

# OECD eyes 'enormous' economic gains from better education

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Credit: Charles Rondeau/public domain

Rich and poor countries could see "enormous" economic benefits from reducing youth unemployment by ensuring all youngsters have basic reading, maths and science skills, the OECD said Wednesday.

In a report entitled "Universal Basic Skills", the OECD warned that

global economic crises in recent years had shown that bailouts, stimulus programmes and printing money were not remedies by themselves.

"We can only grow ourselves out of bad economic conditions," said the report released by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the German capital.

Increasing access to schooling is a first step, it said, but nations need to go further, equipping more people with better skills to "collaborate, compete and connect" in ways to advance societies.

If every 15-year-old in the world achieved at least basic skills by 2030 "the benefits for economic growth and sustainable development would be enormous", said the report, compiled from data from 76 countries.

The 110-page report defines basic skills as "modern functional literacy", or at least the first level of the international PISA student assessment programme.

With youth jobless rates high in most of the OECD's 34 member states, fuelling fears of a "lost generation" in heavily-indebted EU countries, the Paris-based OECD said even its high-income members stood to gain from improving basic education.

By ensuring all pupils had basic skills by 2030, they would raise their average future [gross domestic product](#) by 3.5 percent, it said.

"Without the right skills, people end up on the margins of the society, technological progress doesn't translate into [economic growth](#) and countries face an uphill struggle to remain ahead in this hyper-connected world," the OECD said.

Ghana has only a 46-percent secondary school enrolment rate, as well as

the lowest achievement levels for those 15-year-olds who are in school, it noted.

The West African country could grow its GDP to 38 times its current level in present value terms, over the lifetime of children born today, if it were able to reach the OECD education target, it added.

Underperformance in education is also a problem in wealthy countries, the report warned, describing as "worrying" the large share of pupils from advantaged backgrounds in rich nations that don't have even basic skills proficiency.

In the United States, 24 percent of 15-year-olds do not successfully complete those basic skills, it said, adding that meeting the universality goal could produce more than 27 trillion dollars in additional income for the US economy.

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