



ROUND TABLE. Experts share ideas and experience

Innovation in education and challenges faced in 2020

MALAGA

Rachel Haynes. The changing times, with the influence of modern technology in all areas of life, have brought advantages to the world of education.

Instant information and connectivity provide new openings to students and teachers, but also challenges for the classroom.

Experts from several schools in the province of Malaga - Novaschool, Laude San Pedro International College, Phoenix College and the British School of Malaga - were invited by SUR this week to share how their schools are dealing with the changing scenario now, and how they see the future.

One important change over the years is in the students themselves. "No two students are the same," said Elvira Báez, the Educational Director of Novaschool, a group that has four private schools, including Sunland and Añoreta, and five infant schools in the south of Spain.

"You have to adapt, year after year; that is one of the challenges of today's society."

Alex Mitchell, one of the founders of Phoenix Sixth Form College in Malaga city, pointed out that students are now much better informed than before and both students and their parents are much more open to the idea of studying at a univer-

sity in another country. Phoenix College teaches A levels and prepares students for study at British and other universities.

The fact that young people now have such a huge amount of information at their fingertips is something that schools are having to take advantage of.

According to Raúl Rico, technical director at the British School of Malaga, "Schools have to be able to use the mobile phone as a useful tool," he said, adding that children are not always aware of the damage an image or a comment on social media can do.

Mercedes Colmenar is head of Admissions at Laude San Pedro International College. She agrees that schools and parents have to find a "balance" between taking advantage of the information available online and being aware of the dangers internet poses for young people.

Miguel Ángel Garrán is director general of ISP (International Schools Partnership), the group which includes the British School of Malaga and Laude San Pedro. Schools have to make technology their "ally" he said. "With so much information, children have to learn to be selective," he said, "to tell the difference between a piece of fake news or a good academic study, for example".

Elvira Báez of Novaschool added



The participants at the SUR offices in Malaga. S. SALAS

that this education in using technology in the right way has to be done from a young age, not just among adolescents.

A new challenge for schools is precisely that students who have grown up with new technology often know more than their teachers.

Miguel Ángel Garrán of ISP suggested that the role of the teacher in the classroom was changing. Before, teachers made 90 per cent of the effort in the classroom, he pointed out but the ISP group wants to change that, so that the students become more active and "busy learning". The emphasis should be on

learning, rather than teaching, he pointed out.

Raúl Rico of the British School of Malaga agreed that the focus is changing, especially among older students. "They have to learn by themselves, with the supervision of their teachers," he said.

For Alex Mitchell of Phoenix College, schools have to be more flexible. He gave the example of how some of the college's classes are taught from a distance by an expert in London and that is not a problem, rather an advantage for the students, using technology to provide a higher level of education.

Elvira Báez, Raúl Rico, moderator Carmen Álcara, Alex Mitchell, Mercedes Colmenar and Miguel Ángel Garrán. SALVADOR SALAS

Concerns over future employment are inevitable among older students, and the experts discussed ways in which they prepare their students for the future.

Raúl Rico said that it is important not to take away a student's passion for a future career even if work prospects are apparently difficult. "It's better to follow their hearts before doing something they don't want to do just because they can get a job easily," he said.

Elvira Báez said that students need positive motivation from their teachers and a careers guidance department that can show them their options inside and outside Spain.

Mercedes Colmenar of Laude San Pedro said that it was difficult to prepare students for their future careers, especially when a lot of jobs will no longer exist in the future. "We have to prepare them to have opportunities, to be ready to continue learning for the rest of their lives," she said.

Students should also be prepared to be entrepreneurs, added Raúl Rico, saying that representatives from the business world were also invited to his school to give talks.

"Enterprise should be a subject," said Elvira Báez, "but children should be taught to be enterprising in their day-to-day lives."

For Miguel Ángel Garrán, it is not the school's role to teach children to do business, but to prepare them for the future, teaching them how to work as a team, to carry out projects, and to prepare them for university.

Alex Mitchell pointed out that it is more important to give the young people the self-confidence to be able to be entrepreneurs in the future.

First though, many of the students currently at the international schools on the Costa del Sol will be preparing to study at university, and most probably at one outside Spain.

Alex Mitchell commented that now not just students from the British system but also those from the Spanish system were planning to study in the UK or another country.

Mercedes Colmenar said that students at international schools such as Laude already speak two or more languages and have no frontiers when it comes to higher education options.

Among the challenges ahead, for Raúl Rico, these include preparing students to be able to "learn how to learn".

Alex Mitchell stressed the need to give students "flexibility to be prepared for the future with their feet firmly on the ground".

There are exciting times ahead, pointed out Miguel Ángel Garrán, as neuroscience develops to help us learn more about how students learn.