

A New Paradigm for Education

'You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.'

R Buckminster Fuller

When I read a call to arms entitled 'The Fall and Rise of Educational Orthodoxy – 2018 Revisited' with its reference to an *'army of educationalists storming the barricades'* and ending in an exhortation *'Who's up for a revolt in 2019?'* I felt a momentary stirring as if, at last, it was time to put on some armour, and make ready to sally forth. For I could see there was a lot of sense in what was written – that is before I started noticing the holes and that voice appeared in my head asking *'whose army?'* and was it same *'army'* that turned out regularly to fight on the binary battlefields of education, monopolising conferences, mythologising education by forests of jargon and acronyms, promoting books and theories on what was right and what was wrong with education offering another sliver of meaning and yet always constrained by orthodoxy and self-interest, mired by industry they are implicitly a part of. Looking further for some illumination, I came across a sentence:

"It strikes me again that the greatest leaders in education today are those who seek to change the system from within, and from the ground up, through reason, rational argument and evidence; through intellectual authority rather than positional authority."

I'm up for a seemingly and justified revolution as much as the next person, of course, (although I may have used less inflammatory language,) but not on these terms. I'm with R. Buckminster Fuller in seeing the need for a new model. Change isn't going to come from within, but by stepping outside our current paradigm and by looking at education anew. That way, we can ask the fundamental questions: what is the purpose of education, is it meeting the needs of our children all leading to that overwhelming question that should always be on our lips: what is the best education we can give to our children?

Most schools are up for it, given the chance. They KNOW change is required, that what they are being coerced into teaching is not working. Most teachers are hard-working and dedicated to their profession so this is not the question. The issue is whether they are able to teach in a way that advances children's learning or do they keep teaching a curriculum that is in large part redundant or founded on the wrong premise. To properly support our children and teachers we need to provide a new paradigm of education, however inadequate that may be, and let them grow a new curriculum.

In a world that is changing rapidly there are few constants and education, by its conservative nature in what is taught, has been one of those, not in individual subjects where new knowledge is absorbed, but in the round. The problem has come about with the pace of change but at a more basic level *'who is education designed for?' and 'who owns education?'* These are not trivial questions and the answers to them provide the starting point for what a new paradigm could look like.

It is easy to marginalise anything that deviates from the norm: environmental issues, invasive technology, change that undermines our methods of assessment; our current methodology and approaches to learning; our provision for all learners regardless of their learning differences – which is why we need to start with the purpose of education:

The Purpose of Education:

1. To equip children with the necessary tools to function in today's world as literate, numerate, well-informed and well-balanced adults.
2. To equip children with the critical faculties to question knowledge based on ethical premises.
3. To look at values and belonging, both community and planetary

4. To provide depth and understanding of learning and improve personal fulfillment by embracing a wider definition of education.
5. To help them to inhabit a future society by being aware of the challenges of biodiversity, regeneration and climate change. (i)
6. To change the focus of learning from selection and primacy to community and shared values through a recognition of different talents, cultures, backgrounds.
7. To address issues of bias from a young age

The Process of creating a New Paradigm: A Step by Step Approach.

1. Promote the idea of inquiry and flexible thinking to guard against the fixed mindset
2. Changing the culture of learning by acknowledging that learning is really a state of mind. More than the skill, it's receptiveness that counts. If the mind is always open, you're always learning. And if it's closed, nothing has a real chance of sinking in.
3. We need to look at knowledge holistically, not under traditional subject headings
4. We need to establish a culture for life-long learning which means changing in the way education is presented and the idea of education operating without walls
5. We need to differentiate between education and administrative and social functions of schools in the way we staff.
6. Formal learning should not begin until age five. Prior to that, teaching should focus on social skills, attitudes, ethics and values, developing listening and communication skills, behaviours,
7. Assessment models should be replaced with a single summative examination in Year 13. Testing and moderation should be carefully moderated using a greater

array of measures than currently available with the emphasis on keeping options open

8. Schools should act as hubs of education in their local communities and provide education for their local communities.

The Implications for the Curriculum:

1. Education will become bespoke and personalised and will be delivered through more than one media
2. Traditional class-based education with an emphasis on disciplined learning will be integral during KS1 and KS2
3. A far greater range of subjects will be presented, in classes, lectures, tutorials aided by distant learning courses, e-learning
4. If we accept that knowledge is the backbone of any curriculum, we need to (a) make sure we identify and can justify “what knowledge” and (b) ensure we have a method of constant review as knowledge expands and changes
5. Schools need to widen their offering by providing intellectual, artistic and physical nourishment”
6. Schools and other learning institutions need to move away from a raft of traditional subjects to one or more subjects that
7. We need to do more than pay lip-service to those children whose aptitude, interests, and abilities lie in vocational education, arts, and sports or in single areas, ie coding, astronomy.

The Curriculum Principles:

“All of our children ought to be able to tell us what they are learning about and why it is important. If they can’t, we haven’t taught them properly.”

Mary Myatt

“You ever wonder how humans learned to cope and self regulate for the roughly 199,850 years before we thought it needed to be explicitly taught?”

1. We need to look at the utilitarian value of education as well as its esoteric value. (ii)
2. That the curriculum is based on the principles that children want to learn and that learning is not, by its nature, adversarial - the issue is what they want to learn. The other guiding principle is that learning requires memory, following instructions, critical thinking, rigour, raised expectations and an ability to apply intelligence.
3. The number one skill is to be creative including extending the definition of creativity into sciences etc. Curiosity, philosophy, psychology, sociology all important idea of having a passport of skills. ResearchEd shows us just how much we underuse the resource of young minds.

The Political Agenda:

1. To advocate for more consistency among school types and greater equality of opportunity
2. To push for greater funding for schools
3. To raise the status and improve the conditions of teachers by investing in the profession
4. To minimise the use of data and measurement to drive learning
5. To remove all testing before age five and Key Stage tests
6. To move away from selective schooling so all schools are 'mixed' abilities schools with different curricula and measurement
7. To see ability in new ways and to redefine the purpose of schools

This is, but a start and each list above, the same and over the coming weeks I will flesh this out with a mind on the pragmatic. I do not foresee AI running our classrooms or a huge shift away from past learning; I see rigour and high (but different) expectations sitting at the hub of education, but I do see the

walls coming down, the idea of institutionalised education being challenged.

(i) 'It is obvious that the real wealth of life aboard our planet is a forwardly- operative, metabolic and intellectual regenerating system. (...) Our children and their children are our future days. If we do not comprehend and realize our potential ability to support all life forever we are cosmichly bankrupt.' R Buckminster Fuller

(ii) Half of what we do could be automated in the next 15 years Perhaps it will affect 15 – 20% of the workforce (still some 400-800 million jobs globally). There will also be tremendous growth in caring professions with aging, in technology etc which means jobs created will exceed jobs automated. But 75 – 375 million will still have to find a new job.