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British Columbia School Superintendents' Conference

OVER-SCHOOLED BUT UNDER-EDUCATED; GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT

Empress Hotel, Victoria
November 15th, 2007

Participants at this conference might also be interested in the following two articles published by the 21st Century Learning Initiative:

-  Adolescence: A Critical evolutionary Adaptation
-  When will we ever Learn?

Opening Minds _ Unlocking Futures?

“We are not blind! We are men and women with eyes and brains... and we don't have to be driven hither and thither by the blind workings of The Market, or of History, or of Progress, or of any other abstraction.”

Fritz Schumacher
*“Small is Beautiful; Economics as if
People mattered”*, 1973

**Education is what remains when
you have forgotten everything you
ever learnt in school**

**To remain a pupil is to serve your
teacher badly.**

Friedrich Nietzsche
1844-1900

Education for What?

Battery Hens, or Free Range Chickens?

“Classes are boring, ‘cos we don’t have to think about what we are doing. We’re just told to copy stuff down off the board or from what the teacher tells us. It makes us lazy... in fact, sorry to say this, but it’s you teachers who make us lazy.”

Half of the 5 year olds starting school lack the speaking and listening skills needed to cope in the classroom "A cultural change means that parents no longer believed conversation was essential to their children's development," said Alan Wells, Director of the Basic Skills Agency. Describing family communication as "the daily grunt", Mr. Wells went on to say, "There is an ethos (among parents) which says 'don't worry, schools will do it all for you'".

The Independent
4th March 2003

"That act of thought is almost as great a miracle as the universe. We are a sub-microscopic dot in a tiny corner of a small galaxy in a universe containing billions of galaxies, but in us the universe has become conscious, has started thinking about itself. The sun is not thinking about itself as it burns; the universe is not thinking about, is not conscious of itself as it explodes through space; but we are. Something is going on in us that is as wonderful and extraordinary as the universe itself".

Why have Children?

(Children are not just for Christmas)

Pilgrim, or customer?

Yali's Question

In 1972 the young biologist Jared Diamond was walking along a tropical beach in New Guinea with a young local politician named Yali. Yali had never left New Guinea, but he was extremely inquisitive and highly politically alert. He asked the most probing questions about world trade, and economic affairs. All the time it was obvious that he was edging towards trying to find out why there was such a difference between the booming conditions in the West, and the backward conditions in New Guinea. Eventually he turned to Diamond and said

“Why is it that you white people develop so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo (Cargo equals trade goods) of our own?”

That very direct question stimulated Diamond to begin a lifelong quest to understand what has subsequently become known as evolutionary psychology.

“Education is the ability to perceive the hidden connections between phenomena.”

Vaclav Havel, 2000

Key Issue 5

"No curricular overhaul, no instructional innovation, no change in school organization, no toughening of standards, no rethinking of teacher training or compensation will succeed if students do not come to school interested in, and committed to, learning... We need to look, not at what goes on inside the classroom, but at students' lives outside the school's walls."

Laurence Steinberg,
Beyond the Classroom, 1997

"To blame schools for the rising tide of mediocrity is to confuse symptom with disease. Schools can rise no higher than the expectations of the communities that surround them."

Ernest Boyer. Former President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

"This township believes in functional literacy, that is, the ability to be comfortable with all the change of a rapidly evolving, highly technological society.

Comfort depends on mastering the skills of learning, and knowing that it is the individual's responsibility to develop this for a further 70 years or more after leaving school. It depends on four skills: the ability to *think*, to *communicate*, to *collaborate*, and to *make decisions*."

Mission Statement,
Princeton, New Jersey, USA

Subsidiarity:

"It is wrong for a superior body to hold to itself the right to make decisions which an inferior is already well qualified to make for itself."

Pope Pius XI
1931

The first of Three Questions

Que Sera, Sera by *Doris Day*

When I was just a little girl
I asked my mother
What will I be
Will I be pretty
Will I be rich
Here's what she said to me

Que sera, sera
Whatever will be, will be
The future's not ours to see
Que sera, sera
What will be, will be

When I grew up and fell in love
I asked my sweetheart
What lies ahead
Will we have rainbows
Day after day
Here's what my sweetheart said

Que sera, sera
Whatever will be, will be
The future's not ours to see
Que sera, sera
What will be, will be

Now I have Children of my own
They ask their mother
What will I be
Will I be handsome
Will I be rich
I tell them tenderly

Que sera, sera
Whatever will be, will be
The future's not ours to see
Que sera, sera
What will be, will be
Que Sera, Sera

Written by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans

*This song was written for Alfred Hitchcock's 1956 re-make of his 1934 film
"The Man Who Knew Too Much" starring Doris Day & Jimmy Stewart*

So what is the "New Story"?

"In contemporary capitalist society, the central value of moneymaking goes hand in hand with the glorification of material consumption.....

Accordingly, political rhetoric in America moves swiftly from "freedom" to "free trade" and "free markets". The free flow of capital and goods is equated with the lofty ideal of human freedom, and material acquisition is portrayed as a basic human right, increasingly even as an obligation."

Fritjof Capra
The Hidden Connections, 2002

As the new century unfolds, there are two developments which will have a defining impact on the future of humanity. Both have to do with networks and both involve radically new technologies. One is the rise of global capitalism, which is concerned with electronic networks of financial and informational flows; the other the creation of sustainable communities based on ecological literacy and the practice of ecodesign, concerned with ecological networks of energy and material flows. The goal of the global economy is to maximize the wealth and power of its elites; whilst the goal of ecodesign is to maximize the sustainability of the web of life.

Fritjof Capra
*The Hidden Connections:
a science for sustainable living, 2002*

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