SoFIA: From a Content-based to Competency-based Educational Paradigm

K. C. Koutsopoulos and Konstantinos Doukas

1National Technical University of Athens and EUROGEO, Greece.
2School of the Future International Academy, UK.

Authors’ contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author KCK developed the concept. Author KD founder of School of the Future International Academy (SoFIA) helped its formulation and provided the data related to the paradigm’s application. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to show that in the educational system of the 21st century, four conditions must be met for its successful present and future: an educational philosophy that can provide an operating pedagogical framework to address the issues of educational experience and the appropriate principles and values in teaching and learning; a path to excellence in order to create innovative practices in the teaching and learning environment within which all pedagogical operations can take place; a technology integration instrument with which the fundamental educational needs and their attendant changes can be attained; and a leading in action process, which can allow new concepts and ideas to be able to be realized. But most importantly these requirements force upon the education system the need to work within an educational paradigm which is susceptible to such necessities.

This paper presents and describes such a paradigm, named SoFIA which seeks to satisfy the conditions mentioned above. It suggests an educational philosophy offering an operating.
Keywords: Educational philosophy; path to excellence; technology integration; leading in action; educational paradigm; SoFIA.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Educational System in the 21st Century

Even through a cursory examination of the educational system, four issues can be easily discerned. The first issue is: what are the ideas that comprise the Educational Philosophy which determines the pedagogical framework required to address the necessary changes in education? The term represents the notion of Pedia (from the Greek word Παιδεία that means intellectual and social shaping of the human character) or the WHY of education.

Presently, the prevalence of globalization, which is accompanied with complex social changes, has resulted in the emergence of a different type of citizen and consequently student. The basic operational rule in modern society is that people need to live, work, develop and seek happiness locally, under a global influence however, and education has to accommodate both of these trends. The previously established and accepted social principles and values that used to influence and determine education have been re-examined and implicitly or explicitly challenged. In simple terms, the simultaneous development and nurturing of a new local and global individual must include the acquisition of different competences; mastering new skills; acquiring new multi and inter-disciplinary literacies; establishing and operating new and more complex set of educational rules, as well as the need to protect the environment; and being compassionate with people from other continents, countries, religions and cultures.

The necessity for such changes is leading education stakeholders to re-think and re-evaluate not only who is teaching and what is taught at all levels, but also how schools and educational institutions are led and managed. These in turn, shape and re-direct both the local and global communities and consequently their educational environment. The traditional approach to learning, teaching, and managing of all educational institutions, but mainly the philosophy upon which it was rooted, lacks certain elements of the new and changing world, and thus students are not fully prepared and well equipped to live in the new environment.

The second issue raised is: what is the Path to Excellence or the innovative practices embedded in the teaching and learning environment, within which the necessary concepts, principles and values will be applied? It represents the notion of Aristia (from the Greek word Αριστεία that means pursuing excellence under the guidance of an appropriate educational paradigm) or the HOW in education.

In dealing with the path to excellence two factors play a determining role, namely: the necessary and sufficient conditions to achieve excellence. Excellence, which is based on educational criteria accepted by society, is the result of repeatedly successful fulfillment of an effort/mission and constitutes the highest award for a student. Thus, the necessary conditions for achieving excellence within an educational environment require a continuously successful learning process (necessary condition), both collectively and personally (sufficient condition). The path to excellence in education can be defined as a continuous act of necessary and sufficient practices in engaging all education stakeholders and the community, as well as utilizing their differences, their authentic energies, creative ideas, and diverse qualities for the benefit of students’ life.

The third issue is: what is the Innovative Delivery Methodology or the required inspiring instructional instrument with which the fundamental educational needs and their attendant changes can be attained? It represents the notion of Protipo (from the Greek word Πρωτόπορο that means the required body of methods and principles associated with providing
knowledge to learners) or the WHAT in teaching and learning.

The coming of the 21st century has brought the recognition that the world has been moving in such diverse directions and has created new and particularly complex demands for citizenship and types of careers that it is no longer possible for old learning environments associated with old learning paradigms to accommodate them [1,2]. Within this framework, of particular importance to education there are two areas of concern: first, the blossoming of the information society, which has unleashed two powerful forces. One force empowers education stakeholders of any school, anywhere to have an easy access and use of ICT, [3] and the other provides them a ubiquitous access to open content and standards, as well as making it possible to leverage education through identity related programs in unprecedented ways. The second area of concern is that it was realized that in order for learning outcomes to be achieved it is not sufficient anymore to limit teaching within the intersection between knowledge and pedagogy [4,5]. Instead educational institutions have to invest and systematically capitalize on the interaction of technology with both pedagogy and content [6]. In simple terms, a multi-centric pedagogy, which leads not only students [7] but all educational stakeholders to becoming digital natives, is the way to approach teaching and learning.

The fourth issue is related to the process of Leading in Action or transforming new concepts into actions. It represents the notion of Igesia (from the Greek word Ἡγεσία that means the leadership necessary to translate vision and new concepts into reality) or the WHO in Education.

Learning leadership is a paramount factor in the 21st century education environment, as leaders search for opportunities to change, innovate and improve education. Such actions, however, challenge prevailing views and are usually vigorously resisted. Any change is considered as a move towards destroying the existing education environment, where people have invested in the way things are and experience fear, anxiety and insecurity when things change due to the uncertainty about how things will be for them. Most education stakeholders resist change, especially when the prevailing educational culture provides them with the justification to accept and encourage the status quo. Therefore, the need for leaders and leadership to be interconnected and integrally related with any form of innovation as well as for people and processes to work towards improving or changing education, and successfully drive the design of learning is considered fundamental.

From this examination it should be evident that in the educational system of the 21st century there is a set of four conditions that must be satisfied for a successful educational present and future:

- An educational philosophy providing an operating pedagogical framework to address the issues of educational experience and the appropriate principles and values in teaching and learning;
- A path to excellence paved with innovative practices in the teaching and learning environment within which all pedagogical operations can take place;
- A technology integration instrument with which the fundamental educational needs and their attendant changes can be attained; and
- A leading in action process whereby new concepts and ideas are transformed into reality.

These requirements are, moreover, forcing upon the necessity to work within a susceptible to such educational conditions’ educational paradigm. This paper suggests and describes such a paradigm, which builds: a different type of education relating to that new world; a modified type of an educational methodology that relates to these new educational needs; specific approaches in achieving excellence; a new mechanism of providing the necessary vision; and corresponding strategies to successfully drive the design of learning.

1.2 The SoFIA Paradigm

A HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM supported by an integrated leading framework and guided by Technology called SoFIA (School of the Future Inspirational Approach) has been developed and implemented by the School of the Future International Academy [8]. SoFIA is a carefully designed, awarded and certified educational paradigm, exhibiting a fundamental characteristic, it is holistic. Educators have the scientific background which allows them to examine teaching and learning, to analyse broader educational processes and finally to present the results of these analyses in order to enhance, in a scientifically sound and efficient way, didactic programs and approaches. These processes however cannot be dealt with unless
we accept the fact that they represent different manifestations of "a whole", the dialectic entity of education. An entity which is: diachronic, operating at local and global level, referring to all aspects of human activities (economic, social, political, cultural, technological etc.), but simultaneously exists in dialectic harmony and respect towards human values and the natural environment. Therefore, a holistic approach towards education is required. An approach that is not possible without the help of an all-encompassing paradigm, such as SoFIA.

Moreover, SoFIA can support any academic institution to make a shift in their perception of what education means, and offers educational opportunities and experiences which are determined by their philosophy and culture, defined through their history, principles, values, policies, management style, and most importantly the thinking and behavior of their constituents. SoFIA provides a framework for unity without uniformity [9] for local education stakeholders to become architects of their own learning in order to change themselves first, and finally the world. SoFIA supports a kinder and fairer world for the benefit of every one, by providing the foundation to develop a world with such essential qualities.

To summarize, the SoFIA paradigm is defined, within the 21st century environment, as a holistic educational experience, consisting of Pedia, Aristeia, Protipo and Igesia. These refer to the continuous act of effectively engaging all members of any educational institution, while utilizing their differences, energies, inputs and diverse qualities primarily for the benefit of every one, by providing the foundation to develop a world with such essential qualities.

2. PEDIA: TEACHING AND LEARNING TRAJECTORIES

The traditional approach to teaching, learning and managing educational institutions has been a one-dimensional affair based on a philosophy which lacks consideration for important elements of the new world we live in. A world that requires students to be fully prepared to live, work, develop and seek happiness under a global influence and local culture. This in turn, leads to changes in the nature of their workplace and the requirements needed for their employment. There is an urgency to re-think and re-evaluate not only who, what and how we teach, but also how we manage and lead our educational institutions. There is as well a profound need to re-establish the appropriate universal principles and values to guide our students' actions, on a personal and professional level.

Determining the pedagogical framework needed to address the required learning trajectories demands the building of a different educational philosophy which should possess the following set of characteristics arranged on a continuum and whose ends are the tributes related to approaches focusing on the Academic and the Human Characteristics aspects of teaching and learning, which are all an intrinsic part of the Pedia component.

2.1 Human Characteristics

2.1.1 Ethic

This characteristic refers to the assimilation of ethical concerns or how learners following their conscience do what they know to be right.

2.1.2 Intrinsic

This characteristic becomes part of learners' life as well as their dreams, strengths, desires and talents.

2.1.3 Harmonious

This characteristic considers the working of the educational system as an orchestra, where the leader is the conductor who helps all the other stakeholders to remain in harmony, resulting in every stakeholder to be equally important in achieving the desirable results for any educational effort.

2.1.4 Motivational

This characteristic develops unique learning methods for the students to become motivated through team activities and projects, in order to bring out the maximum creative abilities of educators and students.

2.2 Academic Characteristics

2.2.1 Cheerful

This characteristic requires the activities of each class to be developed through playground
motions, school adventures and experiential learning based on cultural and athletic events. This cheerful approach leads a learner to a better and more successful learning experience.

2.2.2 Effective

This characteristic achieves learners’ educational objectives by effectively driving a learners’ performance in a way that they can certify their life competences to help succeed in academic advantages ultimately resulting in a better learning experience.

2.2.3 Meaningful

In order for an educational experience to have worthwhile personal value, it must be meaningful to the learner. The above can be accomplished by being: in line with his/her fundamental personal and professional goals; in accordance with his/her principles and values; part of his/her life and in conjunction not independent of knowledge; and related to his/her dreams, strengths, desires and talents.

2.2.4 Useful

By properly combining knowledge with acquisition, the learner is empowered to acquire the most appropriate skills and values providing him/her with a useful tool to become better equipped to confront their demanding modern lives.

3. ARISTIA: THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE

Worldwide, the path to excellence in education, which includes: learning, instruction, curricula, methodologies, resources and means, has been changing due to several factors evolving around the notion of "how children learn". Vosniadou [10] has suggested there are three principles to focus on: cognitive factors; today’s requested soft-skills; and individual differences and motivational influences, which are related to the basic pillars of knowledge, skills and values/attitudes that need to interconnect with the spectrum of competences and literacies [11].

Aristia, an integral part of SoFIA paradigm, provides two important innovative approaches in the path to excellence: first an innovative synthesis of existing models of competences and literacies (innovative practices) and second the utilization of the social and emotional learning. In terms of the path to excellence, research and experience have shown that it is not easy for a school to find its optimal path to excellence and show measurable results. Yet Aristia has developed to utilize a synthesis of existing models of competences, including social learning, and literacies which helps in achieving the right path to excellence.

Determining the pedagogical framework needed to address the path to excellence within the SoFIA paradigm demands the building of an educational approach which should rely on the two ends of the spectrum related to "how children learn", namely competences and literacies, which in turn are an intrinsic part of the Aristia component.

3.1 Competences

The competency model of SoFIA is a synthesis of existing models. This model, like the majority of such models, is based on the three principal pillars of competences: knowledge, skills and attitudes/values, which express the Social and Emotional Learning approach to competences.

3.1.1 Knowledge

Knowledge is the first pillar of the model, as it consists the foundation aspect of competences. It is based on the “Revised Bloom's Taxonomy”, chosen for its in-depth documented cognitive processes, which define the process of creation as the highest order cognitive process. The SoFIA competency model, however, has adjusted the revised taxonomy by reversing "analyzing/applying" and enriching the base of the competence concept, with the "experience" adopted by the "Learning by Design" model (in
place of the two cognitive processes: "remember" and "understand").

3.1.2 Skills

For the second pillar of the model, skills, it is widely accepted that they represent at least the 4Cs: collaboration, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity (others have suggested 6Cs [13]; 3Rs x 7C’s [14]). Given that creativity is already part of the first pillar, the skills in this pillar are enriched with general management information (not only as a specific digital skill, but related with the more general "research skills"), accompanied with the concept of "synthesis", which in some approaches is the driving force of innovation. But the basis of this pillar, considered as the first layer of the skills’ aspect of competences, must be the well-being skills (physical-healthy-safely, as they are referred to in Maslow’s hierarchy of physiological and safety needs), especially motor or locomotor skills that are very important for the holistic development of children. The top of the skills’ aspect of competences is occupied by collaboration.

3.1.3 Social and emotional learning

The third pillar of the model is based on emotional, personal and social competences and skills through which innovative practices can be put into successful use [15]. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), is a fundamental aspect of education, because the development of students and their success in and out of school require guidance, training, and support as the only way to achieve an effective school-wide implementation of reality. Moreover, young people equipped with SEL skills can become better students now and better adults in the future. In today’s environment of increasingly specialized jobs, nothing could be more important than to foster, teach, and promote the competences of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

The SoFIA model and its three competence pillars is illustrated in Table 1. One or more, or even all of the 3x5 = 15 actions indicated in the table can be associated with the goals/objectives or results/outcomes of simple or composite educational activities as well as integrated competences.

3.2 Literacies

The innovative nature of SoFIA paradigm is expressed in its treatment of the literacies, which include two categories: The Multi-Disciplinary and the Inter-Disciplinary literacies or innovative practices that constitute an added dimension of the SoFIA approach and is interconnected with the three competences’ pillars.

This innovative concept suggests that literacies cannot be addressed only in the traditional multi-dimensional way. Given that nowadays, it is universally accepted that literacies, as well as competences, represent different manifestations of "a whole", the dialectic entity of education. Then, the focus in the path to excellence cannot be neither on what we are learning nor on how we are learning it, both aspects are very important [16], but mainly on the approach to achieve them, which should be holistic. But a holistic approach requires inter-discipline methodologies and practices, which fortunately can be supported by cloud-based technologies that "bridge" the real and digital world, representing the hybrid approach of the SoFIA paradigm and constituting what Koutsopoulos and Kotsanis [3] considered as a "paradigm shift". Both of these literacies are shown on Table 2 [11].

For practical reasons the categorization of the literacies shown on the table, when used in SoFIA follow the well-known and universally accepted groups of: Language/Arts, Science, Social and Others groups (when it deems appropriate).

To summarize, the Aristia approach can achieve all the objectives the existing frameworks expressing different point of views are striving for by addressing the real and the digital world and by involving: a hierarchy of cognitive levels, a correspondence to soft-skills, a personal fulfilment and social inclusion, and mainly the development of innovative competences and literacies [20,21,22,23,15].

In addition, Aristia’s contribution to the path to excellence, on a first level is related to the practical issues of being focused on learners in a school environment regardless their age and its simplicity to be applied by both individuals and educational organizations. Most importantly, however, on a second level it is associated with
Table 1. Competences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>SEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- creating</td>
<td>- collaborating</td>
<td>- self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- evaluating</td>
<td>- critical thinking - solving problems</td>
<td>- self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- applying</td>
<td>- communicating</td>
<td>- social awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- analyzing</td>
<td>- managing information - synthesizing</td>
<td>- relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- experiencing</td>
<td>- well-being</td>
<td>- responsible decision-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Literacies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multi-disciplinary literacies</th>
<th>Inter-disciplinary literacies innovative methodologies - practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Language</td>
<td>Cloud-based Learner/Teacher/Leader [20]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Physical Sciences</td>
<td>Remote Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social-Human Sciences</td>
<td>Personal Movement Learning [18]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Digital and Cloud-based Technologies</td>
<td>Personal Career Counselling [19]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Physical Fitness and Healthy Life</td>
<td>Personal Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Arts, Cultural, Civic</td>
<td>Education Hub Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Economics, Entrepreneurship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lead to changes such as shifting the role of learners from content consumers to creators of their own knowledge, cultivating contemporary social and emotional learning skills and indicating the importance of values and attitudes by the interaction among learner and educational practitioners. They represent a new innovative way that educational institutions can offer their services and constitutes an educational “paradigm shift” based on competences, including innovative practices related to Social and Emotional Learning, and literacies frameworks.

4. PROTOPO: INSPIRING TEACHING AND LEARNING

In order to provide inspiring teaching and learning, educational institutions have to face the complexity of connecting the digital dots of today’s world, which “are multidimensional of varying sizes and colors, continuously changing, and linked to other, as yet unimagined dots” (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2008), as well as assimilate the new set of characteristics that can be described as: overwhelming, immediate, manipulatable, participatory, visual and mainly digital and networked. But most importantly it is required to take a leaping step to implement these challenges within a changing framework, where knowledge is considered as a social obligation.

In response to this need and in determining the pedagogical framework needed to provide inspiring teaching and learning, SoFIA is relying on characteristics covering the spectrum from Pedagogy to Content/Means, which are all an intrinsic part of the Protipo component.

4.1 Pedagogy

A fundamental principle of SoFIA is the approach towards the methods used or the pedagogic end of the Protipo component. The teaching method depends on what fits an institution (educational philosophy, classroom demographic, subject area(s) and school mission statement). Teaching methods can be organized into four categories based on two major parameters: a teacher-centered approach versus a student-centered approach [24], which can incorporate the use of high-tech material or the use of low-tech material.

4.1.1 Teacher-centered methods

The teacher is actively involved in teaching, while the learners are in a passive, receptive mode listening to their teachers through lectures and direct instruction.

4.1.2 Student-centered methods

The teachers are still an authority figure, but their primary role is to coach and facilitate student...
learning, while students play an equally active role in the learning process.

4.1.3 High-tech Methods

The advancements in technology, which are available to the education sector are followed to aid students in their classroom learning.

4.1.4 Low-tech Methods

Teaching should be based on providing a combination of new and old approaches. Tailoring therefore the learning experience to different types of learners may require low tech approach to learning, such as the physical presence and interaction between the educator and the student.

4.2 Content/Means

4.2.1 Old/New

The first element of this end of the Protipo spectrum is the fact that teaching and learning should be based on providing a combination of new and old approaches, in order to be both efficient and effective. Jenkins [25] provided a list of such approaches, suggesting that students should acquire, among others, the ability to approach the content of a subject by:

- **Playing**: Experiment with their surroundings as a form of problem solving.
- **Performing**: Adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery.
- **Simulating**: Interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes.
- **Appropriating**: Meaningfully sample and remix media content.
- **Multitasking**: Scan one’s environment and shift focus as needed to salient details.
- **Judging**: Evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources.
- **Trans-Media Navigating**: Follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities.
- **Networking**: Search, synthesize, and disseminate information.
- **Negotiating**: The ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms.
- **Distributing Cognition**: Interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities.

4.2.2 Blended

Blended learning programs and courses constitute an important dimension of Web-enhanced instruction and a fundamental pillar of the SoFIA paradigm. These content approaches achieve what Graham [26], has written that “blended learning systems combine face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction”. These blended-learning provisions lead, in turn, towards a series of advantages strongly substantiated by the literature [27,28,29], such as:

- Increase access and flexibility.
- Increase social interaction.
- Improve learning effectiveness.
- Increase student motivation.
- Enhance student learning outcomes.

4.2.3 Life-long

SoFIA ascribes to the principle that in addition to introducing core subject knowledge, teaching and learning should be able to prepare students, as life-long learners, to successfully cope with the demands of the ever changing world that has resulted from the information revolution [30] (The Partnership for the 21st Century Skills framework). As a result, these approaches should be focused on:

- Information and communication.
- Inter-personal and self-directional dimensions.
- The technologies of this century.
- Connecting learning to real-life situations.
- Curating information from many sources.
- Being more aware of inequalities.
- Reshaping the role of the educator.
- Balancing between globalization and local traditions.

5. IGESIA: LEADING IN ACTION

SoFIA’s approach to leadership lies upon its adaptability in embedding international methodologies and best practices within its didactic approaches with high respect to local culture, values and the schools’ strategy. More specifically, it provides the means of “how to achieve that change”. In this way it delivers
credible, trustworthy procedures and methodologies to achieve exceptional academic results for students and increase their brand awareness and reputation. As a result, leadership is the conceptual foundation of Igesia and is concerned with the search for challenging opportunities to change, innovate and improve education. A leader should see his professional goal as an adventure of always questioning the status quo. But most importantly he has to find ways to motivate the rest of the stakeholders to look for new ideas, seek out opportunities, and renew themselves individually and collaboratively.

In order to achieve these goals Igesia’s approach to leadership is based on the following seven components.

**5.1 Strategy/Policy**
This component provides a school's strategy designed to implement, monitor and assess: long-term vision, stakeholders’ insights, and all forms of management.

**5.2 Education**
This component is related to the way the educational program is developed, implemented and assessed and how it is supported by effective instructional programs and by extracurricular activities.

**5.3 Education Support Services**
The third component is concerned with the provision of services that support education and are developed, implemented and assessed.

**5.4 Relationships with Stakeholders**
This component provides the way for an institution to develop, implement and assess internal (student, teacher and staff), as well as external relationships and partnerships (public and private).

**5.5 Human Resources**
This component is addressing the processes and mechanisms Human Resources policies and strategies can be developed, implemented and assessed.

**5.6 Infrastructure, Equipment, Facilities, ICT**
This component provides a process by which facilities, infrastructure and the IT systems can be developed, implemented and assessed.

**5.7 Financial Resources**
This component is addressing the way financial services can be developed, implemented and assessed.

In summary, Igesia’s approach to education basically re-envisions education by drawing on social constructivist educational philosophies [31]. An approach which emphasizes the importance of interrelationships between all stakeholders participating in the teaching and learning processes and the kinds of interactions that need to be fostered in planning learning resources to create participatory learning experiences. In other words, it is based on “Constructivism”, and not “Constructionism”, a theory which is based on observation and scientific study and determines how students learn and how they construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, by experiencing things and reflecting on them” [32].

**6. SOFIA’S PARADIGM FRAMEWORK**
The best and most efficient and effective tool in understanding where leaders, institutions and leading processes stand in terms of systemic, institution-wide implementation and assessment is the use of a an acceptable, sound, scientifically based, and easily operating framework, representing an educational paradigm such as SoFIA.

Developing such a framework, research [2] and experience has shown that it is not easy for a school to translate its vision into an easily operating framework. Yet SoFIA has developed and utilizes an important innovative approach in helping educational leaders and the approach to leading. It has created an educational framework that can be fully determined by its major components, namely: the PEDIA axis, the ARISTIA axis and the PROTIPO axis, creating a three-dimensional space within which any aspect of the fourth SoFIA component, IGESIA, can take any position (Fig. 1).
This framework represents an excellent conceptual tool. It is characterized as a PEDIA - ARISTIA - PROTIPO dependent approach, suggesting that for any given of the IGESIA characteristic there is a distinct educational point in a three-dimensional space, which:

- Provides a very efficient assessment tool for that characteristic.
- Helps any educational institution to recognize the characteristic contexts (i.e. social, political, cultural, economic etc.) in which it is operating.
- Helps towards achieving the goal of leading in an educational environment of the institution.
- Provides a comparison tool differentiating institutions, levels of education, cultures, goals etc.

Therefore, in any educational organization attempting to use SoFIA, the application has to be explicitly expressed on those terms, which in addition have to reflect the objectives of the institution. In other words, in order for an educational institution to develop the means to transform their own identity into a powerful tool to design their teaching and learning practices the development approach must be based on the paradigm components, but arising from their own needs and expectations.

7. CONCLUSIONS

There is a shared vision among global societies to enhance quality in education. Various stakeholders focus on the needs, aptitudes and aspirations of individual pupils, ignoring the constantly changing times where traditional education and most learning methodologies are being challenged. In response to this condition a Holistic Educational Paradigm has been developed supported by an integrated leading framework called SoFIA. This paradigm: promotes an integrated approach, which includes a well specified pedagogical philosophy; is supported by the identification of concrete innovative practices of learning reflecting this philosophical underpinning; is based on a concise articulation of a set of models of complementary instructional strategies; and incorporates specific learning activities whereby new concepts and ideas can be transformed into reality.

In addition, the SoFIA paradigm possess the following: first, it follows a holistic approach towards didactic programs and approaches, which, it is suggested, cannot be dealt with unless they are considered as representing different manifestations of “a whole”, the dialectic entity of education. Second, it forces all educational stakeholders to work together towards a common cause. Third, it provides a successful transition from the traditional school,
to a progressive school environment where learning is associated with technology. Fourth, it has established that students following SoFIA’s approach are well-equipped to become tomorrow’s leaders with competences and abilities as well as compassion to make the world a better place to live in. Fifth, it offers educational opportunities and experiences that can be determined by any academic institutions’ philosophy and culture, which is defined by their history, principles, values, policies, management style, and most importantly the thinking and behavior of their constituents.

**DISCLAIMER**

The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

**COMPETING INTERESTS**

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

**REFERENCES**


