



Episode 5

**Forget careers.
Show me your
competencies**



MONSTER
under
the **BED**



Podcast: Monster Under the Bed

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Published by the European Investment Bank.

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Monster Under the Bed

Transcript: Episode 5

Intro

Allar: Don't be scared. This is the podcast that always leaves the light on.

(Music)

Allar (over the music): This is Monster Under the Bed. The podcast that takes some of the fears and myths in our society and busts them wide open. I'm Allar Tankler.

End of intro

Matt: Do you know what a competency is?

Kid 1: Gesundheit.

Matt: Mari, do you know what a competency is?

Kid 2: No, á tes souhaits.

Kid 1: What is a competency?

Matt: A competency is a thing you know how to do. But it's not so much knowledge that you have; it's just a way of doing something and you know how to do it. So for example if you have a job and you need to speak in public or give a presentation, then you know how to do the job, but you also know how to give a presentation.

Kid 2: Excuse me, can I make one note? I once made a presentation in my class, you know, about my family.

Matt: So, how old are you?

Kid 2: Seven and three-quarters.

Matt: And you've already made a presentation.

Kid 2: Yes.

Matt: Cai, have you made a presentation?

Kid 1: I've made a lot of them, and this year I also learned how to make a PowerPoint, which is not as exciting as it sounds.

Kid 2: What is a PowerPoint, Cai?

Kid 1: It's a way of presenting, where you can go through different slides and you can show people how to do something.

Kid 2: Cool.

Matt: Those little kids showed me that I shouldn't be scared of the Monster Under the Bed in education, Allar. They're so smart.

Allar: You're just saying that because you're their father.

Matt: I am a bit biased, yes. They are my kids.

Allar: But how did the monster under the bed come up?

Matt: Because of the older one, I recently confronted something about education that turns out to be a myth—and a fear that I had. A monster under the bed.

Allar: Monster Under the Bed is a podcast from the European Investment Bank, the EU bank. We're exploring different fears and beliefs people have which are costing us as a society. In each episode of the podcast, we fight one imaginary monster under the bed and win the battle for a more rational way of doing things in the spheres of education, healthcare, food, and many others.

Matt: So that you don't miss an episode, subscribe to Monster Under the Bed on iTunes, Acast, Stitcher, player.fm or wherever you get your podcasts.

Allar: And let us know if you can think of a monster we should expose on future episodes. Get in touch with me on Twitter @AllarTankler or you can just tag @eib.

Matt: I'm Matt. I work with Allar at the European Investment Bank.

Allar: So, Matt, you saw a Monster Under the Bed because of something that happened in your son's education?

Matt: Right. He started secondary school and I saw that the teachers were not really focusing on feeding him knowledge and information the way my teachers did a loooooong time ago.

Allar: And you were afraid that they weren't teaching him well?

Matt: I thought they weren't educating him the right way and, like any parent, I was very worried that his entire life was going to be wrecked.

Allar: That's the thing about a monster—it's not just a myth; it's something pretty scary too.

Matt: Luckily before I stormed into the headmaster's office to demand that my son should be learning the way I did, I looked into it some more and discovered that I was wrong to be worried. The myth about education is based around the idea that you are what you know. It turns out that's not true anymore. Now you are how you know. Or to put it more correctly, you are the things you know how to do.

Allar: Like Mari who is seven years old—

Matt: Seven and three quarters.

Allar: Mari, who is seven and three quarters saying, that she has given a presentation?

Matt: That's right. Here's why this is happening. My grandfather and my father had the same kind of job all their lives. People generally did in those days. I have had to work in more than one career. I thought I had made a career choice, and then along comes the economy and it gave me the message: we don't need whatever you're doing any more.

Allar: I see. You mean that you used to be a journalist, then you were a writer, and now you work for an international institution. It's actually true for me too. I worked in politics. Then I co-owned a business. And I edited a newspaper. Now I work for an international institution, the European Investment Bank.

Matt: Right, and this is going to become even more of an element in our children's lives as artificial intelligence develops. So how do you get ready for those changes? Schools in some countries have completely changed the way they teach. The aim is to prepare them for a future in which technology will make it necessary for us to adapt to big changes in our work lives.

Allar: So today on Monster Under the Bed...

Matt: Forget careers. Show me your competencies.

Allar: Matt, if this seemed to you to be a myth and a fear—a Monster Under the Bed—school was presumably different for you.

Matt: Well, sure. I went to a school that was built when Charles Dickens was still alive. We learned everything by rote. I've been wondering how kids are learning today. I spoke to the education experts here at the European Investment Bank to see if they could tell me.

Anna: There are pretty big changes in education or how we feel children and adults need to be educated. Today workplaces require different behaviours from the ones expected decades ago. Today we expect children and people who enter the workforce later to be able to work in teams, to be more critical of the information they receive, we require them to be more adaptable.

Matt: That's **Anna Canato**, who heads the education and public research division at the European Investment Bank.

Anna: Between three and 21 you really need to learn how to learn, because that's the competency that you need in the rest of your life to be equipped as someone who can be resilient in the workplace, resilient in society, resilient in their personal life. So one of the challenges for education is to obviously keep the intellectual side of what you are learning, but to equip children with how they need to learn. Workplace technologies are changing more often than before. So in the workplace in all different industries individuals need to be better ready to acquire new behaviours, to acquire new knowledge, to be able to change jobs in their life if they wish.

Allar: What Anna's telling us is that you never really finish learning.

Matt: You've got it.Working with Anna, there's an education economist called **Nihan Koseleci**. I asked her how schools try to prepare kids for the new work environment that Anna describes.

Nihan: Standard testing obviously has been very heavily used in the US. People started to suffer from this because it started to twist the curriculum more, because people started to teach to test. This has some consequences on the outcomes of the education. I don't mean only numeracy and literacy skills, but

also on the creativity, on the way to look at life, how we communicate with other people, how we work with other people that are necessarily the skills that we need now, or even how we behave in the environment, how we deal with all the sustainability issues, how our knowledge of the environment is evolving. In the education community there has started to be a reflection on how education should respond to the requirements of the evolving society and the evolving world.

Allar: That all sounds great, but it might also be a bit scary to people. You know, you go to school and prepare for a career. But you don't know if it's going to last. Isn't that stressful?

Matt: On the one hand, yes, (and I'm going to tell you about some ways schools are preparing kids for that) but I'm also going to talk about upskilling.

Allar: Upskilling? That sounds like a town in Sweden.

Matt: There is a place in Sweden called Skillinge, but it's time we put Upskilling on the map too. You'll find out soon what upskilling actually is. ...The other answer to your question is this: There was a study a number of years ago that found Iceland was the happiest place on earth. This wasn't because it was the richest place. It was largely because people changed careers. In Britain, if I had trained to be a lawyer and, then when I was 30 years old I had decided I didn't want to be a lawyer any more—maybe I wanted to open a café—my British mother would've said, What a waste of your training, stick with your law career. But in Iceland they would say, That's great, I'll be sure to come to your café for some fermented shark and a glass of schnapps.

Allar: So people are free to do new things, because society approves of it.

Matt: Maybe these changes that we're seeing now could be good for us. Instead of feeling insecure about career changes, our kids will have been trained to adapt to it. ...I asked Anna Canato about this.

Anna: There are a lot of opportunities for people to feel that they can still change what they do in their life, and they can take opportunities also after they have finished their formal education at 21 or 25.

Matt: One of the words that you used a moment ago, people talk about acquiring skills and knowledge, but you also mentioned competencies. What is a competency? And why do young people now need to learn competencies, rather than just to learn how to do algebra and things like that?

Anna: The way I will say that is that there is knowledge, that is you learn to do something, and there are competencies, where you learn how to do something. Competencies is ability to do something and can be transferred from one domain of knowledge to another. If you learn how to speak about something, how to speak in public, then the content change but you keep the ability to be able to communicate and to frame what you want to say, and that's a competency.

Allar: That's fine for our kids. But let's say artificial intelligence figures out a way to make podcasts without humans. What about you and me?

Matt: That's where upskilling comes in. Because the aim of education is not to push everybody to higher and higher levels of education. The European Commission decided some time ago that it aimed for 40 percent of younger people to go onto higher education. We're almost there, in fact, which is quite impressive.

Allar: So we're not saying that everyone should get a PhD.

Matt: In fact, it might be a problem for the economy if everyone did. What Europe is aiming for is that everyone should have an equal opportunity to get the education they need. And often that might mean learning new skills when you're a bit older. Nihan Koseleci explained this.

Nihan: I think this is a bit valid for higher education but also for lower levels of education. By saying that we need to have competencies, we don't need to open a Master's programme on how to get the best competencies, but all these things should be across the population. Competencies should be mainstreamed in the curriculum; it shouldn't be just a left-out topic. So when you teach geography, you still have a way to teach competencies, to teach teamwork. It depends on the way you teach geography, the way you teach mathematics. A lot of kids hate mathematics, so people are thinking how can we actually teach mathematics in a better way so that people learn

mathematics, but they also develop competencies like teamwork, like problem solving skills that they can apply in real life situations. Competencies are not “Oh, I have a Phd in competencies,” but “I have a Phd in mathematics, but I also know how to work in team.

Allar: You mentioned that everyone should have an equal opportunity to get an advanced education. That costs money. So what do you do? Do you make education free for everyone? I mean, government budgets are tight.

Matt: Let me introduce you to **Gunnar Mai** and **Chiara Amadori**. They work at the European Investment Fund, which is part of the European Investment Bank Group. What the Fund usually does is finance small and medium-sized businesses through intermediary banks. But Gunnar and Chiara run a fairly new programme that helps banks lend money to students who want to study in a different European country. The programme is called the Erasmus Plus Student Loan Guarantee Facility.

Allar: How does that work?

Matt: If you go to a bank and say you want to borrow money to study abroad they'll probably ask for a guarantee from your parents. Obviously, that's not fair, because what if your parents haven't got any money to guarantee you with? Under Erasmus Plus, the European Investment Fund says to the bank, Make the loan and if the student can't pay it back, we—the Fund—will take almost all the loss.

Allar: So there's no need for a guarantee from the parents. That's fair.

Matt: Here's how Gunnar and Chiara explain the ideas behind the programme...

Gunnar: Today's students are tomorrow's entrepreneurs. At the same time I think it goes back to kindergarten, which is why in many countries you have a debate about whether it should be compulsory to go to the kindergarten simply to get children who have a disadvantaged start in life out of the family situation and more into starting to see the broader picture of what is out there, even as a three year old child. Because you have a very high correlation between the educational level of the parents and the kids or youth thereafter. And there's a huge potential we are losing out on. Interestingly enough a lot of

the startups are created by rebels. Rebels in school, rebels in university. You need to be taking on the fight. If you are a conformist, if you are following what the teacher says, it's very unlikely that you become a disruptor.

Chiara: What I want to say comes from personal experience. In Italy, what they teach you is to listen to the teacher, they are always right. This is how you are taught. So when you take notes, you take notes on what the teacher is saying and you learn out of your notes, and you repeat the notes, because the teacher has the knowledge. But ultimately now, in terms of the startups and becoming a disruptor, they are teaching you to have a critical view of things, and I never had that. When I started to work it was for me a real challenge to learn to think that maybe what I was reading was actually not correct and I should challenge that specific piece of writing. For me that was completely impossible to think of, because I had not been trained in that way.

Gunnar: I think it's more about what you need to have to later on potentially become an entrepreneur. You need to have self-confidence, and you need to be able to form your own view. And this can all be done already in the kindergarten, by the way you are dealing with the kids and the tasks you give and the way you talk to the kids.

Matt: The bottom line with Erasmus Plus is to make education part of social cohesion.

Allar: What's that?

Matt: In the last few decades there has been an increasing gap between the rich and everyone else in society. When they talk about making that gap smaller, economists refer to social cohesion. I asked Chiara about this....

Chiara: Under for example the Erasmus Plus Guarantee Facility what the Commission has thought of doing was to make sure that no collateral is requested of the student, meaning that you do not need a parental guarantee to access this financing, so it's only on yourself and your future development. I think that still we are not totally there in terms of social inclusion, because somehow it is still also related to the way you are brought up. So what you see growing up also influences where you want to go afterwards, how you want to develop, the career you want to have and so on and so forth. It goes back again to education and let's say the obligatory education that everybody has to go through, the type of values that we pass on, the type of skills that we want to

develop, this will influence how education may become more socially inclusive going forward. If we don't act on these type of issues then what should we act upon? It cannot only be access to finance for SMEs. The SMEs come out of the passion and the will of people to develop something, and this type of passion you need to develop from early childhood. Especially now when we don't really know what types of jobs there will be in the market in the future, where everybody's asked to change the way they think and the way they approach their job because the job is changing every day. So ultimately, yes, I think it is a duty.

Matt: Our education experts Anna and Nihan also agreed that education is both so important and so expensive that the public sector—government—should be its main financier. Then we're more likely to have a fair system. We're also more likely to shift the focus of education to the kind of competencies that our kids will need. That's good for them and good for the long-term success of our economy.

Allar: It sounds like a smart way to educate everyone. Thanks, Matt.

Matt: You're welcome, Allar

Allar: Another Monster Under the Bed has been slain.

Matt: Now, if we're done here, I'm going to go and listen to a course on how to play better chess.

Allar: Are you upskilling to be a chess master?

Matt: No, my kids are learning chess and I have to try to keep up with them.

Allar: Good luck with that. Just as long as they don't take our jobs as podcasters.

Matt: Oh, wait a minute, didn't I tell you about this...? Kids come in here.

Allar: What? Hey, what are they doing in here?

Kid 1: To all our listeners, if you want to keep up with Monster Under the Bed subscribe to this podcast. We have episodes on climate change, health, food,

healthfood, cybersecurity—pretty much everything that impacts your life.
Subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Player.fm...

Kid 2: And we'll see you back here soon for the next episode of Monster Under the Bed from the European Investment Bank...

Kid 1: ...the EU bank.

(Outro music)



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