

Schools

Where are we now?

Depending on how you look at it, our approach to educating young people is still based on the needs of the 1870s, the 1920s or the 1960s. Successive education reforms over the past century and a half have not fundamentally altered a system which was originally designed for the needs of post-industrial revolution Britain. In fact, the trend of the past couple of decades has been towards removing even more of the freedom and creativity from education, a process which has been deeply disempowering for teachers and learners alike.

As a result, many young people simply don't want to be in school, viewing an externally dictated curriculum in a hierarchical and often authoritarian environment as worse than pointless. Over 50,000 young people miss school without permission every day. A further 50,000 are now being home educated – a tenfold increase in ten years. And, according to the OECD, more of them leave formal education at 16 than in almost any other developed country.

Perhaps we could live with these cultural flaws if the ends justified the means. But the UK does badly on a wide range of educational indicators. 20% of adults cannot read, write and count to the expected standard of an 11 year old and the CBI believes that half of all school leavers are unfit to enter the job market. We have serious skills shortages in a number of key sectors, which restricts our economy's ability to innovate and compete. And many of those young people who do manage to progress through further and higher education are still ending up in low skill jobs.

School is one of society's few universal experiences. Currently, this opportunity to properly prepare young people for the diverse demands of adult life is being squandered. Something clearly needs to change.

The experience of Changemakers

Changemakers has been working in partnership with schools for over a decade.

Our schools strand has developed around three main themes:

- **Curriculum** – developing programmes for the mainstream school curriculum. These have included: *Active Citizenship*, engaging young people in practical, youth led community projects in order to foster and develop active and engaged citizens
Social Enterprise - enabling young people to set up and manage social enterprises in order to develop the next generation of social entrepreneurs
Y Bank - training young people as grant givers and social investors, developing financial literacy and promoting charitable giving.
- **Culture and values** – working with schools to develop a more young person led approach to education and learning.
- **Governance** – exploring alternatives to traditional hierarchical models of school governance.

Our role has been:

- **Cultural change** - working with schools to incorporate a more youth led approach to their work
- **Training and developing teachers** – redefining their role as facilitators rather than instructors and providing resources and materials to support the curriculum

- **Working directly with young people** – developing citizenship, entrepreneurship and financial literacy and enabling them to influence the way their schools are run
- **Using our experience to influence public policy** – notable successes have included the development of citizenship education and the emerging focus on social entrepreneurship

Through this very wide range of experience we have developed an in depth understanding of the challenges of educating and developing young people in the 21st century.

What is our vision for schools?

What should replace our factory farming approach to education?

Changemakers envisions a model of schooling in 2018 which:

- Replaces the curriculum with a competency framework
- Prioritises skills development over knowledge acquisition
- Accords equal weight to practical skills and academic excellence
- Encompasses learning in the wider environment as well as in the classroom
- Supports and facilitates the development of social and emotional literacy and the transition to adulthood
- Focuses on the intrinsic motivation of young people to learn, voluntarily, for their own ends
- Gives young people the responsibility for leading their own learning, supported by their teachers, parents, carers, peers and communities
- Redefines the role of teacher as facilitator not instructor
- Provides a legitimate and meaningful role for young people in school governance

How will we achieve this vision?

We will be focusing on three main areas of activity:

- **Curriculum** – modernising the school curriculum to meet the needs of society and young people in 2018. Developing existing and adding new strands to our curriculum portfolio, including a youth led careers initiative and a structured transition to adulthood programme.
- **Culture and values** – developing a programme of work to support schools in creating a framework of culture and values which incorporates the views and interests of all stakeholders.
- **Governance** – adapting our experience of youth leadership in community and public sector settings to the school environment.