Educa...nt people for change

A VIEW OF THE FUTURE

You can't cross a canyon in two short leaps...

It's not ignorance that causes the problem; it's what people think they know that causes the problem.
In the growing confusion

We need to

"Keep it simple"

Education is too important to be left to the Ministry of Education

"What is needed is independent minded individuals who have the greatest possible stake in their own futures and who can perform to their full potential."

Peter Morgan
Institute of Directors
Every child has so to learn How-To-Learn that each develops a range of skills which they can apply with confidence to changing and unfamiliar situations at anytime in their lives.

Traditionally, schools have been concerned with:

- Transfer of culture
- Development of skills,
- Habits,
- and attitudes

Evolved from the experience of earlier generations.
The pace of change is now so great...

Young people have to be equipped to go where none of us have been before.

Schools therefore have an additional task; they have to start a dynamic process through which pupils are progressively:

- Weaned from dependence on teachers and institutions

- Given the confidence to manage their own learning
- Cooperate with colleagues

Using a range of resources amid learning situations.
* The industrial economy is giving way to an information and service economy.

* Mass production is being replaced by speciality and niche marketing.

* Workers need to be empowered: bosses cannot make decisions fast enough to compete in this new world.

* For 200 years, the economic base has been in the Atlantic Basin, but now it is shifting to the Pacific Basin.

* 8 out of 10 of the fastest growing economies are in the Pacific Basin and they have 10% annual growth compared to 1 - 3% in the industrialised world.

* 55% of the world population is in the Pacific Basin where there is a highly educated workforce prepared to work.
Such skills, practices and attitudes cannot be 'taught' solely in the classroom, nor developed solely by teachers. They require a new 'learning environment' made up partly of formal schooling, and partly of informal learning opportunities; they need the support of teachers, and many other adults and colleagues.
Academic Success involves

- Largely solitary study
- Generally uninterrupted work
- Concentration on a single subject
- Much written work
- A high analytical ability

Commercial Success involves

- Working with others
- Constant distractions
- Different levels across different disciplines
- Mainly verbal skills
- Problem solving and decision making
'When the factory was touted as the ideal organisation for work and when most youngsters were headed for its assembly lines, making a mass public education system conform to the model of the factory may have seemed like a great achievement. But America's old fashioned factories are dead or dying and will not be resurrected as we knew them. The limitations of America's traditional factory model of education have become manifest, and they are crippling'.

'The traditional model of schooling is, therefore, incompatible with the idea that students are workers, that learning must be active and that children learn in different ways and at different rates'.

Dr Albert Shanker
President
American Federation of Teachers
Secondary schools have been saddled with the artificiality of single subject disciplines, each with a heavy load of content - the teacher takes control, the pupils does as he is told... "It's the only way to cover the syllabus". The integrated view of knowledge is easily lost... very many pupils lose interest, they do as they are told because... "teacher knows best"... not because they any longer feel responsible. A vital attribute - that of responsibility - is destroyed; many never recover - learning is associated with failure, and this bugs them for all time'.

John Abbott
CBI Annual Conference, 1987
(2 years after ceasing to be a Comprehensive School Head)
'When I think back on all that crap
I learnt in High School
It's a wonder that I can think at all
My lack of education has not hurt me
I can read the writing on the wall'

Paul Simon

'We don't need no education
We don't need no thought control
The dark sarcasm in the classroom
Hey, teacher, leave those kids alone'

Pink Floyd
'The test of a successful education is not the amount of knowledge that a pupil takes away from school, but his appetite to know and his capacity to learn. If the school sends out children with the desire for knowledge and some idea of how to acquire and use it, it will have done its work. Too many leave school with the appetite killed and the mind loaded with undigested lumps of information. The good schoolmaster is known by the number of valuable subjects that he declines to teach.'

Sir Richard Livingstone, 1941
The critical importance of learning being structured in ways which are compatible with the way the brain learns naturally (as it has evolved over aeons of time)

... that it learns when it is trying to "make sense"

... when it is building on what it already knows

... when it recognises the significance of what it is doing

... when it is working in complex, multiple perspectives

... and when it is learning collaboratively in a social/team setting.
"Why is it", I am often asked, "after years of conventional teaching do so many young people appear to have little personal initiative, seem so unwilling to accept responsibility... after all at the age of 11 so many of them left their primary schools alert, excited, inquisitive?"

Maybe you recognise such a child?

'The clue is in the word teaching. Primary schools encourage children to want to learn, to explore relationships, to treat the world as their expanding oyster... the child becomes excited - and motivated.
Humans come into the world with highly sophisticated mechanisms for acquiring knowledge. Spontaneously and continuously they construct programmes for learning ... the almost miraculous rate at which young humans acquire whatever language they are immersed in illustrates these inborn self-programming learning capabilities. By the time children reach the age of formal schooling they have forged elaborate learning skills, and their minds are prodigiously complex repositories of knowledge. The feeling that a parent has, watching a young child grow, that 'My child is brilliant, possibly even a genius', is entirely valid. Each child is extraordinary. Nature has equipped every child with learning capacities that far exceed anyone's ability to describe them.

Farnham-Diggory, 1990
Essentially, it seems, the brain learns best - and grows to learn more - when it is exercised in highly challenging but low threat environments.

Each brain, it is becoming apparent, is as individualistic as those physical characteristics which give persons their individuality.

The brain drives itself and is remarkable stubborn to external pressure.
"This township believes in function 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 4 key skills; the ability to think, to communicate, to collaborate and to make decisions.

Princeton 1984