

Results of initial High Performing Systems for Tomorrow stakeholders' consultation report



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Introduction

From January to March 2023, the OECD conducted a stakeholder consultation in six jurisdictions, including Australia, Canada (British Columbia), Estonia, Finland, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. This consultation was part of the High Performing Systems for Tomorrow (HPST) initiative, carried out in collaboration with the Teach For All network. The main objective of the report resulting from this consultation was to gather and document the perspectives of stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, and employers, regarding various aspects of education.

The report primarily focuses on four key areas: understanding the concept of human flourishing, identifying the factors that support or hinder it, exploring the role of education systems in promoting human flourishing, and understanding the context-specific enablers of education. By engaging in this consultation, the OECD aims to ensure that the voices of the involved jurisdictions are heard and considered during the development and implementation of the Education for Human Flourishing Framework.

The methodology used for the analysis of this stakeholder consultation involves several key steps. Firstly, careful planning and design are crucial to establish objectives, identify stakeholders, and determine data collection methods. Data is then collected through focus groups, and subsequently analysed using qualitative techniques such as coding, thematic analysis, and stakeholder segmentation. The analysis is validated through cross-referencing and triangulation of data from country reports. The findings are interpreted, synthesised, and reported, highlighting key themes and insights. Although the sample of this consultation is limited, this systematic approach aims to gather comprehensive insights, validate findings, and incorporate stakeholder perspectives into decision-making processes.

Definition of Human Flourishing

Students' view

Students see human flourishing as self-acceptance, pursuing individual paths, and fulfilling one's potential, while asking meaningful questions about identity and purpose of life. Human flourishing is described as a sudden increase in well-being, comparable to the blossoming of a plant. It is a state of mind when individuals know themselves, understand what they want to achieve and get the necessary support that enables them to achieve their goals.

Human flourishing is not only about individual well-being but also about thriving communities and a healthy planet. Inclusion and equity are seen as essential components of flourishing, with the need for additional support for marginalised individuals.

For students, human flourishing is not defined by exams, subjects, or career paths, but by purpose, passion, and holistic well-being. It involves taking care of one's mental, spiritual, and physical aspects, managing personal environments, and developing intellectual and moral capabilities. Opportunities and resources are crucial for people to flourish, and education provides the foundation for a good life by imparting life skills and knowledge.

For **Finnish** students, human flourishing centres around self-awareness, support, achievement, enjoyment, and personal interests. They perceive it as a state of mind where individuals have a clear understanding of themselves, receive enabling support, experience success and enjoyment in their endeavours, and have the freedom to explore and deepen their understanding in areas of personal interest. For others in the **UK**, human flourishing highlights the interdependence between personal well-being, thriving communities, and a flourishing planet. They stress the importance of inclusion, equity of opportunity, care for the environment, and pursuing purpose and passion as key elements of human flourishing. In the **Australian** context, the importance of reconciliation and enabling Indigenous students to successfully 'walk in two worlds' was raised by many stakeholders. There is a need to reconcile with their colonial history and impacts on Indigenous Australians for all Australians to flourish.

Parents' view

Parents perceive human flourishing as encompassing emotional and physical well-being, fulfilling potential, having agency and choices, following passions, being part of a supportive community, accepting differences, and finding happiness. However, they expressed frustration with schools due to one-size-fits-all approaches, high-stakes accountability, inhibiting assessments, and a lack of community support. The concept of human flourishing involves healthy relationships with oneself, others, and nature, taking control of one's future, and assuming responsibility for the world. It includes elements such as purpose, confidence, resilience, belonging, health, creativity, compassion, security, balance, and fulfilment. It varies depending on context, and parents desire better opportunities for their children. Ultimately, in parents' view, human flourishing entails growing into one's potential, finding inner happiness, expressing individual opinions, and being part of a larger community.

In the **UK**, parents express a strong belief that schools are failing to promote human flourishing. This sentiment is reinforced by the impact of the pandemic, which has caused a shift in people's perspectives on traditional education. In **Australia**, parents highlight that certain individuals possess the capacity and capability to achieve more in their lives and education, but consciously choose not to. This behaviour may stem from a lack of consideration for what it truly means to lead a fulfilling and purposeful life, as they prioritize the popular mantra "You Only Live Once" (YOLO), which discourages exploration and aspirations for self-improvement. Parents in **Singapore** add the significance of individual agency, intrinsic factors, and personal effort in determining educational outcomes and social mobility. They attribute success not solely to external factors like financial resources but also to personal characteristics, motivation, and the willingness to work hard.

The parental perspectives from these countries reflect a range of concerns and beliefs about the role of education in promoting human flourishing. The UK emphasises the need for improvements in the education system, Australia focuses on individual choices and priorities, and Singapore underscores the importance of personal agency and effort. These differing viewpoints offer insights into the diverse expectations and perspectives regarding education's impact on human flourishing in different cultural contexts.

Teachers' view

Teachers describe human flourishing as a sense of internal safeness, empathy, and the ability to cope with different encounters in a positive and forward-moving manner, where it requires a supportive community and breaks away from old hierarchical systems. It is not synonymous with happiness and goes beyond individual well-being, encompassing the needs of the community and the planet. They also underline that basic needs must be met and a balance between physical, mental, and social environments is necessary. Materialism and consumerism are seen as detrimental, and informed choices and cultural reconciliation are essential for human flourishing. It involves living in harmony, fulfilling one's purpose, and contributing to the community while recognising the interconnectedness of the environment and embracing lifelong learning.

Teachers in **Canada (British Columbia)** see human flourishing as a multifaceted understanding of well-being, encompassing balance, interconnectedness, purpose, joy, belonging, lifelong learning, passion, and the meeting of basic needs, which highlight the importance of nurturing all aspects of one's being, fostering connections and community, and pursuing personal and collective growth. For **Estonia**, the definition of human flourishing for teachers revolves around the fulfillment of basic needs, a balanced relationship with the natural environment, personalisation and support for individuals, and a critical examination of materialistic and consumerist values. By considering these aspects, teachers strive to create educational environments that foster holistic well-being and contribute to the flourishing of their students.

Employers' view

When asked employers, human flourishing for them is the ability to succeed in work and life, being the best version of oneself, and finding satisfaction and passion in personal and professional development. It extends beyond individual well-being to encompass the flourishing of communities and societal structures. It involves growth, well-being, and realising one's potential within a thriving natural environment. Belonging, resilience, and holistic well-being are important aspects. Human flourishing requires a balance between intrinsic and external factors, and it is a common aim for education worldwide. It involves agency, purpose, and the use of skills and knowledge to contribute to society.

For example, employers' perspective in **Finland** of human flourishing is the success and well-being of their employees, job satisfaction and skill development, and the strive to bring out the best in individuals. On the other side of the globe, employers in **Australia** value agency, purpose, emotional well-being, holistic factors, developmental stages, belonging, and resilience as key aspects of human flourishing. They also shared that they aspired to create work environments that support employees in achieving and maintaining a state of flourishing. These show the importance of creating supportive environments for employees to thrive, but their specific emphases also reflect their unique cultural perspectives and values.

Enablers and obstacles of Human Flourishing

Students' view

Human flourishing is promoted by respecting learners' individual interests and freedom, teaching meaningful and holistic knowledge, and addressing barriers like high-stakes exams and factory-like schools. Socio-economic circumstances and inequality hinder flourishing, while addressing skills gaps and involving young voices can enable it. The rapid development of technology and challenges like overpopulation and consumerism impact flourishing. Practical skills, supportive teachers, stability, climate action, political education, and equity are enablers, while outdated curriculum, low expectations, and reliance on textbooks are barriers. Considerations include crisis management, cost of living, adaptive learning, and the pros and cons of artificial intelligence.

Students in the **UK** recognise the importance of addressing socio-economic barriers, enhancing skills development, and reconsidering assessment practices to promote equal opportunities and support the flourishing of students. In **Singapore**, the students' perspective highlights the complex issue of family investments in education and the potential consequences for equity. While some families view these investments as necessary for giving their children a head start, students recognise the need for equal access to educational resources and opportunities to enable human flourishing for all students, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds. This approach aligns with the broader goal of fostering an inclusive and equitable education system that enables every student to reach their full potential.

Parents' view

From a parental perspective, it is crucial to prioritise the promotion of personal significance and available resources within schools, fostering closer collaboration between parents and educators, facilitating intergenerational learning, and addressing obstacles that hinder individual growth and well-being. Key factors that facilitate these objectives encompass creativity, support for mental health, emphasis on sustainability, and fostering ongoing dialogue. It is imperative to avoid oversimplified solutions and overlooking the human element of technology. Instead, we should focus on adapting to technological advancements while maintaining our connection to ourselves and cultivating critical thinking skills. Various barriers that need to be overcome include a one-size-fits-all approach to education, limitations imposed by geography, unmet needs, and the importance of nurturing relationships. Supporting core values, addressing societal disruptions, fostering community engagement, building resilience, and ensuring equal opportunities are all significant factors. Striking a balance between knowledge acquisition and the pursuit of excellence also presents a notable concern.

Estonian parents prioritise shaping a positive future and emphasise the importance of self-connection, finding a balance with technology, and fostering adaptability and critical thinking skills in their children's education and development. They also recognise the need for their children to navigate a rapidly changing world and prepare them accordingly.

Australian parents' perspectives turn to the need for personalised approaches, addressing basic needs, fostering relationships, and supporting mental health to enable human flourishing among young people. These reflect a concern for the overall development and flourishing of their children, but with varying emphases on different aspects of education and support.

As for parents in **Canada (British Columbia)**, they emphasise the importance of instilling foundational values in children and fostering a sense of community and giving back. Concerns are raised regarding the negative impact of political and climate-related upheavals on their children's well-being. Poverty is identified as a hindrance to flourishing, particularly in terms of food affordability. The parents highlight the significance of resilience, a growth mindset, and government support programs that address children's basic needs and promote community and safety. They also advocate for the removal of barriers related to race, disabilities, gender, and immigration status to ensure equal opportunities and representation. While acknowledging the value of foundational knowledge, there is a worry that children may be excessively protected without an expectation of striving for excellence.

Overall, these parental perspectives reflect a shared concern for the well-rounded development of their children, but they also reveal different priorities and areas of emphasis. The Estonian perspective focuses on adaptability and critical thinking skills, the Australian perspective emphasises personalised approaches and mental well-being, and the Canadian perspective highlights foundational values, community engagement, and social equity.

Teachers' view

Teachers face barriers to human flourishing such as rigid systems, standardised exams, and segregation. Flexibility, pedagogic freedom, and well-prepared learning environments enable flourishing. AI is both an enabler and a barrier due to biases and societal impact, causing job displacement fears. Human connection, teacher well-being, trauma-informed practice, and time constraints play crucial roles. However, they identify social-emotional learning, well-being, work-life balance, foundational needs, diversity, purpose, and sustainable contribution as enablers. They not only note that compassionate leadership, critical thinking, resilience, and holistic development are crucial, but also observe negative impacts of social media and polarization.

Teachers in the **UK** believe that AI has the potential to both enable and impede flourishing in education. They highlight the need to address issues of bias in AI development, acknowledge societal attitudes, and mitigate the adverse effects of social media on mental well-being to ensure a more inclusive and beneficial future for education. Similarly, teachers in **Estonia** are confident that education and a globalised world provide opportunities for self-actualisation and human flourishing. However, they express concerns about convenience and AI hindering new challenges and job prospects. Fear of war and ecological collapse also contributes to a sense of hopelessness, exacerbated by sensationalised news on social media. Despite this, the openness and curiosity of the youth are seen as potential enablers for a flourishing future.

Employers' view

Employers believe that community, teamwork, and a friendly social environment are crucial for success, while global polarization poses a hindrance to flourishing. They underline the need for proactive support for the younger generation and recognise the potential of AI and technology, despite facing resistance. The lack of a clear vision for education impedes progress, and reskilling is deemed essential for adaptability. Global instability and a shift from consumerism to love are concerns, and the impact of AI on flourishing varies. Context, connection, and resources are considered important factors. Enablers include strong relationships, equity, and support systems, while preventers include work-life imbalance, economically driven career choices, and socio-economic barriers.

The employers' perspective in **Finland** emphasise the value of community, balance, inclusivity, and support mechanisms for enabling individuals to flourish in the future. They believe that fostering collaborative environments and addressing societal challenges like polarization are essential for creating conducive conditions for personal and professional growth. Likewise, employers in **Australia** focus on the significance of human connection, supportive learning environments, Social-emotional learning curriculum, teacher wellbeing, and addressing barriers such as time constraints and trauma to enable flourishing among students.

Jurisdictions shared focus on community, support, inclusivity, and addressing challenges reflects a common understanding of the factors necessary for enabling flourishing. It highlights the global consensus on the importance of creating conducive conditions for personal and professional growth and the well-being of individuals.

Enablers of Education for Human Flourishing

Students' view

In students' perspectives, differentiated education for gifted students is important, along with active participation and peer learning. Holistic education should cover demanding topics and life skills. Physical literacy, mental health, and social-emotional learning are critical for the whole person to flourish. Equity, access, and additional support for lower socio-economic backgrounds are essential. Students desire

learning beyond the classroom and closer integration of tech and industry. A rigid, drill-oriented system causes mental pressure and neglects well-being. Creativity, personal connection, and grading reforms are needed. Soft skills and purposeful education are emphasised. Coherence, feedback, and lifelong learning are crucial. Indigenous perspectives, relevant course content, and education on stigmatised topics are necessary. Controlling AI use in the curriculum is important.

Australia's perspective on the enablers of education for human flourishing includes a focus on soft skills, personalised learning goals, practical applications of knowledge, critical thinking, and comprehensive feedback systems. These principles aim to foster an educational environment that promotes holistic development and equips individuals with the skills necessary for success in various aspects of life. An Australian student said, "*I think it would be better if we had more, like, actual learning where we learn why we're learning the things and not just, like, remembering stuff from a textbook.*" Another student, in Asia this time, shared "*I am grateful that I have access to an educational pathway that lets me pursue my passion in a way that is best for me.*" Stakeholders in **Singapore** mention that education should enable students to choose a suitable pathway in life and fulfil their potential. This meant that the customisation of education to students' learning needs is also a key aspect of education for human flourishing.

Parents' view

For parents, education should be open-ended, active, and culturally rich, catering to diverse needs. An integrative approach is crucial, supporting both struggling students and those advancing faster. Schools should be safe spaces for personal growth. Readiness for work requires clearer career pathways and investment in vocational education. Holistic education is needed, including support for students with special educational needs and trauma-informed approaches. They see personalisation, critical thinking, and free time for passion projects are important. Overcoming barriers to education and fostering relationships enable human flourishing. Mental health and wellbeing support is essential. Future-ready skills, community involvement, and inclusive values should be taught.

To illustrate this, the perspective of **UK** parents on education for human flourishing reflects a combination of concerns regarding the future employability of young people and the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to education. A parent expressed "our children learn in different ways. We need a better understanding of neurodiversity, and that one size does not fit all. There should be different options and approaches: practical learning, coursework, forest education." The importance of addressing individual learning needs, providing adequate support for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and integrating trauma and attachment-informed practices to promote positive relationships and communication within the educational setting was emphasised.

Canadian (British Columbia) parents' perspective on education for human flourishing involves a future-oriented focus, community involvement, extracurricular engagement, project-based learning, inclusivity, and teaching values of acceptance and respect. By integrating these principles, parents believe that education can prepare their children for adulthood, help them discover their place in the world, and nurture their overall well-being and success. These examples show that there is a common desire for education that addresses individual needs, promotes inclusivity, and fosters positive relationships and communication.

Teachers' view

Education should be holistic, active, and relevant, providing just-in-time learning for different learners. Solid basic skills are crucial, upon which further knowledge can be built. A clear vision is needed, like Wales' tenets, to guide curriculum development. Child-centered approaches, skills development, and relevance to students' lives are important. Empowering individuals, promoting self-directed learning, and reducing high-stakes pressure are crucial. Teachers should be supported in their roles, and cooperation among

stakeholders is necessary. The role of teachers is evolving in the age of technology. Mental health and community connections are key. Student choice and agency should be balanced with clear expectations. Supporting self-awareness, social-emotional skills, and inclusive definitions of success are important. Competency-based learning, challenging traditional structures, and fostering curiosity and human connection are recommended. Collaboration among families and communities is essential.

As an example, teachers' point of view from **Finland** on education for human flourishing focus on a holistic, active, and personalised approach to learning. It values clear and relevant learning experiences that support personal growth, while also recognising the importance of solid basic skills as a foundation for further knowledge and skill development. By incorporating these principles, Finnish teachers aim to create an educational environment that enables students to flourish and reach their full potential. As for teachers in **Canada (British Columbia)**, enablers of Education for Human Flourishing include the importance of self-discovery, social and emotional skills, inclusivity, community building, competency-based learning, adapting to changing needs, integrating technology, fostering curiosity, human connections, and collaboration with families and communities. These would create an educational environment that supports the holistic development and flourishing of students.

Employers' view

Employers expressed that education should balance freedom and responsibilities, foster agility, value personal choices, and promote self-directed learning, critical thinking, and real-world relevance. Basic skills, social skills, and life skills are essential, and the education sector should keep up with technology. Equity and alternative recruitment methods matter. Empowering youth, curiosity, adaptability, and unleashing human potential are key. Metacognitive skills, personalisation, cooperation, and soft skills are valuable. Exposure to the world enriches education, and support for physical and mental health, teacher support, and resilience are necessary. Emotional intelligence, problem-solving, intercultural understanding, and self-development should be taught, with technology enhancing relationships.

Employers in **Estonia** highlight the importance of holistic education that encompasses curiosity, adaptability, critical thinking, focus, empathy, and the unleashing of human potential. It emphasises metacognitive skills, personalization of education, well-being, cooperation, and a growth mindset. These elements are believed to contribute to human flourishing by preparing individuals to thrive in an ever-changing world and reach their full potential. As for the **UK**, employers on education for human flourishing encompasses a broad range of priorities, including physical and mental well-being, support for teachers, alignment with workforce needs, a balance between traditional subjects and employability skills, emotional intelligence, intercultural understanding, and the development of personal identity. These priorities reflect the desire to cultivate well-rounded individuals who are equipped to succeed in both their professional and personal lives.

Role of education systems in the Education for Human Flourishing

Students' view

The education system should be inclusive and flexible, providing supportive and accessible learning environments. Cooperation between schools and the use of digital technologies should be promoted. Personalisation and differentiation are important to maintain students' enthusiasm for learning. Policy making should involve more input from learners, parents, and carers. Bridging the gap between theory and practice is crucial, with a focus on practical skills like personal finance and programming. Understanding the "why" behind learning is essential to build trust between generations. Individualised learning, hands-on experiences, and real-life application of knowledge are beneficial. Life skills, problem-solving, and

adaptive teaching methods should be emphasised. The current grading system may not adequately represent students' abilities for post-secondary education.

For instance, students in **Estonia** express their need for personalised approaches, bridging the gap between theory and practice, and emphasise the importance of understanding the purpose behind learning. One student shared "*I think that if we had an education system that promoted creative freedom straight from kindergarten, a system where the students could have the best opportunities for making creative, personal choices, then we wouldn't have to worry about the kind of chaos we fear might ensue in the classrooms when we think about giving creative freedom to students who have gone through the current system and are not accustomed to such freedom.*" Allowing personalised and flexible approaches would create an educational environment that nurtures students' curiosity, equips them with practical skills, and fosters trust and motivation in the learning process.

Another example is **Canada (British Columbia)** where students' perspectives on enabling human flourishing in education revolve around practical life skills, personalised and adaptive learning, interactive teaching methods, student input, and accurate assessment methods. With these in place, students believe that education systems can better support their holistic development, meet their diverse learning needs, and prepare them for future success.

In **Finland**, the students' perspectives highlight the importance of an inclusive, supportive, and flexible education system that provides equal opportunities, utilises collaboration and technology, and goes beyond standardised knowledge to foster human flourishing among all learners.

Students' views across these countries share common goals of personalised learning, practical skills development, interactive teaching methods, student involvement, and a holistic approach to education. They emphasise the need for education systems that nurture individual potential, adapt to diverse learning needs, and provide an inclusive and supportive environment for students to thrive. While specific priorities and approaches may vary, the overarching theme is a student-centered education that promotes human flourishing.

Parents' view

Parents emphasise the need for education systems that prioritise personal growth, community, and redefine success with a focus on kindness and trust. They advocate for respecting and empowering teachers, shifting societal attitudes, strengthening parental involvement, and considering students' preferences. Technology's role, early testing, holistic well-being, equitable access to services, and early exposure to career opportunities are also important considerations.

For parents in **Australia**, community engagement, inclusive conversations, support for teachers, and addressing the role of technology are important in promoting human flourishing. These underline the need for education systems to be responsive, inclusive, and supportive, enabling all individuals to thrive and reach their full potential. In **Estonia**, parents underscore the importance of involving stakeholders, including parents and students, in shaping education systems. It highlights the value of recognising and respecting the diversity of children's needs and preferences, which can contribute to creating educational environments that promote human flourishing for all.

Teachers' view

Teachers recognise the critical role of the first three years of schooling in developing fundamental skills for all students, deviating from the traditional grade progression system. They advocate for flexible education systems that embrace lifelong learning. Striking a balance between local autonomy and national guidance is deemed significant. Teachers' well-being and professional growth should be prioritised, while motivators in the education system need to be reevaluated, shifting away from external pressures. Integrating parent education within the framework of human flourishing is also suggested. Personalising education is crucial

for unlocking students' potential and supporting teachers. Embracing diversity, exploring alternative delivery methods, and harnessing technology as an enabler are essential considerations. Smaller class sizes and equitable funding contribute to positive outcomes. Pass-fail or competency-based assessments and a focus on personal growth in graduation requirements are recommended. Creating a reciprocal learning environment between teachers and students is vital for fostering growth and development.

In **Singapore**, the influence of peers and teachers on educational outcomes and goals is recognized by various stakeholders. Teachers were acknowledged as influential figures who inspire and play a crucial role in students' education. The presence of motivated and driven peers was also seen as a motivating factor for academic achievement and aspirations. Therefore, mixing with high-achieving students was perceived to positively impact one's own study habits and goals. This example highlights the importance of peer and teacher influence in shaping educational outcomes and aspirations. In **Finland**, teachers see the need for education systems to prioritise foundational skills, lifelong learning, flexibility, local autonomy, and national coherence. They also recognise the importance of education as a safe and supportive space that promotes social interaction and personal growth. This approach to education thus aims to equip students with essential skills, foster adaptability, and promote personal growth and well-being.

Employers' view

Employers expect education systems to demonstrate adaptability, inclusivity, and flexibility while valuing the needs of all learners. There is a call for enhanced collaboration among businesses, universities, schools, and colleges, with government support in developing talent pipelines. Eliminating a narrow focus on test-driven teaching and investing in infrastructure are important considerations. Education policymakers are urged to actively listen to industry leaders. Prioritising equity, addressing challenging topics, promoting physical and mental health, facilitating experiential learning, reducing stigmas around non-university pathways, modernising classrooms, supporting teachers and students, redefining success, and offering diverse learning options are essential goals.

In **Australia**, employers' perspectives on the role of education systems included considerations of external factors, building education around areas of interest and local hubs, equal opportunity, and creating a safe place for community-level belonging. One participant said "*[An education system which enables human flourishing is one] which allows the formation of and continued development of strong relationships between educator, mentor and student and between institution and family, whole community.*" In **Canada (British Columbia)** employers focused on the need for equity, inclusive curriculum, emphasis on physical education and mental health, applied learning experiences, reduced stigma, modernised classrooms, support for teachers and students, redefined success, support for extracurricular activities, and the teaching of critical skills. Incorporating these perspectives can thus help education systems prepare students for successful and fulfilling futures in the workforce.