

21st century skills for 21st century needs - pre-project teacher reflections

Defining the 6 Cs and increasing the perceived value of skills

“One of the things I think is very important is to make the learning of these skills as passive and ‘behind the scenes’ as possible for my age group. They would not appreciate a ‘collaboration’ lesson and would probably be very resistant to that but would be very willing to have a collaboration skill-based exercise related to the current curriculum that increased the learning of both. I’m not even sure they need to know that they are improving the Cs as they go. Highlighting the skills to students at the beginning of the year, and then at regular intervals pointing out lessons where we improved those skills AFTER the event may work best.”

“I’ve been doing a lot of reading recently and a large consensus says that skills are context dependent (e.g., Just because you are creative in writing an essay in English, does not mean that you can be creative in planning a Science experiment) because skills are knowledge based and so you need to have deep knowledge about a topic/subject in order to effectively demonstrate the 6Cs. Our school is doing a lot of work on knowledge and the knowledge curriculum currently, so thinking through how the 6Cs relate to knowledge would be helpful.”

“Education establishments to launch and highlight these skills at the beginning of and throughout the year. Education establishments to reward and recognise these skills explicitly in celebration assemblies and award ceremonies. Enterprise projects for every year group!”

Relevancy and real-life problem-solving

“Each section of a student’s curriculum will be able to hone different skills in the 6 Cs. For instance, the activity I got the students to do involved problem solving, risk-taking, cost efficiency, etc. but couldn’t delve as well into e.g., citizenship because of the nature of the subject material. Other areas of the curriculum would be able to cover this easily.”

“How we might increase the perceived value of skills teaching and learning for students e.g., through explicitly highlighting which skill they are going to develop in lesson learning outcomes or by labelling exercises with a skill logo etc.

“Accommodating different abilities will be difficult as the skills that students will be able to demonstrate will be based upon what they know. There is a lot of discussion in the teaching world currently about assessment and how that can be done effectively. If we’re not careful, I think that it could become a bit arbitrary trying to say how students in year 7 should be able to think critically compared with students in year 8/9.”

“A regular reflection/audit (half termly?) through work produced in class where students and teachers actively make links between the work and topics covered and the 6Cs.”

Contextualise skills learning and engagement

“The skills we are talking about are life skills and ‘softer’ rather than ‘hard’ skills. We should focus on getting them to learn these skills passively and only make reference beforehand (these skills are really important!) and after the events have occurred (look at how many skills you’ve improved in this term!). Students can’t be disengaged with something if they don’t even know they’re doing it!”

“We need to somehow allow students to see the value and need for 21C skills.... provide them facts and statistics that will shock and cause realisation and a call to action!”

Employer-engagement

“We need to probably speak to the employers and see what they would be willing/able to actually do. I’d love them to come in and plan/teach some lessons for me, but I don’t think they’d be as keen!”

“We have some excellent staff currently building relationships with partner organisations. Last week they held a partner forum where employers were talking about the skills, they want to see students developing (things like communication came out highly) and work is being done to see how these employers might be more involved with students.”

“Invite employers to the launch of the programme. Ask them to come into a breakfast/coffee morning to sign up. Use local press. Ask for local sponsors. Ask staff and parents for contacts. Ask students which businesses they would like to know more about-ask students to contact.”

Self-assessment

“We need to get the students to do self-assessment e.g., questionnaires, feedback to teacher, etc. but also we need to assess them ourselves – students may be overly critical or not critical enough of their own abilities and so we need to be able to assess them too (hopefully theirs and our assessments should tally!). Skills improvement is the aim, and so we should be looking to focus on general trends of improvement rather than “everybody by the end of the lesson should be able to do X.”

“I did a survey with my students before the project (based on ‘I can...’ statements and will do so again after the project to see whether they perceive anything to have changed.”

“I don’t like those ‘I can’ statements they are too tick boxy and unappealing to students. Students will just tick them to get them done and not think about the meaning. Maybe something like ‘I have shown (Enter skill) through/by (explain and evidence) I could use this skill in the future to (enter suggestions....)’”

Bringing learnings together in the form of a handbook

“I think we absolutely need to focus on the skill and then examples of how to deliver it – people reading the handbook may not do our subject and may be doing a subject that nobody in the whole project is doing! They will be reading it looking for inspiration for ideas, and that’s how we need to present it. The subject is only loosely relevant (e.g., chemistry could be any STEM subject really, geography and history will have lots of overlap with the kinds of activities that are possible, etc.)”

“Organising the handbook by skill is probably a good idea (despite there being overlap) as people are more likely to want to find out about e.g. ‘critical thinking’, than a specific focus of projects e.g. ‘plastic waste’. It

might also be worth having some kind of reference index at the end where people can see what is covered for each subject – i.e. Under ‘Geography’ have listed all of the projects/places that were geography focused as the more I read, the more I am convinced that people will want to implement the outcomes of this project in their own subject, so would like examples to see how they could do this.”

“The case study overview should be given and then the skills developed highlighted and explained (I think this because each case study links to more than one skill).”