



## 1 Introduction by Sandra L. Morrison

*(English, Français, Español)*

**ICAE President and Associate Professor, University of Waikato**

### **Skills and competencies**

My immediate family is composed of four generations; not unusual by any means but for a short time we were a five generation family. One of my most defining moments was when I was able to look into the eyes of a grandparent with a newborn grandchild playing idly on my knee, both who were completely oblivious to the deeper meaning that I was making of this engagement. The opportunity to look back in time through the experiences and realities of a grandparent and within the same moment to feel the wonderment of a new generation allows one to look forward in time through your progeny – history, destiny and continuity dissolve into a cycle and one feels the responsibility to fulfil a duty of care to the planet, to ongoing peace and to happiness. These are critical life reference points which allow time for self reflection as we morph into becoming the conduit for the knowledge that we have inherited from those who have gone before with the obligation to pass it on to future generations. Reflection extends also to thinking about our future as a global community and exploring and clarifying what are our hopes and dreams for the future generations; how do we equip our children towards ensuring that they have the capacities for the world that awaits them and what are the skills and competencies that they will need ?

Just looking at the events of the last 12 months- Brexit, Trumpism shows how easily popularism can surface to create fear, incite racism and religious hatred amongst our communities and manipulate public opinion. We are in an era where we are denied dialogue on big issues such as climate change, environmental degradation and possible warfare between nations. Cyber warfare is added to new threats. Presently we are conveniently distracted by tweets, untruths and alternative facts and it takes a lot of manoeuvring and even a stubborn refusal to engage to create a counter hegemonic discourse. Offering a



counter opinion can only emerge through an informed mind, an openness to learn and a commitment for a robust democratic society...and it all starts with acquiring basic literacy skills, numeracy skills and now also digital skills. It seems to me that more than ever before we need a lifelong learning society to decipher what is real and what is propaganda. Complex as the world seems now will the future be simpler or even more challenging ? What will the world be like 10 years on; 20 years on and even 50 years on?

Our Virtual Seminar presents an opportunity to reflect on the concept of skills and competencies in adult education and development against the background of an uncertain world. Through the wide thinking of the many contributors from diverse contexts, we are presented with a broad range of informed opinion, theoretical understandings, practical challenges to confront and expand our thinking. Points raised discuss the place of non cognitive skills; the impact of a rapidly increasing technological world, an unpredictable future with new jobs not yet invented. Then we have unique viewpoints on lifelong learning as path to happiness and I was particularly taken by Alessio Surian's account of five skills it takes to build another possible world- very thought provoking. Let us not forget also about the global Sustainable Development Goals and the Education 2030 Agenda which is also under examination in this seminar and which took years of persistent advocacy to arrive at a framework in which there has been global agreement.

While increasing our critical awareness is important, we must also think about the known strengths and propensity of communities to work in particular ways and to learn from each other. How can we promote the value of community and encourage community cohesion and collaboration? How can we extend that notion to cohesion and respect across nations, across religions and across ideologies? We are after all stronger standing and working together as collective entities rather than as individuals. In times of challenge resilient communities are built on having social cohesion.

Being able to interact as humans who have a sense of worth, have respect for others and can initiate dialogue and communication are fundamental human values which we no doubt all treasure. Moreover the ability to create and be visionary and entrepreneurial will be important dimensions to our future realities especially as the availability of paid work decreases. Self reliance and community reliance will be key.



Continuing to be open to learning and creating learning communities requires nothing more than groups of people to come together even in small ways to respond to an identified learning need. Lifelong learning is a mandate and a mantra leading to being critically aware of our self as individuals, our self in our communities, our place in our nation and our place as global citizens. Moreover the ability to co construct solutions to pressing problems will require us to draw on our own strengths and potential to create and take charge of the wellbeing of our communities.

As we read through these articles and join in stimulating discussion with our colleagues through this virtual forum I challenge you to create a legacy of which your progeny will be proud, to be remembered as a good ancestor and to keep the faces of your grandchildren in your heart when you make the decisions for today. I invite you to engage, to challenge, to wonder, to be curious, to question and to share your experiences.

**These are the links to the AED 83/2016 publication in three languages:**

[English](#)

[Français](#)

[Español](#)