What are the 21st-century skills every student needs?

Don't get left on the shelf ... brush up on your collaboration, communication and problem-solving skills

Image: REUTERS/Eric Gaillard

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The gap between the skills people learn and the skills people need is becoming more obvious, as traditional learning falls short of equipping students with the knowledge they need to thrive, according to the World Economic Forum report New Vision for Education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning Through Technology.

Today's job candidates must be able to collaborate, communicate and solve problems – skills developed mainly through social and emotional learning (SEL). Combined with traditional skills, this social and emotional proficiency will equip students to succeed in the evolving digital economy.

What skills will be needed most?
An analysis of 213 studies showed that students who received SEL instruction had achievement scores that averaged 11 percentile points higher than those who did not. And SEL potentially leads to long-term benefits such as higher rates of employment and educational fulfillment.

Good leadership skills as well as curiosity are also important for students to learn for their future jobs.

The report asked chief human resources and strategy officers from leading global employers what the current shifts mean, specifically for employment, skills and recruitment across industries and geographies.
Policy-makers, educators, parents, businesses, researchers, technology developers, investors and NGOs can together ensure that development of social and emotional skills becomes a shared goal and competency of education systems everywhere.