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## Mind the Gap: Mapping Skills in Higher Education Project Summary

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# Project Summary

## Knowledge Mobilization & Impact

### Mind the Gap: Mapping Skills in Higher Education

#### Background

The call for reform in higher education has been a focus of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for over a decade. This call for reform is driven by a stated “skills gap” between the skills of graduates and the needs of the labour market. Student groups have also voiced their concern about the skills gap and its impact on future employment.

#### The Problem

There is some agreement that the idea of a skills gap needs policy attention, but there are differing arguments about what the actual problem is according to different policy actors, such as students, policymakers, media, industry (Viczko, Lorusso & McKechnie, 2019).

Key arguments include:

- The skills gap is caused by a lack of preparation of graduates to enter the world of work
- The skills gap is caused by the inability of graduates to properly articulate their skills
- There is a lack of labour market information (LMI) collected by industry and government.
- There is a need for an articulated strategy for skills development.

Yet, we want to know, how important is “skills” as an issue of concern?

#### The Project

The goal of the project was to explore how important the issue of this skills gap was to two different policy actors: the OECD and national student associations/unions within several OECD member countries. In order to know how important the issue of skills was, we had to know all of the different issues these groups are concerned with and then find out how skills ranks among those issues.

#### The Findings



- Using digital methods, we were able to analyze the websites of policy actors to create an overall representation of the issue space in which the “skills gap” was featured as a policy concern
- This figure represents the prominent issues being addressed by student unions and the OECD
- The size of each bubble corresponds to the ranking of the issue
- Funding for education was the most prominent issue being addressed globally by student associations and the OECD
- **The issue of skills was still important, ranking 6<sup>th</sup> out of 14 main issue categories**

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