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TIME TO REINVENT THE CLASSROOM

In the wake of the recent baby boom and record immigration, the UK's classrooms are facing increasing pressure to accommodate more students. But, higher density doesn't have to spell disaster.

Technology and furniture can help facilitate 21st century teaching methods which can help counterbalance the potential negative effects of higher student-teacher ratios.

Research shows that games, technology and practical applications work well for this generation. Schools can redesign the classroom to allow teachers to put these methods to work. Video games for example are no longer just a distraction to homework, they're effective teaching tools. A study from the University of Southern California found that fifth-graders who played an iPad math game about fractions for just 20 minutes a day for five days, boosted their test scores by 15%. Computer scientists at the University of California, San Diego,

recently used a video game to teach 8-12-year-olds how to code. In just seven days, the students learnt to write commands in the Java coding language.

Simply swapping out textbooks for tablets, which enable students to swipe through content as they would in a game, can boost academic performance. One study concluded that 20% more students scored "proficient" or "advanced" in algebra comprehension when they read from iPad-based textbooks instead of conventional ones.

Project-based learning doesn't just teach the "what" – the subject matter. It teaches the "how" – how to work together and solve problems. These sorts of skills are in high demand in

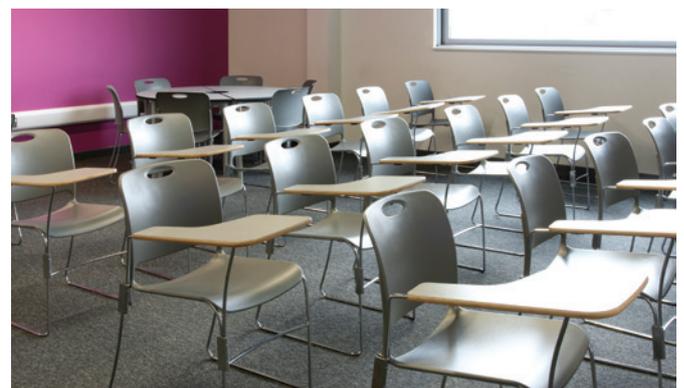
the workplace. Studies have demonstrated that giving students a problem-solving-style task leads to greater subject knowledge than traditional, passive lecture-style instruction.

To fully deploy these newer, more effective teaching methods, schools will have to redesign their classrooms and use classroom furniture so that teachers and students can seamlessly transition from one task or learning method to the next. Games and virtual learning make frequent use of technology, so students need quick access to computers and tablets. Instead of lining the walls with stationery, student desks or computers on desks, teachers could stow away tech devices in mobile storage units until students need them.

Teachers also need to be able to mould learning environments to fit each lesson. For example, if teachers want to break students into small teams for a project-based learning assignment, they should be able to reconfigure lightweight, mobile tables and classroom seating. Better still, mobile seating with tablet arms and under-seat storage, like KI's award-winning Learn2, give students the flexibility to completely reconfigure a room within minutes.

Schools must adopt newer, more effective teaching methods in order to cope with the capacity and technology demands on classrooms today. They must create flexible classrooms that are future-proofed and readily accommodate new teaching methods. Doing so will help ensure that students can maximise their learning outcomes, despite higher student-teacher ratios. 

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