

Curriculum for the 21st Century – *A Corporate Citizenship Education Initiative*

Dr. Frank Stefan Becker, Siemens AG

Senior Consultant Generation21 Universities

Skills and Human Capital Summit

The Lisbon Council, Brussels Oct. 15, 2007



Current trends and challenges for individuals and society

- Growing complexity of society and the economy, increased interdependence, plethora of options available to all participants, many external factors influencing events and decisions
- Everyone must assume different and sometimes contradictory roles as customer, citizen, voter, employee, shareholder....
- Without a basic understanding of the mechanisms defining complex modern life, an inability to cope with private and professional challenges will result, leading to frustration or even aggression
- Education must be holistic, encompassing professional as well as personal skills, combining specialization in one field with a general understanding of the others

Curriculum for the 21st Century – Steps to create the necessary awareness

- Definition of **Ten Points** covering the major skills and competences
- Without claiming to present something previously unknown or unexpected, the **Ten Points** are meant to serve as a yardstick, raise awareness and stimulate discussion, thereby creating the necessary “feeling of urgency“
- Gap between existing and required skills level to be visualized using a survey among recruiters at the company (> 100, Siemens), corroborated e.g. by an external survey among students
- Publication of the results in cooperation with the Lisbon Council in summer 2008, with the aim of feeding into the OECD Adult Skills Survey planned for 2010+. Start of public debate!

Required skills and competences – Professional and society-related (1)

1. Mathematical/analytical/logical thinking

- *Competence in mathematics, ability to recognize when a mathematical approach is appropriate and to formulate mathematical problems*
- *Ability to think logically, see consequences, recognize cause and effect, use of plausibility checks and estimates to detect possible errors, critical scrutiny of information presumed to be correct*

2. Fundamental understanding of science/technology

- *Basic knowledge of physics (mechanics, energy, electricity, optics and acoustics), basic knowledge of chemistry and biology, familiarity with the fundamentals of medicine as relevant to healthcare*
- *Awareness of the possible impact of new knowledge and technologies on one's field of activity, on society and on the environment; openness to interdisciplinary topics*

3. Proficiency in the use of information and communication systems

- *Basic understanding of the latest information and communication media, knowledge of innovative, career-relevant computer applications, mastery of the use of work-related electronic devices*
- *Familiarity with information systems and research options, the ability to evaluate and interpret results*

Required skills and competences – Professional and society-related (2)

4. Basic knowledge of economics

- *Knowledge of the mechanisms of a market economy such as pricing, cost-benefit analysis, quality requirements; understanding of how a company operates, margins, environmental and corporate citizenship standards*
- *Awareness of the impact of financial markets, competition strategies, intellectual property*
- *Familiarity with regulating mechanisms established on the basis of legislation or standards*
- *Holistic view of the interrelations between cause and effect in economic systems and the understanding of possible side effects*
- *Recognition of the effect of unmarketlike, non-rational mechanisms*

5. Fundamental understanding of society and politics

- *Knowledge of governmental functions, structures and spheres of influence (legislative, executive, judicial); familiarity with the political party system, elections, the role of the opposition*
- *Awareness of the significance and functions of public institutions and private organizations and the role of the media*

Required skills and competences – Individual and human-related (1)

6. Self-perception, personal characteristics

- *Ability to analyze situations, set goals and priorities, manage time*
- *Knowledge of one's own role and responsibilities, awareness of the impact of one's actions*
- *Capacity for self-discipline, enthusiasm and reliability; good work habits, ability to cope with frustration and to make decisions*
- *Willingness to engage in life-long learning*

7. Social skills (empathy, sensitiveness)

- *Awareness of the positions, moods and sensitive points of other people*
- *Sensitivity in situations involving criticism and arguments*
- *Etiquette (appearance, creating an appropriate atmosphere, observing social distance, politeness, discipline), ability to judge one's own behavior and fit into a hierarchical structure*
- *Ability to compromise and focus on joint goals, ability to give and receive criticism or feedback*
- *Recognition and acceptance of the abilities and contributions of others*
- *Curiosity, openness to new things*

Required skills and competences – Individual and human-related (2)

8. Native-language communication skills

- *Ability to express oneself orally, listen to, analyze and reproduce complex factual information*
- *Ability to take into account the interests of other people*
- *Good written formulation skills, also under time pressure, ability to present topics and contexts for specific target groups, ability to formulate in the appropriate style*

9. Knowledge of English and one other foreign language

- *Fluency in English, ability to read texts of medium difficulty, understand lectures in one's own area of specialization and produce written summaries of information received*
- *Ability to state one's own opinion orally and in writing*
- *Basic knowledge of a second language, preferably from another language group*

10. Understanding of values (of one's own and foreign cultures)

- *Ability to recognize and evaluate one's own cultural background*
- *Awareness of problems relating to current trends affecting society*
- *Ability to relativize material goals and competing goals in the context of other interests*
- *Respect for other value systems (religious, traditional, gender-specific)*



Further steps – Suggestions welcome, implementation together with partners

Open questions:

- Are these Ten Points a meaningful yardstick? Are they too demanding/comprehensive? Is their focus right, or are they too challenging to be implemented in any curriculum at all?
- Can any survey be a meaningful approach to visualizing skills gap? What could be improved? Which questions are most important?
- How to win support; novel approaches to conveying the message to the public, educational institutions, the government, unions, employers
- Education must be recognized as a goal that is worth every effort!



**Thank you for your attention!
Questions and suggestions are welcome....**

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An open, democratic society cannot survive without informed citizens who are capable of understanding and participating

Frank-stefan.becker@siemens.com