



“I’ve made a difference”

The 21st Century Competencies Students Need to Thrive in the Workplace

This brief was authored by Tom Dobson, Professor of Education. Contact: t.dobson@yorks.ac.uk

How can we prepare students to be active citizens, who undertake jobs not yet created, and tackle challenges we can’t imagine?

Despite schools striving to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks and Ofsted judgements on Personal Development, many students do not develop the 21st century competencies required for work.

We define 21st century competencies as: cognitive (e.g. critical thinking); intrapersonal (e.g. self-regulated

learning); interpersonal (e.g. collaborative learning); and affective (e.g. motivation).

But with an overcrowded curriculum, league tables, and teaching to the test, it’s no wonder many of our students leave school without the competencies needed to make a difference in the workplace.



Nurturing the Next Generation of Responsible Leaders

Give students the opportunity to change society for the better and they'll take action.

Our partner, NextGenLeaders (NGL), is a non-profit organisation that is unique in facilitating students to implement real-world projects that matter to them. From street safety to hate crime, from vaping to food poverty, when students are empowered to become researchers who take action, they develop the 21st century competencies required for work.

Don't just take our word for it. Our research captures students' perspectives on how they developed the full range of competencies, and how this led to holistic personal development.

This is conveyed by one student's self-portrait before and after their project shown above.

Call to Action for Secondary Schools and Policy Makers

Enhance schools' curricular offer by implementing our [Teachers' Guide](#) or partnering with Enactus on their NGL programme.

Make time to nurture the next generation of responsible leaders in your schools. This could be during Personal Development Time, PSHE, Citizenship Education, or through an enrichment offer.

Read more about the evidence-base for pedagogies that develop 21st century competencies in our [global review](#) and read more about how to facilitate students' projects in [our research](#).

For more information on Innovations in Education Policy, visit: www.yorks.ac.uk/innovations-in-education-policy