Adaptability as one of the essential skills of the 21st century in an ever changing world

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I've already mentioned adaptability as one of the must-have soft skills in a recent article. I would like to propose a more enriched approach, linked to the changes in our society and more generally in the whole world. Adaptability is life.

Indeed, the acceleration of technological advances, which are more important over the last forty years than in the millennia that preceded it, raises questions about our ability to adapt in our daily, personal, professional, relational, political and institutional lives.

Let's take a moment to look at the origin of the word "adapt": the verb "adapt" is derived from the Latin verb "adaptare", which means "adjust to". This word itself comes from the Latin apo (hapax legomenon) I attach, I attach, I bind, I join, I bind. This Latin verb is composed of two elements: **"Aptare"**: which means "to make fit, to adjust" and **"Ad"**: which means "towards, to".

Thus, the literal meaning of 'adaptare' is to make fit for something or to adjust to something." It can be seen that the verb "adapt" appeared in French in the thirteenth century. Its first meaning was "to unite, connect, attach without modifying" and then evolved in the sixteenth century, in the sense of "modify to make compatible". There is also an underlying idea of being prepared. Finally, it is worth noting the word "aptitude", sometimes wrongly considered to be synonymous with competence, because it is rather related to a physiological dimension.

Adaptability has often been quoted as one of the "soft skills" that companies need and need to do so, both from the point of view of recruitment and its functioning. I would like to broaden this reflection to include "life skills" that are essential in the context of the construction of personality, its

development and its fulfilment, in the context of Savoir Devenir on which I have been working for more than thirty years. Even if the professional dimension is always emphasized most of the time, we must now consider that this competence affects all sectors of private life, family life and social life.

This more holistic and inter-skills approach therefore makes it possible to go beyond the sole framework of the company, and has repercussions within Life in general, in all contexts, philosophical, sociological, pedagogical, political, digital and ethical.

What is the generally accepted definition? Adaptability is the ability of a person, group, or system to apprehend, adjust, and conform to the ever-changing environment of its environment, whether expected or unexpected, predictable or unpredictable. It involves reacting in an agile and flexible way to changing factors, conditions or environments by acquiring and/or developing new skills, or building on existing or pre-existing skills. I personally use a more synthetic definition: "The ability to put oneself in phase (being, thinking, acting) with one's environment".

With the framework for this analysis in place, here are some key characteristics of adaptability, which I will group around three domains, always considering that they interact with each other, and therefore without wanting to compartmentalize them:

The cognitive domain is based on three skills:

1. <u>Awareness</u>. Indeed, awareness of the present moment, self-awareness and sensitivity to what is happening around you, as well as awareness of the possible or probable effects of this or that action contributes to the understanding of contexts as well as the effects induced by this or that change.

2. <u>Flexibility</u> of the mind refers to the ability to think about multiple things simultaneously, to adapt quickly to new challenges and the disruptions they bring. It also refers to the ability to modify one's representations, methods, habits or attitudes according to the context. If we look at the business world first, the only constant in this rapidly changing world is change. Professionals within the company need to be adaptable and flexible to adapt to a changing environment. This means being more and more open to learning new skills, embracing change, and being willing to change your strategy or perspective if necessary. As automation takes over routine tasks, the ability to think critically and solve complex problems becomes necessary.

3. Finally, <u>learning to learn</u>, to name more like "the knowledge of our own cognitive processes". Some speak of the "**ability to continue and persevere in learning, to organize one's own learning" (Rana Ramjaun)** Some equate learning to learning with metacognition, a concept more related to mental functioning. *Jacques Tardif defines it as* "referring to the knowledge and control that the subject has over himself and his cognitive strategies." This necessarily implies an openness to change, i.e. showing a positive attitude towards change and making oneself available to learn new skills or ways of working from one's colleagues, to try a new behaviour within one's family and friends. Be able to assimilate new information quickly and apply it effectively in different situations, for others and for oneself.

The psycho-social field, with three key areas of competence:

Emotional intelligence: The commonly accepted definition refers to a person's ability to perceive, understand, manage, and express their own emotions, as well as those of others, in order to solve problems and regulate emotion-related behaviors (Peter Salovey and David J. Sluyter). This work was then taken up by Howard Gardner and Daniel Goleman, focusing on the intelligence of the manager and multiple intelligences. Six skills can be grouped around emotional intelligence:

1. Awareness (in this case, awareness of oneself, of one's functioning on an emotional level),
2. Listening and looking in the sense of both the time spent on these two attitudes, but also the quality of them (seeing is not looking, hearing is not listening)
3. And as an extension of this self-knowledge, self-control, the "dosage" of one's reactions allow for dialogue and understanding
4. Attention to others, the establishment of a communication-relationship that integrates active listening, empathy, open-mindedness (openness to differences in functioning, culture, for example)
5. Adaptability to others, concerning the adaptation to each situation of meeting, dialogue or debate with the other, thus promoting teamwork. This skill is also part of a relational dimension, which brings listening, empathy and recognition of others and others as people. This also presupposes respect for differences, for disability, and the facilitation of inclusion. But also interculturality, citizenship.
6. Sociability, as the ability to integrate a network, a team, peers, and to respect each other. And so this notion of respect within the savoir-vivre, knowing how to live as respecting the basic rules of a social life promoting the savoir-vivre together.

Collective intelligence. It seems to have appeared at the end of the 19th century in a work by Gustave Le Bon (The Psychology of Crowds) which notes the different behaviors of individuals (even of various origins) within a group gathered in a particular situation at a given time. This is a question of group psychology. Other authors emphasize the fact that collective intelligence, like observations made on the world of ants, bees, or other animal species, makes it possible to solve problems collectively more effectively than individually. This introduces for human beings the importance of the relational dimension and its quality. Other authors refer to this collective consciousness, which allows wisdom, creativity and performance, on the condition of course (which we often forget) that we ourselves are aware of the effects and contributions of the energy that is deployed within us; I then evoke the "consciousness-energy", the transformation of these realizations into strength, into efforts, into new ideas that must then be shared. Let's then talk about pooling and teamwork:

1. **Pooling** is an act of sharing, allowing us to move from individualism to cooperation. To share is to dispossess oneself of what one knows, of what one has learned, in order to "benefit" others, or even a group. And therefore accept to question oneself, which obviously implies a certain humility. To dispossess oneself of an idea, a strategy, an orientation so that others can possess them again in their own way by appropriating it. It is therefore at the same time to trust and believe in the potential of the other and of others.

2. Pooling necessarily leads to **teamwork,** in a more technical dimension. The means of teamwork, as long as the actors adhere to it, are many and varied and we will mention here only a few. To begin with, let us recall the need for horizontality within a group, recognition of the importance and potential of each person, even if their functions and roles are different. Depending on the context, we will mention mind mapping, team building, brainstorming, world café, graphic facilitation, etc. It seems to me that there is an axis that runs through this collaborative work, around the notion of a shared project. »

Situational Intelligence as the ability to understand a situation in its different dimensions and complexity in order to adapt to it and provide an appropriate response. It is therefore a question of being able to analyze and react when a new situation arises, both rationally and emotionally. People who are able to use this intelligence can therefore easily adapt to changing, unforeseen and

unpredictable situations. They adjust their behaviour, actions and decisions according to new circumstances.

Situational intelligence also includes a significant social dimension. Indeed, understanding and interpreting social interactions, reading the emotions of others (see emotional intelligence) and decoding non-verbal signals and attitudes, makes it easier to understand delicate relational situations.

Finally, people who develop situational intelligence are adept at solving problems that arise in specific situations. A quick analysis of the challenges and issues can enable them to make the right decisions.

And finally, the more "humanistic" domain specific to Savoir Devenir around several essential skills related to adaptability:

Resilience as a sign of adaptability without question: Being able to face challenges and bounce back from failures or difficulties. But what are we talking about?

Resilience is defined in the Robert as the physical resistance to the impact of a metal, and the psychological ability to overcome trauma. The contraction of the two definitions evokes the adaptation and resistance of the body and mind to the shock to which they are subjected.

The emotional dimension of resilience emerged only a few years ago, in connection with the September 11 attacks in the United States, and those of the Bataclan, the rise of terrorism, and the COVID crisis and the lockdown among others. In a more psychological sense, it is characterized as the ability for an individual to psychologically endure the trials of life, which allows him to bounce back, to often make a new start. Self-knowledge and self-control are facilitating elements. It is therefore a question of overcoming setbacks, obstacles, and meeting challenges. This involves the mastery of emotional intelligence, which allows you to positively deal with problems encountered during new trials or the appearance of obstacles, thus developing resistance, endurance, and ultimately perseverance. It is not a question of trying to erase trauma at all costs, but rather of trying to use it in order to find the springs that will allow us to bounce back. Identifying the tools used that have made it possible to be positive and to get through the trials is therefore essential. The concept of resilience is now widely used, especially in companies, both in the field of management and in the field of personal development and collaborative work. Very often related to the notion of well-being, conducive to greater efficiency at work, at school, but more broadly in daily life.

Finally, it would be a shame to talk about resilience without quoting Boris Cyrulnik who writes: "Resilience is to flourish in an arid land, or after a long and harsh winter". He points out that there are crowds of resilient people around us, silent, who have not let the trials of life get them down, and who seek to emerge stronger, grown.

Projection, personal projecting: *knowing how to become refers to the individual's ability to project himself, i.e. to conceive here and now a representation of his future as much by identifying his journey, his itinerancy, his life story, as by imagination, openness to opportunities and authorization to be who he wishes to be, or by mobilizing planning skills in order to script the sequence of actions, identify constraints and risks, and reduce uncertainties.*

The Aim of well-being or what I have called **learning to become serene.** Around this notion, it is simply a question of happiness and well-being. Indeed, it seems obvious that fulfillment tends to occur when we are successful, but also when we are constantly developing our skills, our abilities, renewing them and adapting them to new contexts, changes, and even upheavals. Learning and knowing how to become contribute fully not only to responsibility, through the capacity for self-determination (decision, choice), to self-confidence, resilience (already mentioned) or to openness to the world,

curiosity and the desire to learn. Personal and professional balance thanks to the development of attitudes and skills, allowing you to avoid stagnation, staying in a routine...

It's about being able to stay calm and focused even in high-pressure or high-stress situations.

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