

# **Towards an education workforce dedicated to human flourishing:**

**What professional development do our  
leaders and teachers need?**

**VALERIE HANNON**

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# Introduction

The debate about education's new purpose has become widespread and serious. An alignment of forces, ranging from the UN, World Economic Forum, UNESCO and OECD now exists, united in a view of the new direction of travel. OECD pioneered work in this space with its *Education and Skills 2030* project (OECD, 2018). The UN convened a summit on the *Transformation of Education in 2022*.<sup>1</sup> A consensus is starting to emerge based on the premise that thriving or flourishing is at the heart of the future we want – a far cry from the Human Capital Theory of education that currently prevails.<sup>2</sup> At the OECD a second phase of the High Performing Systems for Tomorrow (HPST2) program proposes that becoming fit for the future entails creating systems focused on Educating for Human Flourishing (EHF). This is a transformational agenda.

The foundation paper (Stevenson, 2022) to the EHF program summarises the debate as follows.

*The challenges that confront 21st century societies are existential. Is the flourishing person someone who finds their highest potential in helping to resolve them? This goes beyond future readiness and even futures literacy. It is a capacity to support future transformation.*

The transformation that is required is already underway. It is happening in pockets, projects and prototypes that are being developed in many parts of the world by visionary educators (Hannon and Temperley, 2022; Schleicher, 2018).

Transformation must necessarily be an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary process. Many steps are needed to progress this evolution, not least the **societal** reconsideration of education's purpose.

If education is to reframe its purpose in light of the challenges humanity faces, it will have practical implications (or else the exercise has been pointless). Amongst those implications is a reconsideration of the adequacy of our thinking about the competencies that leaders and teachers will need to engage in the shift. The quality of the workforce in education is absolutely central – although it is not the whole story. However, without a simultaneous re-skilling of educational capacity – its leadership and extended workforce – the project is doomed to failure. This is a failure humanity cannot afford.

My purpose with this paper is to offer a draft framework to support a systemic approach to the professional development of leaders and teachers in K–12 education. The professional development of educators is of the utmost importance, as every high-performing system has known. Much in current practice around teacher and leadership learning remains relevant and valuable. It has many strengths. It is important that those strengths are not lost; but also that we acknowledge frankly some weaknesses. Therefore the focus here is on how existing professional development frameworks might be further redesigned or extended if the ambitious goal of supporting human flourishing is to be met.

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## Frameworks for professional development (PD)

Educators committed to developing education for human flourishing have not waited for policymakers to catch up. Globally we see initiatives in clusters, networks and sometimes individual entrepreneurial schools modelling the change, and becoming the change. Their work is inspirational, and the testimonies of their young graduates are building a growing evidence of the power of the new curricula, pedagogies and assessment methods under development. Whilst these approaches are becoming codified, it must be recognised that the evaluative challenge is considerable. Education for human flourishing entails ‘head, heart and hand’; and this is much more complex to evidence than the (apparent) simplicity of measurement by standardised tests. Going hand-in-hand with the evolution of practice is the learning happening amongst the practitioners. This is reflective practice or praxis. Enough experience is now available to indicate the direction in which professional educators’ learning and development needs to move to achieve the new goals.

In considering new implications for professional learning in the context of pursuing true human flourishing, we do not lose sight of the continuities with existing best practice, including, for example,

- the emphasis on education leaders as leaders of learning, and as learners themselves
- the notion that leadership must be inclusive and distributed

- a focus on personal qualities such as honesty, authenticity and humility
- leadership needing to demonstrate moral integrity, and
- underpinning social-emotional competencies, such as empathy.

It may be worth noting here the confusing use of terminologies in this field.

The terms ‘capabilities’, ‘aptitudes’, ‘competencies’ and ‘skills’ are often used interchangeably and inconsistently. In this paper the term ‘competency’ will be used as the key construct, since it has been rigorously explored and utilised in the predecessor OECD project *Education and Skills 2030*.<sup>3</sup> The term ‘competency’ denotes the combination of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes considered to be of value in a particular domain. It overcomes the unhelpful and false dichotomy between knowledge vs skills, recognising the relevance of both and their inherent connection. It also acknowledges the importance of including values and attitudes as an important part of the piece. In what follows therefore, the term ‘competency’ will be deployed as the key construct; but it is beyond the scope of this paper to develop in detail the constituent knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that would constitute the whole.

Moreover, it is recognised that the wider educational workforce (including learning mentors, specially trained classroom support workers and a whole range of allied professionals) is an absolutely vital component of high-performing systems. Lack of space precludes exploration of the implications for that group.

## Professional learning for leaders: The challenge

As numerous publications have pointed out, the task of education leadership has never been more important or challenging.<sup>4</sup> Leaders must grapple with the legacy of health-related disruption; unacceptable and unsustainable growth in inequality across and within nations; mental health problems amongst learners and teachers; and leadership burnout. In many jurisdictions, the recruitment to the role of school principal has become problematic, as teachers balk at the magnitude of the task. This makes it all the more imperative that preparation for, and development within, the role becomes more authentic and constant.

... we are looking at a considerable task of system change, not simply that of system maintenance.

Part of that is the acknowledgement that the job has changed. There has been a marked trend to see principals as key contributors to system leadership: whether that be directly in the form of federations of schools or

multi-academy trusts (such as in the UK); or in broader consultative and engaged roles within district initiatives (such as in districts like British Columbia and Kentucky). This role is focused on contributing to the direction of travel of the system as a whole. This paper incorporates considerations of both institutional and system leadership (roles which are sometimes vested in the same individual).

In relation to systems, the work of the EHF project suggests that systems that are moving towards 'human flourishing' need now to embrace at their core some new features. These include

- equity
- being AI enabled and aware, and
- being ecosystemic.

The implications of these dynamics are explored below. However, since they are clearly not features typically to be found in current systems, we are looking at a considerable task of system change, not simply that of system maintenance. This consideration informs the emphasis placed below on systems thinking; and is informed by recent work on change in complex systems.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, at the school/institutional level, the leadership challenge is now one of a different order to that faced by previous generations of leaders. We now need institutions that actively contribute to the furtherance and development of key goals: rules-based democracies, based on the values of universal human rights and equity. But democracy is in need of renewal: perhaps it has always been so (though heretofore, schools have not seen this as part of their business). However now, in an AI world that threatens the fragility of democracy (and of course the apprehension of truth) schools as critical social institutions have a key role to play in the furtherance of this aspect of human flourishing. Partly this is to be done by creating the optimal conditions for a workforce to address the competencies young people need for human flourishing. However, it is also, to an extent, a community leadership role: one that conceives of schools as parts of a wider ecosystem.

With these considerations in mind therefore, the following set of competencies is proposed as the basis for a renewed framework for educational leadership. Their choice reflects the current state of thought leadership in this space (WISE, 2023; Hannon and Mackay, 2021), but the framing ultimately must stand or fall by the degree to which the competencies respond to the overarching imperative: a new reorientation towards a paradigm founded on the idea of flourishing, rather than old concepts of 'success'.

## 1. Re-booting educational purpose through narrative

The ‘leader as story teller’ has a long pedigree and an increasing body of scholarly analysis (eg, Ganz, 2008).

The argument of the intergovernmental organisations previously referenced is that education needs to set a new purpose and new goals. Whether they are conscious of it or not, education leaders participate in public narrative, either perpetuating or challenging and replacing taken-for-granted ideas about what education is for. The new paradigm implies the need to call out the old purpose of education, embedded in Human Capital Theory, and replace it with a narrative – crafted for context, culture and history – rounding out the ideas of human flourishing on a thriving planet.

In particular, reframing the human endeavour in the wider framework of our place in nature, constantly stressing our interdependence with the natural world and its fate, are new dimensions to how leaders need now to co-create narrative. Moreover, the new post-COVID (and long overdue) elevation of wellbeing as a critical element of education’s purpose needs to be woven in more explicitly to the story of schools; it is a prerequisite to creating a culture of caring (NCEE ISTP, 2022). This includes learners (and the workforce) feeling that they belong, and that they are safe. This is an aim in itself, not merely an instrument for better academic attainment.

... elevation of wellbeing as a critical element of education’s purpose needs to be woven in more explicitly to the story of schools

Since leaders of education are fundamentally in the business of shaping the future, it is their duty to understand the contours and implications of the disruptive VUCA<sup>6</sup> world – and then to participate in the crafting of a new narrative,

envisioning new futures and possibilities, and education’s role in getting us there. This means education leaders mobilising new voices, in order to articulate the new narrative, in a way that builds first public and then political support. Narrative creation is learnable (multiple programs exist). The complete suite of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes entailed needs to be selected and worked out in situ.

## 2. Orchestrating learning ecosystems

The best leaders have always understood the critical role that is played by fostering strong collaborative relationships with the surrounding community, especially parents and carers. Often, however, the rhetoric has been stronger than the practice, but the traditional silos of schooling are no longer adequate to the challenge of providing the range, diversity and personalisation of learning opportunities that young people now need if we are all to thrive. Many more organisations and sectors need to be involved. One way to think about this is to reconceive ‘education systems’ (usually top-down hierarchical arrangements of management) as **learning ecosystems**.

As the International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) put it,

*The question should not be: ‘What can schools do to serve all learners?’  
It should be: ‘What can schools do to orchestrate various other government entities and community partners, and to leverage broader investments in social infrastructure, in order to give all learners the full range of supports they need?’*

(ISTP, 2022)

If schools and systems are to move in this direction, it requires a fresh set of competencies for success, that can lead

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to efficient, effective and sustainable ecosystems. Amongst these are

- leading through influence not status
- unlocking the learning assets of communities, and
- extensive engagement with stakeholders beyond the education sector (see, for examples, OECD, 2023 and 2016).

Considerable work is underway on what this looks like in practice (Luksha, 2020). In the new conditions that we face, schools cannot do everything: they need to incorporate themselves in nets of learning opportunities, not least digital ones. With the limitless wealth of such opportunities available to young people online (albeit mostly in the cognitive domain) – likely to be increasingly personalised – leaders need to consider how these can be incorporated into the overall mix. Again, this is a learnable competency. It involves new knowledge and skills but, perhaps more importantly, different attitudes and values.

### 3. Championing equity

One problem with incorporating an ‘equity’ competency in this suite focused on human flourishing is that it is perhaps over-familiar. Nominally at any rate, equity has featured in education’s goals (and therefore leadership frames) for three decades. However, in the context of a wide vision of human flourishing, previous conceptions now appear to be inadequate. Too often, systems have focused on academic outcomes data, looking at group comparisons. Of course this remains relevant; but it is just a starting point. More critical are cultures of values and respect. Whilst we yearn for a peaceful planet, the dehumanising of groups in a culture of dominance is what has led, and continues to lead, to the perpetuation of conflict and the precariousness of peace.

A proper understanding of the idea of human flourishing means that the objective is not to help everyone achieve the same thing, expressed as a single set of minimum education requirements. It is more about helping everyone find their purpose through learning, combining aspirations and distinctively human competencies, in order to contribute to shaping a thriving future.

It is essential to grasp how fundamental equity is in terms of achieving a flourishing future on a peaceful planet. Moreover, research and scholarship is indicating that reducing inequality is also key to delivering future prosperity. Boushey (2019) demonstrates how rising inequality is a drain on talent, ideas and innovation.

That is why it is necessary now to think in terms of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) – three distinctive dimensions of this vision. This is not just about equity in outcomes, access or inputs. This is fundamentally about what is valued and how.

- Whose history?
- Which values?
- Which cultural norms?

It is about celebrating diversity and practising inclusivity – embracing the differences not just of race, gender, LGBTQ; but also of neurodiversity. The competency in this space therefore is understanding and implementing EDI. Again, there has been an explosion in this area in the last few years, not least that which addresses the issue of indigeneity – now completely reconsidered in terms of educational goals. The values and attitudes may be foundational, but a core of emergent knowledge and skills is growing – for example, how to conduct an environmental analysis, as a means of understanding local inequalities and perspectives.

#### 4. Systems thinking: managing dynamic complexity

Clearly, the complex disrupted environment in which we are now working requires leadership that is capable of thinking in systemic terms, as opposed to linear mechanical ways. It is too much – and unnecessary – to expect leaders to become sophisticated system analysts deploying some of the mapping tools now available in the public sphere.<sup>7</sup> However, it is important – especially in the context of moving towards ecosystemic working – that an understanding of how complex issues relate to each other is fostered; and for leaders to become acquainted with some of the concepts that should be considered when trying to make sense of confusing, challenging situations. The key concepts here are purpose, power, relationships, resources and, of course, their interrelationship (Leadbeater and Winhall, 2020). This is a classic case where the knowledge dimension of this competency (analytical) is supplemented by the human dimensions – attitudes and values of personal understanding and empathy. Our institutions now more than ever need to be agile and flexible (COVID provided the perfect instance of this), at a time of uncertainty, ambiguity and risk.

The key concepts here are purpose, power, relationships, resources and, of course, their interrelationship (Leadbeater and Winhall, 2020).

System thinking can help leaders to avoid becoming overwhelmed by complexity, and to work towards actionable strategies that take into account the range of factors in play. Whilst leaders in public service are increasingly acquiring this competency through their professional learning, school leaders are not. There are now PD prototypes in development.<sup>8</sup>

#### 5. Leading and managing innovation

Most existing professional development frameworks make clear the importance of being able to use evidence and research, always with a focus on students' learning. Moreover, a number of PD frameworks stress the need to foster a culture of learning. However, as schools pivot towards the future, this is insufficient. What is also needed now is innovation; but innovation which is disciplined, purposeful and carefully evaluated (with the right metrics). Leading and managing this process is all about the competency to

*... inspire productive action in yourself and others during times of creation, invention, uncertainty, ambiguity and risk.*

(Cone, 2019)

This entails understanding methods of innovation and how they sit alongside the use of research; involving users – especially learners – in the effort. A range of well-evidenced and developed methodologies now exists and is readily available to be deployed in the endeavour. These methodologies may not be standard in leadership development programs, but their use is growing, new approaches are emerging and expertise becoming more widespread. They include methods like Human Centred Design (Harvard) and Spirals of Inquiry (British Columbia).<sup>9</sup>

Such methodologies offer the leader who aspires to engage in a transformational shift approaches which are similar, in that they

- place purpose and focus upfront, with the requirement really to debate what the goals are
- acknowledge the complexity of educational goals and problems, not falling back on managerial linear planning techniques



- rely upon convened teams of empowered educators to explore, inquire, learn and implement together in a structured, disciplined way
- utilise prototyping as a technique, and
- emphasise the importance of involving and engaging the most important actors – the learners, their families and their communities.

... the concept of agency is absolutely fundamental if we are serious about creating self-regulating, purposeful learners with the competencies needed to shape the future.

This last point is important. A thriving humanity needs learners who are excited about learning, motivated, included and cared for. So, the quality of the learner experience must be attended to with a sensitivity which has been markedly lacking in schools' histories (Hannon and Temperley, 2022). Leaders who become competent in these approaches are able to engage in future-

focused innovation with real professional responsibility. Again, this is a learnable competency, with well-established methods now available.

## 6. Developing agency in others and in self

In the wide consultation processes that accompanied the evolution of OECD's *Education and Skills 2030* project, time and again the issue of agency arose – in two ways. First, it became readily apparent that the concept of agency is absolutely fundamental if we are serious about creating self-regulating, purposeful learners with the competencies needed to shape the future. If learners' experience of schooling is one of passive compliance, how can they possibly be expected to cope with – let alone shape – a flourishing future?

Agency can be situated as individual, collaborative and collective. In addition, although the primary suggestion is that people make a greater difference in the world when they work with others, there is also an implication that educators should equip not only individuals with the competencies they need but groups, communities and societies too – in other words, that educators should build collective competency.

However, secondly, educators draw attention to the fact that if they themselves do not experience or enact agency, how can they teach their students to do so? How can it be modelled if the circumstances do not permit it? Therefore, in addition to building their own sense of agency (purpose, identity and action) education leaders need to find ways to enable the learning community – workforce and students – to do so too. However, the personal, interior sense of agency by a leader must not be neglected. The internal dimension relates to the transformation of self, the authorising of self.

Past notions in this space were concerned with distributed leadership. An extension of this is the exploration of intergenerational leadership. One important outcome of the UN Summit on Education Transformation in 2022, was a stream of work examining the possibilities of this, and resulting in the guide *Uniting Generations and Sharing Power to Transform Education*<sup>10</sup>. At both state and institutional level, leaders are developing methods to involve learners fully in the development of strategy and direction.<sup>11</sup>

One way to approach the question of how this competency might be developed is to consider the personal/professional mindsets involved (values and attitudes)

and the skills and knowledge that are needed (WISE, 2022). Some are highly consistent with previous best practice in existing frameworks (collaboration, systems thinking, strategic working and identifying and releasing talent). Others reflect the reorientation proposed in the new paradigm for young learners: curiosity; networking; prioritisation of own mental health and that of others; empathy and social awareness; value-driven.

## What does this mean for a learning workforce?

The competencies proposed above are intended to develop systems and institutions directed towards the goal of human flourishing. However, of course, ultimately this can only be achieved through the direct relationship between teachers and learners, in the classroom and beyond. There needs to be a through-line between those competencies and a related set for teachers – how we see the role of teachers evolving.

What is it that we need our learning workforce to do? What is the job? What are the outcomes that are sought for young people? Certainly ensuring the mastery of the conventional literacies; certainly competency in key domains of subject knowledge. However, scholarship,<sup>12</sup> practice, and to some degree, jurisdictional policies have tilted towards a more holistic view, incorporating

- the ‘4 Cs’ critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication, character, and
- social and emotional competence, including metacognition and wellbeing.

The OECD forerunner to its EHF project (*High Performing Systems for Tomorrow*) embraced these dimensions but also argued for a further expansion, if we are to pursue the ambition of flourishing humanity.

The suggested additional competencies for learners were

- adaptive problem solving
- ethical decision making, and
- aesthetic perception.

These considerations point to the need for yet further, more ambitious aims for developing the teacher workforce. Lest it be thought such proposals are fanciful or unachievable, it should be noted that **every one of the competencies proposed for inclusion in what follows is being modelled in practice right now somewhere in the world.**

This paper does not deal explicitly with the interstitial role of teacher leadership – seen not as a stepping stone to principalship (though it might be) but as valid in itself. Teacher leadership is the process in which educators exert influence through relationships and interactions beyond their scope in the classroom. At its best and most powerful it is uniquely rooted in student voice. This is a growing feature in schools, and deserves more attention than space here permits. Focus on it would likely entail a blend of the leadership and teacher competencies here, rather than a distinctive new domain.

### 1. Facilitating deep learning

The argument is that teaching and learning need to change in a fundamental way to support thriving at all levels: in people, places and the planet. Such an agenda requires learning that is adequate to the profound challenges and opportunities we face. What we need from a modern education workforce therefore is the capacity to organise experiences, relationships and content in order to foster our expanded ambitions for young people. It embraces pedagogy in particular, but with obvious implications for curriculum (see below). This has been called ‘deeper learning’,<sup>13</sup> or ‘4-Dimensional Education’.<sup>14</sup>

There are other models driving in the same direction.<sup>15</sup> Considerable effort has gone on, worldwide, to develop adequate pedagogical approaches; it is not my intention here to attempt a synthesis or taxonomy of them, and certainly not to prescribe a particular approach.

If the role of teachers continues to be conceived as that of 'delivering' the curriculum, as though it were a parcel, little progress will be made in pursuing education for human flourishing.

Teachers rarely engage (as once they did) with theories of constructivism, behaviourism or liberationism. Systems differ in the degree to which they have discouraged broadcast-style instruction, seeking more interactive methods. What seems important now, in considering the professional development that teachers need, is to establish that the key competency is that of **skilled selection of the appropriate pedagogical approach**, focused

on facilitating deep learning. The repertoire that is available is extensive, and does not need reinventing by individual teachers or groups – although it can undoubtedly be adapted according to context.

The repertoire includes, *inter alia*,

- direct instruction
- problem-based learning
- cross-disciplinary teaching
- service learning
- passion-based learning
- Socratic dialogue, and
- project-based learning.

Whichever approach is in play, it is fundamentally about authentic, challenging learning tasks, preferably ones that are relevant to and engaging for the learner – and these tasks need to go beyond individual, intellectually focused effort. As the range of approaches becomes better codified, and as evidence mounts about the circumstances in which they are

effective, we will be in a better position to support teachers to become competent in the business of pedagogy selection. This requires

- knowledge (of pedagogical repertoire for deeper learning)
- skills (resource building), and
- values and attitudes (open-mindedness, imagination, professional inclusivity).

## 2. Curriculum co-design

The nature of the curriculum itself naturally lies at the heart of this discussion. If the role of teachers continues to be conceived as that of 'delivering' the curriculum, as though it were a parcel, little progress will be made in pursuing education for human flourishing. Nor, however, can it be envisaged that the curriculum is an empty space to be filled at teachers' behest. The *Education and Skills 2030 project*<sup>16</sup> took the view that curriculum is a powerful lever which, amongst other things, can ensure a degree of consistency across institutions that contributes to greater equity. At the same time, it must be recognised that too much prescription can limit the creativity and agency of students and teachers if there is not sufficient space for them to explore their own interests and sense of purpose. The 2030 project explored extensively the phenomenon of curriculum overload, arguing that in many instances the scales had tipped too far towards prescription. In a world where knowledge is expanding exponentially, this is an untenable approach (Saarivirta and Kumpulainen, 2016).

Each jurisdiction will reach its own settlement on this question. The perspective adopted here is to propose that wherever the balance is struck between state-prescribed curriculum and teacher (or school) autonomy, the essential new competency for teachers is that of **curriculum co-design**.

In the case of state-mandated curriculum, this competency relates to working with state-level experts to co-design the nature of the prescribed content. There are many instances of this in practice – for example, the 2030 project took as one case study British Columbia, where the 2017 curriculum redesign process was predicated on a co-design process with serving classroom teachers.<sup>17</sup> This was felt to be key, not only in the quality, rigour and practicality of the work that emerged, but also in the process of engaging the workforce as a whole to enact the vision and make it real.

In the space where teachers have autonomy over the curriculum then the competency relates to the co-design process with other stakeholders (learners, other staff, community). In particular, co-designing aspects of the curriculum with learners is an emerging competence: one which many teachers aspire to, but which they recognise can be complex. They need support to acquire the competence.

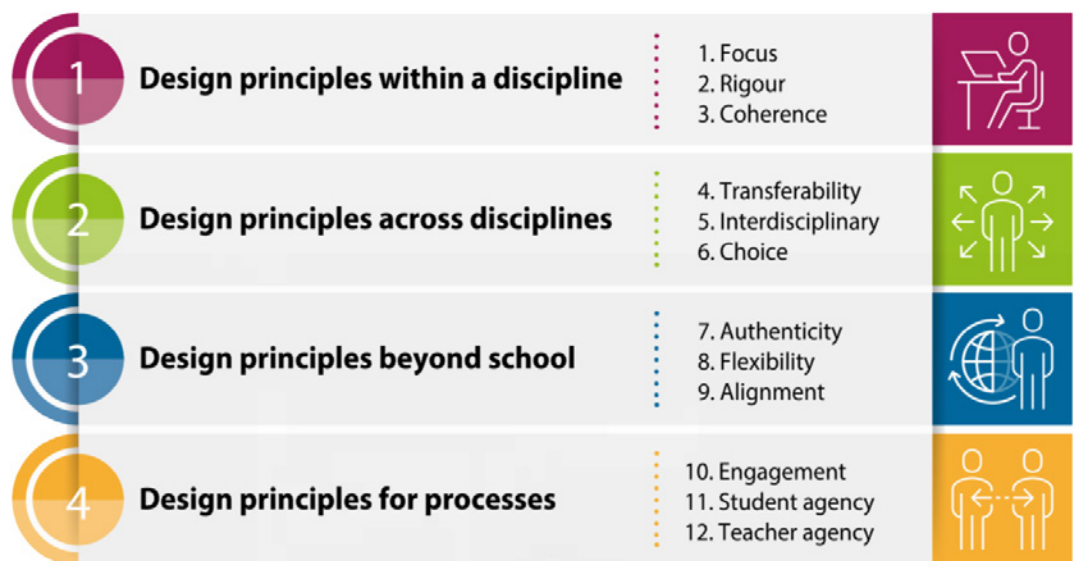
The purpose of this emphasis on co-design is

- to ensure that teacher expertise and insight is fully incorporated in the process of state-level curriculum redesign, and
- to emphasise that, within a school, agency and co-agency are particularly enhanced when the curriculum is the subject of intentional collaborative work. However, teachers will not be equipped to engage in these co-design processes if they do not acquire the competency.

The knowledge dimension of this competency might start with the principles of curriculum design, which OECD suggests<sup>18</sup> are as shown in Figure 1.

Schools that have empowered their teachers to engage in curriculum co-design observe that there is sometimes some unlearning to do in terms of values and attitudes. For example, the possibility of non-linear progression (recognising that each student has their own learning path and is equipped with different prior knowledge, skills and attitudes when they start school); together with the recognition that a curriculum is a living and evolving tool, not a fixed ‘thing’.

**Figure 1. Principles of curriculum design**



### 3. Assessment choreography

Across the world there is increasing recognition that conventional methods of assessing learning are not working. One problem is the plethora of functions that assessment is expected to fulfil: from promoting more effective learning in individuals, through judging their performance; through to judging institutions' performance; right through to judging the performance of systems. The result is that the purpose which is at the very heart of all this – promoting powerful learning – is not achieved; least of all in the service of human flourishing. In his critique of the current state of assessment, Lucas (2021) points out that not only does high-stakes testing, reliant on standardised tests, have a damaging impact on health and wellbeing of students, but it is not evidencing the kinds of dispositions and capabilities that society wants (as reported by employers, colleges and universities). Lucas quotes the following illuminating analogy, suggested by W T Randolph, the Commissioner of Education of Colorado.<sup>19</sup>

*To solely use standardized achievement tests is like casting a net into the sea – a net that is intentionally designed to let the most interesting fish get away. Then, to describe the ones that are caught strictly in terms of their weight and length is to radically reduce what we know about them. To further conclude that all the contents of the sea consist of fish like those in the net compounds the error further. We need more kinds of fish. We need to know more about those we catch. We need new nets.*

The 'new nets' have been in development and use in a multitude of settings internationally. They include, amongst others,<sup>20</sup>

- learner profiles (such as those in use in the Mastery Transcript Consortium; the International Baccalaureate [IB]; XP School [UK]; Big Picture Learning)

- psychometric tests (such as Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset Assessment, Harvard's Human Flourishing App)
- extended investigations (such as the EPQ in the UK, and the Extended Essay of the IB), and
- micro-credentialling (such as those developed by Digital Promise).

It must be apparent that there is much more to do, both in research and development terms<sup>21</sup> and above all in policy terms, to move in this direction to support the goal of human flourishing. This work is a prerequisite to expecting a new competency on the part of teachers who, for the most part, are not granted the learning and development opportunities to utilise the full range of methods becoming available. Nevertheless, how might we describe the teacher competency that we would be looking for?

Professor Sandra Milligan, Director of the Assessment Research Centre at the University of Melbourne New Metrics for Success project,<sup>22</sup> suggests that a teacher who is competent in assessment will have

- developed a repertoire that enables them to design, with colleagues and learners, a process of gathering evidence from a variety of contexts so that a learner can show what they are truly capable of in any domain of learning, and
- knowledge of how to make considered judgements (on the basis of the above) about the learner's position on a scale of competence in that domain, from less expert to more expert, interpreting what the learner knows and can do and what they need to learn next, with a sufficient degree of confidence, to support learners in their learning and to provide the recognition of attainment that people can trust.

As High Resolves (2020) has argued, we need to focus on better understanding the best combinations of multimodal assessments to select, depending on context and desired outcomes. In any case, a variety of modalities will be increasingly imperative as AI tools make the inadequacy of conventional methods even more apparent. The acquisition of assessment repertoire is critical. In the pursuit of human flourishing, perhaps the modality of learner profiles is most salient, since these enable students to better manage their own learning, monitor their own progress and recognise the learning skills they already have or need to attain.

So perhaps the metaphor to capture this competency is **assessment choreography**. It is important that what is asked of teachers is both fully supported by the policy as well as the research environment, so that we are not expecting the impossible from teachers. Thus, skills in things like statistics, normal curves, measurement theory, data analytics, item analysis, data banks, data analytics or standardisation do not feature in the knowledge dimension of this competence. Ideally, however, teachers should also be able to identify the

various ways that incompetent or faulty assessment can crush the will and confidence to learn, narrow the conception of learning, and hence reduce standards of attainment. The ‘attitudes’ dimension of this competence is important: shifting from the view of assessment that is solely about judgement, towards a wider understanding that encompasses assessment **for** and **as** learning (see Earl, 2012).

#### 4. Digital literacy

It has been anticipated for a decade, but perhaps generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) made its breakthrough impact in education with the launch of ChatGPT in 2022. Without doubt, this is but the harbinger of many other products, with an accelerating range of applications and user friendliness. Whilst many young people immediately played with the potential of the tool, the response of education systems has been predictably slow and hesitant. That is understandable, since the implications are immense and the stakes are high. AI carries enormous consequences for the future of humanity and therefore it is imperative that education crafts a response that is measured and wise.

The Beijing Declaration of 2019<sup>23</sup> recorded an international consensus that AI needed to be integrated into education. 2023 saw the first international guidance on the question (UNESCO, 2023). November 2023 also saw the first international summit on Safety and AI convened by the UK government. The issue has forced itself on to the agenda in education as never before, and responses are still emergent and unclear. What is certain is that AI holds the capacity either to advance the aim of human flourishing as never before or entirely to destroy it. It has been argued (Barrett and Harte, 2023) that Digitally Enabled Learning Ecosystems (DELEs) – where every child, irrespective of geography and socioeconomic status, has access to adaptive learning and AI that safely and securely adds value to the learning experience – have the potential utterly to transform education in pursuit of human thriving.

It is important that what is asked of teachers is both fully supported by the policy as well as the research environment, so that we are not expecting the impossible from teachers.

... teachers identify developing technology skills for teaching as their second-most important professional learning need, but 44 per cent of teachers in OECD countries do not receive any technology-related professional learning.

What then might we reasonably expect of teachers in this fast-moving but highly consequential domain? What is clearly unacceptable is for the education workforce to lag behind the world their learners are entering. Plainly, education content is almost literally infinite and widely available. New tools are coming online daily. They are a part of learning ecosystems with many dimensions: including strategy, connectivity, platforms etc (Barrett and Harte, 2023). Here we focus on what is entailed for teachers' competency and therefore their professional development. According to 2023 survey data on the governmental use of AI for education, only some seven countries (China, Finland, Georgia, Qatar, Spain, Thailand and Türkiye) reported that they had developed or were developing frameworks or training programs on AI for teachers. Only the Ministry of Education of Singapore reported building an online repository centred on the use of ChatGPT in teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2023). According to TALIS (the Teachers and Learning International Survey), teachers identify developing technology skills for teaching as their second-most important professional learning need, but 44 per cent of teachers in OECD countries do not receive any technology-related professional learning. Also, systems spend substantial money on new technologies without investing in helping teachers to use it more effectively (Schleicher, 2022).

It is clear from UNESCO's reviews that, as yet, little work has been done to reassess the competencies needed by teachers to understand and use AI for teaching, for learning and for their own professional learning (see OECD, 2020); nor yet is there the advocacy work to ensure that these are integrated into professional development frameworks. In lieu of this detailed work, we advance here simply the notions that the required competency entails

- knowledge and skills to navigate widely available generative AI tools – to use such appropriate tools for their own professional development, but also to employ and critique tools for the use of students themselves; to develop understanding of ethical considerations about how to personalise, by utilising learning analytics software to determine how students are learning, what content and ideas excite them, and when and where they are disengaging.
- values and attitudes among teachers so that, whilst deploying AI tools wisely to optimise opportunities, they yet remain vigilant about their shortcomings and risks (tech professionals refer to the tendency of AI to 'hallucinate'<sup>24</sup>).
- open and curious attitudes to AI that facilitate appreciative utilisation.

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## Conclusions and recommendations

In summary, in this paper I propose that, in pursuit of education for a thriving planet, places and people, the professional development of both leaders and the education workforce needs to be reconsidered. The suggestion is that frameworks for this development need to include the following set of new competencies.

### Leadership competencies

1. Re-booting educational purpose through narrative
2. Orchestrating learning ecosystems
3. Championing equity
4. Systems thinking: managing dynamic complexity
5. Leading and managing innovation
6. Developing agency in others and in self

### Teacher competencies

1. Facilitating deep learning
2. Curriculum co-design
3. Assessment choreography
4. Digital literacy

These suggestions are made in the full awareness of the crisis facing education in terms of recruitment. UNESCO's estimates indicate the need globally for an additional 24.4 million teachers in primary education and some 44.4 million teachers for secondary education, in order to achieve universal basic education by 2030.<sup>25</sup>

Latest convenings of the International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) have made commitments to reorganising teachers' time and working conditions to support teachers in their shifting role; and to rethinking pre-service and in-service professional learning (NCEE ISTP, 2023). Central to this is a vision of a much more collaborative profession. As the ISTP gatherings have made clear, we face a choice: taking the education workforce in the High Competency – High Wage direction (the hallmark of a number of high-performing systems); or accepting a lower level of professionalism, less job satisfaction and the current spiral of decline.

The suggestions are consistent with other work on the future of teaching and 'the new professionalism',<sup>26</sup> but place particular focus on the implications of a serious focus on education for human flourishing as our paramount goal.

No part of the framework proposed above is merely theoretical or hypothetical. Every dimension has real-life correlates in the real world, in action now. Perhaps jurisdictions might ask the questions: how might these competency sets fit our context and resonate in our circumstances? What depth of work needs to be done in terms of further research and developments to pursue this direction of travel?



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## Endnotes

1. [www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit](http://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit)
2. See [www.templetonworldcharity.org/about-us](http://www.templetonworldcharity.org/about-us) for a wide ranging initiative based on the concept of human flourishing.
3. See particularly the Executive Summary for OECD (2005) *Definition and Selection of Key Competencies*, OECD, Paris. [www.oecd.org/pisa/definition-selection-key-competencies-summary.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/definition-selection-key-competencies-summary.pdf)
4. As examples, see the suite of publications produced by the WISE All-In group: [www.wise-qatar.org/education-disrupted-leadership-for-a-new-era](http://www.wise-qatar.org/education-disrupted-leadership-for-a-new-era)
5. See particularly Leadbeater, C and Winhall, J (2020) Building Better Systems. [www.systeminnovation.org/green-paper](http://www.systeminnovation.org/green-paper); and the anonymous 2023 New Education Story, *Big Change: Three Drivers to Transform Education Systems*. [www.big-change.org/publication/new-education-story](http://www.big-change.org/publication/new-education-story)
6. 'VUCA is an acronym that stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity – qualities that make a situation or condition difficult to analyse, respond to or plan for. Understanding how to mitigate these qualities can greatly improve the strategic abilities of a leader and lead to better outcomes.' Wikipedia.
7. For example the Mapping tool produced by the International Public Policy Observatory. [theippo.co.uk/mapping-systems-for-policy-impact-introducing-ippos-seppa-method](http://theippo.co.uk/mapping-systems-for-policy-impact-introducing-ippos-seppa-method)
8. For example, Leadbeater's work with the Association of Independent Schools in South Australia (AISSA) on systems thinking in the *Learning Impact Project*; Leadbeater (2022).
9. Harvard University Design Thinking in Education. [tll.gse.harvard.edu/design-thinking](http://tll.gse.harvard.edu/design-thinking); for Spirals of Enquiry See Halbert and Kaser, 2013; and see also [www.noie.ca](http://www.noie.ca)
10. [neweducationstory.big-change.org/uniting-generations-and-sharing-power-to-transform-education](http://neweducationstory.big-change.org/uniting-generations-and-sharing-power-to-transform-education)
11. See for example the work of South Australia in intergenerational leadership [discover.education.sa.gov.au/our-strategy/](http://discover.education.sa.gov.au/our-strategy/)
12. See Fadel et al, 2015 and his work with the Center for Curriculum Redesign. [curriculumredesign.org/ccr-releases-4d-framework-1-0-for-skills-character-and-meta-learning](http://curriculumredesign.org/ccr-releases-4d-framework-1-0-for-skills-character-and-meta-learning)
13. See *A New Education Story* on the Big Change web site. [big-change.org/publication/new-education-story/](http://big-change.org/publication/new-education-story/)
14. [curriculumredesign.org/our-work/four-dimensional-21st-century-education-learning-competencies-future-2030/](http://curriculumredesign.org/our-work/four-dimensional-21st-century-education-learning-competencies-future-2030/)
15. See, as examples, Big Picture Learning [www.bigpicture.org/approach](http://www.bigpicture.org/approach) ; and Education Reimagined: [education-reimagined.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/A-Transformational-Vision-for-Education-in-the-US.pdf](http://education-reimagined.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/A-Transformational-Vision-for-Education-in-the-US.pdf)
16. See in particular the project's paper on curriculum redesign. [www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/brochure-thematic-reports-on-curriculum-redesign.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/brochure-thematic-reports-on-curriculum-redesign.pdf)
17. [curriculum.gov.bc.ca/rethinking-curriculum](http://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/rethinking-curriculum)
18. [www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/brochure-thematic-reports-on-curriculum-redesign.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/brochure-thematic-reports-on-curriculum-redesign.pdf)
19. [pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/AssessmentReimagined\\_Booklet\\_0.pdf](http://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/AssessmentReimagined_Booklet_0.pdf)
20. For a full discussion of new methods see Lucas, 2021 and Milligan et al, 2020.
21. Fortunately this is an expanding area: see the New Metrics Project (University of Melbourne) [education.unimelb.edu.au/melbourne-assessment/home/partnerships](http://education.unimelb.edu.au/melbourne-assessment/home/partnerships) ; Rethinking Assessment (UK) [rethinkingassessment.com/](http://rethinkingassessment.com/) ; Project Zero (Harvard) [pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/AssessmentReimagined\\_Booklet\\_0.pdf](http://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/AssessmentReimagined_Booklet_0.pdf) ; The Brookings Institution [brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2017/08/31/new-data-on-the-breadth-of-skills-movement-over-150-countries-included](http://brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2017/08/31/new-data-on-the-breadth-of-skills-movement-over-150-countries-included)
22. Email communication with the author, October 2023.
23. [unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368303](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368303)
24. [www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/AI-hallucination](http://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/AI-hallucination)
25. [unesco.org/en/articles/world-teachers-day-unesco-sounds-alarm-global-teacher-shortage-crisis](http://unesco.org/en/articles/world-teachers-day-unesco-sounds-alarm-global-teacher-shortage-crisis)
26. [www.oecd.org/education/ceri/new-professionalism-future-of-teaching.htm](http://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/new-professionalism-future-of-teaching.htm)

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- Additional reading**
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### About the author

Valerie Hannon is a global thought leader, inspiring systems to re-think what 'success' will mean in the 21st century, and the implications for education. The co-founder of both Innovation Unit and of the Global Education Leaders Partnership, Valerie is a radical voice for change, whilst grounded in a deep understanding of how education systems currently work.

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### About the paper

The author believes that thriving or flourishing is at the heart of the future we should work towards for education. This requires a transformational agenda, with practical implications, and related professional learning for teachers will be of the utmost importance. She explores the concepts of a re-boot for educational purpose; orchestration of learning systems; championing equity; management of dynamic complexity; leading innovation; and developing agency in others and in self. She discusses what this means for a learning workforce, in terms of learning, curriculum design, assessment, digital literacy, and leadership and teacher competencies.