

# British SME decision makers disagree on role of education, report reveals

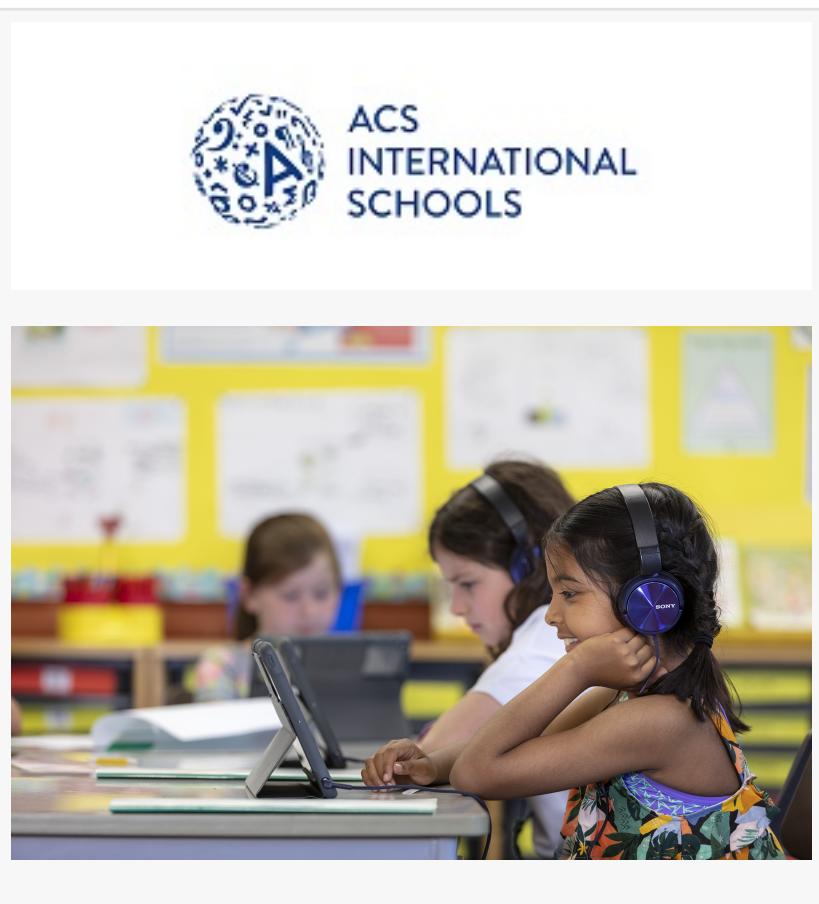
CAMBRIDGE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE, UNITED KINGDOM, April 26, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new report, Education for a World of Opportunity, shows that British employers are divided on whether the role of education is to create efficient workers for the future (32 percent) or to develop children into well rounded human beings (68 percent). As the private sector evidently continues to struggle with recruitment following the disruption of Covid-19, business owners cannot reach a consensus on what the priority is for educating their future workforce.

The YouGov poll, conducted on behalf of [ACS International Schools](#) and [IBSCA](#), surveyed British Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which, in 2022, accounted for 99 percent of UK businesses\*. Supplementary qualitative research was undertaken with leading global companies and organisations, including the Royal College of Arts, Amazon and Pepsi Lipton.

## Subject knowledge vs personal and professional skills

Despite conflicting opinions about the ultimate purpose of education, the research shows that, when recruiting, SMEs of all sizes and at all stages, place greater value on personal and professional skills such as problem solving, communication, critical thinking, and reflection, than on subject specific knowledge. Only a quarter of respondents rate subject knowledge as very important.

Robert Harrison, Director of Education and Integrated Technology at ACS International Schools, said: "As educators, it is important for us to understand the needs of employers so that we can



help to prepare young people for the world. The lack of consensus from the business community about what they are looking for from potential employees is indicative of the challenging and volatile job market that our young people will be entering. It is, however, heartening to see agreement on the inherent value of personal skills. That's one of the main reasons that, at ACS International Schools, we offer the International Baccalaureate (IB), because the favoured core competencies by businesses are deeply embedded into the IB's approaches to learning."

IB learners at ACS International Schools benefit from a broad-ranging curriculum, which encourages independent thinking across a variety of subject areas including Maths, Literature, Languages, and the Arts. The IB values academic excellence and promotes life skills such as communication and problem solving. The survey evidence shows these are all highly desirable skills for employers.

Solene Adler, Global Senior Insights Manager at Pepsi Lipton said: "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."

Views on the purpose of education also vary from industry to industry. Traditionally, client or customer facing industries - such as medical and health services, real estate, marketing, sales, and media - all report placing significant importance on education developing students into well-rounded human beings (75 percent report this as important or very important). Whereas, only 58 percent of organisations operating in more internal-facing organisations - transportation and distribution, finance, and accounting - report the same level of importance.

Stuart Jackson, Director of Global Workplace Communications for Amazon, said: "Businesses are built on people. So, education needs to create well-rounded, decent human beings, because that's what makes a great worker, colleague and, ultimately, a great business. For that reason, personal skills for a school leaver are key. If you have good interpersonal skills, you're 50 percent of the way there, because everything else can be learned when in the role."

### The most desired skillset

The YouGov research also asked SME decision makers about the skill set they most desire in future employees. 88 percent of SME decision makers cite communication, 78 percent say inquiring mind, 76 percent critical thinking, 72 percent open-mindedness, 64 percent principled and 63 percent empathy. The skills least valued by SME decision makers when recruiting entry levels roles are risk taking (22 percent) and entrepreneurship (34 percent).

When asked what skills and personal attributes are most important for young people to acquire in preparation for the unknown future, Ramiro Prudencio, Global Director of Communications at McKinsey & Co said: "Team building, management skills and collaboration" are top priorities. Adding "The ability to read, analyse and integrate different types of information, and draw

meaningful conclusions, which allow for deeper understanding."

Through IB programmes, ACS students are empowered to take ownership of their own learning. The curriculum provides knowledge in key subject areas and puts emphasis on ensuring that knowledge is contextualised, applied, and communicated for real-world scenarios. Through the IB's service-learning programme, ACS students are pushed out of their comfort zones and away from their peers and teachers, to work alongside people they wouldn't ordinarily. This is how ACS students prepare themselves for the realities of the working world.

Richard Markham, Chief Executive of IBSCA UK and Ireland, said: "The IB Learner Profile is designed specifically to foster the personal and professional skills that this YouGov research shows employers value most when employing young people. These skills are universally prized by employers across the globe and, along with internationally recognised qualifications from the IB Diploma and Career-Related Programmes, provide young people with a ticket to some of the most exciting career paths they can imagine."

Harrison added: "We are educating today for the jobs of the future, for roles and responsibilities within businesses which will use technology and systems that are either in their infancy or haven't even been invented yet. Educating to develop ethical and personally fulfilled human beings, who are prepared and equipped to be responsible members of local and global communities, is the key to unlocking the potential of the future workforce as we get them ready to thrive in a changing world. What is clear from the research results is that businesses value applicants with the professional skills, competencies and desired attitudes ACS works hard to instil in its students."

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\*according to a report by BEIS and ONS

The link to the full report is [here](#). Additional industry-specific and regional data is available upon request.

For further information and high-res images, please contact the ACS Press Office on Sophie.baillie@consciouscomms.com tom.evans@consciouscomms.com or 01223 421 831.

#### About the research

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 551 All 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.

#### About ACS International Schools

Founded in 1967 to serve the needs of global and local families, ACS International Schools

educate over 3,500 students, aged 2 to 18, day and boarding, from more than 100 countries. Our schools – 3 in Greater London and 1 in Doha, Qatar – are all non-sectarian and co-educational.

At the heart of our approach is the idea of readiness – we empower our students with the skills and knowledge to thrive in a world that is changing fast. Our world-renowned curriculum includes all International Baccalaureate (IB) Programmes, and top US programmes including Advanced Placement (AP) courses and the AP Capstone and International Diplomas.

Our students leave ACS as well-rounded global citizens with the academic and emotional intelligence to empathise and engage with tomorrow's big issues, turning compassion into action as they stand ready for a future full of opportunity.

#### About IBSCA

The UK's IB Schools and College's Association promotes the IB mission, values and programmes by supporting and representing member schools and engaging external stakeholders and communities in the promotion and enhanced understanding of the intrinsic value of an IB education. Over the past 25 years, the Association has supported a diverse community of more than 140 schools through the provision of professional development opportunities; research and advocacy on behalf of schools; and a close working relationship with the IB. At the heart of what IBSCA does is the facilitation of collaboration, as strong advocates of the benefits of peer learning, IBSCA's formal and informal networks of schools offer advice and guidance for all IB programmes. The educational landscape at present is complex and subject to continual change, and IBSCA exists to help schools navigate their way through this complexity.

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