



Bridging the Global Skills Gap

Teachers' views on how to prepare a Global Generation for the challenges ahead.



The Development Education Association

About the research

This report represents the findings of a survey of teachers¹ conducted by YouGov on behalf of Think Global. The study was commissioned to gauge the extent to which teachers recognise the need to develop global knowledge and skills in young people as they progress through the education system in the UK, and teachers' confidence and motivation to respond to that need where it is identified.

Questions were put to a nationally representative sample of 753 teachers, school senior leaders, teaching assistants and supply teachers. Interviews were conducted online through YouGov's Teacher Track panel between 20th and 26th February 2013.

References used in this report

This report refers in places to a global generation, or, 'Generation G.' Generation G is a term which has been variously used to describe a new generation of young people. Some people also refer to this generation as 'Generation Z.' The 'G' has been understood to stand for 'Global', 'Gaming' and 'Generous'. Each of these 'Gs' are different, but in each case they describe some overlapping characteristic threads. Common characteristics include a generation born around the year 2000, they are online 'digital natives', globally connected, confident users of technology and data. Broadly, they are consumers more concerned about sustainability and ethical consumption than previous generations.

As well as living in an age of astonishing technological progress, Generation G also live in an uncertain era. Oscillating fuel and power prices, complex global finance interdependencies, global food insecurity, growing populations and shifting international power relationships are amongst the obvious challenges they will face.

This report aims to gain an insight from teachers about how best we help prepare this global cohort for the challenges their generation will face.

It builds on previous report with business leaders, [The Global Skills Gap](#).

¹ Throughout this report we use the term teachers to refer to all school professionals who have a classroom role, including senior leaders, teaching assistants and supply teachers.

Summary of the findings

Teachers report an emerging gulf between the global knowledge and skills needed for the 21st century and what their pupils currently learn in school, according to research. Despite believing that a vital part of their work is to prepare young people to succeed in a globalised workplace and contribute to a global society, teachers report a number of barriers that are preventing the development of global knowledge and skills in learners.

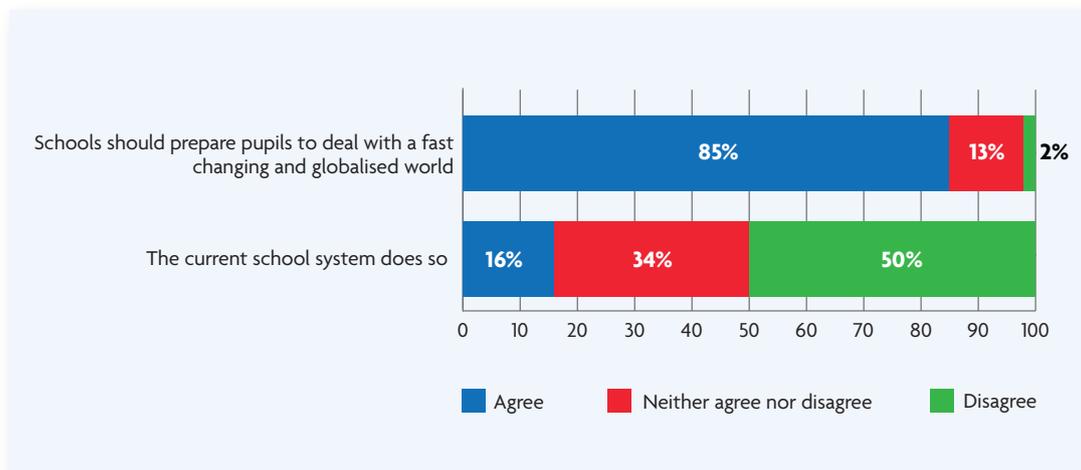
As a result we risk bringing up a generation unable to compete for high-value jobs in a globalised economy, and ill-equipped to participate in today's interdependent society, according to our teaching workforce. Senior business leaders reinforce the reality and immediacy of this risk. Yet young people themselves do not perceive the importance of global knowledge and skills, reinforcing an understanding gap that teachers may have a vital educational role in filling.

The research finds that raising exam attainment and improving basic skills alone will not prepare school leavers to contribute to the global economy and wider society; global knowledge and skills, including awareness of the wider world, are as important, if not more so.

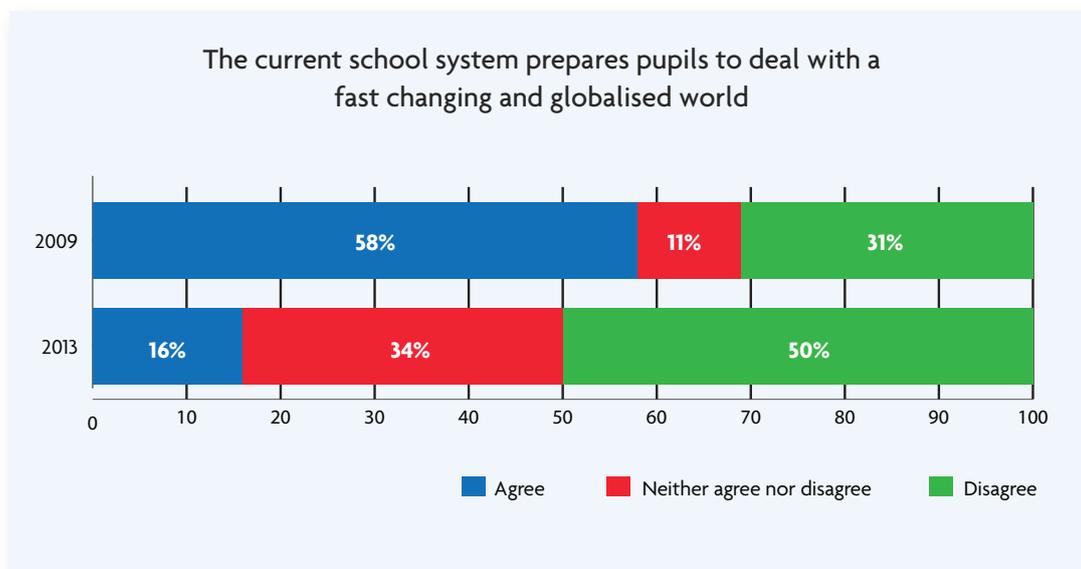
Yet the research does suggest a solution to this challenge. The solution rests on three familiar pillars: confidence gained from subject-specific support; asking for and acting on learners' views about what should be in the curriculum; and building on and developing teachers' expertise, enthusiasm and creativity. Each of these is available to teachers, and if implemented together they can bridge the gap between the knowledge and skills that young people are currently developing, and the global capabilities they need if they are to survive and thrive in the world of the future.

Our education system vs. the needs of Generation G

Our current school system is failing to meet pupils' needs. Whilst 85% of teachers agree that schools should prepare pupils to deal with a fast changing and globalised world, only 16% agree that the current school system does so. In plain terms, 300,000 teachers² in the state school system believe that we are failing to foster in young people the global knowledge and skills that they will need to thrive in a globalised world.



The figures present a rapidly worsening picture: in a 2009³ survey asking the same question, well over half of the teaching workforce felt that schools were preparing pupils to deal with a fast changing and globalised world. Since then more than 150,000 teachers have changed their view. The extent and rapidity of this change is surprising and worrying.



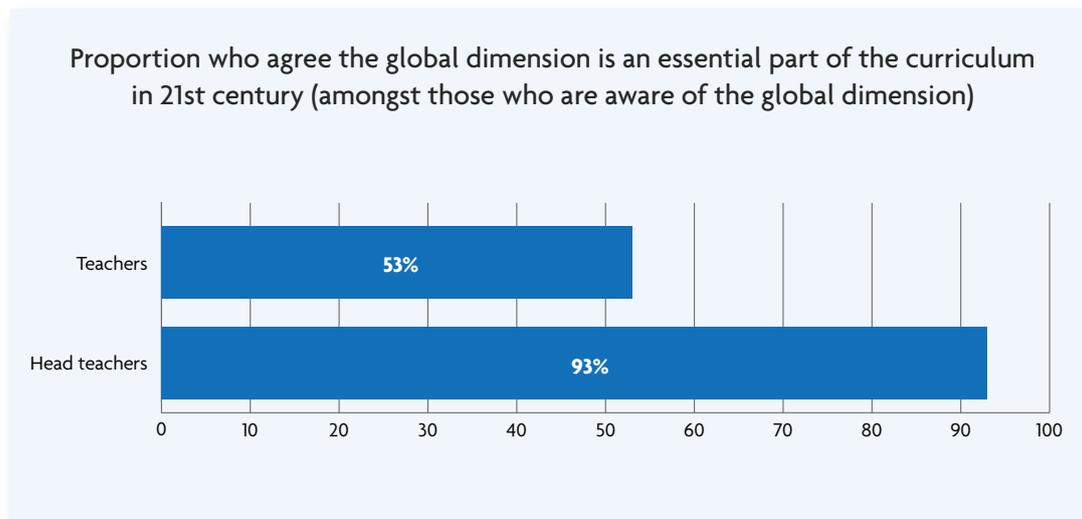
This worsening picture is not as a result of a lack of interest amongst teachers, and even less so amongst head teachers. On a broad range of measures, teachers agree that it is important for schools to help young people to make sense of and contribute to the global society we live in.

² Assuming a state school workforce of 438,000. Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-17840447>

³ 2009, [Teachers' Attitudes to Global Learning](#) An Ipsos MORI Research Study on behalf of Think Global

For example, nine out of ten teachers believe it is important for schools to help young people increase their openness to cultures and perspectives of people from different places and backgrounds. Almost half of the teaching workforce considers this to be very important. More than 8 out of 10 of teachers believe that it is important for schools to help young people to become responsible global citizens.

Head teachers are even more emphatic in their support of global learning. Whilst half of teachers who are aware of and interested in the global dimension consider it an essential part of the curriculum in the 21st century, 93% of head teachers who are aware and interested consider it essential.



This commitment to the importance of global learning is equally prevalent across all school subjects at both secondary and primary; long gone are the days when global learning was seen as the preserve of geography or citizenship teachers.

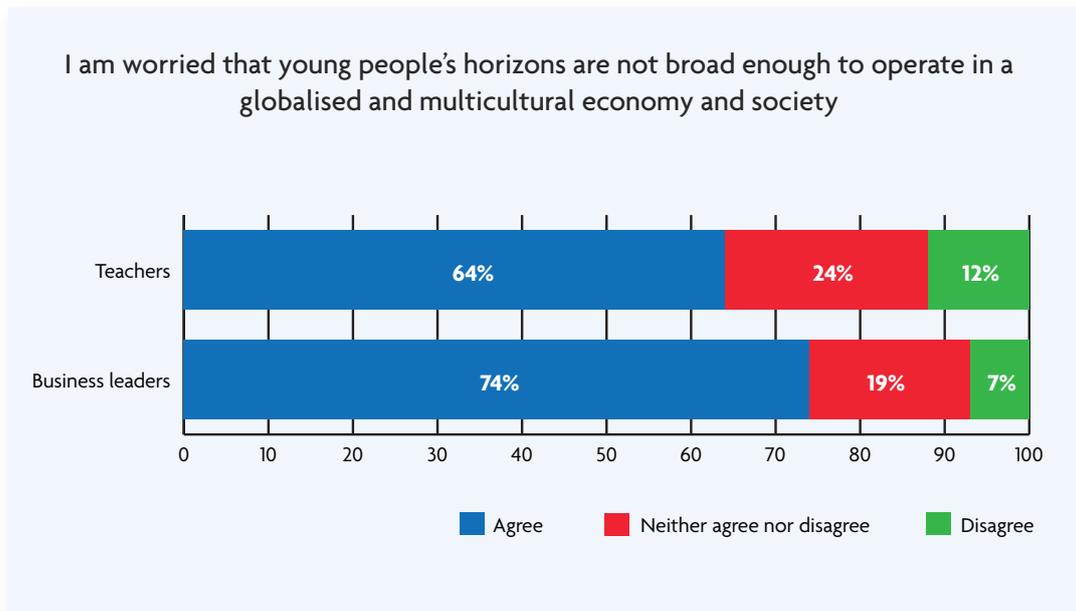
It's a tough time for schools; like most other sectors of society the purse strings are tight and the pressure is on. But teachers report that central policy can sometimes unwittingly make matters worse. For example, three-quarters of teachers agree that the current focus on 'the basics' and Ofsted results is squeezing out opportunities to foster global understanding in young people. A third of teachers strongly agree with this statement. Whilst teachers believe 'the basics' and good Ofsted results are important, the survey shows their belief that a good education needs to be more than this.

There is also a disturbing drop in teacher confidence to teach about big questions like immigration, climate change and global interdependence. In a poll conducted in 2009, nine in ten teachers felt confident that their teaching helped pupils to understand that we live in an interdependent world; today only a little over half feel confident.

The risk: a generation unprepared to operate in a globalised world

Two-thirds of teachers admit that they are worried that young people's horizons are not broad enough to operate in a globalised and multicultural economy and society.

Business leaders agree; research with senior executives found three-quarters expressing the same worry and a similar number arguing that we are in danger of being left behind by emerging economies unless young people learn to think more globally⁴.



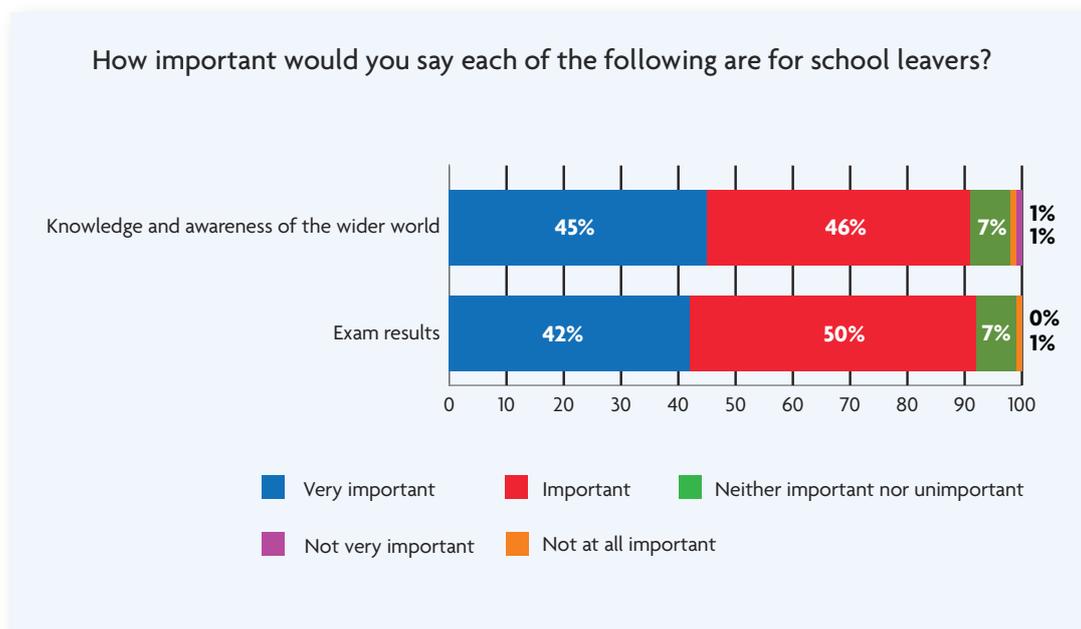
One response might be to emphasise young people's agency; in the internet age pupils have opportunities to seek out global learning outside the classroom. However, less than half of young people (48%) think that an international outlook benefits their work prospects.⁵ Thus teachers have a vital role to play in helping their pupils recognise the vital role that global knowledge and skills play in their future career prospects, as well as their capacity to contribute to global society.

⁴ 2011, The Global Skills Gap. Think Global: London <http://www.think-global.org.uk/resources/item.asp?d=6404>

⁵ Ellison and Gammon, 2011, Next Generation UK [online]. Available at: http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/PageFiles/15492/YouGov_Report_v3.pdf [cited 14th March 2013]

Global understanding is more important than exam results

Whilst teachers naturally agree that it is important for school leavers to have good exam results, the profession agrees with business leaders that knowledge and awareness of the wider world is even more important. Forty-five percent of teachers rated such knowledge and awareness as very important, whereas 42% rated exam results in the same way. Employers are even more emphatic on this point: a greater proportion (79%) say knowledge and awareness of the wider world is important than the numbers who say A-level results or subjects are important (68% and 63% respectively)⁶.



The implications are clear: attainment alone won't close the gap between the knowledge and skills young people currently develop at school and the global understanding they need to succeed and thrive in the globalised world of the future.

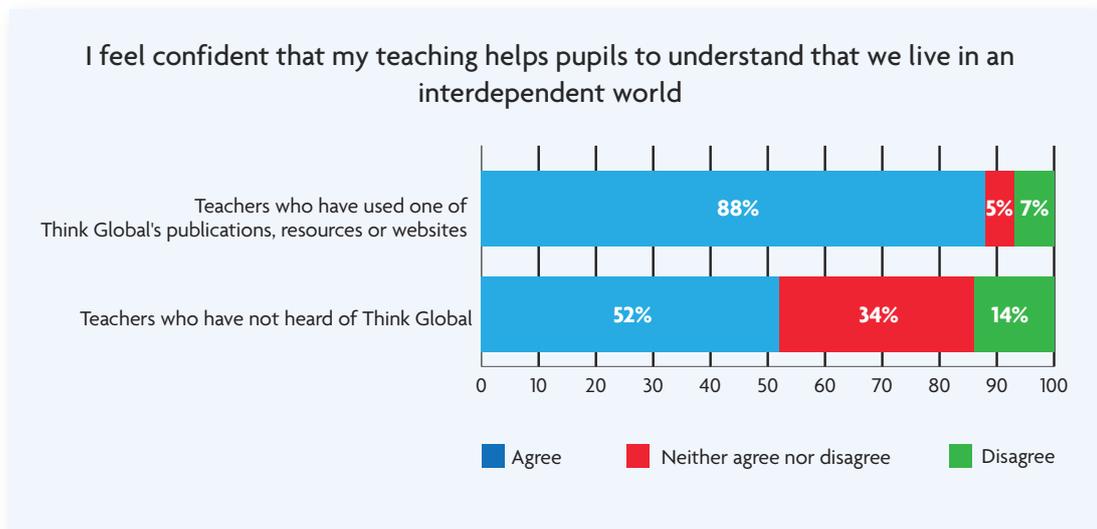
⁶ 2011, The Global Skills Gap. Think Global: London <http://www.think-global.org.uk/resources/item.asp?d=6404>

A solution: three pillars to bridge the global skills gap

The research presents an undeniably worrying picture. However, some of the findings, when combined with a case study of an outstanding school and findings from previous research studies, point us towards a solution that teachers can implement, regardless of restrictions on schools in the current funding and policy environment. The solution rests on three familiar pillars: confidence gained from subject-specific support; asking for and acting on learners' views on what should be in the curriculum; and building on and developing teachers' expertise and enthusiasm.

1. Make use of subject-specific support to increase teachers' confidence

The research indicates that where teachers are able to access dedicated resources relating to global learning, their confidence and agency rises dramatically. For example, amongst teachers who have used one or more resources from Think Global, the proportion that feels confident that their teaching helps pupils to understand that we live in an interdependent world rises from 57% to 88%. Likewise, the proportion that agrees that the current school system prepares young people for a fast-changing and globalised world nearly doubles (from 16% to 29%). Thus a clear picture emerges: accessing dedicated, subject-specific support such as that offered by Think Global's Schools Network or its Schools Plus service gives teachers the confidence and motivation to teach what they know young people need to survive and thrive, despite the pressures the teachers face day-to-day.



The research suggests that this subject-specific support will be popular with teachers. Asked from a menu of options how they would like to be supported to teach global issues, the most highly favoured method was INSET/CPD training relating to the teacher's subject (58% of teachers favoured this method).

2. Ask the pupils

Previous research indicates that over three-quarters of pupils think it is important that schools help them understand what people can do to make the world a better place (78%);⁷ and the great majority (93%) think it is important to learn about issues affecting different parts of the world, particularly how the world they live in may change.⁸

⁷ Think Global, 2008, Young People's Experiences of Global Learning [online]. Available at: <http://www.think-global.org.uk/resources/item.asp?d=915> [cited 13th March 2013]

⁸ Geographical Association, 2009, A Different View: World Issues Survey from the Geographical Association. GA: London

These findings suggest a second solution to the challenge of preparing Generation G for the world of the future. Offering pupils an opportunity to have an input in curriculum development, and specifically asking them if they want to learn about global issues and the wider world, is likely to lead to a strongly positive response. The case study below highlights this: Headley Park Primary is a highly successful school that uses the passions of its pupils to craft a curriculum infused with global learning. The impacts seen by Ofsted and others are very significant.

Case study

Headley Park Primary in Bristol

Head teacher: Brian Walton

In February 2013 Headley Park achieved outstanding in all areas of their Ofsted inspection.

Ofsted said: ‘The school curriculum is broad, balanced and exciting. The school places appropriate emphasis on the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. The teaching of the ‘Headley Park Skills’, including responsibility, empathy, collaboration, creativity, patience and perseverance, underpins the curriculum and ensures that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.’

Head teacher Brian Walton explains how a global learning approach helped inspire children and helped focus the school to improve.

“We are not special. We don’t have complex links and international programmes running. We keep things pretty simple and because we think of individuals first and think of the impact they and their experiences will have beyond our school. Global learning adds the awe, wonder and material with which to work – and there is moral purpose in this as well.

“The passions of both pupils and teachers guide their work. The school formed curriculum groups and the ‘Changes in the World’ and ‘Culture’ Teams allowed individual teachers to develop expertise on important global themes. The quality of teaching has improved, because teachers care about what they are responsible for. All adults are enthusiastic about learning. Teachers believe in the importance of a skills-based curriculum. Knowledge is important, but it’s not only about knowledge. I believe every school has at least one teacher passionate about global learning – it is by using their passion that real high quality experiences can happen in school. It is about the leadership of learning.

“Students are passionate too. We have a very active school council who take a lead in picking issues of interest to them. A wide outlook is essential. Good reading and writing is needed - but it isn’t enough. Students have taken part in ‘big global debates’ and look into concepts like ‘charity’ and ‘water’. Students use RE to explore different cultural views and also did a lot of work on ‘self-identity, self confidence’ and anti-racism.”

3. Build on and develop teachers' expertise, enthusiasm and creativity

In the case study on the previous page, Headley Park Primary has seen very high quality learning experiences emerge from tapping into teachers' passions for global learning. The school has nurtured this enthusiasm by giving teachers an opportunity to develop their expertise in the subject and to take creative approaches to curricula and pedagogies. This recipe of enthusiasm, expertise and creativity leading to high quality global learning is encompassed by a comment from one of the teacher research respondents that "global learning is integral to outstanding teaching." Ofsted's outstanding rating for Headley Park Primary reinforces this point.

None of these three pillars is new or unique to global learning, and putting them in place is no magic bullet for a highly pressurised school system. But together they can make a real difference to teachers' capacities to incorporate global learning throughout their repertoire. And by enhancing teachers' capacities these pillars can make a real difference to pupils' preparedness to negotiate a fast changing, globalised world, and their desire and ability to make that world a better place.

Teachers wanting to explore the world in their classroom can access free help and support by visiting www.globaldimension.org.uk

Teachers can also access the '[Global Learning Guidelines](#)' for support.

