

KNOWING WHAT COUNTS IN FUTURE.

Our strategy



Deutsche Telekom **Stiftung**

In 2003, Deutsche Telekom Stiftung defined its primary charitable purpose in its articles of organization as “promoting and shaping the development of a connected knowledge- and information-based society both nationally and internationally.” In the first few years after its founding, it sought out areas where it could translate this purpose into concrete action, quickly settling on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. Germany had had serious training and quality problems in this field since the 1990s, and its troubles came into sharp relief following Germany’s poor showing in the first PISA study. Deutsche Telekom Stiftung then tackled its mission by working to improve disciplinary and particularly cognitive skills in STEM subjects. Through its work, it has made a name for itself as Germany’s leading foundation for STEM education.

Teaching 21st century skills

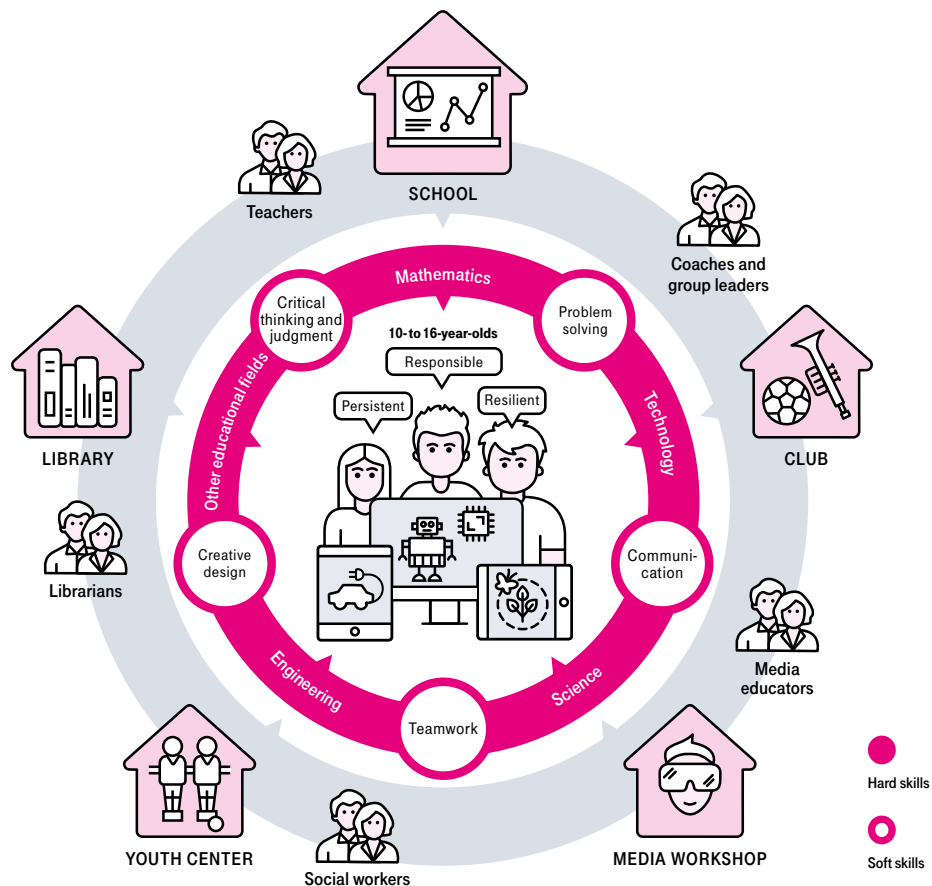
Digitalization is changing the face of education and making it necessary to re-assess the skills the people will need to obtain employment and contribute productively to society in the 21st century. Basic hard skills will remain essential, so we will continue to support their teaching in the future. However, success will increasingly be driven by soft skills and personality traits such as resilience and perseverance.

The foundation has recently responded to these developments and initiated projects that no longer focus exclusively on teaching hard STEM skills. Instead, the foundation will re-align and expand its activities to include soft skills alongside its core STEM focus. In particular, we support the development of the following skills:

- Thinking critically
- Researching and assessing information
- Solving problems across disciplines
- Designing creatively
- Communicating effectively
- Working in a team

We are particularly interested in critical judgment and thinking as well as creativity and innovativeness. In that sense, our approach reflects developments around the world, particularly in the OECD (see OECD Learning Compass 2030, www.oecd.org/education/2030-project).

OUR EDUCATIONAL ECOSYSTEM



Creatively and critically tackling broader questions

In the future, we plan to largely support an interdisciplinary approach to STEM subjects, although we are well aware that all interdisciplinary work must begin with the acquisition of hard skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Future projects will revolve around solving real-life STEM problems, including global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity and electromobility. It takes creativity and critical thinking to tackle these issues and develop and execute solutions, particularly when evaluating sources. That is why, in the future, we will devote more attention to advancing problem- and user-centric methods such as design thinking.

An interdisciplinary approach capitalizes on the capabilities of digital media and prepares students to navigate the digital world, which serves

as stand-in for the modern world with all its challenges. It goes beyond traditional STEM subjects to include the arts – hence the acronym, “STEAM”. We interpret the “arts” broadly as not just the fine and applied arts, but the humanities and cultural education as well.

One new field that is ripe for an interdisciplinary approach is data science education. It combines mathematics, statistics and computer science with technological and social science applications. In addition, it has been virtually ignored by the German educational system even though knowledge generation has increasingly become data-driven (big data, data mining, machine learning, etc.) and the job opportunities in sophisticated data analysis are vast and growing.

Improving educational biographies

We believe there is a particularly urgent need to teach digital skills to 10- to 16-year-olds. This is a critical age for the trajectory of young people's educational careers. Moreover, some members of this cohort are very resistant to educational programs, particularly those involving traditional school subjects. We will therefore be focusing our energies on this target group in the future. In the process, we will continue to live up to our standards for educational equity by identifying and supporting talented young people regardless of their background.

We will develop programs directly for and with children and teenagers and thus empower students to take more responsibility for their educations and school careers. We want them to view themselves as active members of the digital world and enable them to put their own ideas into action.

We also want to collaborate more closely and directly with the people who work on the front lines with children and adolescents, including teachers, social workers, media educators and librarians. We believe that school can no longer teach all the skills the 21st century demands and so view educational environments as "ecosystems" centered around school. We will therefore take action not only in traditional part-time schools, but also in youth welfare services, all-day schools and non-scholastic places of learning such as libraries or makerspaces. We believe makerspaces in particular are highly innovative, particularly when it comes to imparting creative skills.

Improving education locally

Schools, as the organizing center for educating children and teenagers, have to engage with non-school partners as equal partners. To make this happen, we will focus more on changing school and class development from the outside in by focusing on opportunities for schools to partner with other members of the educational ecosystem. We will support principals and teachers who want to take a different approach to education by not only supplying educational material and programs but also focusing more on non-school partners and integrating outside ideas more effectively.

“IN THE FUTURE, WE WILL FOCUS MORE ON CHANGING SCHOOL AND CLASS DEVELOPMENT FROM THE OUTSIDE IN BY FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOLS TO PARTNER WITH OTHER EDUCATIONAL PLAYERS.”

In this environment, we do not believe that career changers represent a stopgap solution to teacher shortages. Instead, we want to promote alternative paths to teaching careers and other positions in education as opportunities to bring new ideas and energy to schools. We will thus be supporting people who have not completed a traditional teacher certification program to leverage the hard and soft skills they acquired in their previous careers and the different way they perceive the real world. At the same time, we will insist on the high standards of teacher professionalism that must be met by professional development and continuing education programs for career changers.

Cooperating with researchers and practitioners

Deutsche Telekom Stiftung draws on the latest science and research and contributes to scientific progress itself. It will thus continue to work with universities and other scientific institutions. We will form development workshops with these important partners in order to develop research-based programs for the people who work with children and teenagers: from principals, teachers and college students majoring in education to people who teach in non-school settings. These programs will be the focus of our partnerships with teacher training institutions and continuing education providers in the future.

We will generally continue to develop programs for practical purposes based on empirical evidence. Our development process will draw on agile methods that bring together pure and applied research.

Improving visibility

As a result of its new strategy, the foundation will act as an even more forceful advocate of its issues and target groups in order to underscore and strengthen its position as a valuable civil society player in the educational space. We will continue to utilize events, particularly those addressing questions of the future, as well as national and international surveys and studies to raise public awareness of our issues and projects. To strengthen our brand, we will identify issues that we can successfully tackle on our own. Wherever we can and/or want to achieve a greater collective impact, we will work with partners and contribute our new focus areas to the partnership (e.g. the Forum Education and Digitalization and the National STEM Forum).

Focusing heavily on international activities

We are obviously aware of and participate in international discussions on the future of education, particularly with regard to digitalization and 21st century skills. We want to introduce these discussions and other countries' experiences into the educational debate in Germany.

Developing and executing project ideas

Deutsche Telekom Stiftung will start to gradually execute and translate its new strategy into project ideas in the second half of 2019.

LEARN MORE

Do you want to know how we put our strategy into action?
Visit our website for extensive details on our programs and projects.
In the Topics area, you can also read regular reports, interviews and
op-ed articles on the future of education – and how we are
helping to shape it.

www.telekom-stiftung.de/en



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