

# Funding the Future

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The [OECD has published](#) a new report on the state of global teenage career preparation. As they say on their website:

*This report sets out key findings from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as they relate to teenage career development.*

As the [executive summary to the report says](#):

*Using data from the OECD Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), which compares data from 2000 to 2022 across more than 80 countries, this report explores the state of career preparation among teenagers worldwide and highlights several key findings and concerns.*

*A significant portion of students are uncertain about their career plans, which is linked to poorer employment outcomes later in life. This uncertainty has grown substantially since 2018. Students who participate more in career development activities tend to have clearer career plans and better employment outcomes.*

*The report reveals that while educational ambitions have increased, socio-economic background still plays a significant role in determining these ambitions. The study shows that social background is a stronger determinant of educational plans than academic ability. High-performing students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely on average to expect to complete tertiary education than their less academically successful but more advantaged peers.*

*Despite the rise in educational aspirations, students' job expectations have changed little and remain misaligned with actual labour market demands. Many young people continue to aspire to a limited number of traditional, high-status jobs. Students' career expectations are increasingly concentrated in professional occupations, which do not align with the actual distribution of jobs in the labour market. Confusion about how the education system can be used to access desirable jobs is particularly pronounced among students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many students demonstrate anxiety about their career prospects.*

*The report underscores the importance of effective career guidance and employer engagement in helping students understand the opportunities available to them. However, it finds that too few students are participating in career development activities that are most strongly linked to better employment outcomes. Disadvantaged students, in particular, are less likely to engage in these activities, exacerbating existing inequalities.*

*It also calls for greater investment in career development systems that begin early in students' educational journeys and involve frequent, meaningful engagement with employers. It suggests that such systems can help students make informed decisions about their education and career paths, ultimately leading to better employment outcomes and a more balanced workforce.*

I am well aware that there are some people who think that the OECD is 'the rich countries' club', and what it has to say should therefore be ignored, but my own experience of working with it over an extended period suggests that would be unwise. The reality is that it frequently researches topics that would otherwise not be addressed, and that it has the resources to do so. This is an example of one such study.

The findings of the report is damning of the current state of the education system, and it's failure to prepare young people for the world that they will actually face when they move into work.

Not only does it show that over more than twenty years, there was no significant move to tackle the problems created by inequality, and consequent access to the workplace, but it also shows that social perceptions, no doubt backed by education systems that have desperately sought to reinforce social hierarchies of power in many countries around the world, have not adapted to the world we live in, or the fact that an old order has disappeared, whatever the neoliberals might like to pretend to the contrary.

To be blunt, working in most of the 'old professions' is a grim experience for most people now, and offers few career prospects.

Accountancy has not adapted to the real world, and still presumes that shareholder priorities matter most when the vast majority of young people think otherwise.

Like the legal profession, accountancy has also completely failed to comprehend, so far, what AI might mean for it.

Medicine is being totally commoditised, and the concept of care is being removed from it.

Other professions which once offered the prospect of a stable career for life, from banking to teaching, and much else, are no longer doing so, either because of the deliberate downgrading of staff numbers and skills within them, or because funding is

not available for more mature staff, meaning there is no chance of a lifetime career for many.

But still education seeks to train people in single silos, presuming that mastering just one of these is all a person will ever need to do.

It is not. People need to learn how to manage multiple careers, requiring skill sets that can adapt as time develops. They cannot, therefore, afford to become too specialist. Instead, they need skills that are adaptable, whether in communication, accounting and budgeting, IT, social media, using the web, marketing, entrepreneurship and related issues like money management and tax, and much more. But who is training these things? Almost no one. And so young people are left wholly unprepared for the world they will need to live in.

When will anyone listen?

That will be when the neoliberals who are dedicated to that education to reinforce the status quo are swept from office. Until then, there is no chance of change.

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*My thanks to David Lowry for drawing this report to my attention.*