it "extremely innovative." In the context of an ever-changing global job market, educational systems that lack innovation are most likely moving backward, not forward.

The situation in education contrasts with the rapid acceleration of numerous other fields in recent decades due to the Digital Revolution, transforming the way people shop, invest, read, socialize, work and generally communicate. Yet, at the same time, economic stagnation in much of the world, including persistently high unemployment in places, is creating critical challenges for today's young people, and indeed for the stability of nations.

While the picture for education may seem grim, it is clear that no country is alone in facing these challenges. The majority of WISE experts in most major regions of the world are dissatisfied with their educational systems and, almost everywhere, few rate their system high on innovation. However, there is considerable consensus within the WISE community on what education needs to do to remedy the situation:

- Foster more collaboration between schools and employers.
- Strengthen the teaching profession, both from within and without.

- Harness technology to supplement and support, not replace, high quality teachers.

These findings are from the **2015 WISE Education Survey: *Connecting education to the real world***, conducted by Gallup via the Web, August 6-31, 2015. The survey is based on responses from 1,550 members of the WISE global community: teachers, students, recent graduates, education policy makers and members of the private sector who have connected with WISE over the years on education reform issues. The results reflect the views of this unique global community of education experts who have made a demonstrated commitment to improving education in partnership with WISE.

## REFOCUS EDUCATION ON WORK READINESS

WISE education experts have high hopes for what education can and should be. Seven in 10 (69%) say it is a university's job, not that of employers, to ensure students are successful in their first job. However, 39% believe universities in their country are adequately preparing students for the workplace, and even fewer (23%) say this about their primary and secondary schools.

The good news is that the global WISE community sees a positive way forward for education. The survey finds WISE experts envisioning more collaboration between schools and employers to ensure students thrive in today's workplace. Such a system would not only benefit students and schools, but also employers in the public and private sectors who require a well-trained, well-prepared workforce.

WISE experts still value the importance of a university degree, but they believe what is most lacking at the postsecondary level is internships, apprenticeships, mentoring and dynamic curricula that provide students with ample opportunities to practice the knowledge they are acquiring. Far more WISE experts identify these as the key areas for higher education to focus on than cite the need for greater access to technology, lower costs, increased funding, or better career counseling.

- 62% cite lack of work/internships that prepare students for jobs as the top postsecondary challenge.
- 52% cite lack of project-based learning (students applying their academics to real-world problems).

- 38% cite ineffective career counseling.
- 31% cite the quality of teachers.
- 18% cite lack of access to current technology.
- 14% cite lack of school funding.

At the primary and secondary levels, WISE experts see teacher quality and lack of project-based learning as the primary challenges facing their educational systems. The percentages of respondents picking these challenges far exceed those identifying access to current technology, the need for more rigorous curricula or improved standardized testing.

60% say the quality of teachers is the biggest challenge facing their country's primary and secondary schools.

58% cite project-based learning.

32% cite school funding.

30% cite lack of access to current technology.

29% choose the need for more rigorous content or curriculum.

Two questions summarize the dual importance WISE experts place on formal education and practical experiences. On the one hand, the majority (57%) would encourage a child to enroll at a university even if it meant forgoing a dream job with a highly respected company; 35% would encourage the child to take the dream job. On the other hand, when given the choice between two types of recent university graduates, 80% say they would rather hire a B- student with a relevant internship than an A+ student with no relevant internship.

## **MORE INVESTMENTS NEEDED IN TEACHING**

WISE experts point to a multi-pronged approach to raising the quality of teachers, one that involves more professional development for existing teachers, more funding to attract top people into the teaching field and a concerted effort to increase society's respect for teachers.

- About one-third (36%) believes teachers in their country are treated with respect; 59% disagree.
- Three-quarters identify more professional development opportunities as a key strategy for attracting and retaining high-quality teachers.

- A majority, 57%, identify higher salaries as a key teacher retention /attraction strategy.

## **TECHNOLOGY HELPFUL, BUT NOT A CURE-ALL**

WISE education experts offer a clear preference for investing new education dollars in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers (78%) rather than on improving technology in schools (19%). That is not to say they don't value technology. Eighty-eight percent say technology-based solutions can improve education in disadvantaged areas, and 74% say technology helps all students learn better. But 71% say a high-quality teacher without technology is more effective than a low-quality teacher with access to technology in the classroom. Also, just 29% say online learning is as effective as classroom learning.

WISE experts are supportive of computer education but do not fully embrace the idea that teaching students programming skills should be part of the core curriculum. While 74% rate teaching basic computer literacy skills, such as typing and word processing, as "very important," far fewer, though still a majority at 57%, consider introductory computer programming classes very important.

## **WISE EXPERTS CALL FOR INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION**

The overall message of the **2015 WISE Education Survey: *Connecting education to the real world***, is that the failure of education to keep pace with changing workplaces is a global problem. And the response is a major commitment to collaborative solutions. Given the realities of limited government funding, only by engaging employers in the task of educating succeeding generations of workers will education achieve its full potential. Indeed, what employers don't invest in the system now will cost them later in lost productivity and training expenses. In combination with more investment in teachers and school funding, deeper connections between schools and workplaces will ensure tomorrow's students will move seamlessly from the classroom into productive jobs.