

Twenty-One Trends for the 21st Century: Out of the Trenches and into the Future

By Gary Marx

1. **Generations:** Millennials will insist on solutions to accumulated problems and injustices and will profoundly impact leadership and lifestyles.
2. **Diversity:** In a series of tipping points, majorities will become minorities, creating ongoing challenges for social cohesion. (Worldwide: Growing numbers of people and nations will discover that if we manage our diversity well, it will enrich us. If we don't manage our diversity well, it will divide us.)
3. **Aging:** In developed nations, the old will generally outnumber the young. In developing nations, the young will generally outnumber the old.
4. **Technology:** Ubiquitous, interactive technologies will shape how we live, how we learn, how we see ourselves, and how we relate to the world.
5. **Identity and Privacy:** Identity and privacy issues will lead to an array of new and often urgent concerns and a demand that they be resolved.
6. **Economy:** An economy for a new era will demand restoration and reinvention of physical, social, technological, educational, and policy infrastructure.
7. **Jobs and Careers:** Pressure will grow for society to prepare people for jobs and careers that may not currently exist.
8. **Energy:** The need to develop new sources of affordable and accessible energy will lead to intensified scientific invention and political tension.
9. **Environmental/Planetary Security:** Common opportunities and threats will intensify a worldwide demand for planetary security.
10. **Sustainability:** Sustainability will depend on adaptability and resilience in a fast-changing, at-risk world.
11. **International/Global:** International learning, including relationships, cultural understanding, languages, and diplomatic skills, will become basic. (**Sub-trend:** To earn respect in an interdependent world, nations will be expected to demonstrate their reliability and tolerance.)
12. **Personalization:** In a world of diverse talents and aspirations, we will increasingly discover and accept that one size does not fit all.

13. **Ingenuity:** Releasing ingenuity and stimulating creativity will become primary responsibilities of education and society.
14. **Depth, Breadth, and Purposes of Education:** The breadth, depth, and purposes of education will constantly be clarified to meet the needs of a fast-changing world.
15. **Polarization:** Polarization and narrowness will, of necessity, bend toward reasoned discussion, evidence, and consideration of varying points of view.
16. **Authority:** A spotlight will fall on how people gain authority and use it.
17. **Ethics:** Scientific discoveries and societal realities will force widespread ethical choices.
18. **Continuous Improvement:** The status quo will yield to continuous improvement and reasoned progress.
19. **Poverty:** Understanding will grow that sustained poverty is expensive, debilitating, and unsettling.
20. **Scarcity vs. Abundance:** Scarcity will help us rethink our view of abundance.
21. **Personal Meaning and Work-Life Balance:** More of us will seek personal meaning in our lives in response to an intense, high tech, always on, fast-moving society.