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THE FUTURE SKILLS REPORT

EDUCATION FOR A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

How can education prepare students for, arguably, one of the most crucial and defining steps into the workplace and adult life? Over the last five years, students have witnessed a global pandemic, learning behind screens, isolation, a growing climate crisis, wars and political events that have global impact.

Worldwide industries, communities and societies are constantly adapting and evolving to meet new sets of challenges, so it is imperative for education to be at the forefront of this change. This will help ensure that today's students are prepared to face not only our current challenges, but are able to pre-empt, identify and effectively plan to tackle issues that are yet to arise.

This research, Education for a World of Opportunity, has been conducted collaboratively by ACS International Schools and the IB Schools and Colleges Association (IBSCA) in the UK. Through YouGov polling, it surveyed senior decision makers from British Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) representative of British business sizes.

In 2022, there were 5.5 million private sector businesses accounted for in the UK, of which over 5.47 million were SMEs. They are the backbone of the UK economy; driving growth, playing a vital role in providing employment opportunities, and opening new markets. SMEs also help create competition and further encourage innovation across a range of sectors.

Qualitative research has also been undertaken with leading global companies and organisations, including: McKinsey & Company, Amazon Web Services, Royal College of Arts, Schlumberger, and more.

ACS International Schools has been aligned with the International Baccalaureate (IB)'s educational philosophy for more than 50 years. Together, ACS International Schools and IBSCA believe that every student can rise to meet academic and personal challenges and fulfil a potential that they might not even know lies within them.

Through the IB, ACS International Schools and IBSCA are committed to developing effective learners, confident individuals, and caring contributors who are practical problem solvers and change makers, working together to make a better world.





DR. ROBERT HARRISON
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND
INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY,
ACS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



Faced with an increasingly unpredictable future, we should assume that the world of work will continue to be disrupted and reshaped. New disciplines and previously unimagined job roles are emerging every day, and the skills and dispositions that employers value today, may or may not be valuable tomorrow. We can be sure that the most important competencies and attitudes are likely to centre on being able to learn and adapt in the face of rapid, volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous conditions in society and the world of work. We also certainly cannot ignore the unprecedented growth of technology, which will continue to change the jobs people do, and how we do them.

If this vision of the future is true, it's fair to ask, what is the purpose of education today?

It is our responsibility, as educators, to help develop ethical and personally fulfilled human beings, who are prepared and equipped to be responsible members of local and global communities. This means that learning today must focus not only on what students need to know, but also how they are to use that knowledge and translate their understanding into effective action. High-quality education develops both social and academic intelligence, not to mention an appetite to engage with a world filled with opportunity. This is what it means to get our students ready for the future today.

This research helps us understand the kind of skills and, importantly, the kind of people valued by SME decision makers - a group of stakeholders whose perspectives are not always sought or understood, and yet they account for 99.9% of the business population. Armed with this information we can better design and deliver education that's fit for purpose now and into the future. And, while I doubt that any school can deliver students who are future-proofed, we can certainly help to make them future-ready.



Following the disruption of the global pandemic, there has never been a better time to question the "why?" of education and understand what businesses prioritise and how they are adapting to an employee-first market.

We are pleased to co-present this report, which provides insight and evidence for students, parents, and the education community into the skills that employers are looking for in their future workforces.

And, if businesses are having to adapt, this means that education must too, to ensure that doors remain open for students to the world of possibilities.

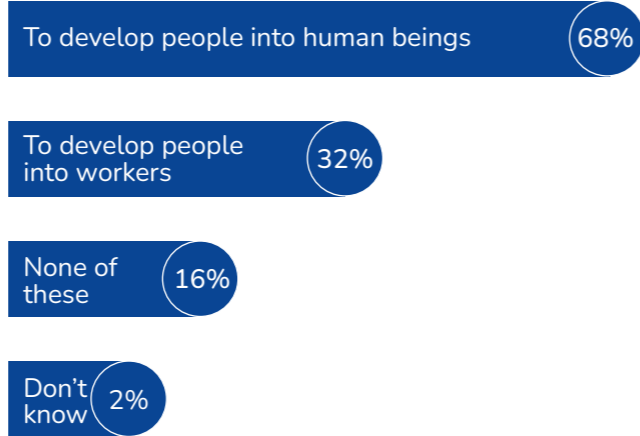


RICHARD MARKHAM
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, IB SCHOOL
AND COLLEGES ASSOCIATION
OF UK AND IRELAND

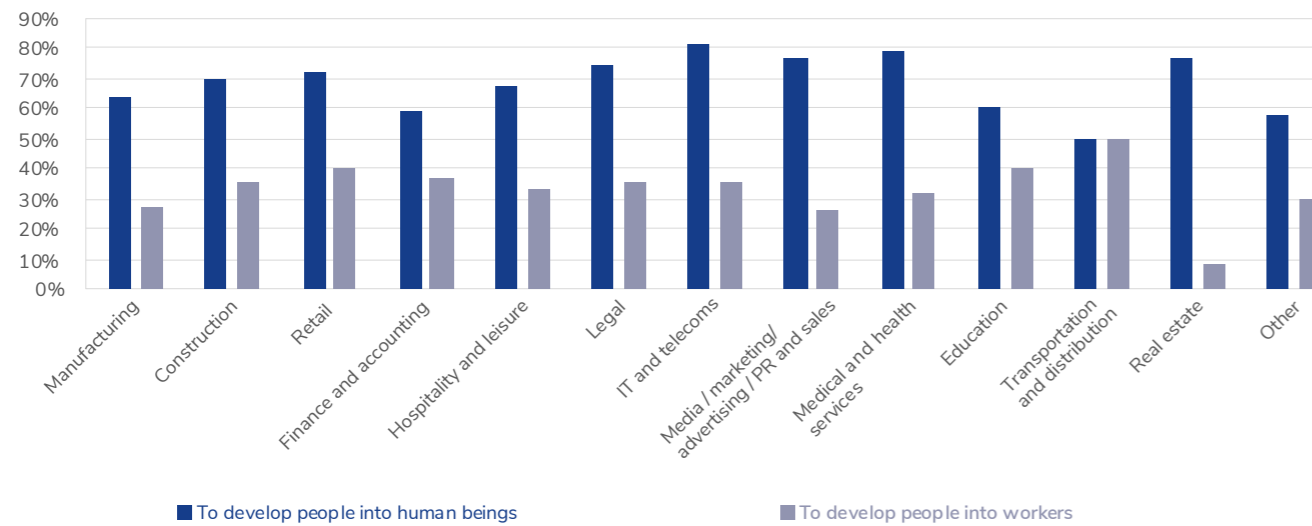
THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

The role of education is a topic of on-going debate which has most recently come to a head post-pandemic, where it was made clear that, in order to thrive, students need a holistic well-rounded education that develops them to be open-minded and to ask the questions that will solve tomorrow's issues.

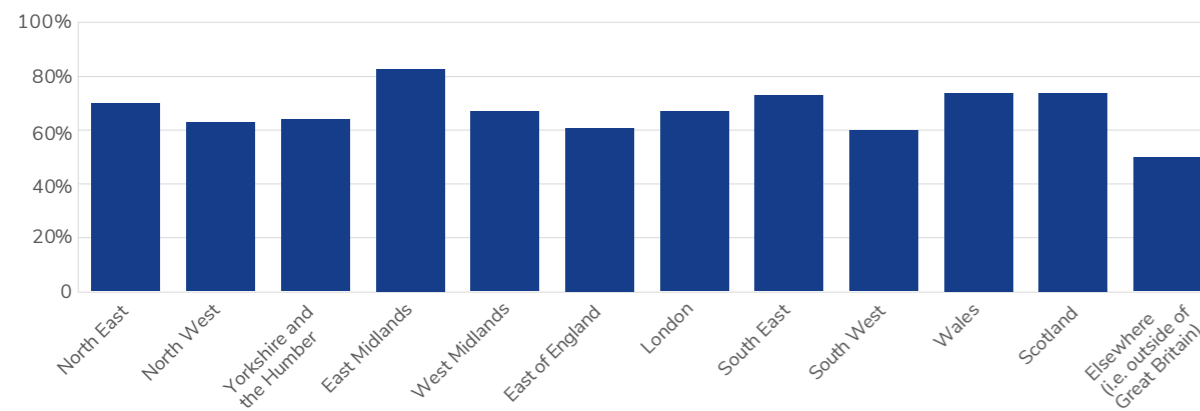
Considering the on-going conversations taking place around the validity of national curriculums, it is no surprise that over two thirds (68%) of SME business decision makers in the UK believe that the purpose of education is to develop people into decent human beings.



INDUSTRY BREAK DOWN



BUSINESS LOCATIONS



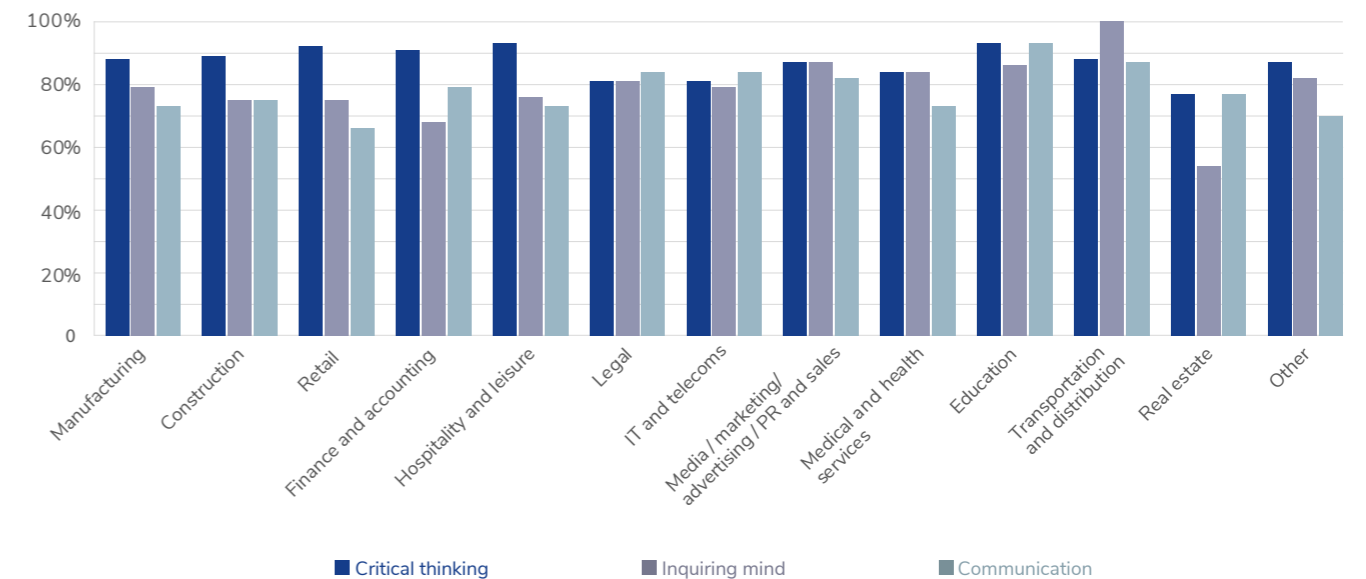
However, SME decision makers operating in transportation and distribution, education and retail sectors disagree with this view, with most (50%, 40% and 40% respectively) stating that the role of education is to develop people into efficient workers.

School is a safe place for students to make mistakes and a place to develop, and the research results are indicative of the unpredictable job market that our young people will be entering. That being said, it is positive to see a general agreement amongst the business community on the types of personal skills that students will need to be successful in the workplace.

Students need an education that doesn't solely focus on subject knowledge, but develops core competencies that businesses are looking for. An education for life, that doesn't just prepare them for one career, but many. To achieve this, students must have access to a broad, yet balanced, curriculum. IB learners benefit from a flexible and tailored education that is appropriate to cultures, context, needs, interests, and learning ability and involves a range of subjects in each programme. For example, students undertaking the Diploma Programme take six different subjects (including mathematics and a science) to the age of 18. This enables students to develop their passions while studying their strength subjects.

Knowledge	69%
Open-mindedness	72%
Communication	88%
Risk-taking	22%
Inquiring mind	78%
Entrepreneurship	34%
Critical thinking	76%
Reflectiveness	41%
Principles	64%
Empathy	63%
None of these	-
Don't know	1%

SKILLS BY SECTOR



Alongside subject knowledge, SMEs were asked about the most desired skill set in future employees, the ability to communicate, have an inquiring mind and be able to think critically were deemed to be the most important as the data below suggests. Through an IB education, these traits are developed through the IB learner profile, a range of human

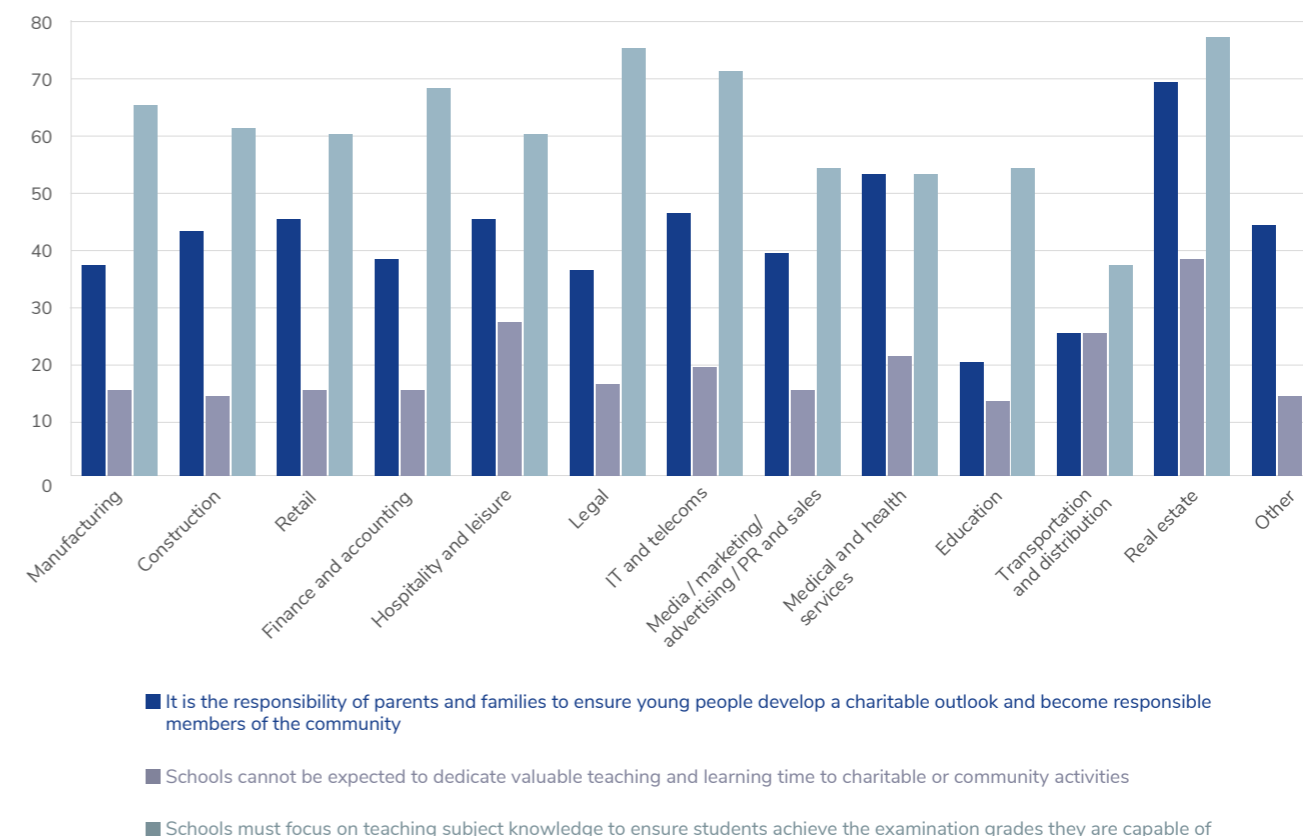
characteristics that go beyond academic success. The profile aims to develop learners who are inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, balanced and reflective, all of which are highly regarded by the SME decision makers and the global corporations surveyed in this research.

Educational institutions should use examples of historical role models to inspire young people to be charitable/good citizens	43%
Teaching students to be responsible members of society should be the role of the RE (Religious Education) and PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) curriculums	32%
Schools must focus on teaching subject knowledge to ensure students achieve the examination grades they are capable of	42%
Schools cannot be expected to dedicate valuable teaching and learning time to charitable or community activities	17%
It is the responsibility of parents and families to ensure young people develop a charitable outlook and become responsible members of the community	63%
Charity work, including fundraising activities, should be part of every school curriculum	36%
At school only academic knowledge is important, it is the only thing that students need in order to have a successful career	7%
None of these	5%
Don't know	4%

Through IB programmes, ACS International Schools develop the next global thinkers and doers who help to create a better and more peaceful world. SME decision makers were asked to consider whether it is the role of schools to develop students into responsible members of society, or the remit of parents and families and to look at which of the following statements they agreed with.

When looking at the data from the survey, it is interesting to see that while nearly half (42%) of those questioned believe that schools should focus on teaching subject knowledge, and whilst 17% said that schools cannot be expected to dedicate valuable teaching and learning time to charitable or community activities, 36% of respondents believe that charity work, including fundraising activities, should be part of the school curriculum.

SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE VS CHARITABLE OUTLOOKS



EXPERT INDUSTRY COMMENT



The International Baccalaureate forces students to push their learning through a much broader context. That's probably the thing we most like about the IB programme – it's not just learning maths or science, it's understanding maths or science in the context of societal issues and values. Students explore the ethical and social implications, and historical context. It requires deeper understanding of the material, and high levels of discussion and argument in the classroom, learning from peers and working in teams – all these things ideally will set them up for the workplace in the future.

RAMIRO PRUDENCIO, MCKINSEY & COMPANY

EXPERT INDUSTRY COMMENT



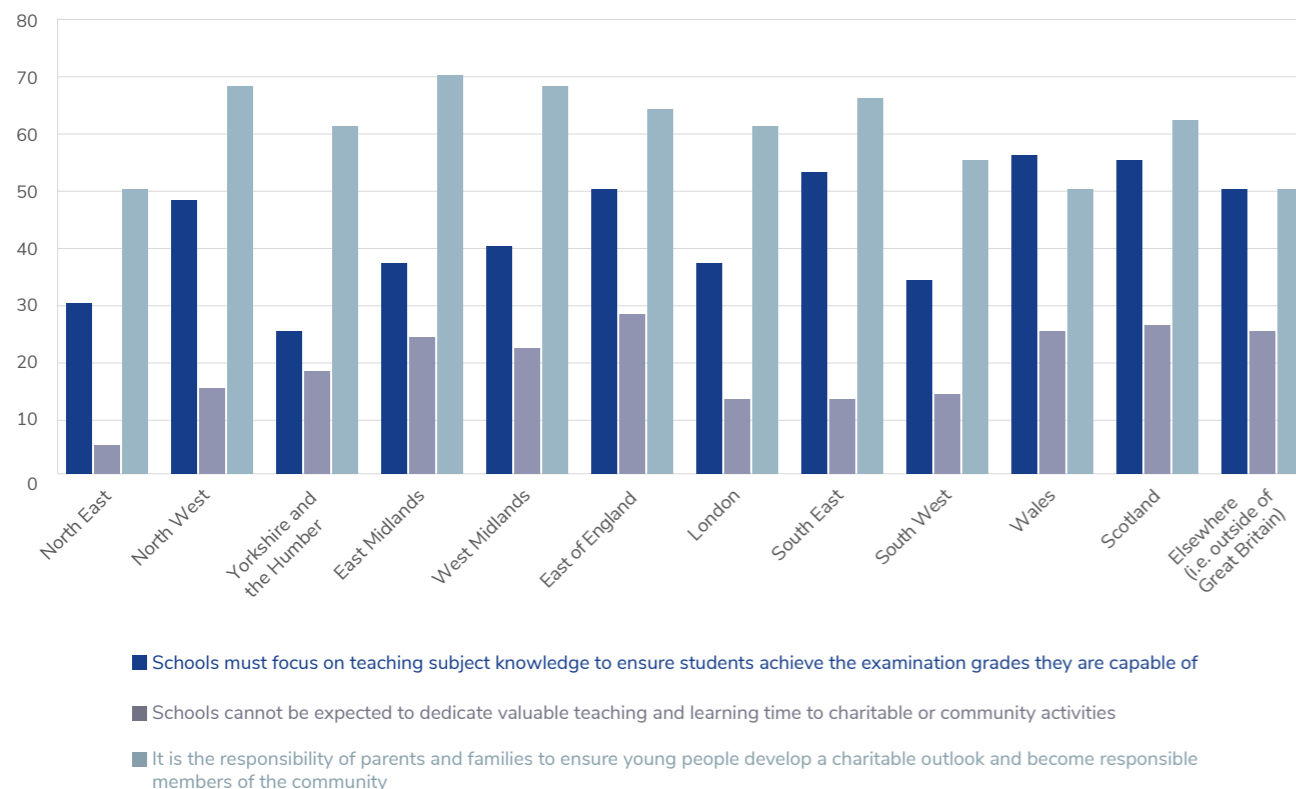
A CV means nothing, it is formalities, it is something that people feel comfortable to present and talk about. But, a lot of people have amazing CVs yet don't know how to communicate and vice versa. I have always hired people based on how they communicated with me, and how they communicated and expressed opinions and absolutely nothing about what they have done in the past.

GHANIM ALSULAITI, ENBATH HOLDINGS

This means that employers agree with, and appreciate, the “added value” elements to an IB education that can be found in the core of each programme, such as Service as Action in the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for students aged 11 – 16 years.

This is further reflected in the survey results where, over a quarter (29%) of respondents believe charitable work to be important or very important on a young person’s CV.

SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE VS CHARITABLE OUTLOOKS – LOCATIONS



EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL-MINDEDNESS

International-mindedness means to understand, respect and value different cultures, embrace diversity and know that different perspectives can offer a great deal. Being global thinkers enables us to work in harmony with colleagues from around the world and benefit from a wide range of knowledge and experience.

Global perspectives are, of course, prevalent in international schools and those offering the IB, where so many international elements are already in place. For example, the rich tapestry of cultures within the student cohort or the option to study subjects through global contexts. Through local and global settings, IB students connect their learning experiences to their real-world experiences, taking action to make a difference in their community, building practical problem solving and critical thinking skills and a lifelong sense of curiosity.

This opinion is echoed in the research results where by 40% of SME decision makers (those who ranked between 7 – 10) say that a young person’s demonstration of international-mindedness is important or very important in their recruitment of entry level candidates as they see themselves connected to a global community and assume a sense of responsibility to its members.

0 - Not at all important	12%
1	2%
2	5%
3	5%
4	6%
5	12%
6	11%
7	13%
8	14%
9	4%
10 - Very important	9%
Don't know	7%

40% of SME decision makers state that demonstration of international-mindedness is important or very important in their recruitment of entry level candidates

EXPERT INDUSTRY COMMENT

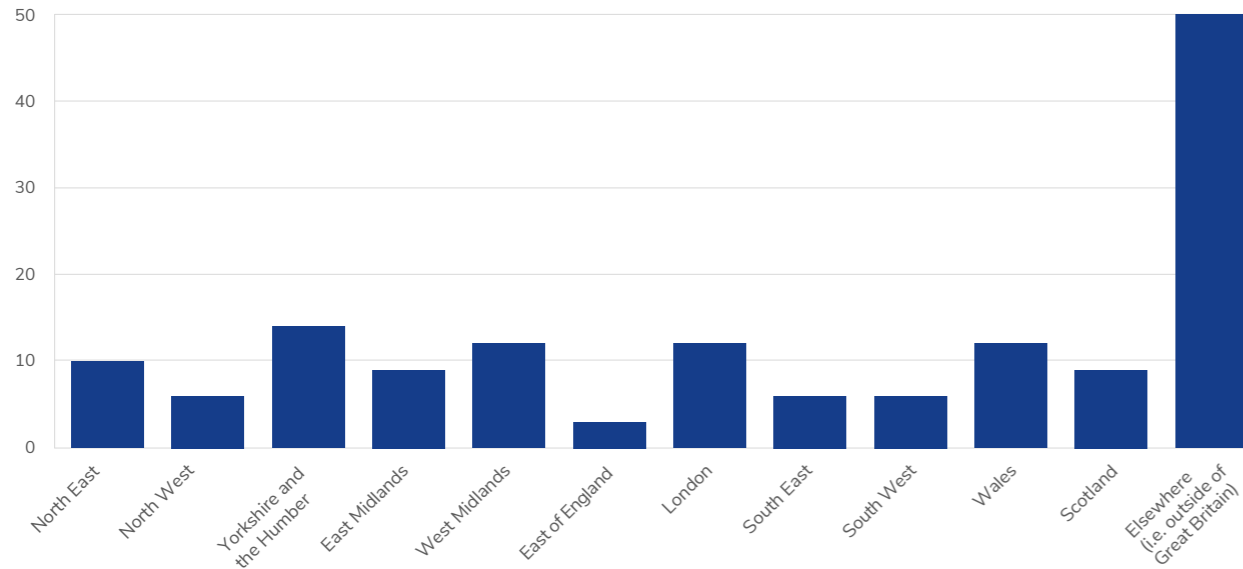


Schools are accountable for nurturing students to become responsible and charitable members of society. If you think about diversity and inclusion and think about our world, we need people who are really engaged in those topics. It also helps with work life balance, helps people feel more confident in applying for positions and reaching for goals. So, I do think that we need to do a lot to encourage kids to get involved with our communities and make stands.

GORDON CASTLE, TECHNICAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, AMAZON WEB SERVICES SPORT



GEOGRAPHICAL SPLIT: INTERNATIONAL-MINDEDNESS IS "VERY IMPORTANT"



EXPERT INDUSTRY COMMENT



Everything is international these days. We can learn so much from colleagues all over the world, be that big or small economies. The better we understand and the more open-minded we are, the more chance of succeeding and coming up with good solutions to everything, whether it is in business or in the challenges facing the planet.

NADIA DANHASH,
DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION,
ROYAL COLLEGE OF ARTS

Teaching students how to be global citizens gives them a knowledge base and understanding of global issues as well as critical thinking skills and pluralistic attitudes. In a time of rapid change, it is more important than ever for students to have the skills to work together and against issues such as climate change and sustainability.

Developing cultural intelligence in students through education helps young people to build their own understanding of world events, equips them with the ability to challenge injustice, think about values, practice cultural empathy and be involved with communities at many different levels.

With this in mind, SME decision makers were asked to consider whether they have witnessed international-mindedness being taught in schools. Interestingly, while 40% of respondents value global awareness in their approaches to recruitment, 40% believe that they have not witnessed it being taught in schools at all.

That being said, the top three routes that SMEs believe education is developing global thinkers and doers are through:

Educational trips and visits	33%
Language learning	34%
Culture taught through geography, sociology, and other subjects	35%

RECRUITING PARAMETERS

The research results suggest that just having subject knowledge is no longer enough to thrive in the world of work and life. Knowledge is obsolete if students do not know how to apply it and the best way for students to develop these skills is through learning about real world concepts. For students to succeed in the future world of work, they will need the right attitude, adaptable skills and cultural sensitivity.

This opinion rings true amongst the British SME community, where only a quarter of SME leaders believe that having subject knowledge is very important, favouring the development of personal and professional skills.

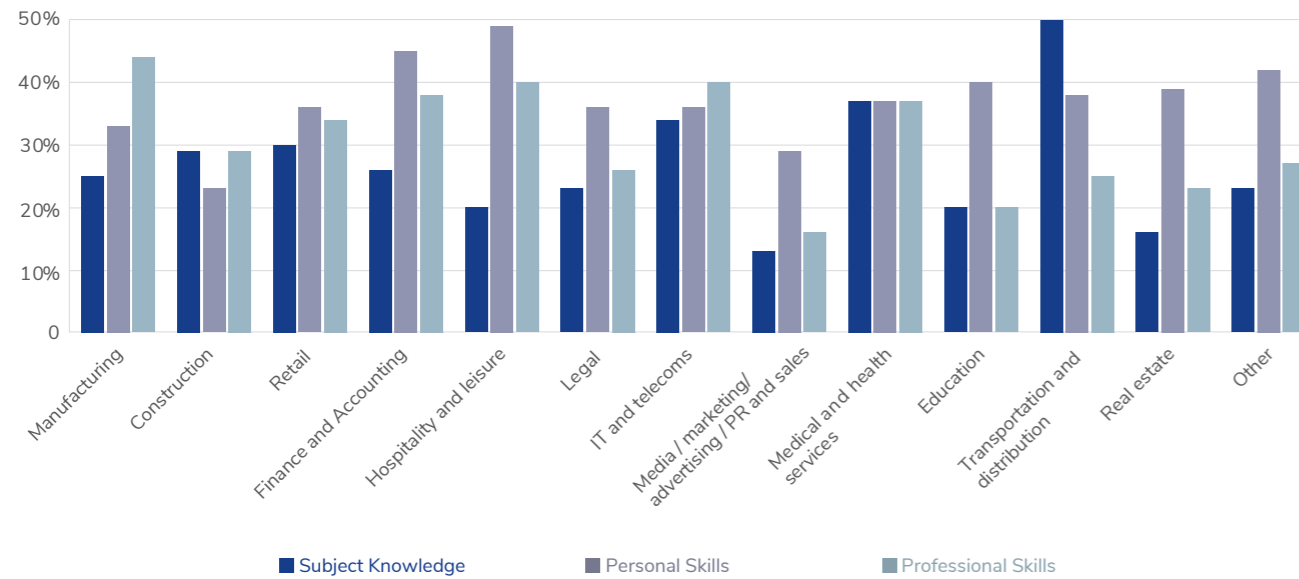
That's why ACS International Schools, along with more than 40 other independent and state sector

schools in the UK, offer the IB's Career-related Programme (CP). The CP prepares students for businesses and industries that require self-confidence, accomplished personal and professional skills, and technical knowledge. Through the CP, students achieve a valued and academically rigorous qualification that features real-world, practical approaches to learning. The CP prepares students both for university and career pathways—combining academic subjects with their own professional interests. CP students develop transferable personal skills in intercultural understanding, effective communication, thinking processes, and applied ethics.

	Subject knowledge	Personal skills	Professional skills
0	1%	1%	1%
1	1%	-	0%
2	3%	0%	1%
3	5%	0%	1%
4	5%	1%	1%
5	12%	4%	5%
6	11%	5%	6%
7	15%	12%	13%
8	14%	24%	26%
9	6%	15%	12%
10	25%	37%	32%
Don't know	2%	2%	2%

Transportation and logistics ranked subject knowledge the highest
 Hospitality and leisure ranked personal skills the highest
 Manufacturing ranked professional skills the highest

SECTOR SPLIT: SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE, PERSONAL SKILLS AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLED RANKED "VERY IMPORTANT"



The events of 2020 were a shared experience on a global scale: a period of change in our lives that was a process of trial, error and reflection. Through lockdowns and periods of isolation, we truly understood the interdependence we have on each other.

It was imperative for students to feel like they were supported on how to best approach online learning. This transition was easier for IB students, as the promotion of independent learning is at the core of IB programmes.

After a minimum of two years behind screens, it is no surprise that UK SMEs are finding that young employees are expecting more from them as employers, compared to life pre-pandemic.

Much more	18%
A little more	21%
No difference	40%
A little less	2%
Much less	0%
Don't know	18%
Net: More	40%
Net: Less	2%



EXPERT INDUSTRY COMMENT



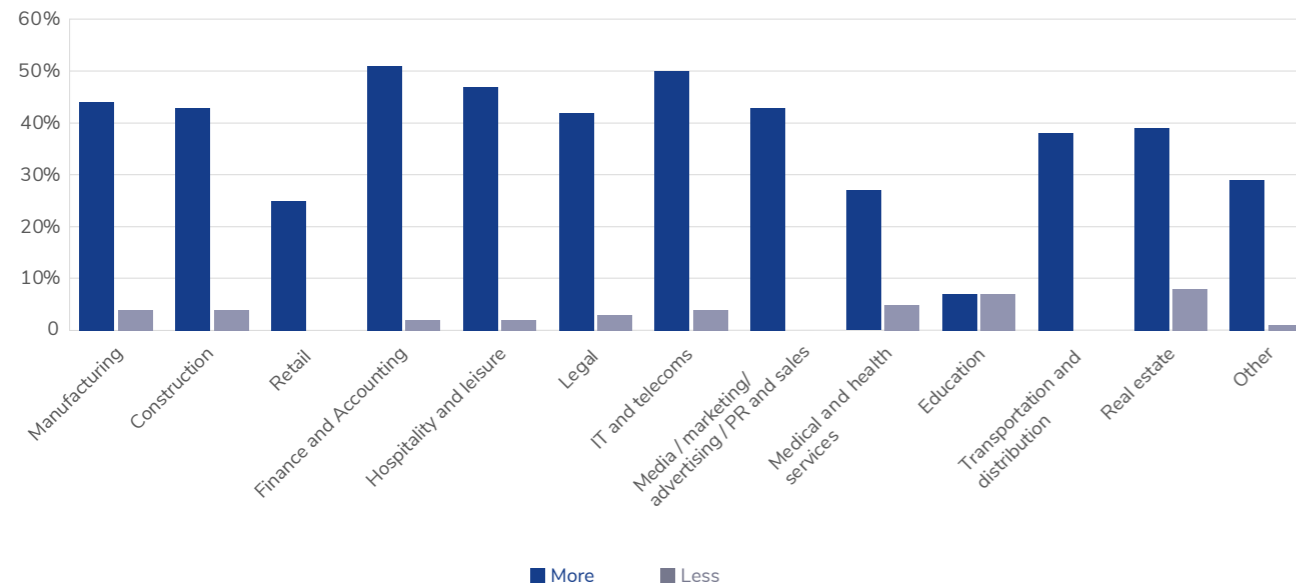
I think we tend to exaggerate change and we can talk about how the request for certain skills has changed over the years but overall, when I joined the corporate world there were qualities, maybe more qualities than skills per se, that were required that are still valid today. So, if you're hardworking, work well as a team, if you're conscientious, if you have human qualities, you're likely to succeed in the corporate world.

If I get a CV and I see the International Baccalaureate, straight away it will be on the pile of CVs I want to go through, regardless of the other elements. It's almost a shortcut on a CV that tells me that this kid is internationally-minded and has gone through a rigorous programme, probably is quite open minded and flexible in the way they think. It's a really solid foundation.

SOLENE ADLER, GLOBAL SENIOR INSIGHTS MANAGER, PEPSI LIPTON.

Finance and accounting are the highest sector with employee expectation rising post COVID-19

SECTOR SPLIT: EMPLOYEES EXPECTATIONS POST-COVID



As we continue with life post-COVID, a greater work life balance is now expected by employees (77%), with many wanting to retain the comforts of working from home. Other entry level employees are looking for validation and job security through remuneration (70%) and professional development (53%).

Other young employees are mostly requesting:

Financial benefits – private healthcare, wellbeing packages	50%
More annual leave	36%
Commitment to sustainability and protecting the environment	33%
Commitment to diversity and inclusion	35%

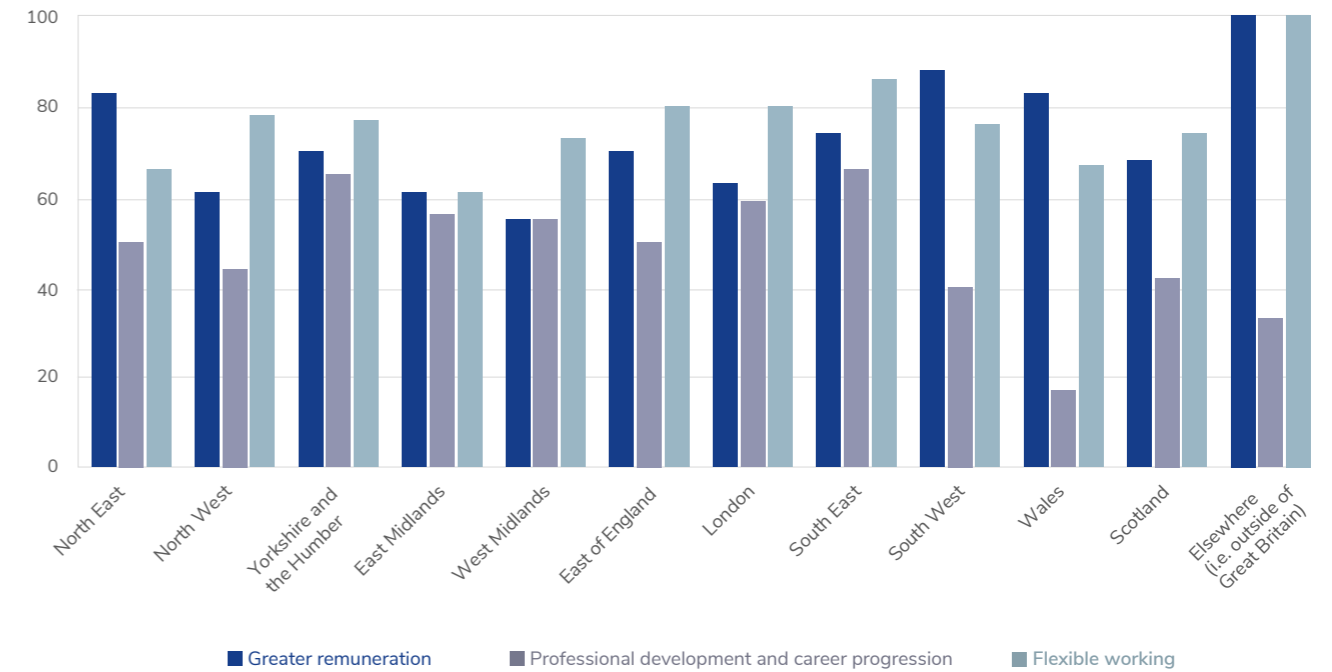
EXPERT INDUSTRY COMMENT

“

You're never going to learn what it's like to work in an office or work environment from a book or through a screen, so that's one of the areas that I see as essential – making sure that young people coming out of school and into work for the first time have a lot of physical 'face time' with their colleagues. When you've been in business for a longer period, and you understand how things work it's easier to work at home, but we certainly see that the younger cohort of people coming into the workplace want a physical interaction and work needs to be a real thing rather than a virtual thing.

STUART JACKSON, DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL WORKPLACE COMMUNICATIONS, AMAZON

SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE VS CHARITABLE OUTLOOKS – LOCATIONS



■ Greater remuneration ■ Professional development and career progression ■ Flexible working

What are the top requests by industry?

Greater remuneration: Legal, education, medical, real estate

Professional development: Finance and accounting, education, IT & telecoms and transportation and logistics

Flexible working: transportation and logistics, education, media and marketing

EXPERT INDUSTRY COMMENT

“

Going into the workplace post COVID-19 things have changed a lot in my company for the good, so at least I can say that through all the negatives that came with the pandemic but, for us and probably others, it has brought a new way of working. While we do have a flexible working policy, we believe there has to be a balance for our new hires so they are given the opportunity to learn from one another and be part of a culture.

MAURIZIO ZOTTI, COMMERCIAL SALES MANAGER, SCHLUMBERGERRAMIRO PRUDENCIO, MCKINSEY & COMPANY

SKILLS IN A TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN ECONOMY



It is no secret that technology will continue to disrupt and reshape the world of work. New fields and unexpected roles will emerge, and merge in the kaleidoscope of the contemporary labour market. While not every job will be in technology, every job will, in some shape or form, be impacted by technology. Taking this into consideration, we asked business decision makers where they believed technical responsibilities lie and how much they favour technical skills from entry level graduates. The top three responses were:

Everyone, including the leadership team, needs to understand and be able to use the technology that is core to their organisations	58%
Everyone needs basic IT skills to be able to function in the workplace	73%
New recruits, including entry level candidates, are expected to have core IT skills	60%

EXPERT INDUSTRY COMMENT



The constant need to be stimulated and consume content, due to technology, is impacting attention spans, which to me is a great concern. I don't think it is conducive to thinking things through, absorbing knowledge, or letting the brain rest to think clearly.

SOLENE ADLER, GLOBAL SENIOR INSIGHTS MANAGER, PEPSI LIPTON

Over a third of the SME decision makers surveyed believe that everyone needs to be aware of developments in technology (e.g. AI) and how they might benefit their organisation. With further AI software being developed, with the likes of ChatGPT, education needs to evolve to keep up with technological developments and teachers must become wiser, imaginative and creative in their evaluations and assessments so they can accurately capture what young minds know.

Schools should look to use AI tools to enhance

learning and teaching to help students make ethical decisions about it. Most AI technology, like ChatGPT, is morally agnostic; whether it is bad or good depends on how you use it and why you're using it.

The research findings suggest that a balance is to be struck when considering the impact of automation on jobs which require human personal traits, such as empathy. Two thirds of respondents (66%) believe that professional empathy is important to job productivity and satisfaction when there is less human interaction.

	In an automated workplace, with less human interaction, professional empathy is important to productivity and job satisfaction	In an automated workplace, with less human interaction, professional empathy is important to mental health and wellbeing	Technology enables more time and space for professional empathy and compassion	Balance is required between professional empathy and compassion, and unproductive indulgence
Strongly agree	26%	28%	6%	18%
Tend to agree	39%	40%	22%	45%
Neither agree nor disagree	20%	16%	38%	19%
Tend to disagree	4%	5%	19%	8%
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	7%	3%
Don't know	9%	8%	9%	8%
Net: Agree	66%	69%	28%	63%
Net: Disagree	6%	7%	25%	11%

The research shows mixed reactions from SMEs on the major impacts of innovation in technology on the workplace and workplace skills. While two-thirds (66%) believe that technology will positively impact the workplace by allowing for more

flexibility, and therefore making the workplace more attractive to entry level workers, 90% of the British SME decision makers believe that further innovations in technology will not lead to more satisfying jobs.

Automation – less repetitive, more satisfying, roles for humans	24%
Greater productivity	27%
Less travel required, less negative environmental impact	66%
More satisfying jobs	57%
More value placed on human input and achievements	10%
Charity work, including fundraising activities, should be part of every school curriculum	17%
Less value placed on human input and achievements	23%
Greater inequality in the workplace – larger gap between skilled and unskilled workforce	29%
Less opportunities for unskilled workers to ‘learn on the job’ and progress to higher paid roles	36%
Other	3%
Don’t know	9%

EXPERT INDUSTRY COMMENT



In the last 10 years empathetic leadership has become a valuable tool for an individual leader and for a business, but it’s a recent phenomenon. If you look back 25 years ago, it wasn’t seen as a valuable commodity and it would be fascinating to see how many CEOs used to come from the financial side of the business vs how many now come from the communications, marketing or HR side.

STUART JACKSON, DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL WORKPLACE COMMUNICATIONS, AMAZON

CONCLUSION



It is clear that knowledge is no longer enough to thrive in the world of work and life. Knowledge is obsolete if students don’t know how to apply it and the best way for students to develop the skills they need for this is to learn about the real world. The consensus across every industry surveyed shows that the most important skill for students to learn, is the skill of being human.

Using this research as a springboard into the future world of work, schools and employers need to re-frame what it means to Educate for a World of Opportunity. What might be in a future-ready curriculum that combines understanding and skill in a technology-driven society?

Introducing this research at the 2040 Future Skills Conference sponsored by ACS Doha, Dr. Harrison invited schools and future employers to read between the lines, and outline a possible agenda for education that includes preparing students to develop:

1. Associative cognition

This includes learning and skills that are machine resistant, such as navigating unpredictable metaphorical landscapes. A unique aspect of being human is being able to create a solution to something that hasn’t happened before, and create new connections rather than follow existing pathways.

2. Appetite for complexity

Technology is better at overcoming complications than human minds. But humans are better at complexity, and therein lies the important difference. For example, you can teach a car to drive autonomously, but you won’t be able to teach the car how to overcome disruptive business models; something that jobs of the future will require workers to do.



3. Algorithmic intelligence

Workers of the future must understand what machines can and can’t do. This means that today’s students must continue to learn how to hold hands with technology and expand their vocabulary to include things like data science and machine learning.

4. Achievement of wisdom

Education should be geared towards building wisdom as much as knowledge. Education is more nuanced and enriching than just the development of skills. As important as skills and knowledge are, it is the wisdom and dispositions that today’s students develop that are going to enable them to make good decisions, thrive and live a fulfilling life.

Education for a World of Opportunity means getting students ready not just to have the skills to get a job, but to be fully human, and to be convinced that they have the ability—and responsibility—to change the world for the better. That calls for an education that develops confident individuals who are caring contributors and effective learners in school and beyond the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

This survey has been conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc UK panel of 800,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 551 SME senior decision makers. Fieldwork was undertaken between 21st – 29th November 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have

been weighted and are representative of British business size.

Alongside the YouGov survey, telephone interviews took place with 12 professionals at leading global employers in December 2022. The calls were conducted by an independent organisation working to Market Research Society (MRS) standards.



ABOUT ACS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Founded in 1967 to serve the needs of global and local families, ACS International Schools educates over 3,500 students, aged 2 to 18, day and boarding, from more than 100 countries.

There are three schools in the UK, in Greater London: ACS Cobham, ACS Egham and ACS Hillingdon, and one school in Doha, Qatar – are all non-sectarian and co-educational.

ACS International Schools offers a choice of curriculum including all International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes, and US programmes including Advanced Placement (AP) courses and the new AP Capstone and International Diplomas.

The strength of its university preparatory programmes ensures that ACS students are consistently able to gain places at leading higher education institutions in the UK, the USA and around the world.

For more information about its schools, please visit its website www.acs-schools.com



ABOUT IBSCA

The IB Schools and Colleges Association of the UK and Ireland (IBSCA) is a membership organisation for all schools in the UK and Ireland offering International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes.

IBSCA exists to:

- provide a network of support for teachers through a range of professional development opportunities
- provide tailored support for individual schools
- liaise with Higher Education institutions and other relevant bodies to increase understanding of the value of the programmes.

For more information about IBSCA please visit the website www.ibsca.org.uk

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GLOBAL THINKERS AND DOERS



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