EDITOR'S NOTE

Learning Societies: Towards a Reflective and Generative Framework

Manish Jain

What are the diverse perspectives that exist about learning societies? What are the key attitudes, frameworks, actors/institutions, processes involved in unfolding a learning society? What are the obstacles that stand in the way of unfolding diverse learning societies? What are some examples of interesting initiatives that are underway which might contribute to the unfolding of learning societies?

This special issue of Vimukt Shiksha is not a how-to manual, it is not a prescriptive workplan, and it is certainly not a declaration. For those in search of quick fix solutions and clear answers, it will be a great disappointment. Rather, this booklet should be seen as an open invitation to enter into a dynamically evolving and still-muddled discourse around learning societies which is being propelled forward by several different forces, agendas, and experiences. We wish to share a cross-sample of these perspectives with you. All of the authors in this booklet, however, do share at least one common concern and understanding – that something is seriously wrong with the modern framework of education and that this can not be 'fixed' by expanding access to schools/NFE centers/distance education courses or by simply reforming schools through training more teachers, changing the textbooks, etc. This booklet is an invitation to stop looking at the world through school-colored spectacles, to move beyond the deficit rhetoric of 'reaching the unreached', to reflect on the damage that schooling has caused (and continues to cause) to millions of people around the world. It also represents a deep-felt desire to rediscover, regenerate and re-value different ways of questioning, of understanding, of relating, of creating, of living, in the face of larger societal concerns and impending catastrophes.

TAKING OFF OUR SCHOOL-COLORED GLASSES

John Holt (1976) has described that when most people use the word 'education', they are in fact referring to some kind of Treatment – which typically involves transmitting, thought-controlling, indoctrinating, social-engineering, coercing, and manipulating other human beings who are perceived either to have some sickness to be cured or some deficit to be filled. The most common form of this Treatment takes place through Schooling (Noam Chomsky (1988) and others have argued quite persuasively about the Treatment also being administered through large State and Corporate media such as televison and newspapers). So before people go to school, they and their communities are diagnosed by some outside 'expert' and branded with dehumanizing labels like 'uneducated', 'illiterate', 'uncivilized', 'irrational', 'backward', 'underdeveloped', 'unreached', etc. In other words, one is not fully human, nor can one ever hope to be, without the Treatment. Without a certificate to prove that you have been professionally 'treated', you are not only considered a lower form of life but also a menace to society. Which is why it has now become commonplace in our social greetings to make sure to identify, within the first 30 seconds of conversation, the level of Treatment received by those in our company by asking questions like: "What are your qualifications?"

The biggest fallacy that comes with the Treatment is that some of us believe that WE not only have the right but also the moral responsibility to Treat other people for their own good. This grows out of a tradition which is commonly referred to as the White Man's Burden. Gerald Porter (1995) describes the W.M.B. as "the imperialistic conviction that the superior white man, having conquered the inferior colored peoples of the world, was responsible for the care and well-being of the colonized people. The white man's attitude toward the defeated races was presented by Kipling as *noblesse oblige*. But beneath the thinly patronizing veneer was fundamentally an attitude of contempt and hatred that dehumanized the white man's alleged beneficiaries. No culture was regarded as equal to the European standard, which was held up as the yardstick of true civilization. To the extent that the cultures of colonized people were judged to be different, they were found wanting and inferior." This yardstick (now American and Virtual) continues to be both the measure of the Treatment's success as well as its compass for the future.

Because we have framed the Schooling-Treatment as an 'universal human right' and 'value neutral public good', neither Schooling nor any of its 'products' have been subject to much serious widespread interrogation. However, a far-reaching set of crises have emerged that raise deep doubts about both the future of humanity and the future of the planet. These global crises implore us to stop blaming the 'poor' and 'marginalized' for our problems and to start looking at more closely at the 'crisis of the schooled'. We have not yet begun to fathom the levels of destruction (to different languages, creativities, cultures, species, etc.) that has both taken place among the 'schooled' and **because of** the 'schooled'.

Schooling has led to severe fragmentation – fragmentation of our whole beings, of our brains, of our knowledge systems, of our communities, of our links with Nature. It has also created new more rigid and unaccountable structures of stratification, vicious competition and debilitating forms of dependency throughout the world. The vast majority of the schooled live their lives believing that they are 'losers', 'failures' or 'drop-outs' and that their local languages, manual labors, traditional cultures, etc. are sub-human and dirty, and deserve to be scorned (unless, of course, they can attract tourism i.e., foreign currency). The few elite 'winners' in the system live their lives believing that it is their natural right to exploit other human beings and Nature because they are the 'fittest' and the 'mightiest', and the poor and oppressed are 'lazy' and 'stupid'. Both the winners and losers alike are sucked into a vicious postmodern whirlpool of mechanized consumerism, selfishness, ego, violence, and insecurity. With every additional year of Treatment, the natural processes of inquiry, creativity, collaboration, self-confidence, and intrinsic motivation, which both derive from and replenish the human spirit, get further institutionalized and suffocated. As Aaron Falbel (1996) describes, "Most of us have forgotten what it is like to follow our own noses, to ask our own questions, and find our own answers. Years of educational treatment have convinced us that learning is, and can only be, the result of teaching." The great tragedy is that not only have we lost faith in our capacities to 'do', 'know', 'live together' and 'be/become' without the Treatment, but also that we have lost our love for self-learning. If one is open to also seeing and

understanding these 'realities', then we have much reason to pause, take a deep breath and reflect before steam-rolling forward with more targets and action plans.

A decade has passed since the infamous "Education for All" meeting that took place in Jomtien, Thailand. Rather than glorifying superficial successes built around the internal logic of schooling or by limiting our critiques to failures in achieving certain goals, there is an urgent need to problematize Schooling in relation to the larger discourse of Development. It is quite noble that EFA2000 thinks that everyone should be given a chance to get a lottery ticket. But it is unfortunate that they are unwilling to engage with the overall set-up of the lottery. We cannot seriously discuss peoples' 'learning needs' without some having larger vision of Life and a clearer understanding of our collective Pasts, Presents, and Futures. Today, larger questions around the meaning of Development, Globalization and Progress are being seriously debated and reconsidered by various groups around the world. It is imperative that those involved with education link to these debates as they have profound implications for the very meaning of education. The anniversary of Jomtien is the right time to engage in some serious reflection and deep soul-searching around the meaning of education – not for more trite slogans, for more propagandized success stories and statistics, for more bull-dozing over the voices of resistance.

Many people would argue that we should proceed with the agenda of promoting access to and enrolment in Schooling, "After all, everyone should have a right to the Treatment. Granted, there are small gliches in the quality of the Treatment, but these can be corrected afterwards with improvements in curricular content, better teacher training, better teaching aids, etc. Such pauses only further unnecessarily delays the marginalized from developing." In the face of this W.M.B. mindset, it is useful to recall Marshall McLuhan's (1964) famous saying "the medium is the message". By this McLuhan was trying to warn us that content may not be the only problem, or even the principal problem, with Schooling. The mere existence of Schooling causes society to be re-organized in certain ways. It impacts our time-schedules, where we live, who we talk to, how we dress, etc. We get also bound into various dependency relationships with the State and Market. We don't realize what is behind one little government school in a village – how many interest groups, how many industries (textbook publishers, construction companies, teacher's unions, uniform manufacturers, examination companies, etc.), how much infrastracture, how many layers of management. Our choices and options get limited and directed as we must spend all of our time maintaining this 'investment'. Furthermore, whatever natural strengths (wisdom, knowledge systems, relationships, people) we have that do not 'fit' into this model get devalued and dumped. Thus, Access/Quality to Education vs. the Meaning of Education are essentially different kinds of questions. In the former, we are locked into a particular worldview of Development and Progress; while in the latter, we still have space to re-conceptualize and re-negotiate this worldview.

Jerry Mander (1991) has suggested that, "All technologies should be assumed guilty until proven innocent." The same test should be applied to Schooling. We must consciously examine the hidden negative values of the Treatment in a world brainwashed to see only

the positive side of the story. Implicit in Mander's statement is an assumption that judgement could and should be made in time for the intervention to be halted. We believe that there is an urgent need to engage in a critical review around the overall system of Schooling – to more honestly assess its guilt or innocence. There is also an urgent need to understand the state of other learning spaces and processes which have not been colonized by Schooling. The emerging discourse on learning societies must thus serve a dual purpose of providing a critical set of reference points from which to reflect on Schooling as well as a generative framework which can facilitate discussions and actions concerning the meaning of education.

TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING SOCIETIES

When we begin thinking about and discussing learning societies, we must be very clear that we are not talking about reforming Schooling, that is, simply treating the Treatment so that it becomes easier to swallow. Rather, we seek to create more open and participatory spaces for dialoguing around the various meanings of education for the 21st century. This dialogue begins with a very basic question: "what kind of world do we really want to live in?" There is not a predetermined right answer to this question; nor, is it too late to discuss it. From this question follows many other questions such as: "what is our role – individually and collectively – in giving shape to such a world?" and "what must be the role of learning in these processes?" From these questions, emerge critical questions regarding knowledge, *parampara*, popular culture, technology, spirituality, intelligences, the brain, governance and economic structures, family and community.

This publication seeks to open up this discussion with learners, teachers, parents, local communities, and to take the Treatment out of the hands of the so-called 'experts'. We have tried to stimulate this process by asking various individuals from around the world who are involved in unfolding learning societies in different ways to share their ideas and experiences. The reader will find a diversity of viewpoints and may even notice several contradictions between the different authors. We believe that this is healthy as it serves to highlight key areas for further reflection and debate. There are a few areas though that clearly emerge from the essays which begin to form the basis for a loose framework/agenda of learning societies:

- We must more deeply recognize the infinite, diverse and divine potentials of every human being and their different learning styles/paces, intelligences, creativities, meaning-making systems, etc. and allow space for these to bloom (outside of the functionalist categories of worker, soldier, consumer, citizen, etc.). At the same time, we need to better understand and foster the dynamics of collective learning, interdependence, collaboration and dialogue which are critical to living in healthy communities.

- We must appreciate a larger landscape of living realities, knowledge systems, associations, and natural environments, in which dynamic and purposeful forms of learning-sharing take place. However, we should be clear that when re-valuing these other learning processes and contexts, our intention is not to colonize these by bringing these within the four walls of Schooling (this would be tantamount to signing their death warrants). But rather, to modify our homogenizing,

compartmentalizing and commercializing mainstream Systems so as to give more encouragement to these other spaces to evolve in their own ways.

- We must restore agency to each learner to self-direct and self-evaluate their own lives. First, by changing our view of him/her as a passive individual merely experiencing/consuming the learning landscape to that of an active constructor of learning spaces, knowledge, meaning, and learning communities within this larger landscape. Second, by re-valuing those learners who consciously choose not to fit into the System or are choosing other priorities than Schooling in their lives. As Aaron Falbel (1996) suggests, "Let us rid our own minds of the prejudice that views others who opt out of educational treatment as 'delinquents', 'failures' or 'drop-outs'. Let us view them as conscientious objectors to a crippling and dehumanizing process."

- We must also seek to more sharply interrogate, challenge and reshape exploitative, unjust, and dehumanizing political, economic and social systems – not to reinforce and legitimize the hegemony of these structures. There is an urgent need to critically examine dominating notions of Development and Globalization and to nurture alternative narratives of progress and success. As part of this, we must address the growing commodification of knowledge, relationships, and human beings.

- We must understand more deeply how Schooling stands as a barrier to the natural healing processes required to regenerate diverse ways of learning, knowing, understanding, being, and becoming. This Treatment prevents any other diagnoses of our situation, while monopolizing all of our attention and resources. Arundhati Roy (1999) suggests a bold agenda for the 21st century, "The dismantling of the Big...big bombs, big dams, big ideologies, big contradictions, big countries, big wars, big mistakes, big heroes. . . perhaps it will be the Century of the Small." To this, I would add the need to dismantle the big Schooling-Treatment.

In moving forward in this process of unfolding learning societies, we should be clear that there are no ready-made formulas or monolithic prescriptions; no standard learning society to be set-up all across the world. Unfolding learning societies must essentially be understood in terms of constructivist and organic processes that are fueled by continuous contextualized action, reflection and dialogue. It will, however, require a tremendous effort of unlearning and deconditioning on all of our parts – to allow us to re-affirm our faith and trust in the goodness of human beings, to creatively dream and share our dreams, and to create more robust and sensitive languages for perceiving and communicating about learning.

This booklet consists of three sections to help facilitate a critical review of Schooling and a discussion on the meaning of education: 1) *Unmasking a Schooling Society*, 2) *Towards Learning Communities: Experiences and Explorations*, and 3) *Conceptual Priorities*. In organizing the booklet in this way, we seek to integrate critiques, innovative experiences and questions for deeper research as we believe that all three of these dimensions are necessary for unfolding learning societies and must be discussed together. After editing this booklet, we find that there is still a great deal to elaborate – conceptually,

operationally and, most importantly, personally – on the theme of learning societies. We invite you to join us in this process.

REFERENCES:

Chomsky, N. Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. Pantheon Books, 1988.

Falbel, A. "Learning? Yes, of course. Education? No, thanks." in M. Hern (ed.) Deschooling Our Lives. New Society Publishers, 1996.

Holt, J. Instead of Education. Holt Associates. 1976.

Mander, J. In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology & The Survival of the India Nations. Sierra Club Books, 1991.

Porter, G. "The White Man's Burden, Revisted" in R. Miller (ed.) Educational Freedom for a Democratic Society. Resource Center for Redesigning Education. 1995.

Roy, A. The Greater Common Good. IndiaBook Distributors. 1999.

Liberating Education from the Chains of Imperialism

Pawan Gupta

The present education system in India is a legacy of the colonial rule that has perpetuated many false notions: that traditional societies have been steeped in ignorance and superstitions for thousands of years; that they are living a life of abject poverty; and that this poverty has been caused by extreme forms of social discrimination and exploitative socio-political systems. And, perhaps most devastatingly, that modern education is the most potent instrument of deliverance from this ignorance, superstition, social injustices and poverty.

We may all differ on the identification and analysis of the problems, but no one can deny that we do have them. And we have not been able to solve them in the last fifty-two years of independence with all the instruments we have been employing - the most critical being modern education. We are an independent country now, under no (visible) external compulsions, and therefore we ought to be able to solve our problems. But creating solutions require two major preconditions to be fulfilled: (1) a clear understanding and analysis of the roots of the problems and (2) an understanding of the historical context within which the problems and problem-solvers are located.

Contrary to the popular understanding among the educated classes of India, and without glorifying the past, we need to appreciate that a large part of the country did have a fairly good system of governance, finance and revenue, and a working education system, as late as even the early 19th century. Awareness of these systems, of the prevailing conditions which supported their sustainability, and of the processes/strategies employed to destroy them, would help us when thinking of new strategies for building a learning society for all.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE BEAUTIFUL TREE

The following findings, drawn from the meticulously researched book "The Beautiful Tree", written by the eminent Gandhian scholar and historian Shri Dharampal, shed light on the former system of education in India. They suggest that various modes of education (*vidyalayas, gurukuls, madrassahs*, etc.) were fairly common in India and that, contrary to common understanding, they were not confined to only the upper castes or to only boys:

- William Adam, a former Baptist missionary turned journalist, had observed in his first report (1835) that there seemed to be about 100,000 village schools in Bengal and Bihar alone around the 1830s.
- A few years earlier, in 1821, G.L. Prendergast, Bombay Presidency council member had stated that in the newly extended Presidency of Bombay "there is hardly a village, great or small, throughout our territories, in which there is not at least one school, and in larger villages more." The Bombay Presidency at that time must have comprised of nearly 1,00,000 villages.

- G. W. Leitner makes a similar estimate about the Punjab area. He mentions a figure of 50,000 schools.
- The number of children doing home schooling in Madras district alone was 26,446, while in the city, 5,523 were going to school. This shows that a large number of students, especially girls and those belonging to higher castes, were perhaps doing home schooling.
- In the Malabar area, between 1822-1825, there were 11,963 boys and 2,190 girls going to school. Of these girls, 1,122 belonged to Muslim families. The number actually deteriorated during the British period, of which there are records.
- In the Tamil-speaking areas of the Madras Presidency, lower caste 'Sudras' and 'Ati Sudras' comprised 70-80% of all school-going children. Among the Oriya-speaking areas of the same presidency, the percentage of children belonging to these castes was 62%; in Malayalam-speaking areas, it was 54%; in Telugu-speaking areas, it was 35-40%.

If we put all these together, we get a totally different view of education in India before the British. Even so, the full picture is clouded by the British way of looking at learning centers in India in terms of 'schools'. In order to more fully appreciate the indigenous systems of education, we would need to make a distinction between these learning centers as they existed in India before the British arrived, and the idea of a 'school' in the perception of the British. We would also need to understand how these learning centers related to other learning spaces.

Why did this "Beautiful Tree" wither away? The answer to this question also needs to be deeply explored when thinking about strategies of education and the system as a whole. Prior to the arrival of the British, people were allowed to manage and have control over their own systems, and the concept of centralization was almost non-existent. In his book, Dharampal describes that there were "sophisticated fiscal arrangements of the pre-British Indian polity, through which substantial proportions of revenue had long been assigned towards the performance of a multiplicity of public purposes, which made such education possible. It was the collapse of this arrangement through a total centralization of revenue, as well as of the political structure, that led to decay in education, economy and social life." In pre-British India, revenue as a share of crop (and not fixed in monetized terms as done by the British) was certainly paid to a local authority, but otherwise people were allowed to be on their own.

In order to further understand the issues related to sustainability of the traditional system, we need to make a distinction between disparity in standards (which is on a vertical plane and has more to do with class distinction) and diversity (differences on a horizontal plane, arising out of the needs of a particular region or community). In the traditional system, there was a lot of diversity but little disparity. Different learning materials and different subjects were taught in different regions of the country. There was no uniformity in standards yet there was no disparity. The idea of a standardized entity called 'school' was an alien concept. Only when the British, at the invitation of social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, started opening English medium schools, giving them state support and recognition, and thus bringing about a false notion of uniformity

did glaring disparities emerge within the education system. The new British schools began the process of breeding an elitist class by alienating them from their culture, country and indigenous value systems, and also by inculcating in them a sense of inferiority towards anything which was their own.

This kind of strategy had far reaching consequences. An alien system — designed to cater to only a small elitist minority, but giving the false impression that it is available to all — which gets state and social recognition and subsidies, serves two purposes. On the one hand, people lose confidence in themselves. On the other hand, they become victims of a myth that the fruits of the new system are available equally to all. This has serious repercussions. They lose the will to sustain their own indigenous systems, as they are perceived to be inferior and, at the same time, find themselves incapable of managing the new system, which is perceived to be superior. This leaves people completely shattered. They get trapped in a vicious circle. They let the old system wither away, in the hopes of being part of the state-recognized and state-supported alien system, whereas the state system is intrinsically designed to keep the large majority at bay. Hence, they end up an alienated lot — having either no system at all or a poor replica of the elite system which has little relevance to their daily lives. Over the years, our people have even forgotten that they were at one time running and sustaining perfectly sound teaching-learning systems.

EXPLODING THE MYTHS

We need to understand the critical links between the modern concepts of Development, Science and Education, and how each reinforces the other. If we mean to rejuvenate our societies, then we must necessarily explode the myths related to these concepts. In fact, the illusions created by the modern development paradigm are themselves the biggest stumbling block in finding solutions to problems faced by our societies. “We are dazzled by the shining lustre of our chains and look upon them as symbols of our freedom. This state (of mind) bespeaks of slavery of the worst kind,” as Gandhiji said in his speech to the students at Agra on November 23, 1920.

Over the past two or three decades, our rural people have once again become very aware of the need to educate their children, particularly the male child. But one must question the factors responsible for this desire. The main reason they have started finding education important is because the aspirations of the community here, as elsewhere, are being influenced by urban middle-class values. The modern development paradigm, with its emphasis on the monetized economy, has contributed a great deal to this way of thinking. Earlier education meant freedom (mukti) and building new relationships; now it has come to mean only white-collar jobs and upward mobility in the socio-economic hierarchy (greater disparity). In fact, statistical data substantiate that migration has increased in areas where ‘school-education’ has spread. People are moving away from their traditional occupations and going in search of desk jobs in the cities. Because the non-monetized economy of the village and its benefits are sidelined, land in villages is lying fallow and the educated youth refuse to work in their fields. Thus, the mindset perpetuated by the present development paradigm is one that measures the worth or value of a human being only in terms of money.

Another myth being perpetuated by the modern development paradigm is that modern education decreases social injustices and inequalities. For instance, it is generally believed that the gender ratio is adverse (in favor of men) in those states where the literacy rate is lower and the gender ratio is more balanced where the literacy rates are higher. This is a completely false interpretation. According to census data the gender ratio in India has steadily fallen from 972 (in the year 1901) to 929 (in 1991), while the literacy rate has been steadily going up from a low of 5.39 per cent in 1901 to a high of 52.21 per cent in 1991. And this is true of most states, even the so-called *BIMARU* (sick) states. Moreover, if we compare the rural and urban areas, we again find the same pattern. Rural areas are less literate but have a better, more balanced gender ratio than urban areas. The harsh truth is that modern education has increased social discrimination instead of eradicating it. The cause of the problems of our society lies not in our people being 'deprived' of modern education but elsewhere. It most likely lies in the fragmentation of Indian society at all levels, which has been happening unabated over the last two hundred years and in which modern education has played a vital role. This needs to be examined very deeply without any prejudices or biases (e.g., modern education is good *per se*) and without any fear of the conclusions one may reach in the process of this examination.

Furthermore, the modern education system has used modern science (and vice versa) to successfully perpetuate many modern myths which both advertise the superiority of the modern development paradigm and devalue rural communities and their knowledge systems, values and wisdom. For example, many of us have been taught to believe that a person is not 'educated' unless he/she is literate and that children whose parents have never gone to formal school are 'first-generation learners.' Modern science does not value experience and, under the illusion and arrogance of being 'objective', rejects all that is experiential and traditional knowledge under the rubric of 'superstition'. Nor does modern science publicly discuss what it does not understand, even though the greatest scientists of our times admit that "the more we know, the more we come to know with certainty, how much more we do not know." We need to expose the 'superstitions' of modern science. There have been innumerable instances when modern science has had to retract from discoveries and from claims made earlier. But instead of apologising or showing humility for its earlier mistakes, it has always been arrogant about the new discoveries and claims. In fact, the claims of modern science continue to blind and silence the ordinary person to such an extent that s/he stops thinking or questioning as soon as anything is labelled 'scientific'.

It should be clear from the above discussion that as long as we continue to operate within this paradigm of modern development and modern science, even the most genuine efforts in education will not yield serious results.

EXPOSING THE INSTRUMENTS OF CONTROL

This then brings us to a crucial question. Must we, who are concerned about society and education, always listen to the dominant voices, even if deep down within us we feel that the modern concept of development is not correct, is being supported by the wrong kind

of education and values, and continues to be perpetuated for the last 200 years? Are we to continue to refrain from critically looking at and challenging the instruments of the Western modern nation-state — parliamentary democracy, modern science, technology, the issue of rights (of every conceivable nature - child, human, women, etc.), participation, development, humanism — just because they have been so deified that they now, more or less, replace all other notions of justice, peace, harmony, etc.?

While trying to understand the impact of modern education upon our society, one needs to be careful in distinguishing between the impact modern education has had on colonized societies like ours and its impact on European societies. The same system may have a different impact on different societies because their cultural roots are different. Therefore, it is at best naïve, and at worst criminal, to try and bring about a uniformity in education system all over the country, leave alone the world, as is being attempted now. It is worth quoting Ananda K. Coomaraswamy here: "The World may be likened to a vast, as yet unordered garden, having diverse soils and aspects … The different parts of which should be properly tended by different gardeners, having experience of diverse qualities of soil and aspect; but certain ones have seized the plot of others and attempted to replace the plants natural to those plots, with others more acceptable or profitable to themselves."

The West has succeeded in refining the instruments of control to such a high degree that the physical presence of the oppressor is no longer required at the site of exploitation. To understand this, we need to differentiate between values and instruments, ends and means. Ends (or values) like equity, justice, peace and harmony have almost universal validity both over time and space, while the means (or instruments) to achieve these noble goals are both time- and space-specific. Every culture, every religion from time immemorial, has strived for these ends (or values) and will always continue to do so, but the means (or instruments) keep changing both with the times and with different cultures. Today, as the 'world is shrinking' and becoming more and more 'universalised', an attempt is being made to wipe out values from the collective memories of people by replacing them with a set of instruments, specific to the West. Though, the West has been very successful in this effort, it is dangerous for other cultures, as it ensures the domination of the West over the rest of the world – who continue to live under the illusion that some day they too will enjoy the same privileges that the West seems to be enjoying today.

We can try to understand this phenomenon through the example of organised religion. The saint propagates real values, the essence of *dharma*, whereas the priest or *panda* is only interested in rituals, instead of the essence behind the rituals. That is where the power of the priest lies – in deification and in ritualisation, in replacing values with rituals. Today, the Westernised priests have taken over and deified all instruments of Western society to such an extent that most of us, the educated lot, have started mistaking them for real values. And for the remaining few, the priests have succeeded in keeping them quiet and have prevented them from calling their bluff by making them scared of taking a 'politically incorrect' stand. This is the power of rituals, which the West has

understood as no one else in the past, not even our *Brahmins*. And the most powerful means employed to sustain this ritualisation is modern education.

WAYS FORWARD

Gandhiji had on several occasions warned us of the danger of modern education, where the gap between the home and the school was ever widening. Classrooms do not acknowledge the immense learning opportunities available at home, within communities and workplaces. Outright rejection of the home also inhibits the development of the critical faculties necessary to examine or correct the weaknesses of our systems and counter feelings of alienation. Instead, a child feels ashamed or embarrassed of what happens at home. So in elite schools we celebrate Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, even Valentine's Day, but not Holi, Eid, Rakshabandhan, Onnam or Baisakhi. We have different dress codes, language, and celebrations for home vs. for the outside world. This creates major problems. The child starts living in two separate worlds, which leads to hypocrisy in public life, and dishonesty, corruption, servility, double standards and a sense of shame permanently seep into his/her character. The stress shifts from 'being' (*hona*) to 'appearing' (*dikhana*), from practice to preaching. Let me quote Gandhiji once again to illustrate this hypocrisy. Gandhiji, while speaking to the students at Allahabad in 1920, tells them of his conversation with Lord Willingdon: "Lord Willingdon telling me of his experience in Bombay, where he had spent only a few days after his arrival from England, said that, since his coming here, he had not come across a single Hindu or Muslim who had had the courage to say 'No'. The charge is true even today. We have 'No' in the heart, but we cannot say so. We look at the other man's face to know whether he wants 'Yes' or 'No' and say what we think he would like us to say."

We need to reduce this gap and work to restore the confidence of our people in themselves, their systems, their philosophies and lifestyles. This does not mean glorification or acceptance without being critical. It only means not to reject what is our own in an outright manner and to build on our own foundations. In this process, we need to look with an open mind at those spaces where learning outside school takes place — festivals, melas, traditional crafts, traditional social systems, customs, rituals, agricultural practices and other subtle arrangements by which a society operates. We need to understand them and bring them closer to the school, instead of throwing them out of school as we have been doing for a long time now. Education must play a part in bringing the society closer together, instead of fragmenting it. This means that the local community must be involved in teaching, rather than excessively relying on 'trained and qualified' teachers.

We need to bring the school closer to the local environment also. Young students must understand the locality — not only its customs, rituals and social relations — but also its natural environment of insects, plants and animals, and its local history and geography. Subjects could be easily taught through the local context by knowledgeable people from the community. After all, textbooks are only one medium through which information is shared; they are not sacred. Meaningful knowledge can be better facilitated through local contexts. This will also go a long way in increasing the self-esteem of students, by bringing the classroom and the outside world closer to each other.

Another very important issue is that of values and philosophy. In the traditional education system in our country, both philosophy and values were intrinsic and vital. Without these components, education was not *shiksha*. They were embedded within the system. As soon as we separate these into subjects to be taught — i.e., philosophy and value education — we are in a different paradigm altogether. We can go into the 'why' and 'what' of values, but they can not be taught. They can be discussed. They may be emulated. We cannot teach someone how to speak the truth, but we can show it by example and discuss why truth is important in an honest manner. It has to be interwoven within subjects and activities within schools. Philosophy too is considered a subject to be taught and that only at the graduate or post-graduate level. But in India, even the so-called 'uneducated,' talk in highly philosophical terms and have complex ways for coping with the sorrows of everyday life. In fact, in our country, philosophy, psychology and spirituality are all interlinked. It is therefore not at all difficult to nurture these, right from a very young age.

Institutions of learning should increase the child's curiosity, wonder, respect and gratitude towards his body, family, society and nature. A sense of wonder and gratitude can be inculcated by asking the students to reflect on: How do I breathe? Who makes me sleep? Who wakes me up? How do I digest my food? Is there anything truly man-made, or does it all ultimately come from nature? And therefore, can I call anything really my own? Why does the rhythm of my breath change with changes in my emotions? The insistence in modern education to provide precise answers (by teachers/textbooks etc.) to all questions is not only unnecessary but also damaging at times. Rather, it is quite productive to leave questions for children to ponder over and discuss amongst themselves.

In the end, it is worth quoting Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: "Our struggle is part of a wider one, the conflict between the ideals of Imperialism and ideals of Nationalism[2]. Between the two ideals, the world has to choose. Upon that choice depends the salvation of much that is absolutely essential to the future greatness of civilization and the richness of the world's culture. For Imperialism involves the subordination of many nationalities to one; a subordination not merely political and economic, but also moral and intellectual. … Every nation has its own part to play in the long tale of human progress, and nations, which are not free to develop their own individuality and own character, are also unable to make the contribution to the sum of human culture, which the world has a right to expect of them." Education can be used either way. We have been using it for Imperialism; let us start using it for National Idealism.

REFERENCES:

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Essays in National Idealism. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1981 (first edition).

Shri Dharampal, The Beautiful Tree. New Delhi: Biblia Impex, 1995; republished in The Collected Works of Dharampal, Mapusa, Goa: The Other India Book Store, 2000.

M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. New Delhi: Batiala House (Publication Division), 1973.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pawan K. Gupta <sidhsri@nde.vsnl.net.in> is the Director of the Society for Integrated Development of Himalayas (SIDH). For the past ten years, SIDH has been working with people on issues of rethinking education and development in the rural areas of Tehri Garhwal district, Jaunpur block, and of Mussoorie (in the Central Himalayas). Pawan's interests include exploring the linkage among modern science, education, and development.

Turning the Monster on Its Head: Lifelong Learning Societies for All

Catherine Odora Hoppers

A decade has passed since the Jomtien Conference of 1990 and the initiation of the campaign of "Education for All." A true assessment of EFA leads us to the following embarrassing and shocking conclusions about the lack of comprehensive progress in our education systems:

- Literacy has not been achieved. Equity goals have not been realized. The 'unreached' have not been served in any systematic manner.
- Education for all has not been attained. In fact, education for all has collapsed into "schooling for all" – the blind leading the blind for most of this decade!
- With the exception of South Africa, still emerging from the depths of Apartheid, very little fundamental redesigning of Africa's education systems has occurred. Institutional structures remain fossilized and unresponsive, the realities in and values of local communities are still not taken seriously, and the link between education and the wider developmental efforts has never become clear.

This lack of progress has less to do with financial constraints and more to do with an absence of courage and creativity. The truth is, Jomtien failed to foster a systematic dialogue on models of transformation of education. The 'problem' in education was only defined as an issue of access, and the System – which in reality is the problem – was posited as the locus of the solution. And therefore, we ran around chasing our tails for ten years, wondering why things never seemed to change.

I believe that without a serious understanding of our education system, and the overwhelming emphasis on literacy that accompanies it, we will find ourselves repeating and deepening these tragic mistakes in this next decade. First, we must realize that the education system is not only structured to continuously expel and stigmatize its rejects, but it also severs all ties with them, with traumatic consequences for learners of different age groups. It routinely excludes African indigenous systems from its perimeters, especially in the areas of early childhood development, life-skills, value education, and other competencies, causing major lapses and further distortions in the life of those human beings that go through it. Finally, its rigid entry and exit points remain a problem for communities engaged in full time productive work in other domains of life. While they may expect flexibility and sensitivity from the system, they certainly do not get it. Even matters as simple as the utilization of school premises on evenings and weekends for community service are still not addressed satisfactorily.

Our discourse around literacy has been equally problematic. Instead of looking at literacy as a continuum in different modes of communication, from the oral to the written, we equated being ignorant of the western alphabet with **total ignorance**. We had no qualms in pitting what is not written as thoughtless, as a weakness, and at its limit, as primitivism (Hountondji, 1997). Instead of letting literacy serve an organic function and enable our societies to engage in the critical but active re-appropriation and authentication of our cultures and knowledges (i.e. to strengthen what we have), it was our absolute conviction

that learning the alphabet was not a cultural matter. Instead of putting literacy as the service of a complex range of African knowledges – in botany, crops, animal husbandry, climatology, medicine and midwifery, philosophy and pedagogy, architecture and metallurgy, and other knowledges that were completely subjugated under the forces of colonialism and modernity – we arraigned literacy as the new supreme force. It stood there aloft, talking to itself on its lonely hill, unable to reconnect its objects with their umbilical selves, or to link them to their new alien selves.

We wanted so badly to eradicate illiteracy – to purge, scrub or vaccinate our people clean of something we had clearly equated with illness – that we did not bother to listen ourselves. Nor did we hear the distinct echoes of social Darwinism in our impatient voices, as we waved carrots and sticks in the bid to rapidly attain modernization and to get just the right quantitative numbers on our billboards in order to secure our places at various banquet tables. We forgot that it was the same social Darwinism, embedded deep in the groins of development practice, that had in the first place belittled us, non-Western peoples, and sent us to the back of the queue (Esteva, 1992). We forgot that it was part of our responsibility and obligation to our people to resolutely urge the West to abandon its superiority complex and its intolerant and exclusive assumptions about the gross ignorance and backwardness of all others (Luyckx, 1999). As the class that could read and write, we forgot that we were to turn this pressure on its head and to return humanity to the center, to drown out the jingles of individualism with an overwhelming chorus of human solidarity and an ethics of responsibility to the "Other," which is our gift of heritage from this continent. We forgot that we were to become crucial links in re-contextualizing global processes and creating globally-oriented, indigenously-rooted futures.

When we finally shifted focus to link literacy and societal development, we found ourselves tongue-tied, mired in a narrow functionalist paradigm, and unable to find conceptions of learning that *did not stigmatize*, that *enhanced*, and that *grew from what was there* — because we had been taught (and had learnt well) that **there is nothing there**. For years, we helped make deeper the ravine between the oral and the literate. Now, challenged by new trends in thinking globally, we are trying to find a bridge between the two. The search today is to create learning societies that start with respecting what we do have. From "Education for All," we must therefore move to "Lifelong Learning Societies for All."

Although debt servicing, Structural Adjustment Programs, wars and strife continue to wreak havoc on the pillars of governance, society, economy, and the education system alike, I believe that there is enough to go by in terms of political will. We have African Heads of State, through the OAU, committing to an African Decade for Education. We have African Ministers of Education, through COMEDAF and MINEDAF, reiterating a wish for a different kind of system that is more holistic, more Africa-centered, and that promotes values indispensable to the continent's development. We are thus challenged to transform the education system in Africa, keeping the following in mind:

- We have faced (and are still facing) a *crisis of cognition*, which has left us repeatedly falling back into the safety of minimalist tinkering with change, instead of pro-

actively innovating deep inside the system in support of Africa's development. We must acknowledge that the repeated failures to achieve Education for All arise from problems within the education structure and because of the system's inability to re-configure itself for the provision of lifelong learning for all human beings.

- In the context of globalization, there is also growing realization that Africa must develop at a pace it can determine and understand — not at gunpoint. In fact, if 'Development' has been responsible for the legitimization of ecological ruin and spiritual subjugation of most of humankind, then we must also posit a notion of learning societies that is capable of interrogating Development, rather than being its drowsy and compliant bedfellow.
- Africa is neither a 'lost continent,' nor a continent in distress incapable of raising itself. It is time for Africa to say "yes" to itself and quit behaving like a poor shadow of colonial Europe. We must see this transformation as the beginnings of the African Renaissance — Africa's rebirth — where Africa regains its confidence in its cultures and knowledge systems and sees these as the foundations for systemic transformation and creation.

The regeneration of lifelong learning societies would go beyond serving the interests of Global Finance Capital. Instead, it would be a cultural action to lead towards new basic structures that will be more cooperative, more humane, and more ecologically harmonious. Its time dimension would be infinite, and its identity would derive fully from the combination of the formal, non-formal and informal — the latter translated to encapsulate the indigenous learning pedagogies. It would be clear about the level of knowledge an African child already brings to the school or to the early childhood development center, about the contribution to early childhood development made by African learning systems, and about the progressive loss and/or integration of communities' knowledges. It would not be terrified of genuine democracy, including participatory evaluation of school performance undertaken by parents standing in all the three facets of lifelong learning (formal, non-formal, and informal). Lifelong learning societies will not further the genealogical death of Africa, but rather, they will contribute to its rebirth.

As agential citizens and guerilla intellectuals, researchers, and technocrats, we must remember that never again shall we wilfully sell our people cheap, nor aid in the systematic process of making them lose their life spaces and their words, their parameters for interpretation and their truths. We will acknowledge that the education systems inherited from the colonial period must be challenged and transformed, which means redefining the goals, content, structures, methods, approaches and values of education, as part of a mould-breaking strategy. We shall also endeavour to make literacy socially, culturally and economically useful, by defining *well before the fact*, precisely what aspects of culture, knowledge and latent resources, literacy is going to help unearth and how it is going to help recast African societies as legitimate locations of human imagination (Dias, 1993). Ultimately, our quest is to make literacy and education serve the goals of humanity, and especially of the African Renaissance. It is time to turn this monster on its head and make it serve the objectives we want – and not the other way around.

REFERENCES:

Dias, P., Democratization and Education as a Political Challenge to Social Authoritarianism in India. In Nord-Sud Aktuell — Themen. 2 Quartal 1993.

Esteva, G., "Development," in Sachs, W., ed. The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1992.

Hountondji, P., "Introduction," in Hountondji, P. ed., Endogenous Knowledge. Research Trails. CODESRIA, 1997.

Luyckx, M., "The Transmodern Hypothesis: Towards a Dialogue of Cultures," in Futures. Volume 31, Numbers 9/10. November/December 1999.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Catherine A. Odora Hoppers <COHoppers@beauty.hsrc.ac.za> is a Distinguished Professional and Coordinator of the Project on Indigenous Knowledges and the Integration of Knowledge Systems in the Office of the President, Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria, South Africa. She was the Deputy Director at the Centre for Education Policy Development, Evaluation and Management in Johannesburg. Catherine was a member of the International Consultative Forum Steering Committee on Education For All set up by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank to monitor the global implementation of the Jomtien Declaration on Education For All. Her publications include *Structural Violence as a Constraint to African Policy Formation in the 1990s: Repositioning Education in International Relations (1998).*

Education for What?: De-mystifying the World Bank Education Agenda

Sangeeta Kamat

As a citizen concerned about the education crisis in India and much of the Third World, the newfound interest of international agencies, such as the World Bank, in education reform may give us cause for optimism and hope. It appears that there is not only a new level of commitment to education reform on the part of the World Bank, but one that is poised to make fundamental changes in the education system. To begin with, one fundamental change that is apparent is the coordinated involvement of both state and civil society sectors in the reform process. The imagery of state officials working alongside non-governmental organizations to ensure a decent education for the poor and marginalized, under the benevolent eye of the international community, is both seductive and powerful, no doubt. It appears that finally a common vision has been forged that truly unites the concerns of the common person for a good education, with those of the state and international aid bureaucracy for quality Education for All, especially the marginalized. The seductive power of forging a common will on an issue that everyone agrees is a fundamental human right is precisely what makes it difficult to question the purpose of these reforms and the intent of its lead actors.

However, if we leave interrogating intentionality aside (which is quite an empty exercise) and presume good intentions on the part of all the actors, and instead move toward reflecting upon the discourse of the reforms, the nature of the interventions recommended, and the priorities emphasized, we may be better able to understand the implications of the new policy directives in education. For purposes of this article, I will focus on what appears to be one of the foundational narratives of the proposed reforms. Let us begin with the basic template developed by the World Bank, upon which many of the policy and programmatic reforms in education, not only in India, but in other parts of the 'developing' world, are based. The template presented in the Education Sector Strategy paper of the World Bank is elegant in its simplicity; it states that there are three pillars of a good education system – i) Access, ii) Quality, and iii) Delivery.

Even to the 'unschooled' eye, the principles of access to education, quality and delivery all appear patently obvious and necessary to building an effective education system. On closer examination, however, each of these elements relate primarily to the provision of education, or more precisely, involve the development of mechanisms for the provision of education. In other words, each of these elements have much to do with the mechanisms through which education is to reach the school-going population, and little to do with thenature or content of this education itself. Succinctly put, these three principles privilege form over content, or the 'how' over the 'what' — a characteristic feature of the postmodern era.

In terms of policy recommendations, access to education most often implies locating school buildings more conveniently, especially for more remote populations, or changing school timings for the those who have to work. Quality of education most often translates into improving the teaching-learning process, developing new teaching

methods, new materials that make the learning process more appealing and easy for children, and so on. Delivery of education is concerned with instituting effective management routines, developing feasible budgets and monitoring mechanisms for the smooth running of schools. Each pillar clearly prioritizes the issue of *how* to construct a more effective link between students and the school system, so that students actually come to school, stay in school and learn. In themselves, these are laudable goals and no sensible educator would wish to quarrel with them. What I wish to question is what is being left out of these proposals, and not the stated goals of the proposals per se.

For one, the World Bank Education Sector Strategy paper, as well as the thick volume on Primary Education in India, have very little to say about what education is going to be all about in this new phase of reform. There is absolutely no effort made to articulate the 'what' of education, the 'why' is presumed to be already answered (basic education is a human right), and, as per their documents, the only question that appears worth answering is the 'how'. The scarce moments when the content of education is alluded to, it is clear that consensus is assumed as to what constitutes a relevant education — a consensus that supposedly includes the ideas/views of common people.

For instance, a statement such as, "If people are not gaining the knowledge, skills, and values they need, resources invested in teaching and learning are wasted" (World Bank, 1999). In this statement, which is typical of the reports, the concern, as always, is with the resources and their efficient use, while the former part of the sentence is accorded no attention at all. That is, the knowledge, skills, and values that people 'need' (how about what people 'desire' as opposed to 'need'?[1]) is presumed to require little if any discussion at all. When these are mentioned, it is always through the prism of human capital theory. It is baldly stated that education, especially basic education, is for the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, and the "attitudes necessary for the workplace" (World Bank,1995). This pragmatic view of education is rationalized and legitimized as 'giving people what they need'. Yet, 'giving people what they need' portrays 'need' as self-willed and voluntaristic, when in actuality many of our 'needs' are determined for usby a certain set of structural arrangements which leave no scope for common people to voluntarily define their needs. Educational choices based on 'need' may more often reflect coercive relations of power, rather than the will of people.

An alternative discourse of education reform may privilege precisely these neglected questions in education – what are the knowledge, skills, and values people need and desire, and toward what ends? In an alternative discourse on education, the answers to these fundamental questions are not presumed to be self-evident or already always determined, and instead constitute an ongoing struggle to define and redefine a world of integrity and human dignity. In alternative discourses on education, the question of 'toward what ends' remains a central philosophical issue that needs to be contested, re-examined and re-formulated, particularly because prevailing definitions of the ends of education are having a devastating impact on the quality of human life, the natural environment, and our relations with one another.

Herein lies a critical difference between the World Bank proposals and the alternative discourses. In the World Bank proposals, the goals of education are assumed to be a foregone conclusion – namely, building human capital for increasing national productivity, as in the production and consumption of (economically valued) goods and services. To quote: "The World Bank's strategy for reducing poverty focuses on promoting the productive use of labor — the main asset of the poor — and providing basic social services to the poor. Investment in education contributes to the accumulation of human capital, which is essential for higher incomes and sustained economic growth" (World Bank, 1995) That this definition of education's purpose is leading to a 'race to the bottom,' both between national economies and between groups of people within nations, is of scant regard to the institution. Nations, as well as individual citizens, are competing with one another to market their wares as cheaply and as best as possible, in order to capture a share of the world market. Some of the direct effects of such competition to increase one's GNP are lower wages, poor work environments, environmental damage, overuse of natural resources, huge levels of displacement of people, and intra-national and international conflicts and wars.[2]

Given the above scenario, the question of 'education for what' can hardly be relegated to a non-issue. Instead, it has become even more urgent for us to debate and dialogue over — a dialogue in which 'the people' are not some generic unified group, but are real people, deeply conflicted over our visions of a 'good education' and 'the ideal society'. In most countries, and certainly in India, serious conflicts have emerged over defining a relevant education for the national populations. These conflicts are (1) in part related to the increasingly insecure economic environment across the globe, (2) in part related to the rise of ethnic nationalisms, and (3) in part related to the rise of new social movements. The first instance is clearly a case in which the goals of education are being determined in a reactive manner, as a 'survival response' to global competition for scarce resources, including (well) paid employment. The singular emphasis on schooling to ensure the employability, especially of the poor, fits within this reactive mode to economic distress. International institutions such as the World Bank are guilty of not only operating within this reactive mode, but also of enforcing it as rational policy. In doing so, they misrepresent the forces of global competition as originating from some inescapable, inscrutable and universal logic, rather than as being socially determined and humanly constructed.

Although much more complicated, I would argue that the definition of relevant education in the second instance (namely, ethnic nationalisms) is also a reactive response to perceived or real threats to one's survival as an ethnic or racial group. Some have argued that the economic discourse of 'survival of the fittest' is translated into the cultural realm to the extent that not simply domination, but the annihilation of other groups, is seen as a necessary condition to one's own existence (Chossudovsky, 1997). In these cases, education is devoted to developing sectarian identities that are traditionalist, pure and purposive, and in perpetual historical conflict with other groups.[3]

It is in the final emergent condition, that is, in the case of new social movements, that we see a far more constructivist approach to defining the purpose of education. In other

words, their educational interventions are aimed less at optimizing one's survival within the existing framework of global competition, and more at transforming the existing framework itself. New social movements, which include a wide number of grassroots organizations working locally in many parts of the Third World, are engaged in constructing educational alternatives that symbolize a different vision of the world, and of the social relations therein. Education in these instances is geared toward the development of those critical and creative capacities that will help people build a just and caring society. The education discourse here is inflected not with the voices of economists calling for efficiency and human capital development, but by the work of a number of radical educationists, among whom Paulo Freire is perhaps best known.

From early on, such efforts to re-imagine the purpose of education have been driven by a concern for marginalized groups such as rural communities, indigenous groups, and migrant labor. Schools modeled along the lines of an industrial economy and geared toward meeting the needs of such an economy simply did not fulfill the educational needs or desires of such groups. Responding not only to the marginalization, but also to the continued poverty and exploitation of these groups, radical educationists sought to reinvent the purpose of education, as education for consciousness-raising and social transformation. Changing the purpose of education, of course, also meant changes to the form education took – curricula, structures, processes – making it appear quite unlike the formal, inflexible, hierarchical, abstract, didactic education of modern schooling. With a few exceptions, much of this creative work has continued in a local manner through community-based organizations and struggles too numerous to name here.[4]

However, the minority of 'losers' itself is rapidly becoming the majority, as the numbers of those who are poor, who work in the 'informal' economy, and who have been displaced by war and a fragmented industrial economy, are reaching alarming proportions across the globe. Further, even for the select urban middle class, who perhaps have been best served by modern schools, the functional relationship between schooling and the economy is proving increasingly uneven and unpredictable. Opportunities for well-paid employment are limited to a narrow range of jobs, generally related to information technology. In this emergent context, it is no longer sufficient to formulate alternative education for an 'alternative' population, because the problem of exclusion and irrelevance is no longer a local one, confined to particular communities.[5] Instead, it is necessary to raise the question of what constitutes a relevant, appropriate and desirable education to a national and international level, as an issue of consequence to all people across the world.

This does not mean that there is one kind of education that is relevant to all societies and groups or a one-size-fits-all policy, but it does mean that a new consensus needs to be thrashed out on the overall broad philosophical purpose of education in this new era. The present consensus, which has prevailed since the modern industrial era, is that education is for economic survival. Within this consensus, the precise forms that education takes is different in different places, given that there are different levels of survival within the economy.[6] Analogous to the education-economy coupling, I do believe that a new

vision of the purpose of education needs to be 'consensed'[7], one which is coupled with a vision of a just, peaceful, ecological, post-industrial, leisure society. In the absence of a common vision that can operate as a value framework, the defense of plurality and difference within civil society posits certain dangers, not the least of which is the very real possibility of opposing and disparate definitions of what constitutes a valuable and relevant education for different groups. If anything, at this moment, we need a policy environment of greater, not less, accountability to human well-being. At the same time, I caution that this common vision is not available as a ready-made package, but requires extensive and open public debate and reflection.[8]

Within this common framework, there will be any number of different forms that education will take, with different content, structures, priorities, and innovations that relate to the histories of particular places and people. Constructing a new vision will involve rethinking some of the basic, taken-for-granted features of the education discourse, such as education = schools. We are at a historical moment in which schools as we know them are battling to maintain their influence over young minds, a battle which they appear to be losing to the media, religion, technology, and popular culture. In such a context, to isolate schools as the only relevant object of policy reform is a gross distortion of what constitutes education, of where and how knowledge is produced and disseminated, of what is relevant knowledge, and of how identities are being shaped. Rethinking the goals of education at a fundamental level necessarily implies rethinking our relation to our social and economic environment as a whole.

The reform efforts of the World Bank not only sidestep the fundamental issue of the need to re-envision education's purpose, but, equally, their emphasis on the technicalities of schooling greatly limit larger debates on education policy. As I have stated above, the debates center around how best to allocate resources to optimize economic returns to schooling, how best to ensure access to schools, and so on. Contending visions around education's fundamental goals are barely visible in the policy debates on education reform in the Third World. These glaring silences foster an artificial consensus on the supposedly 'real' issues in education, making it extremely difficult to create the political will for a genuine and wide ranging debate on fundamental goals, assumptions, and values of 'education for what'. Unless we are able to challenge this appearance of a consensus and engage in debate over the fundamentals, fewer and fewer people will be served by the present school-to-work link, while more and more resources will be sunk into trying to make it viable. In the process, we lose out on a valuable opportunity to shape educational debates that speak to some of the most pressing issues of our times.

REFERENCES:

Michel Chossudovsky, The Globalisation of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms. London: Zed Press, 1997.

World Bank, Education Sector Strategy. Human Development Network Series, Washington D.C: World Bank, 1999.

World Bank, Priorities and Strategies in Education: A World Bank Review. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1995.

World Bank, Primary Education in India. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1997.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sangeeta Kamat <kamatsg@yahoo.com> is currently a professor in the School of Education, University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Her research interests include the restructuring of state and civil society, cultural effects of education reform, and the transformative politics of new social movements.

1 Education (reduced to the construction of schools and school routines) is premised on what 'people need' to be functional and not what they may desire or yearn for in terms of educational activity/experience – e.g., the desire to become more fully human or to develop one's mind, body, and soul. Peoples' visions of what education should look like or feel like, not simply for their survival, but for them to be architects of their societies, are not given any space in the discourse at all.

2 The World Development Reports of the World Bank and the Human Development Report of the UNDP confirm this frightening scenario.

3Witness for example the recent interventions by the Hindu Nationalist groups in India in redefining school curriculum to reinscribe a traditionalist Hindu identity in conflict with Muslim and other minority groups in India. See Nalini Taneja, Communalization of Education in India, February 2000. http://members.xoom.com/southasia/2000-01/edu.htm

4 Exceptions are national programs that took place for brief periods in Nicaragua, Grenada, Tanzania. Examples of alternative initiatives in India are Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha, Kashtakari Sanghatna, Eklavya, and many more.

5 From a humanist standpoint, it can be argued that, by focusing only on cognitive skills, modern schools have not served the interests of humanity in general. Although here I emphasize a crisis of relevance caused by global economic changes, the philosophical perspective on relevance is also an important one.

6 These differential forms of education for different levels of survival is what has been attacked as discriminatory, and rightly so. The policy emphasis has therefore tended toward guaranteeing the same form of education that will it is hoped grant the same level of survival within the economy. However, what remains unchallenged in such policy proposals is the basic philosophical principle of yoking education to the economy.

7 By this I mean that we need to recognize and must be willing to go through dialogical processes of conflict, difference, and hard negotiation in order to come to a real consensus.

8 The model of reform through dialogue and civil society referendums popularized by the Zapatistas comes to mind here. Their approach is decidedly different from the World Bank approach of calling for partnerships among all sectors of civil society, including business, and state institutions to work together for economic reform.

The Process of Your Life Should Be the Process of Your Education

Dayal Chandra Soni

THE NECESSITY AND THE ABILITY TO LEARN ARE IMPLICIT IN HUMAN NATURE

The greatest and the most harmful illusion, from which our society is suffering today, is that 'schooling' and 'education' are synonymous. So, the most important task before all thoughtful and honest citizens in our society is to break this illusion. The origin and functioning of teaching-learning on this earth is as old as the origin of human beings, and the process of life itself has been successfully educating human beings, without them undergoing any schooling.

God or the Goddess Nature, while creating human beings and giving them the opportunity to live on this earth, had enough love for them and enough wisdom to make teaching-learning a combined and concurrent feature of life itself. God gave hunger and thirst to human beings which compelled them to engage in the search for food and water. God made life dependent on breathing which compelled them to learn about the air or atmosphere. God also provided men and women with a conscientious heart to prompt them to lead an honest and nonviolent life and to provide a loving care to their offspring. Human beings needed help and protection from other forces so they learned to cooperate with their fellow men and women. The need for cooperation also gave human beings a sense of morality. They realized that life was based on an interdependent relationship of getting help, on the one hand, and giving (or returning) help, on the other hand. God also granted human beings a wondering and questioning mind — an endowment that inspired them to learn about the movements of Sun, the moon, the planets and the stars. This questioning and wondering nature led many people to their perception and faith in some hidden power and hidden mind as the sustainer and creator of this Universe. Thus, spiritualism emerged in human society.

In fact, it is God or the Goddess Nature, who has not only equipped humankind with the capability to learn, but has also made human beings' survival and welfare dependent on their ability to educate themselves. As a result of this capability and necessity for learning, the human race has been engaged in educating itself from time immemorial, without establishing or depending on any schools.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK AND COOPERATIVE LIVING AS AN EDUCATIVE PROCESS

God or Nature also made it necessary for humans to use their hands and legs to undertake some activity so that they could earn their livelihood and bring up their children. But this activity, which is called 'MANUAL AND PRODUCTIVE WORK', does not provide for livelihood only. In fact, work with the hands educates the person who is working. We forget that this activity yields four good fruits when it is undertaken seriously, devotedly and skillfully: (1) livelihood, (2) new learning, (3) a sense of achievement and satisfaction, and (4) a sense of relief and relaxation.

As a cow gives us milk through all four of her breasts, in the same way, the manual and productive work we do can be compared to a four-breasted milk-giving cow. But, the

folly of human beings is that we milk only one breast of the WORK-COW — that which provides livelihood. We have been made to forget that the WORK-COW is the main educator of humankind, and has been so throughout human history. Today, not only are we made to believe that manual and productive work is barren educationally, but also that it is a hindrance to the process of education.

In fact, it is very important for us to understand how work is the best source of human education. The fact is, meaningful learning can only take place when the human being faces some questions and thus becomes eager to find answers and solutions. This situation is created and faced only by people who are engaged in some manual and productive work and feel responsible and motivated to do it. The great amount of knowledge with wisdom that human beings have gained up to now is the result of questions and problems encountered in their work. So, when a school prohibits manual and productive work in its activities, it does not enhance its capacity to educate its students, but it loses its best friend or ally in the process of educating its students. Information given to or imposed on students allows for neither questions nor curiosity, and therefore can neither be digested by the students nor properly used by them.

The second important thing to note is that the spoken or the written word is not the sole means of educating oneself. The child learns a great deal by sharing life with his/her elders and those younger than him/her, as well as by just watching and weighing the behavior of his/her seniors and juniors. Hundreds or thousands of young boys or girls of the same age, assembled or crowded in a school or college, are deprived of all opportunities of learning spontaneously and silently by participating and sharing in the cooperative living of elders and youngsters working with some purpose. A learner should not be totally removed from participating in the life-sustaining work that is done cooperatively by his/her family. The burden of work on a young learner must be light, of course, but the responsibility of work must not be totally forbidden or prohibited. If we wish to teach swimming, we must allow the child-pupil to enter water, though with full care and caution. Postponing the child-pupil's entry into water, until s/he has acquired a certificate of swimming, cannot be a sound and successful approach of education.

NURTURING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME SELF-EDUCATORS IN THE ART OF LIVING

The bifurcation of 'training for a job' and 'actual engagement in that job' into two separate engagements is based on a very wrong concept of human work. It is perfectly right to accept the idea of apprenticeship or novice-ness of a newcomer in a job. But to disallow him/her to enter a job, unless s/he has been trained in a separate training school and has acquired a certificate qualifying him/her for that job, is not only a farce, but also is a fraud that is exploiting our youth mercilessly. In the olden days, young people joined most work as apprentices or helpers. They were admitted in an office, shop or a workshop as novices for a short period of time and after the expiry of that time, they were recognized as regular workers. The apprentice did not have to pay any fees for his/her initial training, but, on the other hand, it was s/he who received a token remuneration from the workplace. It is true that some initiation is necessary and helpful for a novice, but we should not forget that human beings are born with the capacity of self-learning.

Thus, the best education is that which makes one his or her own self-educator, using the conditions and facilities provided by God or Nature for continuous self-learning.

Moreover, language or mathematics or science or art or history or geography is not the real subject or concern of education. The real aim of education is, on the one hand, to establish a synthesis between the individual and the society; and, on the other hand, between the society and its natural surroundings. The learner has to learn the 'art of living' as the main subject of education — that is, how to live with the members of a community by cooperative interactions of getting and giving. The processes of 'getting' and 'giving' must be balanced, even with our natural or physical surroundings. A child may be allowed to get a lot of help and give back just a little. But this reciprocity of getting and giving cannot be ignored during the student years with the hope of reviving it when the student-life is over. If giving is not practiced during childhood, the adult will not practice it when grown up. We become what we practice, and we cannot become what we profess unless we practice it in our real life. Mere listening to sermons, without practicing their content, will produce only hypocrites, not men and women of integrity.

TODAY'S EDUCATION DEGENERATES HUMANITY BY INCULCATING THE WRONG VALUES OF LIFE

However, in the capitalist worldview, education is seen as an investment of money during the child's student years, and the hope is that this investment will yield profit in the future. This view of education is below human dignity. It degenerates and devalues human beings by reducing them to a market-commodity. If a 'schooled' individual proves to be an unscrupulous exploiter of society and polluter of natural surroundings, his so-called education is worse than non-education.

We must understand that human beings are not born to be ungrateful exploiters or parasites, for they are gifted with a conscience to keep them away from parasitism or exploitation of others. But when a child is allowed to practice getting/taking, without practicing the duty of giving, his/her conscience becomes blunted and desensitized, and then s/he is destined to become an exploiter of others. While those boys and girls who do not allow their lives to be dominated by schools (and choose to remain so-called uneducated people) go on practicing getting as well as giving concurrently and naturally, this essential opportunity is denied to school-going children. If we ponder over this situation deeply, we shall be able to understand why the moral standard of humankind has been falling, despite the spread of modern school education. In fact, it is quite difficult to decide whether modern school education is really education in its true sense, or just an instrument to bring about the moral downfall of humankind in disguise.

Today's education provided by schools, colleges or universities can be compared with a lottery, for which tickets have been secured in the form of certificates awarded by their schools or colleges. Whether these lottery-tickets will bring any prize for the ticket-holder is not certain. Rather, the schools of today guarantee that they will uproot students from their parental occupations and from their local society. While our rural people may be economically poor or even illiterate, they are quite rich in their cultural and vocational heritage and their very expressive local dialects. But the influence of today's schools on

these rural people is very harmful, for they cultivate in children a sense of disdain and inferiority for their parental occupations involving physical labor, for their rural life, for their local mother-language, for their traditional attire, and for their traditional culture. Moreover, with too many competitors in the fray, these days, it has become extremely difficult for a rural student to secure a 'table and chair' job. Yet, having developed an ambition for modern comfort, the rural neo-educated youth have lost their capacity to do laborious jobs which they can easily learn from their parents. So the question that arises today is, "Is this school education good or helpful for the rural people, or is this education harmful to them?"

The answer to this question is clear. The school of today cannot help the rural people or the common masses of our nation in improving their lives or their living conditions. This answer emerges clearly from the common people's point of view. But, even if we judge the present school education from the point of view of the elite class of our society, we will come to the conclusion that in the long run, this school education will not be good or beneficial even for them. This education will ultimately make the elite class totally dependent on the so-called uneducated farmers, laborers, dairy workers, and other craftsmen and artists, to fulfil their multiple needs. Secondly, this elite class is bound to face unemployment, because the schools today are producing too many aspirants for a limited number of jobs. As a result of the spread of school education during the last 53 years of our freedom, the unemployment crisis among the so-called educated people has deepened. So, the present school education is now proving to be harmful even for the traditional elite class of our country. In fact, the so-called uneducated person still retains some ability or power to face unemployment, but the so-called educated person does not retain even a little power to face unemployment.

EDUCATION IS A LIFELONG PROCESS WHILE SCHOOLING IS A TEMPORARY PHASE

More importantly, today's belief — that a human being will be an educated person only when s/he is trained by others who claim to be superior to him/her — is very harmful and wrong. The fact is that human beings are constant learners by nature. They have an inner teacher within their minds and hearts and an inner will to improve themselves. What we have to learn and realize most urgently, is that human beings have not been born in this world as destitute orphans with regards to their education. The source or the fountain of learning is already there in him/her and the main task of worldly teachers is to introduce each person to his inner teacher. While Indians do have a tradition of searching for an appropriate spiritual guide (*Guru*), the role of this spiritual *Guru* is to introduce students (or disciples) to their Divine *Guru* (residing within the student's own mind or heart), and not to dominate the student. In fact, Nature has arranged that when a worker is wedded to his/her work, the worker becomes a learner and the work itself serves as his/her Guru. The situation today demands that we remind our fellow human beings that they must become their own self-learners and must assume the responsibility of educating themselves.

Human beings must also be reminded that everything found in their surroundings, and every event taking place around them, can become a source of their education. We must remember that books and teachers are only a fraction of the educational facilities

provided by God or Nature. Moreover, teachers and books cannot be any human's constant and permanent sources of education. While education is a continuing and a lifelong process, schools and teachers are merely a temporary phase in our life.

Nor can education take the shape of a stock or storehouse, secured in our student life, with a view to serving us throughout our life. Each day, and in each situation, we need some new education — relevant to that particular time and that particular place. But today the fashion or trend is to acquire a large stock of information and facts, so that it might serve us for the whole of our future life. We generally talk of 'finishing' our education after passing the M.A. exam or obtaining our Ph.D. degree. And then we talk of our entry into real life and assuming its responsibilities. But this is an absurd notion, because education cannot be bound in any timeframe, nor can it be collected as a stock and stored in our mind to be used for the whole of our life. Education must be relevant and connected to the place and time to which the learner belongs. Education is like a perennial river, constantly flowing towards the ultimate goal of human life. It must not be seen as a mass of stagnated water collected and stored in a big dam.

Thus, we must realize that the era of school education that has flourished during the last few centuries is now coming to an end. The school of today shall not be able to solve the problems of the world tomorrow. So let us stop worshipping these schools, which have cut themselves off not only from the hard realities of life, but also from the rich educative possibilities of the process of human life. Life and learning are so united that they cannot be separated at any time, at any place or in any manner. Life knows the ultimate goal of each human being and it is constantly leading him on the path towards this ultimate goal. So, let us have faith in the educative capacity of our own lives and pursue our education up to the highest goals of human life through our own processes of living.

STOP THIS CRIPPLING EDUCATION

God or Goddess Nature gave hands, a heart, and a mind to every human being. This means that human beings, who are using their hands, must combine this with the use of their hearts, as well as with the use of their heads. God made human beings as 'whole' people. God did not create one class of people with only hands (having no heart and no mind), nor a second class endowed with only hearts (having no hands and no mind), nor a third class of only minds (having no hands and no heart). But our schools today have only been dealing with the minds of their students. They forget that the mind alone cannot be educated or developed properly, without combining it with the use of hands and heart. Thus, our schools are creating a society of crippled human beings as they are engaged in a rebellion against what Nature has ordained. Our model of education today is Anti-Nature and that is why it is proving to be a pollutant not only of our ecology, but also of our minds. If this very school education is continued and universalized, it is bound to prove itself a great calamity for our future generations. So, let us not continue to keep our school education 'Crippled and Anti-Nature' but let us make it 'Wholesome and Pro-Nature', so that it may prove to be not a bane but a boon for the future of humanity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shri Dayal Chandra Soni (26 Vidya Marg, Dewali, Udaipur 313001 Rajasthan, India) was born in 1919 in a small town, Salumbar, in the old state of Mewar. He was selected to lead a Gandhian Basic Education School in 1941, and in connection with his work, he was fortunate enough to learn about Basic Education from Dr. Zakir Hussain, from Gandhiji himself, and from Vinoba Bhave. He later worked at Seva Mandir, an NGO in Udaipur, on a literacy campaign for rural areas. He was chosen to be the Programme Officer in India for the World Literacy Programme of Canada. For the past 60 years, Shri Soni has been writing essays and books on educational reconstruction. He has published nearly 400 articles and 25 books. One book written by him on Non-formal Education (in Hindi) has been given the Madan Mohan Malviya award by the U.P. Government in 1994. He currently runs a small flour-grinding mill in his home and is still actively engaged in writing his views on Educational Reconstruction.

A New Story for Learning and Schooling: A "New Mind" for the New Millennium

Stephanie Pace Marshall[1]

I have not tried to forecast, predict or extrapolate (from current conditions) where I believe public education might be in 25 years. Rather, I have simply invented a conceptual framework for a new 'story' of education by offering some alternative beliefs, assumptions and principles for creating sustainable learning communities that nurture the intelligence, imagination and creativity of the human mind and spirit. I leave to those more operationally adroit, the challenge to create the structures and processes that might bring the ideas I offer to life.

I cannot view public education as an enterprise isolated from the needs of the human condition. To me, the kind of educational system we create is the direct result of our beliefs, assumptions and knowledge of human learning and the kind of mind we want to nurture for the future. Public education cannot serve the needs of future generations, unless the kind of mind we nurture develops our capacity to become more fully human and sees, as its work, the creation of a compassionate and sustainable world that works for everyone.

Devoid of a compassionate and sustaining human context, public education can not serve the public good. As a consequence, I believe we must transform the current paradigm of schooling, which has created structures that stifle the needs children have — for meaning and sense-making, for reflection and complex cognition, for exploration and discovery, for risk, adventure and surprise, and for integration and connection with the natural world — into a vision of education that creates whole, healthy and vibrant learning communities that liberate the goodness and genius of all children for the world.

It is our work, as 'prophets and pioneers' to create a generative paradigm of learning that invites not only the fullness of our intellect but the fullness of our imagination and the fullness of our spirit. This vision is premised on several beliefs:

- human beings inherently possess goodness and genius
- liberating the goodness and genius of children is essential to our sustainability; and,
- the fundamental purpose of education is not to credential vocational knowledge and skills, but to build the capacity of each learner to advance the human condition.

It is my belief that the current structures of schooling, grounded in false and disabling assumptions of human learning, are not capable of re-igniting the power, courage and imagination of children for the world. They are not big enough to enable children to respond to their real questions about life and they are not spirit-ful enough, to enable children to see how they 'belong' to the world and one another.

---

1 The following excerpt from Stephanie Pace Marshall, Ph.D., "A possible new story for learning and schooling – Enabling a "new mind" for the new millennium," is reprinted with permission from the December 1999 issue of The School Administrator magazine, American Association of School Administrators.

In order to create a compassionate and sustainable world, a new global consciousness must become manifest, and this can only come from a paradigm of generative, not prescriptive learning. It is this paradigm that grounds the design of a new story of teaching and learning.

What is the new learning paradigm and how does it differ from the paradigm we live now?

1. Grounded in an epistemology that honors the objectively verifiable, the analytical and the experimental; that views empirical observation as the most important skill; that believes that the acquisition of factual knowledge requires the disengagement of the learners emotions in pursuit of objective truth; that believes that subjectivity endangers the pursuit of objective truth and that holds to the premise that there is no relationship between the knower and the known	1. Grounded in an epistemology that affirms integrative ways of knowing; that believes meaning and connections are constructed by the learner; that affirms the power of relationships and community in learning; that believes the learner's passion and love are essential for deep learning; that understands that relatedness and engagement are at the heart of learning and that there is a profound connection between the knower and the known.
2. Learning is an incremental process of acquiring information.	2. Learning is a dynamic process of constructing meaning through pattern formulation.
3. Intelligence is a defined and fixed capacity.	3. Intelligence is learnable and the potential and capacity for learning are inexhaustible and expanding.
4. Learning should be credentialed by the amount of time spent acquiring information.	4. Learning is credentialed by demonstrations of understanding, anytime.
5. The purpose of schooling is to rapidly acquire information, cover content and reproduce facts; cleverness is the appropriate aim of learning.	5. The purpose of education is to acquire wisdom through the reflective and often slow exploration of essential questions.
6. Prior knowledge is unimportant and a detractor to future learning.	6. Prior learning is essential to future learning.
7. Content segmentation is the more efficient and effective way to learn a discipline.	7. Concept integration is the most meaningful way to understand the unity of knowledge.
8. Rigorous evaluation of learning can only be objective and external; only that which can be quantitatively and easily measured is true knowledge.	8. Rigorous and meaningful evaluation of learning must include qualitative evidence of understanding, be self-correcting and be demonstrated in settings that are real-world.
9. Competition and external rewards are the most powerful motivators to learning.	9. Collaboration, interdependence, and internal rewards are more powerful motivators for learning.
10. Schooling represents a necessary 'rite of passage'; what happens in school prepares one for life.	10. Learning is continuous lifelong engagement; what happens in a school is life.
11. Personal inquiry and the exploration of questions that matter take too much time from the prescribed curriculum.	11. Personal inquiry and the exploration of deeply human questions are the means through which children acquire the knowledge and skills they need to construct meaning.
12. Emotions, passion and the spirit-ful dimensions of who we are 'permitted' if they do not significantly de-rail the objective.	12. The total engagement of the learner enables the construction of meaning.
13. Effective learning requires chronological age peers to be placed together.	13. Engaged learning requires an intergenerational community learning together.

The attributes of the current culture of schooling — rapid information acquisition, disintegration of knowledge, independence and competition — reflect our societal ambitions and predispositions. Schools, in fact, have executed the current cultural norms, values, priorities and reward structures (of most developed nations), quite well.

This 'success' has been at an enormous human and environmental cost, however, and the result has been the emergence of a 'global mind' focused on capitalism, consumption, competition, acquisition and winning. The deep systemic problems, that are now casting a malignant shadow over the global community, and our own society and institutions, will not be resolved until we recognize and re-connect to what we have lost:

- The acquisition of wisdom and the power of discernment;
- Compassionate use of knowledge;
- Integrative ways of knowing and sensing;
- Concern for human and community prosperity and moral action in the world;
- Commitment to ecological sustainability and the acceptance of nature as a sacred dimension of our lives;
- Willingness to engage slowly, around issues of long term consequence;
- Deep awareness of and appreciation for our connection to The Web of Life; and
- The understanding that real learning comes slowly, through the construction of meaning, the recognition of patterns and the creation of relationships.

These attributes of a generative learning paradigm create a framework for a new epistemology, a new pedagogy and a new learning community — all of which offer the possibility to invite the creation of a 'new global mind' — a mind capable of creating a compassionate and sustainable world that works for everyone.

Poised at the juncture of the new millennium, we confront two life-defining challenges:
(1) How to solve the deeply human problems facing us as a global civilization? — problems for which our current system of education does not provide congruent contexts, vibrancy, practices or affirmations;

(2) How to create learning conditions that liberate the goodness and genius of all children? The promise of this time in human evolution, is that by unleashing the unprecedented capacity and power of the human mind and spirit for the world, we set in motion the possibility of inventing a world that works for everyone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Stephanie Pace Marshall <marshall@imsa.edu> is the founding President of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora, IL, USA. Stephanie has served as the President of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development International. She was instrumental in establishing the National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science and Technology, and served as its founding President for two years. She is a member of the State of the World Forum, the 21st Century Learning Initiative, and a Fellow in the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce in London, England.

Envisioning Learning Societies Across Multiple Dimensions

John McClellan

The development of learning societies is the issue of issues of the 21st century. Every social issue — such as poverty, peace, justice, development, the environment — will necessarily require collective learning for solution. The better we understand the process of collective learning the more able will we be to address our collective problems. Collective learning about collective learning is high-order learning and should be our first priority.

The collective meta-cognitive task will be aided by clarification of concepts and terms about the learning society and collective learning. The phrase "learning society" is used differently by different thinkers. In a related domain, the term "organizational learning" has been defined in so many different ways that discussion sometimes becomes blurred as different participants think they are talking about the same thing when they are not.[1] In an effort to avoid confounding different conceptions of learning societies, it would help to identify characteristics or dimensions that distinguish varieties of learning societies. Here I will suggest two such dimensions.

CONCEPTIONS OF A LEARNING SOCIETY ON THE INDIVIDUAL—SUPRA-INDIVIDUAL DIMENSION

One dimension by which conceptions of the learning society may be classified is by the degree to which a learning society refers to learning that involves a) changes in individuals, and b) changes in something supra-individual. When we speak of "learning" we are usually referring to individual learning, a change in what I called the "individual lesson set," a change in a learner's personal knowledge, behaviors, thinking, and feeling. Most of the discussion of the learning society refers to the expansion of such individual learning. Typically it envisions a society in which members are literate, numerate, and actively engaged in learning throughout their lives. Most people would agree with the value of such a learning society, one in which learners are actively engaged in improving their individual lesson sets.

Learners, however, are not isolated; they are social. Learners compare their lessons, and as more and more individuals change their individual lesson sets there is the possibility of changing something supra-individual[2] , of changing what I call the "shared lesson set." By "shared lesson set" I mean the learnings a group shares – its shared knowledge and shared ways of acting, thinking, feeling, and communicating. It includes shared technologies, social structures, mores and worldviews. This shared lesson set is the result of individual learnings, but is supra-individual. It is supra-individual in that it takes on a life of its own, is institutionalized as an on-going feature of the group, is taught to new members, and organizes and forms the action and thoughts of its members.[3] For example, when Copernicus developed his theory that the earth revolved around the sun, there was a change in his individual lesson set, but not of society's. By now, however, his view is taught to almost all young learners and shapes the way they frame their views of reality. When Alexander Graham Bell developed the idea of the telephone, he had expanded his individual lesson set but not the societal shared lesson set. By now, however, the telephone system is embedded in much of the world's shared lesson set and channels the way people communicate. When Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the 19th century saw the inconsistencies between the principles of the United States Constitution and the denial of voting rights to women, her individual lesson set changed, but not her society's. It took sixty years before many

individuals' learning culminated in societal learning, a change in something supra-individual, an amended United States Constitution that henceforth guaranteed women the right to vote.

The shared lesson set houses the activity of individual learners, just as a termite mound houses the lives of dozens of generations of individual termites. But just as the mound is the product of countless individuals' efforts, so is a society's shared lesson set. The relationship between the individual and the shared lesson set is bi-directional. The individual is largely formed by his or her shared lesson set, but the shared lesson set is also the product of the thinking of individual learners. There is an ongoing dialectic of individual learners and shared lesson sets. As individual learners find ways of improving the existing shared lesson set to better fit changing environment realities, or of improving the shared lesson set's internal coherence, at some point those individual learnings become institutionalized in the shared lesson set. At that point we can say that something supra-individual has changed. When the dialectic of individual learners, shared lesson sets, and environing realities gives rise to an improvement in the shared lesson set, we can say collective learning has been achieved.

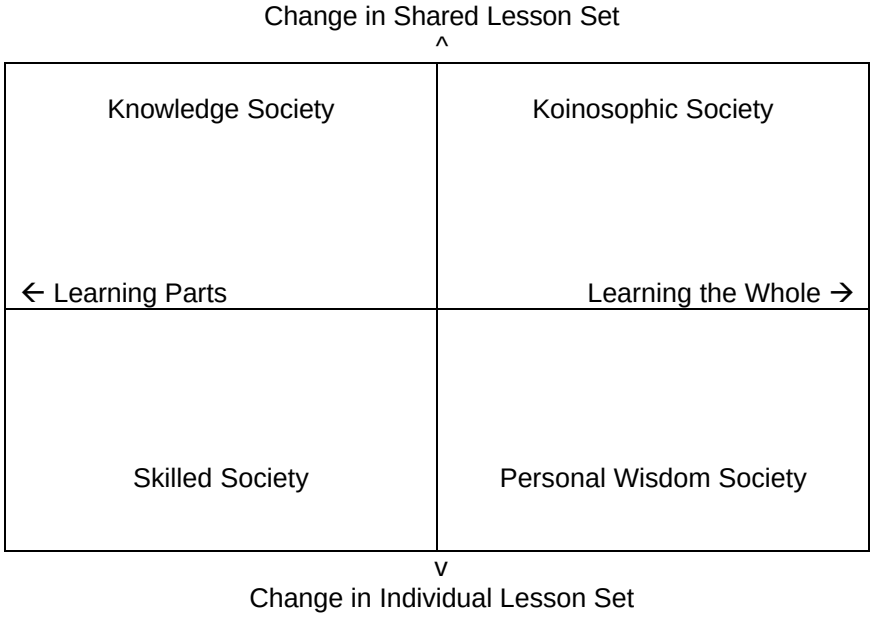
So, there is a second way of thinking of the "learning society," as one that is marked by change in not just individual lesson sets, but also in a society's shared lesson set. This way of conceiving of the learning society is not common, but in my view deserves more attention.

CONCEPTIONS OF THE LEARNING SOCIETY ON THE PARTS-WHOLE DIMENSION

A second dimension that may be used to characterize views of a "learning society" is scope — the degree to which the learning that occurs in a learning society tends to focus on parts or on wholes: a) on fragments of knowledge, or b) on knowledge of the Whole. One common vision of a "learning society" is of one rich with learning about specialized topics, about genes and jeans, quarks and quirks, ozone and e-zines, bits and bots. Today, learners are increasingly rewarded for adding specialized knowledge. This specialization and the proliferation of electronic information are producing an exponential growth in knowledge that offers the prospect of better products, better health, and better lives.

This proliferation of fragmentary learnings may lead some, however, to be anxious about a world in which "the center cannot hold." They may wish for a different sort of learning society, one with emphasis on the integration of the parts into a coherent whole. An emphasis on the whole is akin to an emphasis on wisdom. Wisdom requires both experience and reflection on it. It searches for underlying principles that give value and direction in a wide range of environments in time and space. It is concerned with ends as well as means. My own sense is, however, that the conception of the learning society as a wise society is often orphaned in favor of the seemingly more promising child, instrumental learning about parts.

Four categories of learning societies.



The two dimensions can be put on two axes and combined as shown in Figure 1 to suggest four categories of learning societies. In the lower left quadrant is the sort of learning society in which the emphasis is on individual learning of specialized fragments of knowledge. I call it the "skilled society." Learners improve their "individual lesson sets" by gaining the skills of literacy, numeracy, and of technical or specialized vocations. It is a society of traditional basic education, technical schools, and doctoral dissertations in narrow fields.

In the lower right quadrant is the learning society whose emphasis is on personal learning of the whole. It strives for enriched individual lesson sets that integrate specialized knowledge domains into a personal sense of the whole. It is the society of the "integrated day" curriculum, the liberal arts, monastic and religious education, leadership training for CEOs, and the personal development workshops. I call this the "Personal Wisdom Society."

In the upper left quadrant is the society whose emphasis is on expanding society's shared lesson set about specialized domains. It is the society of science, technical research and development, specialized journals, academic disciplines, the Internet, intellectual capital (Stewert, 1999), and the International Monetary Fund.

The final quadrant's emphasis is on maturing society's shared lesson set to yield a coherent sense of the whole. It seeks to integrate the disparate knowledge contained in its members' individual lesson sets, to reflect self-critically on diverse experiences and search for unifying principles that give guidance over time and in a wide variety of circumstances. It is a society that grows in collective wisdom. I call this the "koinosophic society," coined from the Greek "koinos," or "common,' and "Sophia," for "wisdom."

Ultimate wisdom would be knowledge of the Whole. But that is beyond the practical expectation of an individual. Hence the need for sharing our individual wisdom. Wisdom depends on experience, but each person's experience is limited. To increase our range of experience, we

must share. Wisdom requires reflection, but each individual's reflections are constrained by his/her existing lesson set. Collective reflection can help transcend those constraints. Wisdom's knowledge is textured and complex, able to fit in a wide range of environments; collective lesson-sets are more textured than individuals' lesson sets. Wisdom gives birth to compassion, and that is called forth when all can voice their stories and listen to those of others. Wisdom finds principles undergirding particulars, and those principles grow more universal as they are tested by more particulars. No individual can be expected to find wisdom's guidance alone; individuals need the wisdom distilled from generations. A koinosophic society increases its wisdom by the continual reflection on and integration of its shared lesson set.

The koinosophic society should not be understood to exist independent of the other forms of learning society. It functions on the lessons of the skilled society, calls on the insights of the personal wisdom society, and benefits from the efficacy of the knowledge society. What the koinosophic society does is to integrate those into a more meaningful whole.

YOUR VISION OF A LEARNING SOCIETY IN 2000 AND 2100

The four categories of learning society I have described are of course just ideal types. A real society is likely to incorporate elements of each. But the difference in emphasis between different actual societies differs substantially. And there is likely to be substantial difference in emphasis among those of us discussing what a learning society should look like.

We can use the two-dimensional grid to outline the relative amount of space given to the four quadrants. For example, in Figure 2, I have charted a rough outline of what I see as the relative emphasis given the four quadrants by the current global society taken as a whole. (I am certain others would draw a different configuration.) Learning is limited and weighted toward individual skills. In figure 3, I have outlined the relative emphasis I would like to see the world achieve by the year 2100, with expanded collective learning.

Figure 2 – The global learning society in 2000:

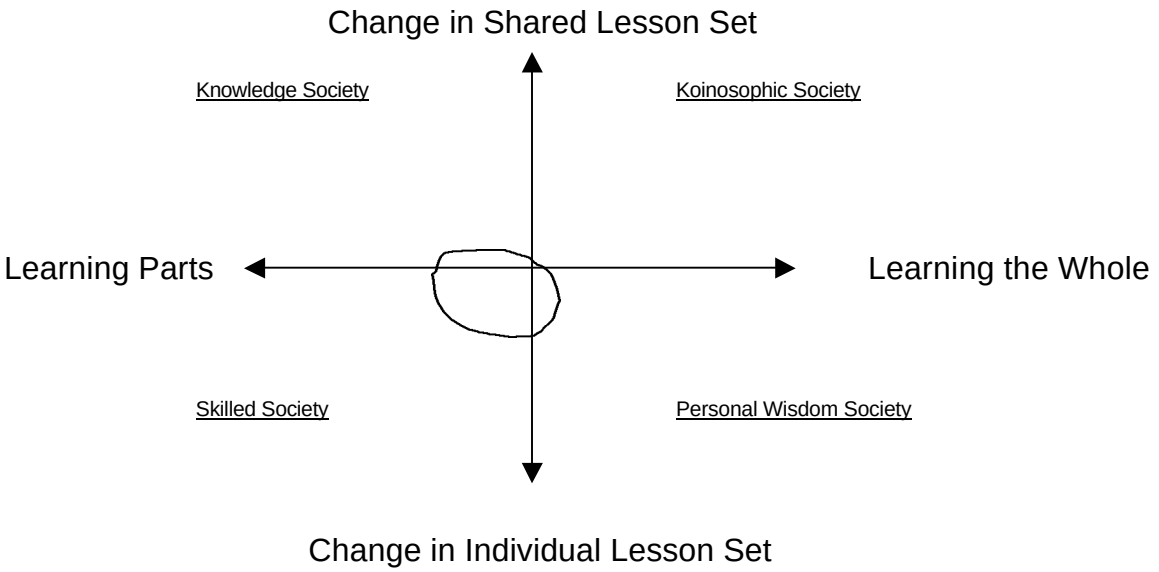
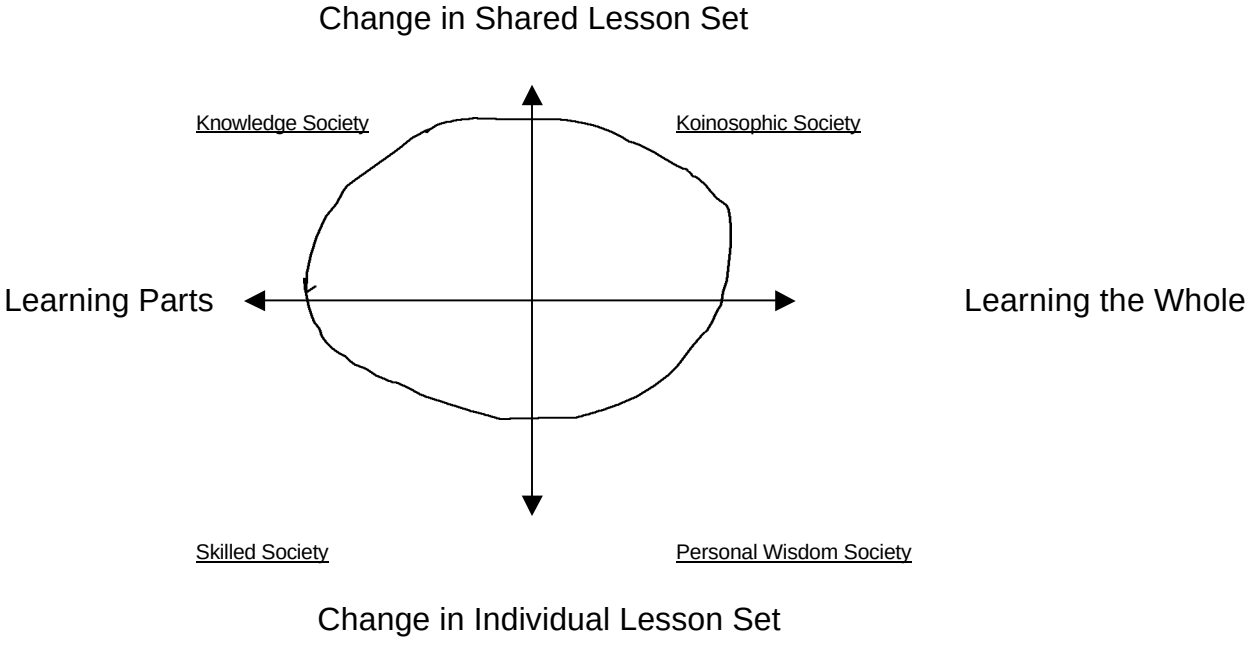
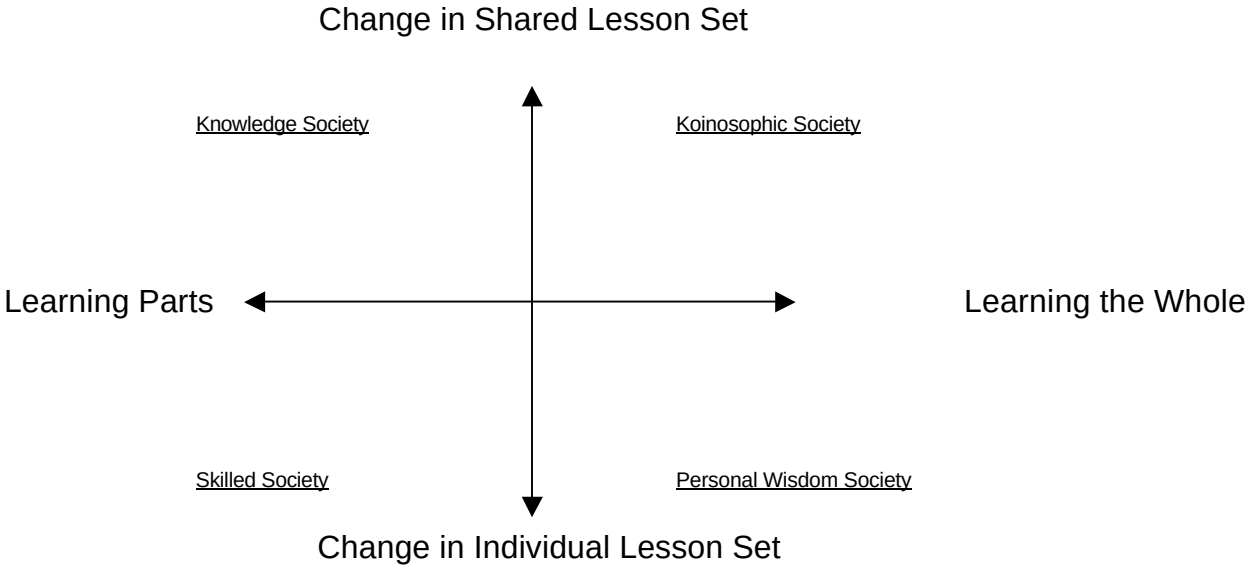


Figure 3– My global learning society in 2100:



You might find it helpful to sketch similar outlines on Figure 4. First, be clear about what "society" you are describing. This scheme can apply to groups as small as families and as large as the world. You might, for example, focus on your community as a learning society. Second, draw an outline of where that society currently fits on the grid. How much or little of each of the four quadrants is included? Third, draw an outline of your learning society as you would like it to be in the year 2100. To what extent would it include elements of the four societies? Fourth, what do the differences in the two configurations suggest needs to be done to achieve your desired society?

Figure 4– Draw your learning society, in 2000 and 2100



SOME ELEMENTS IN MY OWN VISION OF A LEARNING SOCIETY

As the differences between Figures 2 and 3 suggest, I would like to see a learning society that expands learning in all quadrants, and moves from primary emphasis on individual learning of skills to a more equal balance of all forms of learning, including koinosophy. I feel that the prevailing emphasis on individual learning ignores the nascent opportunities for collective learning. And the prevailing emphasis on specialized knowledge leaves us with a shortage of people and tools for seeing the whole, for integrating the proliferating parts. As individuals and societies, we have been getting smarter fast. Now we need to grow wise.

There can be many strategies for moving toward a wise society. Clearly, the nature of education would need to be recast. Classrooms will need to shift from teacher-centered, prescriptive, factory schooling to participatory learning communities, with more emphasis on diversity, integration, reflection, innovation, pro-action, co-action, and dialogue. And clearly the exponential growth in compu-nications can be used to integrate the chaotic growth of fragmentary knowledge. But here I have space to describe only one strategy – an increased use of skilled dialogue.

Thinkers from Socrates to David Bohm[4] have recognized the value of dialogue in furthering wisdom. Yet it is remarkable how infrequently it is used well, if at all. In the United States' "argument culture," (Tannen, 1998) habits are adversarial, encouraging debate rather than dialogue. But in debate, learning is limited. The assumption is that there is one right answer – mine – foreclosing exploration of new options. The tone is win-lose, in a cycle of attack and defense that is toxic to mutual learning. People speak but do not listen, missing the potential in the others' ideas.

In contrast, dialogue gives birth to learning, both individual and collective. Participants listen empathetically to others' experience and views, expanding their own individual understandings. They suspend allegiance to their own assumptions and narrow views, in order to develop a more satisfactory view of the whole. In a group engaged in real dialogue, you can almost see an idea being passed from one learner to the next, each adding her own fingerprints to the clay, until a new supra-individual lesson emerges, sculpted not just by individuals but by the whole.

But good dialogue needs careful nurturing. One organization that nurtures dialogue among small groups of citizens is the Study Circles Resource Center. SCRC has developed guidelines that help small groups of community members engage in fruitful face-to-face dialogue, and has a staff expert in training citizens to be organizers and impartial facilitators. SCRC publishes study guides on such topics as racism, violence, education, youth, and urban sprawl. Groups of about eight to twelve community members use these guides for a series of usually four, two-hour sessions. The meetings are led by peers. The process uncovers areas of agreement and common concern. In the first session, participants generate their own rules of dialogic participation and listen to one another's experiences around the focal topic. The second session typically assesses the roots of the problem. The third generates options. And the last looks for action steps for addressing the problem.

In the decade of its work, SCRC has facilitated the participation of tens of thousands of citizens in such study circles. Participants repeatedly describe the process as superior to existing modes of

public debate, not only for the wiser results but also for the sense of community the process engenders. So helpful is the process that more than 120 communities, from a small town in Arkansas to Los Angeles, have been using it for community-wide programs. In these programs, a representative portion of the area's population participate in the small-group study circles, leading toward a sense of the wishes of the community as a whole and to appropriate change in public policy. And in many communities, the process is becoming a habit, used to address a series of community issues. As this process of deliberative, dialogic democracy becomes a lasting component of a community's shared lesson set, the community as a whole can be said to have learned.

But success with study circles doesn't happen by chance. It takes work, support and learning. SCRC itself is an organization, which is constantly learning what works and what does not. It has distilled its lessons in a set of best practices and guidelines for community organizers. While SCRC's efforts have been entirely within the United States, I believe many of its principles may be used fruitfully elsewhere.[5] It is also important to note that dialogue does not require literacy, though it may foster it in meaningful ways.[6] (For more information about study circles, you can visit http://www.studycircles.org or write SCRC at Pomfret, Connecticut, USA, 06258.)

Study circles alone, however, will not assure a koinosophic learning society, because societal learning is necessarily nested. Individual learners participate in many levels of 'societies' — family, school, community, work, nation, etc. An individual cannot tolerate too much dissonance between the shared lesson sets of the various groups in which he participates. If a person tries to import a dialogic process learned in a study circle to an inhospitable work setting, he is likely to give up and return to old habits. This may be one reason for the limited success of efforts at "organizational learning." Some compatibility needs to emerge among the shared lesson sets of different levels of social organization. My own hunch is that learners who want to work toward a koinosophic society have more impact if they start with their own families, schools, and communities, and work up. Societal learning is fractal; it may be wisest to implant the pattern in small units and watch it spread to larger ones.

Those patterns will spread faster, however, if we gain better theoretical understanding of societal learning. Efforts in this direction have been growing for some time. The Club of Rome project, "No Limits to Learning" called for more research on societal learning (Botkin, 1979). Many Universities, especially MIT[7], have been making strides in understanding 'organizational learning'. There are bodies of relevant insight from the study of cultural evolution, knowledge diffusion (Rogers, 1995), knowledge management, mimetics (Blackmore, 1999), social change, history, political science, the philosophy of science, etc. What is needed is integration of those insights. This will require a process of collective learning about collective learning, or what I call 'collective learning squared'. Integrative, cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary organs like the UN and certain non-governmental organizations might be the best sponsors for such learning. The pay-off would be huge – a quantum leap in the ability of our social institutions to learn. In the meantime, we must do what we can to engender dialogue about the learning society — in person, at conferences, and via the Internet.

REFERENCES

Blackmore, Susan, The Meme Machine. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Bohm, David, On Dialogue. London: Routledge, 1996.

Botkin, James W. et al, No Limits to Learning: Bridging the Human Gap. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979.

Friere, Paolo, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Herder, 1970.

Garvin, David A., "Building a Learning Organization," Harvard Business Review on Knowledge Management. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard Business Review Paperback, 1998.

Kroeber, Alfred, Anthropology, 2nd edition. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948.

Kuper, Adam, Culture: The Anthropologists' Account. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Rogers, Everett M., Diffusion of Innovations. 4th edition. New York: Free Press, 1995.

Russell, Peter, The Global Brain: Speculations on the Evolutionary Leap to Planetary Consciousness. Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1983.

Senge, Peter, et al, The Dance of Change: The Challenges to Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations. New York: Currency, 1999.

Stewert, Thomas A., Intellectual Capital: The New Wealth of Organizations. New York: Currency, 1999.

Stock, Gregory, Metaman: The Merging of Humans and Machines into a Global Superorganism. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993.

Tannen, Deborah, The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialog. New York: Random House, 1998.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John McClellan <qv_mcclellan@commnet.edu> has long been interested in societal learning. He did his doctoral dissertation on collective learning, in the Future Studies Program of the University of Massachusetts. He participated peripherally in the Club of Rome "No Limits To Learning" project and contributed to *Global Stakes: The Future of High Technology in America*, by James Botkin, Dan Dimancescu and Ray Stata (Cambridge, Mass: Balinger, 1982). He is professor of computer science at Quinebaug Valley Community College in Danielson, Connecticut, USA, and is interested in distance learning and learning communities. He is a member of the Board of the Topsfield Foundation, the parent organization to the Study Circles Resource Center. He welcomes dialog via email on a new bulletin board at <www.delphi.com/co_learning>.

1) David A. Garvin listed five such definitions in "Building a Learning Organization," *Harvard Business Review*, July – August, 1993. As discussion of "learning organizations" has expanded, so have the ways in which the term is used. Garvin's article is included in *Harvard Business Review on Knowledge Management* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Business Review Paperback, 1998) For a recent compilation on organizational learning, see Peter Senge, Art Kleiner, Charlotte Roberts, Richard Ross, George Roth and Bryan Smith, *The Dance of Change: The Challenges to Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations* (New York: Currency, 1999)·
2) Anthropologists have long wrestled with the question of the superorganic and superindividual nature of culture. See, for instance, Alfred Kroeber, Anthropology, 2nd edition, pp 253-256 (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948) For other views of humanity as superorganism, see Gregory Stock, Metaman: The Merging of Humans and Machines into a Global Superorganism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993); and Peter Russell, The Global Brain: Speculations on the Evolutionary Leap to Planetary Consciousness (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1983).
3) I use "shared lesson set" instead of "culture" because "culture" has been used in so many different ways. Adam Kuper in *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999) lists two dozen definitions of culture given by anthropologists alone.
4) David Bohm, *On Dialogue*, edited by Lee Nichol (London: Routledge, 1996) See also William Isaacs, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together: A Pioneering Approach to Communicating in Business and in Life* (New York: Currency, 1999); Daniel Yankelovich, *The Magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict into Cooperation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999); John L. Locke, *The De-Voicing of Society: Why We Don't Talk to Each Other Anymore* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998) and Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard, *Dialogue: Rediscovering the Transforming Power of Conversation* (New York: John Wiley, 1998).
5) For a history of study circles including their wide use in Sweden," see <http://studycircles.org/pages/what.html#hist
6) The liberating use of dialog has been described by Paolo Friere in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated from the Portugese by Myra Brgman Ramos (New York: Herder, 1970)
7) See the Society for Organizational Learning, Inc at <http://www.learning.mit.edu/ >

Lifelong Learning and Learning Communities: A Vision for the Future

Norman Longworth

1. Lifelong Learning is suddenly big news. Why?

One reason is that many governments around the world are publishing strategies and papers as a demonstration of their commitment to developing a new approach to Education and Training for the economy and society for the 21st century. Momentum is building up for new Lifelong Learning approaches in all aspects of society, and not just formal education, in anticipation of the challenges to nations, organisations, communities and individuals in the next millennium.

Yet another reason is because just about all the major world organisations — from UNESCO to International Corporations, OECD, the European Commission — are developing plans to introduce Lifelong Learning within their spheres of influence. And it isn't just at the international level — local organisations, local governments, local schools, local businesses are beginning to focus on Lifelong Learning.

This thing is big — it's going to influence everyone of us, our children and our childrens' children over the next century, wherever we are on this shrinking planet. And we are just at the beginning of the process. It's an exciting time.

2. What's really different about the world today?

A new millennium is a time to take stock of the changing world. As a race we are slowly but surely coming to terms with the fact that this planet is finite - that we cannot continue to exploit its mineral wealth, its food resources in land and sea, and change its natural life-sustaining ecosystems without threatening our very existence. And with an expected 5 billion new members of the human race in the next 50 years, learning to adapt has got to play a large part in the future for all of us. These environmental imperatives emphasize a crucial need to educate continually all the world's people as a basis for the survival of species on earth.

Ever since the 'No Limits to Learning' report in the 1980s, which in its time was seminal, major global political and social upheavals have changed the nature of work, life, leisure and learning. Education, like many other sectors of society, is going through a paradigm change in favour of putting the focus on 'Learning' and how it can unlock the enormous potential of each individual human being. Among the many current and future issues contributing to this change and increasing the urgency for a lifelong learning approach are:

A. *The explosion of information and knowledge through the application of Science and Technology*, on the one hand offering a variety of new opportunities for organisational and personal growth and on the other stimulating a questioning of basic values. Both of these have important implications for Lifelong Learning. At one level, Science and Technology has helped to improve material standards of living in many parts of the world. It has multiplied manyfold the information and knowledge available to us and

transformed our way of living, working and communicating. At the same time the speed at which these changes have taken place has outstripped the capacity of many people to cope easily with it. The wealth of information and the technology of handling it has, paradoxically, made possible greater personal decision making, and, through its sheer volume, reduced the likelihood of this being informed and balanced. The skills of information-handling, problem-solving, reflecting and thinking, self-learning, cooperating, and entrepreneurship are part of the new basics to create personal empowerment.

B. *The need to come to terms with fundamental global demographics* — in the West and Japan, ageing, more mobile, more multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies which could release high inter-racial and inter-generational social tensions and a reduced investment in welfare programmes through a fall in the working, and an increase in the retired, populations. By contrast, in the poorer parts of the world, a massive population growth perhaps destined to live at subsistence level and below unless ameliorative projects are initiated. To avoid the worst effects of both these scenarios, a high emphasis will need to be put on fundamental lifelong learning principles and a use of the new development and delivery technologies.

These two, and many other issues connected with change — globalisation, industrial restructuring, the Internet, bio-genetics — are of great relevance to everyone and to all organisations, urging a strong case to make Lifelong Learning the central unifying theme of any Industry's, Government's or Education Organisation's strategy for the future. The next century will have to be the 'Learning Century' because, unless it becomes just that, the alternative is more and more unhappiness, social disorder, deprivation, poverty and a breakdown of democratic structures.

3. It's evident that change is important but how do you get these imperatives over? Change and Learning aren't the most popular words in many peoples' vocabularies. That's true and that's why this is going to take time. We need 20-20 vision. Lifelong Learning has profound implications for all parts of the system — not just the education systems in the schools, colleges and universities, but also the social, political, economic and cultural systems we have built up in our societies. I believe that the age of Education and Training is dead and that the future focus has to be converted into a new era of Learning, in which, information has to be shared with all people, in the ways in which they want to interact with it — integral to communities, not separated from them.

But in order for that to happen, the Education Providers at all levels have to start focusing on the needs of people as learners — finding out why, when, what and how people prefer to learn, discovering new learning methods, identifying the basic skills which people need in order to learn better individually, in groups and in families - using the modern education delivery technologies and tools to provide new learning for people wherever they want to receive it.

4. Are Education Providers ready for this?
There are pockets of good practice around — there are one or two schools for example which are developing continuous learning and personal skills updating programmes for their teachers so that they can respond better to their own learning needs and those of children. Some universities are widening their intakes and modifying their courses to become responsive to the needs of a much more poly-accessible educational world from industry and the community around.

But, perhaps surprisingly, the greatest breakthroughs have come in Industry Human Resource Departments, and we can all learn from this. Here, there is a much greater take-up of the tools and techniques of the new technologies and a much greater democratisation of the learning process. This is because modern companies have realised that their strength and their future lies in the performance of their people and that the development of individual skills and values is the most important thing they can do to survive in a competitive world. Many companies have taken a deliberate step to 'empower' their workforce: to put decision-making in the hands of those do the work. This creates a whole new set of learning needs among adults, which leads right back into challenging conventional schoolroom practices.

However, it has to be said too, that for the majority of Education Providers, there is still a long way to go. Urged by Governments looking for measurable results, they are providing an industrial age education for a post-industrial environment. The emphasis is still on easily-examined information-giving and memorisation rather than creating knowledge, high-order skills, understanding and values - teaching what to think and commit to memory, rather than how to think and how to discriminate between good, bad and indifferent. In an age in which information doubles every 5 years and then feeds upon itself to produce new knowledge, this is utter nonsense.

5. What's the role of Government in a Lifelong Learning World?
Government has financial levers and uses them to get its own way. That's why there is a need for mind-set change (if the first part of the word can be located) in all parts of the system. Government has an important part to play in understanding and creating the conditions for a true Lifelong Learning Society so that both the nation and the people prosper economically and mentally.

There is a very strong correlation between the economic health of a nation and the learning health of its citizens. But Government must base its actions on research and understanding of the true need for everyone, rather than ill-considered political dogma or reactionary prejudices nurtured in an elitist past. If, for example, we use a failure-oriented examination system, that is one which creates failure in some in order to celebrate success in others, we can expect to take the consequences of coping with those who fail. Sure, successful learning must be celebrated and rewarded, but let's make it possible for everybody, or as many as possible, to participate in the fun of success. Nor is there any advantage to be gained from starving teachers and schools of the mental and physical resources and values they need to succeed, and then claiming that they are failing the children.

But although Governments can pontificate, International Governmental Organisations can prescribe and Universities can produce research papers for other researchers to read, the place where the lifelong learning revolution is going to happen is in the cities, towns and villages of every nation. The skills, talents, knowledge and values of real people are developed in real Learning Communities.

6. Learning Communities?

Yes — that is one working vision for the future. These are communities in which business and industries, schools, colleges, universities, professional organisations and local governments cooperate closely into making it a physically, economically, culturally and mentally pleasant place to live;

- from which no-one is excluded from learning and in which learning is an enjoyable and rewarding thing to do;
- which encourages all its resources, especially its human resources, talents, skills and knowledge, to be made available to all;
- which uses modern communications technology to look outwards to the rest of the world and encourages its citizens to do likewise;
- which encourages its citizens to develop personal learning plans and to use guides and mentors to develop their knowledge and skills;
- which mobilises special interest groups - birdwatchers, botanists, scouts, guides, church groups and the many informal organisations in which people congregate - in the monitoring and preservation of a sustainable environment;
- which celebrates learning frequently, and encourages whole families to participate.

This may be a learning utopia — an impossible dream. But already some cities — Southampton in England, Edmonton in Canada, Udaipur in India, Kakegawa in Japan — are taking the first steps towards the dream and declaring themselves to be 'Cities of Learning.' There are others in the world setting up similar initiatives, and it is not impossible to imagine, soon into this millennium, a new world of linked Communities of Learning in which knowledge and expertise and talent are shared with each other through electronic links between 3rd age citizens, school children in their studies, universities in their research activities, companies for trade, and hospitals for medical assistance.

7. How are you going to satisfy all the new learners?

That's where the new technologies come in. They're not very well-developed at present and resistance is high in schools, universities and elsewhere. But there is a promising future and they are becoming ever more sophisticated in what they can do to help learning. I have already mentioned the vision of a new world of linked Communities of Learning using available-now communications technologies like the Internet.

But there are many other tools and techniques in the Open Learning universe, which utilize a mixture of sound, text, vision, graphics, motion picture to stimulate diverse learning processes. The trick is to develop ever-more creative uses of these media, both within and between communities.

For example, the Lifelong Learning University of the future will use modern open and distance learning technologies to provide services for Continuing Education in Industry and Government Offices, support for teachers in schools, extension courses for adults wherever they may be — in the shopping centres, the pubs, the home. They will use all the media at their disposal — television, local radio, satellite, cable, ISDN networks and the Internet — to make learning the number one activity in each community. They will interact internationally to open up both learning opportunities and minds, and make research more applicable to those on whose behalf it is carried out.

Schools will also be able to make an extensive use of new technologies in the following ways:

- teachers will develop and teach collaboratively common curricula between schools in the community and internationally. Children will learn collaboratively with children from other cultures, regions, countries;
- schools will build up their own geographical, historical and biological databases and share them with others;
- children will access different databases, stimulating communities to enliven and enhance their collective learning;
- children and teachers will participate in joint project work with community associations and businesses;
- language teaching will be given a new dimension through interpersonal contacts around the world.

The possibilities to use learning technologies creatively are endless; the opportunities to liberate minds and mind-sets, trapped in Education and Training, are abundant. And all of this will contribute to the development of the potential inherent in every one of us. This is what I mean by Lifelong Learning. But it won't happen this year or next year, or even by 2010. This is a process which will take at least 50 years and, in some countries, much longer. We have the means to make it happen. Do we have the will, the vision and the staying power to make the 21st Century really 'The Learning Century?'

REFERENCES (SELECTED)

Ball, C. and Stewart, D., An Action Agenda for Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century. Report from the 1st Global Conference on Lifelong Learning, N Longworth (ed), Brussels: World Initiative on Lifelong Learning, 1995.

Botkin, J. et al, No Limits to Learning: Report of the Club of Rome. New York, 1979.

Cochinaux, P. and De Woot, P., Moving Towards a Learning Society, A Forum Report by European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) with Conference of European Rectors (CRE). Brussels, 1995.

Department for Education and Employment, The Learning Age, A Renaissance for a New Britain (Green Paper on Lifelong Learning). Sudbury: DfEE Publications Centre, 1998.

European Round Table of Industrialists, Investing in Knowledge, Towards the Learning Society. Brussels: ERT, 1996.

European Round Table of Industrialists, European Approaches to Lifelong Learning. Brussels: ERT Education Policy Group, 1992.

Finland Ministry of Education, The Joy of Learning, A National Strategy for Lifelong Learning, Committee Report 14. Helsinki, 1997.

Kent County Council, Kent Learning: Our Future 1996-2006. Canterbury: Kent County Council, 1996.

Longworth, N., The Woodberry Down School/IBM Basinghall Street Twinning Scheme. London: IBM United Kingdom Ltd, 1980.

Longworth, N., "Lifelong Learning and the Community - Relations with Business and Industry, Towards a Holistic Mission," New Papers on Higher Education, no. 6. Paris: UNESCO, 1994.

Longworth, N. and Davies, W. K., Lifelong Learning: New Visions, New Implications, New Roles - for Industry, Government, Education and the Community for the 21st Century. London: Kogan Page, 1996.

Longworth, N. and De Geest, L. (eds), Community Action for Lifelong Learning for Developing Human Potential, Part 2 of Report of First Global Conference on Lifelong Learning. Rome, Brussels: World Initiative on Lifelong Learning, 1995.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Lifelong Learning for All – meeting of the Education Committee at Ministerial Level. Paris: OECD/CERI, 1996.

Scottish Office, Opportunity Scotland, Green Paper on Lifelong Learning. Edinburgh: Stationery Office, 1998.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Norman Longworth <Norman_Longworth@csi.com> is the former holder of the IBM/UNESCO Chair in Education and Information Technology and Visiting Professor to Napier University Edinburgh, and to Sheffield Hallam University where he is Consultant Professor to the recently opened 'Centre for the Learning City and Learning Region.' In the past he has worked in schools, in Industry and in Universities. He is a former President of the European Lifelong Learning Initiative and of the World Initiative on Lifelong Learning. He is also a Lifelong Learning Consultant to the European

Commission Socrates Programme and other organisations, and the author of ‘Lifelong Learning’ and ‘Making Lifelong Learning Work - Learning Cities for a Learning Century’ (www.kogan-page.com) which explains ways by which cities and towns can develop into ‘Cities and Towns of Learning’.

A Search for Meaning:Udaipur as a Learning City

Vidhi and Manav

"Looking outwards without the capacity to look inwards creates competition, aggression, exploitation of nature and people, violence and insecurity. It globalizes commerce and trade, not human consciousness. It creates exclusiveness rather than inclusiveness. A philosophy of inclusion can only emerge from a philosophy of intrinsic worth and self organization- from the individual to the community (city) to the nation to the world ... it is the foundation for building an Earth Democracy."

Vandana Shiva, Rebuilding an Earth Democracy

WHY DO WE NEED UDAIPUR AS A LEARNING CITY?

In most cities around the world, we see phenomenal levels of violence, corruption, pollution, disease, consumerism, disparity, individualism, selfishness, aggressiveness, suicides, etc. Rural villagers, who are forced to migrate to the city or those who already inhabit urban slums, are often blamed for, or seen as the roots of, these problems in India, and so the solution most often prescribed is that these villagers need more education. There is little desire to explore how the dominant vision of Development, the overall set-up of the city, or the mind-set of the 'well-schooled' contribute to the growth of the above-mentioned problems. Nor is their much desire to explore how solutions can grow from their own local context, especially as our leaders are conditioned to look towards the West for all the answers.

'Udaipur as a Learning City' grows out of a desire to address the problems inherent in modern urban living. These problems are experienced not only by those living in the city, but also by those living in nearby villages, on which the parasitic city feeds. This process also grows out of our personal desires to live a more meaningful life and to discover and create alternatives to schooling for ourselves and our children.

Our starting point for 'Udaipur as a Learning City' was therefore a bit different. We decided to explore the mind-set of the middle-class people of all ages, particularly youth, living in Udaipur. Over the course of several conversations, several common statements began to emerge, which are important to analyze more deeply:

- *"Why should we think about the development of Udaipur? It is not our responsibility; we are responsible only for our families and ourselves. This is a job for the government or for NGOs."*
- *"We have never had the opportunity to think about our capacities or about our talents in our schools."*
- *"The TV is spoiling our children and we don't know what to do about it."*
- *"We need to take more resources from the villages. How else will we survive?"*
- *"We see no future in Udaipur. There is nothing here. We will have to move to Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore for real opportunities."*
- *"Even if we wanted to get involved in improving the city, we don't know where to go."*

The more we spoke to people, the more we realized that if we wanted to address the problems Udaipur is facing, and if we wanted to prevent future ecological and social catastrophe, we needed to provoke and stimulate these 'educated' mind-sets. We also realized that there was quite a lot that people (including ourselves) did not know about the city or about the rapidly-disappearing larger region of Mewar — which we needed to understand if we were genuinely interested in regenerating Udaipur in creativity ways. We realized that there was a need to look at the city in a more holistic way (beyond isolated interests, disciplines, and sectors) and to create spaces and media for more genuine dialogue about the city between different individuals, groups, and communities in the city. Lastly, we realized that we will have to re-negotiate vital relationships between Udaipur and the surrounding villages, between Udaipur and the institutions of the nation-state, and between Udaipur and the forces of Globalization.

In this article, we will first elaborate our growing concept of Udaipur as a Learning City. We will then describe some of the interesting initiatives that are taking shape. Lastly, we will present our reflections on the overall process to-date and some of the challenges we are facing.

WHAT IS UDAIPUR AS A LEARNING CITY?

Though much has been written about Learning Cities, the movement is still in its nascent stages – both conceptually and operationally. Several experiments of Learning Cities are evolving in different parts of the world (primarily in industrialized countries). We have a lot to learn from these experiences, but we also have much to learn from our own Indian philosopher-activists. We are particularly interested in exploring how to give new shape and meaning to Gandhiji's and Tagore's concept of *Swaraj* (rule over oneself) in the urban context. In this context, we believe that it is important to highlight the following process-goals in Udaipur:

- Appreciating and nurturing the vast potentials and creativities of each human being and of different communities.
- Building new relationships between people and regenerating feelings of a caring city.
- Challenging and questioning dehumanizing, destructive and exploitative forces/institutions/systems/attitudes.
- Developing creative shared visions and actions for different kinds of development and counter-Development.

We see 'learning' as the key to re-establishing our human potential, dignity, compassion and *Swaraj*. For this to happen, *the concept of learning must be seen beyond what happens in isolated spaces like schools, training workshops, and literacy courses.* Rather, we believe that we must explore and re-value processes of reflecting, celebrating, playing, working, creating, knowledge construction, meaning-making, and sharing. These processes emerge from dynamic interactions in informal spaces, such as the family and extended families, neighborhood and peer groups, cultural and religious groups, work environments and professional associations, natural and recreational spots, media and other socio-cultural environments. It is interesting to note that Udaipur used to be known as an Education City, because it is home to many schools and colleges, which sprouted

up in the 1940s and 1950s. We think that it is important that we shift from an Education City to a Learning City. *(See the table next)*

EDUCATION/SCHOOLING CITY	LEARNING CITY
Based on notions of human capital and survival of the fittest mentality	Based on the faith and belief in human potential, human spirit and liberation
Education is only for degrees, jobs and money-making	Lifelong learning for meaning-making, creating, understanding and practical doing
Visions and notions of 'development', 'success' and 'progress' pre-defined by a select few	People engage in creating self and collective visions for development, while challenging and rejecting unjust notions of Development
Focuses on fitting the learner into the mainstream system	Facilitates the creation and regeneration of meaningful and just systems/communities
Teaching, transmitting and memorizing information	Learning, understanding, constructing knowledge and connecting knowledge to wisdom
Individualistic, selfish interests and competitive	Collaborative, giving, sharing and nurturing for the good of all
Disconnects learners from their local communities	Facilitates deeper connections among and between local communities
Discovers and values the potential of only a few	Discovers and develops the hidden potential of all
Reinforces and creates new hierarchies and inequalities	Challenges and breaks down hierarchies and builds more equitable relationships
Mechanistic planning and implementation	Organically evolves and is actualized by the people
Usually an imposed Government initiative in which the roles of the Government, NGOs and citizens are predefined and static	Emerges as a Citizens' Initiative which grows from the interests, intrinsic motivation and actual needs of the people. Citizens' roles evolve and keep changing with processes of continuous self-reflection/creativity/ dialogue
Schools and colleges are factories and institutions of thought control	Schools and colleges are learning communities
Responsibility of defining education lies in the school's hands	Responsibility for learning lies with oneself and the community
Education is seen to only take place in schools and colleges	Learning is understood to take place everywhere and these other spaces are valued
The only teachers are in schools	Everyone is a teacher and a learner

We firmly believe 'what' and 'how' Udaipur should look like as a Learning City is for the people of Udaipur to jointly dream about and create. Thus, we see it more as a 'process-project,' which is organically unfolding, based on the interests, *parampara* (dynamic tradition), ideas, aspirations and the intrinsic motivation of local citizens of Udaipur and not by any forced and target-oriented, linear, time-bound plans.

EMERGING ACTIVITIES

For the past 7 months, we have been consulting several groups of concerned citizens of Udaipur, including teachers, artists, media persons, businessmen, city administrators,

doctors, youth, children, parents and others, to get their ideas about how they see the city and how they might like to be involved in this process-project. With them, we have been trying to explore questions such as:

- What is the historical basis for Udaipur's formation and growth?
- What are the main problems, inequities and challenges confronting people of the city, and what are their aspirations for the future generations?
- What are the attitudes of various individuals/communities about teaching and learning?
- What formal and informal learning spaces, institutions, knowledge systems, languages, art forms and relationships exist within the city? What learning experiments have been tried in the past?
- What dynamic organizations and individuals exist who believe in and are committed to support processes of societal learning? Who are the groups who might resist this process?

Based on this, we have been able to nurture several friendships with different individuals and organizations. From these friendships, we have begun a process of individual and shared vision-building around the meaning and practice of 'Udaipur as a Learning City'. Vision-building should never be seen an end task or final state in itself, but rather should be viewed as growing from dynamic processes of action, reflection and dialogue. Also from these friendships, several activities have started to emerge. These activities have also been designed to be 'invitational,' in nature in order to attract and involve more people into the process. Some of these activities include:

1. **Identifying and Connecting Learning Sources:** *These activities seek to re-discover, re-value and regenerate the hidden potential of local citizens and re-connect this vast potential back to the future of the city.*
   a) *A Learning Resource Directory* called *'Aaiye Udaipur Se Seekhain'* is being generated to identify various knowledges, skills, and wisdoms that exist within the people of Udaipur. The directory will feature those who wish to voluntarily share their talents with other people in the city.
   b) *A Study of Environment and Environmental Groups in Udaipur* is being carried out to highlight the environmental problems the city is facing and to identify those groups which are working on these problems. From this study, we will try to involve youth and other groups to think about environmental concerns and to get them involved with local organizations in order to do something to alleviate these problems.
   c) *A Study of Mewari Language Writers, Stories and Songs* is to identify and appreciate the vast culture of Udaipur that is embedded in *Mewari*. Like most local dialects, *Mewari* is also on the verge of extinction, because very few 'educated' people have respect for it. There is immense potential for regenerating our creative expression if Mewari is re-valued.
   d) *A Study on the Spiritual Dimensions of Udaipur* is to understand the various aspects of spirituality in our day-to-day life in Udaipur. In the initial stage of this process, we are identifying and having discussions with various spiritual and religious groups and individuals. We hope to bring these groups together on a common platform in order to prevent religious hatred and violence.

2. **Self-Organizing Learning Communities:** *These activities seek to encourage individuals who wish to reflect on themselves, the larger contexts they live in, and issues of common concern, to come together in various dialogical spaces.*
   a) *Platform for Youth* is an informal space for local youth to share and develop their ideas, views, action plans, visions of life, inner expressions, and critical thinking power. Although thousands of youth organizations are working all around India, youth are rarely involved in the conceptualization or decision-making processes of these organizations. Platform offers youth the opportunity to make decisions, define and design projects of their interest, indulge in creative activities, and develop their visions of life and of the city.
   b) *Teachers' Action Group* is an informal group teachers and learning facilitators concerned with educational transformation. They meet to discuss new ideas and innovations from around the world and to share their experiences. This group started after several teachers in Udaipur participated in an international study, called 'Qualities of an Educated Teenager for the 21st Century'.
   c) *NGO Young Peoples' Forum* is organized by people from different backgrounds working in the voluntary sector who wish to share their experiences and reflect on different issues around local and global development. It seeks to build new kinds of collaborations among young NGO workers across organizations and across sectors.
   d) *African Forum* is initiated by several African students who are studying in Udaipur. They discuss various issues like education, poverty, media, democracy, and the implications for rethinking development in Africa. They also publish a bimonthly bulletin 21st Century Africa through which they document and share their reflections.

3. **Community Reflections/Dialogues:** *These activities seek to generate different public forums, media and meetings to discuss the development of the city. These spaces will facilitate critical analysis and diverse modes of expression to build confidence at individual and collective levels.*
   a) *Community Media* is intended to bring media back into the hands of people and to stimulate critical thinking, creativity and self-expression. The *Lok Bhitti Patra* (Peoples' Wall Paper) seeks to encourage individuals to share their thoughts, experiences, ideas and reflections with others in their community. The *Yuva Ahsas* (Youth Feeling) Street Theatre was initiated by a group of youth who felt the need to understand themselves and their surroundings more deeply, and to invite other youth to start thinking with them about problems facing youth. These youth have written their own street play and are performing it in schools in Udaipur.
   b) *Public Discussions,* for example, on the "Public Report on Basic Education" and " Big Dams, Big Bombs and Big Schools" have been organized to bring together people from different disciplines and backgrounds to dialogue about issues of concern for the future of the city.
   c) *Surveys* on various topics, such as *Dost Banao* (An Invitation for Friendship) with youth, 'Qualities of an Educated Teenager for the 21st Century' with teachers,

and 'Violence in Schools' with various community members, have been conducted to generate dialogue and action.

d) Public Exhibitions, such as on the Meaning of Creativity, have been organized in order to draw public attention to key areas for regenerating the city.

4. **Unlearning/Learning Workshops and Seminars for Learning Activists:** *These activities seek to generate a dynamic intergenerational groups of local learning activists who are interested in creating meaningful learning spaces and opportunities for themselves and in re-activating other peoples' love for learning.*

   a) Learning Workshops, such as 'Art and Creativity Workshops' have been organized for budding young artists, ages 8 to 15, to give the children the opportunity to understand and discover their creative potential and strengthen their self-confidence. Additional workshops in puppetry, music, handicrafts are being planned with community collaboration.

   b) Learning to Learn for the 21st Century was organized with teacher trainers and Bachelors of Education students to challenge existing ideas about learning, education and development.

   c) A workshop on *Mindmapping* was organized for people of different ages to elaborate various techniques of creative thinking, problem solving, and brain storming on the visual elements of mind. A workshop on *Developing Facilitation Skills* was organized for youth to understand how to lead a participatory meeting, discussion or a workshop.

5. **Regenerating Learning Spaces:** *These activities seek to create self-evolving spaces which promote a process of rethinking education and encourage intergenerational learning around local knowledge, language, culture and wisdom.*

   a) Learning Parks are being envisioned and developed in different areas with the support of local communities, particularly led by young children and youth. These parks will utilize a range of traditional and modern media.

SOME OF OUR REFLECTIONS AND CHALLENGES

Through our various methods of *samvaad* (on-going processes of deep dialogue that involve sharing and trust-building), we have learned that very few school-educated people really want to engage in understanding the true meaning of 'learning'. Most find it difficult to perceive the difference between learning and schooling. They are too caught up in the transmission- based and surface-learning processes that are practiced and taught in school. Only a handful of middle class people have indicated that they want to engage in new learning experiences or do something more creative and transforming. For the same reason, they find it difficult to grasp why Udaipur should become a Learning City and not a Green City, a Cyber City or a Marble City.

Over the past few months, we have also learnt that most people, be they teachers, city planners or peoples' representatives, do not understand what is a **vision** *(*or *drishti)*. There also seems to be a lot of confusion about why we need a vision for anything, be it for our lives or for a project. Most people (be they young or old) have been conditioned

to believe that all projects come with pre-planned visions and models and that meaningful peoples' initiatives — connected with peoples' shared visions/dreams about the city — are worthless. The majority of people are comfortable simply copying activities, plans and models without daring to imagine or go off the beaten path.

It has also become very clear from our interactions that most of the people are deeply conditioned to believing that all 'good' and 'bad' in the city is due to the Government and the Politicians. Therefore, whatever needs to be done for the city will have to come from the Government, as it is its duty to think about the problems facing the city. At the same time, quite a few people were blatantly adamant in saying that the common people of Udaipur are not capable of thinking for themselves. Very few people felt that voluntary 'people-led' initiatives could work. This throws light on the low levels of self-confidence and high levels of dependency that most educated people have, and how they rationalize their apathy and try to escape thinking about their personal responsibilities and roles. Our present self-centered and mechanical lifestyles also do not encourage people to explore and engage in the different realities or opportunities that exist in the city.

Though a large number of youth have been conditioned and compelled to be a part of the present competitive and dehumanizing rat-race — running behind endless amounts of money and glamour — nonetheless, we believe that their tremendous energy and spirit can be channeled into self-transforming and regenerative processes. **Our hope truly lies in them and with them.** In interacting with the youth and some younger children, we have seen that they really want to do new, exciting things, but they are usually bogged down with many academic and family pressures. They do not know how to overcome the problems of time shortage and of a lack of encouragement from their peers and families. Therefore, we need open up more motivating spaces for youth, by strengthening opportunities for dialogue between youth and their families, peers, and teachers.

The retired people have also indicated strong interest in doing something for the city. They feel that their involvement in this process-project could provide them with a platform and also some direction on how they could share their ideas and experiences with younger people. However, in our experiences in different seminars which included both younger and older people, we saw that the older people tended to dominate the youth and were not open to giving them space and opportunity to share their ideas and views. If we are to nurture spaces for open intergenerational learning, we need work on transforming this rigidity.

While these are our initial reflections, we have great hopes that Udaipur is on its way to becoming a Learning City. We invite you to share and learn with us, as we further engage in this process-project of regenerating *Swaraj* in Udaipur.

REFERENCES

Shiva, Vandana, "Rebuilding an Earth Democracy: A 50th Anniversary Perspective," in Rukmini Sekhar, ed., Making a Difference: A Collection of Essays. New Delhi: SPIC-MACAY, 1998.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Vidhi Jain <vidhib@yahoo.com> is working as a Learning Activist at Shikshantar. She is a trained special educator and has experience of working with different communities in Rural Rajasthan, Harayana and Delhi. Her interests include ornithology, biking and Indian classical and folk music.

Manav <Chandreshsumi@yahoo.com> is presently supporting Shikshantar as a Learning Activist. He has vast experience of working with children and youth all around India. Manav believes that every individual can be a self-teacher and a self-learner. He is in a process of de-schooling himself, and his practices-interests include experimenting with life, practicing *yoga-sadhana*, interacting with nature, and engaging in a search to know himself.

The Challenge of Change in Creating Learning Communities

Ron Burnett

I work in an institution that states its mission in the following way:

Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design is a learning community devoted to excellence and innovation in Visual Arts, Media Arts and Design.

Clearly, the phrase "learning community" is suggestive of many things. It has become a catch-all for a variety of initiatives that link the learning experience to a notion of community. What is that notion? And why has it become so crucial for educational institutions? If we are to answer the question of what are the key processes involved in building a learning society, then we need to examine the underlying notions of community that have encouraged people to build institutions of learning in the first place.

The challenges of building Emily Carr (which is an institute devoted to the practice of art, media and design) into a learning community are an excellent example of what I am talking about. For the most part, teachers at Emily Carr still want to create conditions of learning that do not account for what students bring to the experiences of learning. Students introduce and communicate an enormous amount of knowledge to the schooling environment and we need structures that will account for and value what the students have to contribute. Consequently, one of the first steps in developing a learning community is the recognition and construction of processes to encourage more equality between teachers and students. This is not only a matter of democracy, but is fundamental to a new spirit that schools need to build. That new spirit will locate the importance of learning in a shared dialogue between partners and not in a monologue that is based on power. This is a lesson that needs to be learned in developing and industrialized countries — a lesson in the development of skills for both teachers and students that permit sharing and encourage openness in institutional procedures and practices.

A community can be many things to many people. It can be the set of boundaries that a particular culture uses to distinguish itself from others and these boundaries can be physical and symbolic, as well as psychological. It can be a certain identity that has been gained over time through historical, social and cultural processes that symbolically unite different peoples, in a shared sense of connection and interdependence. At its most basic, community stands for common interest. But, it is not the purpose of this short piece to define the meaning of community. Rather, what is most important here, is the relationship between community and the symbols that communities use to define their activities. For example, a farming community is largely defined by a shared economic activity that is underpinned by social and cultural interaction. The people in the community don't have to tell themselves what they share; they know what unites and divides them by virtue of their everyday lives. On a smaller scale, a kinship system brings diverse people together under the heading of family and together they form a community of interest. Some families use religion as a unifying force, as do some communities. Others may use a

shared historical experience, a traumatic event or even music to bring meaning to what connects them.

In other words, every social formation has a variety of communities within it and an often-unpredictable way of portraying the ways in which those communities operate. The best way to understand community is to examine people's experiences within the communities that they share. And one of the most important activities that communities concern themselves with is learning. It doesn't really matter what form that learning takes, or whether it is formal or informal. The important point is that learning is seen as a central activity. It is also seen as a crucial example of whether the community has the vision and organization to communicate its historical, technical and cultural knowledge to its members. I would strongly argue that even in those communities with highly developed formal educational institutions, learning takes place in so many different venues, that it would be wise to examine this context with great care.

How then does learning take place within a community? The most obvious example is the school system. But how does one build, nurture and sustain learning experiences that are both growth-oriented and community-based? For the most part, even traditional schools make a valiant effort to 'teach' their students. Is the notion of 'learning community' all that different in intention from what communities have tried to do when creating their own schools and funding them? I ask this question because it is all too easy to dismiss the heritage of the last one hundred and fifty years of experimentation in education. Although it is true that education as a system has been run by central governments in most countries, it is also important to recognize that without local help and local commitment, it is unlikely that a school could survive. Even in those countries with the most highly developed and centralized curriculums, it is not easy, and may even be perilous, to ignore the needs of the community. My own experience with Emily Carr is that the local community abandoned the institution for some years because the institute disconnected itself from community's needs. The result was isolation and lack of support. It has taken us four years to rebuild links that should have been one of the foundations for the institution and its functioning. So, we need to extend the definition of learning community to include the broader social context within which learning institutions operate and this brings us closer and closer to the idea of learning society.

There is a simple definition of learning community available at http://www.eecs.umich.edu/mathscience/learningcommunities/whatis.html that says, "This phrase describes a vision and model where a community's stakeholders come together and share resources." Another definition is, "a 'learning community' is a deliberate restructuring of the curriculum to build a community of learners among students and faculty. Learning communities generally structure the curriculum so that students are actively engaged in a sustained academic relationship with other students and faculty over a longer period of their time than is possible in traditional courses" (http://lists.ctt.bc.ca/lo/learningcommunities.html).

When one asks the question, "how can a learning community be built?", there is the potential that the question will not deal with the reality that learning is one of the most

unpredictable activities that human beings engage in. This issue exceeds the boundaries and mandate of this article. But, anyone who has examined the vast plethora of informal learning contexts that people in communities create for themselves knows that the rules for learning cannot be predefined. This is why most high schools remain an oppressive experience for most teenagers. They are at an age when they are actively involved in creating and participating in their communities of interest. High school often becomes an impediment to learning and trivializes the vast amount of interactions that goes on outside of its walls. This process is so unpredictable and the influences are so broad, that the question of how learning takes place cannot be reduced to locality or even community and especially to school itself.

So, we have a paradox here that defies simplification. The desire to create a learning community is very much about the need to create an institutional context for learning. We are talking here, in the most fundamental of ways, about the process of building formal strategies for the learning process. The difficulty is that building an institutional context for learning means redefining what we mean by 'students', and it is not enough to just transform 'student' to 'learner'. It also means redefining what we mean by 'community' since it is likely that any school is really made up of communities of learners. Some of these learners may be connected to each other and many may not be connected. The complexity of social interactions within a school far exceeds the complexity of the classroom, which is itself barely manageable as a learning environment. This is an issue we have been examining in great detail at Emily Carr, and we do not, after four years, have a simple solution in sight. This means that the notion of 'learning community' needs to be deepened through an analysis of institutions and how they function.

If we are going to create a new model for learning, then it will have to stand the test of both organizational restructuring as well as disciplinary redefinition. The latter will not be accomplished unless we take a long and hard look at the informal learning that is a part of everyone's daily existence. The disciplines that have been the bedrock of education must incorporate the lessons of the informal into their purview. For example, the study of language and composition should not take place outside of the experience of popular culture. The study of the sciences cannot be divorced from ethical and philosophical issues.

If we are to take the effort seriously, then the creation of new learning communities will bring with it a transformation of what we mean by disciplines. For better or for worse, the very nature of disciplines, their function and their role within and outside of institutions has changed. The context for this change is not just the individual nature or history of one or other discipline. Rather, the social and cultural conditions for the creation and communication of ideas, artifacts, knowledge and information have been completely altered. From my point of view, this transformation has been extremely positive. It has resulted in the formation of new disciplines and new approaches to comprehending the very complex nature of Western and non-Western societies. We are still a long way from developing a holistic understanding of the implications of this transformation.

It is an irony that one of the most important of the physical sciences relating to the brain, neuroscience, has become a combination of anatomy, physiology, chemistry, biology, pharmacology and genetics with a profound concern for culture, ethics and social context. Genetics itself makes use of many different disciplines to achieve its aims. To survive in the 21st century the neurosciences will have to link all of their parts even further and bring genetics, the environment, and the socio-cultural context together in order to develop more complex models of mind. It may well be the case that no amount of research will produce a grand theory. But, as the great neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran (1998) has suggested, the most puzzling aspect of our existence is that we can ask questions about the physical and psychological nature of the brain and the mind. And we do this as if we can somehow step outside of the parameters of our own physiology and see into consciousness. Whatever the merits of this type of research, it cannot avoid the necessity of integration.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for many of the disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. Although there has been an explosion of research and writing in the conjoining areas of Cultural Studies, Communications and Information Technologies, the various specializations that underlie these areas remain limited in their approach to the challenges of interdisciplinarity and learning. The reasons for this are complex. Among the most important, is the orientation that some of these disciplines follow and that is to develop their own language and culture of research and practical applications. The difficulty is that, as they grow more specialized, they cease to see or even envisage the potential connections that they have to other areas. They also disconnect themselves from the educational context that is after all a context of communications and exchange.

Most importantly, the research agendas in all disciplines will have to incorporate new approaches to culture and to the fundamental importance of popular and traditional cultures in creating the terrain for learning at all levels. This will be a huge challenge, but it is the most basic one if we are to create the conditions for learning communities and learning societies.

REFERENCES

V.S. Ramachandran, Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1998.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Ron Burnett <rburnett@eciad.bc.ca> is currently President of the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver, Canada. He has served as the Director of the Graduate Program in Communications at McGill University and is the author of Cultures of Vision: Images, Media and the Imaginary published by Indiana University Press. Ron is a photographer and videomaker and the author of over sixty published articles. He founded Canada's first and most important Communications and Cultural Studies Journal, Cine-Tracts and was the editor-in-chief for seven years. His forthcoming book is entitled, How Images Think. Ron has served on the task force for Learning Without Frontiers at UNESCO and is a founding director of the Learning Development Institute.

Schools Beyond Walls: A Stepping-Stone to Learning Societies

M. Srinivisan

It is time that educators and society in India woke up. It is time for a transition out of Government-funded sick education factories, the monster-size concrete jungles that devour more than 80% of the outlay. It is time for the re-awakening of culture and tradition, for the recognition of the power of communication and technology, for a rediscovery of spirituality, and for an active, thinking society. It is time for a complete revolution in education.

This revolution depends on learning societies, which are defined by the responsibility they take for their own learning and which no longer leave the conceptualization of and decision-making for this most central aspect of human life to elites located far away from the pangs, agonies, aspirations and joys of local communities. Such learning societies actively participate in designing learning situations for their children to meet and anticipate the demands of the future. They understand that 'learning is situated' and therefore attempt to situate the curriculum to respond to each individual learner's profile of thinking and to the contexts in which diverse forms of knowledge are constructed (Gardner, 1999). Learning societies draw from local communities' vast repertoire of culture-lore[1] to do this, but simultaneously think and learn globally, so as not to re-invent wheels in isolation. The building of learning societies call for great imagination and leadership by educators and other stakeholders.

As a Principal in Bangalore, I have tried to operationalize a concept of "School Beyond Walls", which I believe offers one experiment in the process of breaking the monotony and monopoly of schooling and developing a dynamic learning society in India. "School Beyond Walls" fundamentally pushes our thinking about the relationships and environments for learning, by recognizing that genuine learning cannot be 'taught' and that little more than rote memorization is currently taking place in schools. It counters with the view that learning is an intuitive, person-specific process, which best takes place in real-life situations. Teachers learn along with children; both continuously construct, refine and reconstruct their knowledge through each experience. Apprenticeship learning opportunities are thus facilitated, as imaginative and accomplished community members are called upon to share their talents with children. Children learn the LANGUAGE of each domain of work. This language portrays the principles, practices, collective wisdom, and understanding that are highly essential to be creative and innovative in that field. These activities are only possible in real life situations, but can be facilitated by the school. By serving as the field for these real-world learning experiences, the local community thus becomes a part of the school.

"School Beyond Walls" also allows for learning opportunities in a global context. It incorporates the concept of a virtual school, where children have the spaces to learn from individuals all over the world. With mediation by peers, teachers and other members of the local community, children can use their experiences of the global, of diverse cultures

and traditions, to further enrich learning about their own spiritual and cultural knowledge. In this way, "School Beyond Walls" develops both the wings and the roots of each child.

ROLES OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOL BEYOND WALLS

To achieve the above, "School Beyond Walls" innovatively utilizes two interrelated frameworks/tools: Multiple Intelligences (MI) (Gardner, 1983) and Information Technology. I have found that MI has two related impacts that aid in transforming schools. For one, it enables a better understanding of each individual child's unique talents and provides each child with more confidence in his/her learning process. When a child is offered a variety of learning experiences and has the opportunity to negotiate different levels of challenges in an unthreatening environment, he or she finds that certain areas are more inviting for him/her to engage in. That is, in that particular area(s), the child appears to learn instinctively or naturally, is willing to work hard and challenge him or herself, seeks out self- or independent-learning spaces, develops originality and creativity, and grows by leaps and bounds. In this way, MI allows children to discover/uncover their own talents and to nurture them in meaningful ways.

On another level, MI helps to transform the roles that teachers and administrators must play. From the MI framework, teachers learn that education must be person-oriented, and administrators learn that schools must be philosophy-oriented. They abandon their urge for mechanization, uniformity, and replication, and strive to facilitate learning that takes into account each child's uniqueness. Like the *gurus* of the indigenous *gurukul* system, teachers in School Beyond Walls recognize that each child requires his or her own personalized curriculum and that the possibilities for innovation are enormous. Simultaneously, Heads of Institutions and other administrators step down from their hierarchical position of authority and create coalitions with parents, teachers, children, and community members to prepare MI-related, diverse learning activities and opportunities. In the process, teachers and administrators also discover themselves, their own uniqueness and creativity in teaching-learning processes. In my experience, for example, I have found that MI nourishes very committed teamwork and interdependency (Covey, 1989). Teachers and administrators have abandoned their 'helpless-follower' mode of thinking and are trying to take leadership in developing the School Beyond Walls. Our effort will reach the next level when we fully introduce MI-based methods of assessment.

Information Technology (IT) is the second crucial tool that must be utilized in transforming schools into Schools Beyond Walls. In villages, local knowledge, often constructed over a very long period of time, is still passed on through daily practices, rituals, conversations, and communions. Information on Wall Street or Silicon Valley, on the other hand, is produced at a distance, at lightening speeds, but has the capacity to tremendously affect millions of lives through little more than push-button devices. In a School Beyond Walls, children, teachers, administrators, and other members of the community must acknowledge both the power and purpose of all types of knowledge and information, in order to learn how to utilize them in ways that facilitate better living for all. Indeed, without such conscious and continuous thinking about IT and about how to

sift through and comprehend the deluge of information available, it is quite easy to get wrapped up in the shiny package of IT and lose sight of its potentially negative impacts. Therefore, the challenge becomes how to take advantage of the IT availability in a place like Bangalore - where Internet is already a common word and which has the potential to provide the conceptual lead in how to use IT for deep learning - without becoming totally overwhelmed and controlled by it.

In our School Beyond Walls, for example, we start with imaginative CD-ROM work to encourage independent self-paced and sequenced learning. Children then have the opportunity to put up and manage their own web pages. Not only does this give them the scope to interact with peers and mentors all over the world, but web posting and publishing also provide the perpetual audience and positive encouragement necessary for talent development. Indeed, in complete congruence with the Schools Beyond Walls concept, IT allows children, prompted by their own interests and talents, to discover new areas outside of the given syllabus. IT is also a great boon to teachers, who can easily exchange and publish their own innovations, experiences and research. We have started a web-based "Gift-Ed" journal, where our children and teachers will collaborate with other children and teachers all over the world on a variety of projects and share their own experiences in this process. Thus, IT, if used discerningly, can provide a source of great learning in connection with real-life processes and environments.

CRITICAL CHALLENGES

However, I must acknowledge the challenges to using MI and IT on a grand-scale in the Indian context. For example, MI is difficult to 'spread' in India for several reasons:

1. Most schools are busy trying to complete a syllabus and prepare for examinations, which allows no space for different frameworks of learning or understanding the world.
2. Schools have become complacent because of their monopoly in the field of education; they lack the urge and the climate to incorporate new research or ideas in their operations.
3. Most teachers and administrators dread changes, for they lack dynamism and refuse to take responsibility to make those changes a reality.
4. Many teachers in India want an easy ride, free lunches and lots of rest, whereas MI requires tremendous initiative and a willingness to work hard.
5. Administrators and Head of Institutions do not want to collaborate with others, yet they themselves are not cutting-edge research- or experience-oriented.
6. Teachers and administrators do not require any re-certification, so after joining a school, they do not work on improving themselves or their colleagues.
7. Systemic support is nil. Government departments, in fact, put up brakes instead of encouraging experimentation.

MI thus demands committed and caring teachers and administrators, who are willing to create smaller and child-oriented School Beyond Walls. Yet today's education department is unimaginative, slow to change and, to a large extent, paralyzed. They are unwilling to release their egos, in order to learn from one another, and unwilling to work hard to facilitate a variety of learning opportunities and activities. MI also requires

detailed planning, new and diverse interactions with the community at all levels, and continuous research on the part of all parties. It is not something that can be managed or conceptualized from the top-down; rather, how a MI framework operates in each School Beyond Walls will have to be determined by the stakeholders of that school itself.

Similarly, IT is difficult to implement on a large-scale. For one, it is impossible for any national-level research institution to design a curriculum that could keep pace with the changes taking place in the field of IT, be they software, hardware or the kinds of services required. This means that each individual school has to anticipate changes in the IT field and plan its strategies according to its continuously redefined learning needs and aspirations. Again, hard work, reflection, dialogue, and research are necessary.

Essentially, children will have to become an integral part of the knowledge generation process. Allowing children to do so would require giving up authority and control, another commitment that many teachers and administrators are unwilling to make. Moreover, teachers will no longer be able to act as masters of knowledge, for with IT readily available, it is clear that they will not be able to know everything. Rather, they will have to develop into masters of facilitation, cultivating in children the same quality of facilitation, of sifting the relevant from the irrelevant, the futuristic from the flash in the pan. Finally, as it stands today, the IT industry is severely weak in terms of software applications that cultivate creativity and collaboration. And, unfortunately, the understanding of pedagogy needed for using the limited applications that do exist is even weaker.

Despite these challenges, the Bangalore School Beyond Walls stands out as a success due to two important factors:

1. Our approach to children, as creating knowledge instead of just consuming knowledge (Renzulli, 1990) through Creative Incentive and Productive Environment (CIPE) Projects, encourages parents to get involved in what engages the imagination and MI way of thinking of children. Thus, parents realize the importance and the challenges of a Creativitists' Approach to education and lend support to the process.
2. We believe in the Interdependency Model[2], where a team of parents, teachers and the Head of the Institution come together in a transparent way. The teachers and the Head of the Institution are open to criticism, which is more than compensated by the enthusiasm, involvement and support of parents who look forward to how School Beyond Walls creates a little genius out of every child. Our community works on facilitating learning as a very mature team.

THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

The School Beyond Walls framework provides one stepping-stone to building learning societies for the 21st century. They encourage everyone to earmark a part of their time to share their 'wisdom' and acumen with the growing generation, to assume responsibility that one and all should realize. Clearly, such activities and sensitivity makes the idea of a universal curriculum, especially within a country as diverse as India, very difficult and completely irrelevant. Instead, the learner will decide what he or she wants to learn and even how these learning interests will be met, resulting in a made-to-order, sophisticated

education. The school community will transform itself as well. Teachers will begin to take action to facilitate each individual's unique learning aspirations, and administrations will prepare to support teachers to meet the learners' multiple intelligence and technology needs. Various Schools Beyond Walls will network and collaborate with each other to establish Research & Development programs, and to share and utilize resources, particularly crucial, complex sources of authentic knowledge and funding.

REFERENCES

Covey, Stephen, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, 1989.

Gardner, Howard, The Disciplined Mind: What All Students Should Understand, 1999.

Gardner, Howard, Frames of Mind, 1983.

Gardner, Howard, The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think & How Schools Should Teach, 1991.

Srinivasan, M., "School Beyond Walls," a coursework paper presented at UCONN, USA as part of Graduate Studies in Gifted & Talented Education.

Sternberg, Robert, et al (Ed), Conceptions of Giftedness, 1990.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

M. Srinivasan <gear@vsnl.com> is deeply committed to evolving a model of education that helps every child discover his/her true potential. Right now, he is working on giving a shape to a (flexible Residential) School Beyond Walls Model at the GEAR innovative International School in Bangalore. Srini's learning interests include MI, Brain Functions, Local Culture and Traditions, and IT as tools for Giftedness and Talents Development.

[1] Like folklore, culture-lore refers to the cultural frameworks, stories, songs and practices, passed from one generation to the next.

2 According to Stephen Covey (1989), a team works at three different levels. **Level 1: Totally Dependent** - The team members depend on instructions and guidance for everything. Most of our new teachers and parents are like this. **Level 2: Totally Independent Level -** After a while they feel they know everything and start working totally 'isolated' from one another. Confidence level may be high but productivity is not. **Level 3: Totally Interdependent Level -** At this level of functioning every one depends on the other to get the best of that person; there is no suspicion of upstaging or competition. Everybody knows how to react to criticism positively and the whole team works as a matured and happy team. Our team of parents, teachers and the management is like the highest level of a team. When you function at this level some parents do create headaches because they finally have a chance to discuss the many things on their mind, which may neither have matured or be very sensible, but the majority of parents appreciate this transparency and contribute to the building up of a very committed team!

Learning Society of the Future: Questions to Consider

Dee Dickinson

Today everywhere in the world, people of all ages are asking how educational systems can be transformed into ones truly appropriate for our time. Since lifelong learning is now essential to survival and 'thrival', how can people of all ages learn how to learn, unlearn, and relearn? How can they develop skills to deal with complexity and challenges that have never before existed? How can schools that were created for another time meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students? Can schools alone meet these needs? In considering these questions, let us look at new possibilities for individuals, learning communities, and an emerging global learning society.

DIFFERENCES THAT DIVIDE; DIFFERENCES THAT CONNECT

Of the 6 billion people in the world today, no two have brains that are alike. Not only are people different genetically, but also the environments in which they grow and learn create unique mental and emotional traits. People from different cultural, social, economic, and educational backgrounds have very different ways of thinking, learning, speaking, and behaving which tragically have often been the source of warfare between countries, and on the individual level, of serious conflict and causes of separation. These differences must be recognized and respected if people are to communicate effectively and learn successfully.

Viewed from a different perspective, individual and national differences may be seen as complementary strengths. Howard Gardner notes that "we are as much creatures of our culture as we are creatures of our brain." Cultures where most people are actively involved in the arts, cultures where academic achievement is most highly valued, and cultures where survival skills are essential to life produce populations with different skills and abilities that have been learned in different ways. Of course, such diversity exists within cultures as well.

When these differences are understood and valued, they can bring people together in ways that may form the basis of learning communities. The ancient Greeks had a word for such organizations. In their 'Paedeia', everyone was a learner and everyone was a teacher, and the whole community was responsible for the learning of its people. The formation of such models is essential today as we see increasing needs for greater interpersonal and international understanding. Few would question that individuals, communities, and countries must find better ways to collaborate on learning about and helping to solve critical ecological, environmental, economic, technological, and health challenges. Successful learning of a whole community begins, however, with the individual.

WHAT WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON

Nearly every human being is born ready to learn and with the capacity — during a brief 'window of opportunity' — to understand and speak any language like a native. A hundred billion neurons are already beginning to connect with each other in complex

ways that make it possible for us to think, learn, understand, remember, problem-solve, and create. The fullest possible development of the human brain depends on being nourished with sufficient food, clean air and water, love, and stimulation from the environment and other human beings.
Note the findings of Dr. Craig Ramey, at the University of Alabama, who has been researching the cognitive development of children of poor, borderline mentally retarded mothers. He set up a control group of children who were provided good health care and nutrition, but had no other intervention. Beginning at the age of six weeks, children with similar backgrounds were placed in an experimental group where they spent five days a week in an enriched environment. There they benefited from much interaction with caregivers who conversed with them, told stories, played games, and nurtured them emotionally. The control group of children remained low-functioning like their mothers, whereas the experimental group of children developed at least average intelligence. By the age of twelve, 50% of the children in the control group had failed one or more grades in school, but only 13% of the experimental group were not successful. Surely all parents must have opportunities to learn how to create environments that will foster the fullest possible development of their children, physically, cognitively, and emotionally.

Until recent years, it was not understood that the human brain can change structurally and functionally as a result of learning and experience - for better or for worse. Ideal conditions for optimal brain growth and development are enriched environments that are positive, nurturing, stimulating, and that encourage action and interaction. Dr. Marian Diamond (1998), neuroscientist at the University of California-Berkeley, describes the characteristics of an enriched environment that:

- Includes a steady source of positive emotional support;
- Provides a nutritious diet with enough protein, vitamins, minerals, and calories;
- Stimulates all the senses (but not necessarily all at once!);
- Has an atmosphere free of undue pressure and stress but suffused with a degree of pleasurable intensity;
- Presents a series of novel challenges that are neither too easy nor too difficult for the child at his or her stage of development;
- Allows for social interaction for a significant percentage of activities;
- Promotes the development of a broad range of skills and interests that are mental, physical, aesthetic, social, and emotional;
- Gives the child an opportunity to choose many of his or her own activities;
- Gives the child a chance to assess the results of his or her efforts and to modify them;
- Offers an enjoyable atmosphere that promotes exploration and the fun of learning;
- Above all, allows the child to be an active participant rather than a passive observer.

It appears that the early years and the ‘windows of opportunity’ they provide are critical, but deficiencies in experience can be overcome to a certain extent in environments with the above characteristics. The work of Dr. Reuven Feuerstein, Israeli psychologist, attests to the fact that mediated learning and particular kinds of cognitive enrichment that he has developed produce remarkable results. The mediated learning approach differs from typical stimulus-response activities in that the teacher is there to support the learner by offering appropriate help when — and only when — it is needed. Little by little, the

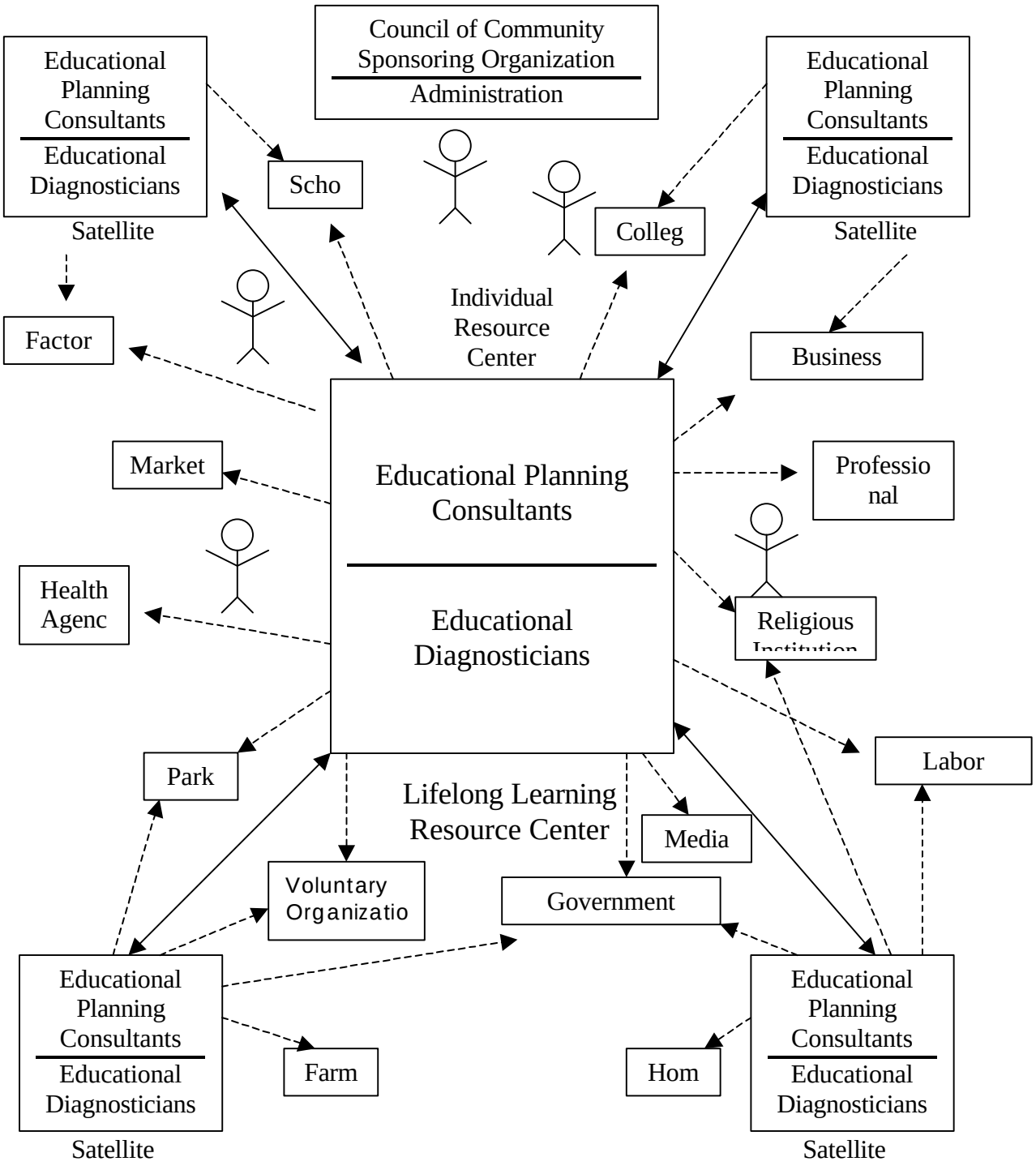
learner begins to take responsibility for his/her own learning. Feuerstein has proved with his work that "intelligence is not a static structure, but an open dynamic system that can continue to develop throughout life." Of key importance is strengthening people's ties to their native culture by respecting and honoring the mores, customs, rituals, and other characteristics of that culture. According to Feuerstein, when these ties are cut, people are deprived of optimal possibilities for their fullest development.

Many characteristics of the enriched environments that Diamond describes are appropriate for adults as well. As we anticipate building a global learning society, it is important to consider, at all ages: (1) individual differences in perception, (visual, auditory, kinesthetic); (2) different kinds of intelligence (Gardner's theory including verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist); and (3) differences in world view (field sensitive/perceiving the whole picture first or field independent/perceiving the details first). In these differences lie our strengths and the tools we need to learn and develop our abilities, as well as dealing with our disabilities. Opportunities to learn in different modalities and understand our own unique characteristics play an important role in successful learning. Students must also be offered opportunities to understand how to utilize these traits in a variety of contexts, including those outside the classroom.

Because an important part of learning is in its application, rote memorization alone will not equip students to use what they have learned in productive, meaningful ways. Rather than focusing on learning mostly from lectures and textbooks, finding the one right answer to a given question, and demonstrating mastery of learning through standardized, true/false, short answer tests, the learner must be encouraged to question and learn actively from a broad array of sources, to consider many possible answers to thought-provoking questions, and to demonstrate mastery by applying what has been learned - or even by teaching others. The creation of learning communities and their openness to continual change in response to the needs of learners and broader community makes these kinds of learning experiences possible.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Over twenty years ago, Malcolm Knowles, considered to be the father of adult education in the United States, drew a sketch of a community learning center that looked like this:



A LIFELONG LEARNING RESOURSE SYSTEM (LEARNING COMMUNITY

Linkage among Resource Centers

Linkage with content resources

In Knowles' vision, at the heart of such a community is a center with specialists who are diagnosticians, prescribers, and facilitators of learning. They are skilled at understanding what may be interfering with a student's learning, know how to support or challenge the student in different ways, and make sure that every child has a strong but sensitive adult role-model or mentor. These specialists also collaborate with teachers, parents, community members, and mentors as the students progress. Today, growing numbers of year-round community learning centers are open early in the morning for day care and through the evening for adult classes (for examples, see New Horizons for Learning - http://www.newhorizons.org and Communities for the Future - http://www.bev.org/cotf). Many offer opportunities for learning through the arts, technology, and environmental education that also bring in financial support as students do productive work as they learn. Courses in nutrition and food preparation, health care, and parenting not only offer opportunities for individuals to learn, but also potentially benefit the whole community.

Critical to the success of community learning centers is a visionary leader who is able to inspire and involve all those in the organization as partners and collaborators. Rather than top-down management, typical of industrial model educational systems, shared leadership creates an open system essential for the evolution of learning communities and a true learning society.

Schools in these communities also make use of new understandings of how to individualize learning and make it an active and interactive experience. In this respect they differ from more conventional, factory models of education. In addition to conventional reading and writing assignments, illustrating a story through a group mural; making up and singing songs about the water cycle; dancing cell division or mathematical equations; writing and performing plays based on historical events; creating multimedia reports — all result in deeper ways of understanding. Teachers recognize that positive emotion associated with such activities is an essential component of successful learning that endures.

Students may study independently or learn in groups of different sizes depending on their needs and the subject to be learned. They understand that when they are learning in a group they have a specific responsibility to help each other master the task at hand, as every student must be successful in order for the group to be successful. Students receive prompt feedback on their work, their efforts are constantly reinforced, and they are offered specific learning strategies appropriate for different subjects. The learning communities of which these schools are a part support their transformation from factory-model schools into environments in which the above kinds of activities are standard practice.

No school alone can handle the complex challenges that today's school populations present. It is now essential for schools to collaborate with other schools, colleges and universities, arts and cultural organizations, hospitals, social service, health, and welfare agencies, churches, businesses, and other civic organizations. How could such a task be accomplished? Coordinating such a complex network requires massive communication and file systems, which did not exist at the time Knowles envisioned his concept of the

learning community. Even in smaller rural villages with few institutions and services, it would be difficult to record and keep track of the community's resources, to say nothing of communicating with the rest of the world. Yet, these connections are essential to bringing about a positive, fundamental change in education.

Today, using computers, databases, and Web sites, it is possible to coordinate support systems for educating people of all ages - creating a technological Paedeia, combining an ancient form with the most current technologies. Here also are the characteristics of a continually developing global neural network, capable of bringing about its own continuing transformation. Essential to this process is the recording of challenges, failures, and successes in order to feed this information back into the system and guide its development. As new more successful educational models come into being, their stories can be shared through the Internet, thus facilitating a true paradigm shift.

At this time, although new technologies and even electricity do not yet exist in many parts of the world, low-cost, wireless computers will soon connect people everywhere with a world of information and educational opportunity. With that opportunity also come risk and further challenges. In addition to rich educational resources, the Internet holds much dangerous and illicit material. This is a complex challenge to meet without putting freedom of expression at risk. Somehow producers of content must be motivated to take responsibility for what they put forth, much as there is current pressure on industries to avoid polluting the physical environment. It is also critical to understand that technology is an important tool for learning and communication, but it cannot replace the quality of human interaction in successful learning. Nor can computers teach ethics and morality, compassion, and personal responsibility.

TOWARDS A LEARNING SOCIETY

As a global learning society is coming into being, community learning centers are beginning to collaborate with each other within countries as well as interlinking through the Internet with those in other countries. Technology has made all of this possible. The foundations have been laid and every minute of every day more connections are being formed. Our very survival may well depend on people throughout the world learning together and working towards common goals of increasing planetary and human health, security, and peace.

In The Birth of the Chaordic Age, a thought-provoking new book about the complex times in which we live, author Dee Hock expresses the hope that one day we may have "institutions that have inherent capacity for their own continual learning, order, and adaptation; institutions in harmony with the human spirit; institutions with the capacity to co-evolve harmoniously with one another, with all people, with all other living things and with the earth itself to the highest potential of each and all."

REFERENCES

Campbell, Bruce, Linda Campbell, and Dee Dickinson. Teaching and Learning Through Multiple Intelligences. Allyn and Bacon, 1999.

Diamond, Marian and Janet Hopson. Magic Trees of the Mind: How to Nurture Your Child's Intelligence, Creativity, and Healthy Emotions from Birth Through Adolescence. Dutton, 1998.

Hock, Dee. Birth of the Chaordic Age. Berrett-Koehler, 1999

Senge, Peter. The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization. Doubleday,1990.

Sharon, Howard. Changing Children's Minds: Feuerstein's Revolution in the Teaching of Intelligence. Imaginative Minds, 1996.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dee Dickinson <building@newhorizons.org> is CEO and founder of New Horizons for Learning, an international education network based in Seattle, Washington. (www.newhorizons.org) She has taught on all levels from elementary through college, has produced several series for educational television, and has created nine international conferences on education. She is an internationally recognized speaker, author, and consultant to educational systems and organizations, community colleges and universities, policy-making groups, and corporations. Her publications include *Positive Trends in Learning* (commissioned by IBM), *Creating the Future*, and she is co-author of *Teaching and Learning Through Multiple Intelligences*, published in a new 1999 edition by Allyn and Bacon.

Rethinking Learning: Implications for Policy, Research, and Practice

Jan Visser[1]

Learning is a disposition. It involves the entire human being, rather than merely the brain, or the part of it that we hold responsible for our intellectual activity, the neocortex. If learning simply were to be identified with the processes that go on in our brain cells, it would be difficult to distinguish between thinking and learning. Learning is distinct because of its overall intentionality. It serves a purpose. In this short essay,[2] I shall argue why we should broaden our perspective of learning, overcoming the narrow focus on the things that go on in instructional settings such as the school. Key to that discussion is the question why we learn. I shall also discuss a number of aspects that I believe are important for how we should go about creating the conditions of learning in this broader perspective.

LEARNING UNDEFINED

Definitions are useful as a guide for reflection and practice, provided they are adequate. They ensure that we all know what we are talking about and thus allow us to communicate effectively and to collectively make sense of things. They keep us on course. However, when a definition no longer reflects the actual state of practice and the latest developments of its underlying theoretical framework, then it becomes a hindrance. In the case of learning, we have reached that stage.

Actually, learning was never very well defined.[3] Most people simply take the concept for granted, assuming that everyone knows what it means. Because of the prominent focus on instruction in policy documents and public discourse, learning is easily understood to be the result of instruction. No wonder then that most learning related research is in fact research of instructional processes and their efficiency and effectiveness.

Surprisingly though – or perhaps it is no surprise at all – when people are asked to identify their most profound learning experiences, those that have made a real impact on their lives, they often refer to events that were either totally unrelated, or at best only marginally related, to the formal instructional settings they have been part of. The Learning Development Institute (LDI), in collaboration with UNESCO's Learning Without Frontiers, recently embarked on a systematic effort to clarify the meaning of learning, among other ways by collecting people's learning stories. Approximately 25 participants in an international workshop on *In Search of the Meaning of Learning: A Social Process of Raising Questions and Creating Meanings* recounted what they felt were their most significant learning experiences. The stories they told are currently being produced in written form to be included in a 'learning stories page' on the LDI website.[4] Initial analysis of their content shows a rich variety of ways in which these learning experiences give direction to people's lives.

Even more impressive is the enormous variety of conditions that allows these experiences to develop. Clearly, no single setting can be held responsible for the development of

learning in and among human beings. Instead, there is a rich tapestry of conditions – related for instance to the family environment, the school, the workplace, individuals who come to play a specifically significant role in other people's lives, the broadcast media, museums, libraries, the Internet, places of worship, and nature – that all work together and mutually reinforce each other to promote and facilitate the development of learning in a lifelong and life-wide perspective.

The challenge then for anyone seriously interested in the evolution of a learning society, is in the first place to start seeing learning in the myriad ways it makes sense to ordinary people, and in the second place, to discover effective ways to nurture the rich variety of conditions necessary, rather than focusing on just one area of concern, such as the school. In other words, we must undefine the learning concept and liberate it from the narrowness of interpretations that has hampered its full development.

WHY WE LEARN AND WHAT IT IS TO BE LEARNING

Four things about learning are essential. In the interest of brevity, I present them here without the thorough argumentation I have developed elsewhere.

Constructive Interaction with Change

Human learning is a feature of our species that we may assume to have its roots in evolutionary history. If we, as a species, would live in an environment where everything would always stay the same, there would be no need to learn. We would be best off if we had been preprogrammed to suit, in the best way possible, the particular set of unchangeable circumstances that were ours for eternity. In fact, if such were the world, there would be no evolution and it is doubtful if the notion of 'life' would still apply to that world. The fact that life is what it is, thriving on diversity and continuous change, forces us to look upon our world and ourselves in a fundamentally different way. Things change all the time and so do we. We do not merely react to change, we also produce it. We are part of the ever-changing universe ourselves. Our capacity to interact *constructively* with change is key to what we may consider the ultimate wisdom of nature. To make it possible to interact constructively with change, we are equipped with the ability to learn.

We are not alone in our ability to learn. All forms of life are characterized by some sort of learning ability. We see it most clearly in the other members of the order of mammals we pertain to ourselves, the primates. Life and learning can even be studied at the level of artificial structures. The development of computer science has much contributed to this field. Thus, artificial life and artificial intelligence have become objects of serious scientific investigation.

What is particularly *human* about human learning is our ability to learn consciously. We reflect on our learning behavior, direct it to chosen purposes, decide what to learn, what not to learn and what to unlearn. We are also able to enhance our capacity to learn and decide that it is important to do so. Moreover, we take charge of the learning environment that surrounds us and thus influence the learning opportunities of other people. Not always do we recognize the full scope of our social responsibility for the learning

environment at large. While it is quite common for societies to accept and develop their responsibility for school-based learning, sometimes to the extent of over-controlling it, other areas receive far less attention. For instance, the learning that results from people's interaction with the media environment often largely escapes serious social scrutiny and reflection. The under-appreciation in many of today's societies of the family environment as an important constituent of the larger learning environment is another example.

The Dispositional Nature of Learning

Learning is, as stated earlier, a *disposition*. As such it is both: (1) an attitude of openness, i.e. an *emotive disposition*, and (2) a state of preparedness, i.e. a set of skills, a *meta-cognitive disposition*, an ability to learn. Agreement on this point is important for how we think about creating the conditions of learning in a society. It means that we must attend to the overall motivational context, such as the societal recognition and encouragement of learning and the aesthetic and moral sense attributed to learning, as much as to the more traditional focus on the various facilitating factors – often merely of an infrastructural nature – related to particular instructional settings.

Learning at Different Levels of Organizational Complexity

Learning pertains to both *individuals and social entities*. The latter term refers to collectives of human beings who share a common purpose. Such entities, or learning communities, may be small, like parents together with their children, a sports club, a chamber orchestra, a jazz band, a collective of people who have joined in the pursuit of a desired commercial or social objective. They may be larger as in the case of a school, an extended family, a tribe, a professional organization, the scientific community engaged in tackling a particular problem, a corporation or organization, a political party. Learning communities may even be as big as learning cities, multinational companies, the communities that span the globe bound together by a common faith or religious conviction, entire nations, partnerships among nations, and, ultimately, humanity at large. At all these different levels, learning is the key determinant for how we interact constructively with change. Here it is important to recognize the different levels of organizational complexity at which learning takes place and to understand that the conditions that promote and facilitate learning at the social level are not the same as those for individual learning. It is particularly important to understand that the learning of a particular social entity cannot be interpreted as the sum of the learning behaviors of the various sub-entities or individuals that are part of it.

The Dialogic Nature of Learning

Learning is a *dialogic* activity. "Truth is not found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction," says Bakhtin (1984 cited in Shotter, 1997). Our schools would dramatically improve if we became more serious about the dialogic nature of learning and would thus de-emphasize the one-way communication processes that characterize so much of what goes on in school-like settings. Dialogue, however, is not restricted to the processes of communication that take place between individuals. The concept extends to what happens between and among the different social entities – learning communities – that reflect the rich variety of organizational complexity present in how we, as human

beings, live, work and grow together. It makes sense, therefore, to think of learning as the defining dimension of a learning ecology: the co-evolutionary existence of humanity, conscious of itself and its place in the universe.

THE CHALLENGES OF THE LEARNING SOCIETY

We live in a critical time. While change has always been with us, the past decades have marked a significant shift for two reasons. In the long-term perspective of evolution, we have reached the stage where we are getting confronted with the limits of our planet and its resources. We have managed to double the human population from three billion to six billion in less than 40 years, an extremely short time span considering the millions of years of hominid development it took to reach the first three billion. Constructive interaction with change, and thus learning, has all of a sudden become essential for the survival not only of us as a species but also for other life forms on the planet. On the other hand, we face the challenge that the rate at which change takes place is now faster than the period typically required for the leadership of one human generation to pass on to the next one (Pais, 1997). Typically, we must adapt to fundamental change within our lifespan. The traditional notion of learning as preparation for life has thus become obsolete, except in one sense: we must learn to learn and learn to unlearn.

Against this background, the challenge of the learning society is enormous. We are looking at problems of a magnitude humanity has never faced before. This is both a threat and an opportunity. The threat is real. The opportunity is there to be taken.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Facing the challenge outlined above requires stepping outside the boundaries of the regular educational research, planning and instructional development mindset. That mindset is based on the assumption that instruction is the main condition of learning, which, it assumes, can therefore be planned linearly. Stepping outside that mindset means recognizing the staggering complexity of the learning landscape and assigning overall priority to the organic integration among the different pieces of the learning ecology over and above the concern with individual elements, such as the school system. Below follows a brief, non-exhaustive, list of recommendations:

Policy, research and practice must recognize in the above context what every good teacher and parent knows, namely that learning in different individuals is not the same. This simple fact militates against the notion of, for instance, factory-style schooling. It calls for design practices that are participatory and for the flexible distribution of the tasks to learn and to facilitate learning among the different actors in a structured learning setting, thus stepping outside of the conventional division between teachers and students.

In the same vein, it must be recognized that people (and social entities) learn best if multiple channels are open to them (see e.g. Anzalone, 1995), allowing learning via one channel to reinforce learning via another channel. This means stepping outside yet another traditional division, namely that between formal, non-formal and informal learning. Educational research must expand its horizon and shift its emphasis from research of instructional processes to research of learning. The societal responsibility to

care for the learning environment as a whole, and not just the school system, calls for greater collaboration among different government ministries and other state organs, non-governmental entities, the private sector and civil society at large in matters of governance and policy. Creativeness is required in envisioning new ways and organizational modalities to shape such collaboration effectively. Societal responsibility for creating and maintaining the conditions of learning in this context must address the conditions of the motivation and meta-cognitive preparation to learn in addition to the traditional focus on the instructional processes.

A selection must be made of significant and relevant portions of the learning ecology between which bridges can be built as a first step towards promoting organic integration of the learning environment. An initial choice could for instance focus on the school, the family and the world of work. From thereon one can start expanding. Initial choices will be context sensitive and no standard pattern can be followed. An important criterion for selection is the extent to which these component learning environments can be made to talk to each other. It makes sense to explore the role technologies can play in building the bridges.

In societies in which, often as a consequence of their colonial past, a schism has grown between so-called indigenous knowledge and the kind of knowledge that tends to be emphasized in Western-inspired formal learning systems, the existence of such a schism should be taken as an important challenge. Integrative practices should be encouraged and facilitated that lead to the enhancement of learning inspired by the rich multiple heritage to which citizens of such societies have access.

Linguistic and cultural diversity is a key condition for the continuous growth of humanity. Existing tendencies towards globalization are both an opportunity for and a threat to maintaining and further developing diversity. Choices in policy, research and practice must be oriented towards exploring the former and counteracting the latter.

The school, against the backdrop of the above recommendations, is in for a big overhaul. I recommend that a review of the school focus on the overall concern how the school can be moved out of its state of social isolation and be transformed into an integrated component of the backbone structure of the learning society. An important related concern should be to turn the school into a place where people partake in a process of co-developing and maintaining attitudes, motivations and skills that allow them to be lifelong learners, with particular emphasis on the skills and practice of critical and creative thinking. Concerning the requirement to maintain and develop diversity, I recommend to explore the reshaped school environment as the place *par excellence* for fostering skills and appreciation for cultural diversity and multilingualism.

My final recommendation is a difficult one as it is less well a part of established discourse. Learning is premised on particular spatial and temporal frames of reference. Normally such spatial and temporal frames of reference are not made explicit. Nonetheless, the emphasis on learning as a consequence of instruction has resulted in a dominant pattern of looking at learning as something that happens inside physical

structures of particular minimum dimensions that presuppose learners to sit still and to be on the receiving end of a mostly one-way point-to-multipoint communication process. These physical structures precondition timeframes of learning that are typically those of the lesson (50 minutes); the school term (several months); yearly cycles of student achievement evaluation; and periods of several years, required as part of existing graduation practices. Many of the problems humankind faces relate to spatial and temporal frames of reference that are unrelated to those of the instructional processes. To deal adequately with such problems, there is an urgent need to refocus policy, research and practice to foster learning processes premised on spatial and temporal frames of reference that go beyond the above limitations. Particularly, they should explore architectural designs that focus on openness, the human body as a dynamic entity, and the human mind as spanning timeframes from the ephemeral to the evolutionary, geological and cosmological.

REFERENCES

Anzalone, S., "The Case for Multichannel Learning." In S. Anzalone (Ed.), Multichannel Learning: Connecting All to Education. Washington, DC: Education Development Center, 1995.

Bakhtin, M. M., Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics, edited and translated by C. Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

De Vaney, A. & Butler, R. P. , "Voices of the Founders: Early Discourses in Educational Technology." In D. H. Jonassen (Ed.), Handbook of Research for Educational Communications and Technology. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1996.

Driscoll, M. P., Psychology of Learning for Instruction. Needham, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2000.

Hilgard, E. R., Unconscious Processes and Man's Rationality. Urbana, IL, 1948. (as quoted in De Vaney and Butler, 1996).

Pais, A., A Tale of Two Continents: A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Shotter, J., "The Social Construction of Our 'Inner' Lives." Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 10, 7-24, 1997. Also online at http://www.massey.ac.nz/~ALock/virtual/inner.htm.

Visser, J. (in print), "Integrity, Completeness and Comprehensiveness of the Learning Environment: Meeting the Basic Learning Needs of All throughout Life." In D. N. Aspin, et al. (eds), International Handbook of Lifelong Learning. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Also online at http://www.learndev.org/dl/LLLIntHbChapter.PDF.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jan Visser <jvisser@learndev.org> is Director of Learning Without Frontiers (www.unesco.org/education/lwf) at UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). He is also the founder and president of the Learning Development Institute (www.learndev.org). A documentary filmmaker, a prolific writer in a variety of fields, and an architect of various significant international development projects, Jan is also a musician and an avid walker.

1 Any opinions expressed in this essay are entirely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect official policy of UNESCO or the Learning Development Institute.

2 This essay is based in part on a more extensive treatment included in the forthcoming *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, Aspin, Chapman, Hatton and Sawano (Eds), in the chapter on *Integrity, Completeness and Comprehensiveness of the Learning Environment: Meeting the Basic Learning Needs of All throughout Life* (Visser, in print).

3 One explicit definition goes back to Hilgard (1948). It states that "learning is the process by which activity originates or is changed through training procedures…as distinguished from changes by factors not attributable to training" (p. 4). De Vaney and Butler (1996) underline this definition's influence on the behavioral school. It is only quite recently that this close linkage with instruction starts to disappear. Driscoll (2000, p. 11), for instance, stresses, with reference to her analysis of different learning theories, that "they do share some basic, definitional assumptions about learning. First, they refer to learning as a persisting change in human performance or performance potential." However, distinctly different from Hilgard's definition, she continues to say that "Second, to be considered learning, a change in performance or performance potential must come about as a result of the learner's experience and interaction with the world." This clearly places the idea of learning outside the individual learner.

4 See http://www.learndev.org/LearningStories.html. The Learning Stories Project is continuing beyond the limited scope of the workshop in which it started. Interested readers may want to contribute their stories by following the guidelines provided at the referred website.

The Artifice of Modernization: Postcoloniality and Beyond

Vivek Bhandari

Of the 158 nations that currently map the world, over a hundred were at some point in the past two centuries a part of European empires. In other words, the history of the modern world, or of at least three-quarters of its population, has to be understood in terms of its resistance to colonial forms of control, and the degree to which the latter are still prevalent today. For populations of the post-colonial world, the ideas, attitudes, institutions, and ideologies of empire are comprehensively intertwined with the present, and determine the parameters that shape socio-political identity. Partly in order to grapple with these concerns, a group of scholars often described as 'postcolonial critics' have begun to articulate new ways of unpacking the legacy of colonialism, and the ways in which this legacy continues to shape the lives of not just the de-colonized peoples of the world but also western notions of subjectivity. The contributions of postcolonial criticism have to be viewed in relation to questions raised by poststructuralist and postmodern critics who raise similar questions about the Western world, and the problems inherent in modernist claims about the construction of knowledge.[1] In the following article, I will make an effort to explore these connections, and how these might help us to formulate a viable agenda for the future.

Initially, the implications of poststructuralist approaches were not fully apparent to postcolonial critics. Mary Louise Pratt has recently pointed out that when the term 'postmodern' began circulating in the world in the 1980s, this elicited essentially two reactions among intellectuals in the 'developing;' world, both of them ironic. One was: "Dammit, we haven't even got to modernity yet, and they've already called it off!" The other reaction was: "Fragmentation? De-centeredness? Co-existence of incommensurate realities? ...If that is postmodern, we're ahead of the game. *They* are catching up with us!" Aside from the fact that these reactions are symptomatic of the incredulity of people towards postmodernism, what is interesting about them is that they revealed the degree to which people in the 'developing' world measured the scope of their own modernity in relation to the West, a 'place' where modernity was assumed to be total, universal, complete. While postmodern critics have made concerted efforts to demonstrate the contradictions and lapses characteristic of the universal claims of modern constructions of knowledge, writings on postcoloniality in the past two decades have taken the discussions further by addressing two interrelated themes: the nature of modernity, and the need to de-colonize knowledge.

The interdependence of postcolonial critiques and poststructuralist writings operates at many levels. The latter have tried to unpack the assumptions that have shaped the construction of modern ways of thinking, and have done so by challenging the foundational principles of modernity, for instance the Enlightenment truths of scientific progress, the use of instrumental conceptions of reason, and the primacy accorded to the state. A fundamental characteristic of these writings has been an ongoing discussion on the relationship between power and knowledge. This discussion, in turn, has provoked a rethinking of modern history in terms of how the entrenchment of modernist institutions

has led to the dis-empowerment and exploitation of marginal groups. Some of these themes are the focus of the Subaltern Studies group of South Asianist scholars, many of whom were pioneers of postcolonial criticism. These scholars narrate a 'history from below', that salvages the voices of women, peasants, lower-caste groups, and minorities. Despite the problems these scholars have faced in finding ways to 'make the subaltern speak' (i.e., to find forms of subaltern articulation and agency), these approaches have opened-up spaces for the exploration of new ways of knowing, and structuring life; new ways that cut across the boundaries imposed by the legacy of colonialism.

WHAT ARE THE ANALYTICAL STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY POSTCOLONIAL CRITICS?

First, post-colonial critics emphasize the need to 'de-center' categories of knowledge by demonstrating their embeddedness in specific historical locations. The concept of 'modernity' has become the focus of analysis, in part because most claims about global inequality are couched in rhetoric that distinguishes between 'the modern world' (where modernity is assumed to pervade every facet of life), and 'the modernizing world', places where 'modernization' (as a process) is unfolding and is 'developing' those societies that had somehow remained 'outside' or 'peripheral' to THE 'modernity' of metropolitan Europe. Questions about the universal validity of European notions of rationality, science, justice, and perhaps most importantly, the nature of modernity itself, are fundamental to these critiques. The classification of the world into places that are characterized by unequal degrees of progress ('developed' versus 'developing', or 'modern' versus 'modernizing') is also being vehemently critiqued by postcolonial critics. Implicit in these critiques are concerns about the philosophical assumptions, moral legitimacy, and efficacy of those categories that, until recently, were taken for granted by newly emerging nation-states.

The next step of this critique is a compilation of a long list of those features that are constitutive of the metropolitan modern world. These features play a critical ideological role in reinforcing the 'feel good' self-perceptions of dominant modernist groups. The list includes — to mention a few elements — the rise of liberal democracy, a free market, the nation-state, class formation, industrialization, and the bureaucratization and 'management' of society and economy (through 'planned' growth). The list also privileges notions of individualism, which, when combined with the need for 'mass' democracy, set the stage for the rise of mass culture, mass education, and the denial of 'cultural values' and 'traditions' (unless these can be repackaged as conforming to facile dichotomies like high/low culture). These lists become the constitutive elements in the construction of histories that describe the development of these elements in 'metropolitan' centers of the world (invariably in the West). 'Origins' are delineated in narratives that trace the development of modernity, and the writing of history becomes a celebration of the 'progress' that the world has made in reaching the apex of civilization. Wars, famines, histories of discrimination, and imperialism are treated as subtexts that are uncritically relegated to the status of footnotes in the narratives of the rise of Western progress.

Although the above tropes of progress and civilizational growth do not, in and of themselves, necessarily imply that they are inherently connected to the history of

colonialism and imperial rule in the past three centuries, many critics have pointed out that modernizing agendas can only be understood *in relation to* their 'others', i.e., the world of 'primitive', 'irrational', or 'underdeveloped' and 'backward' cultures. Edward Said's writings on 'orientalism' have played a crucial role in foregrounding these assumptions of western historiography. Said points out that the existence of these 'others' lends credence and authority to the voice of modernizers stepping forward to 'develop' the world into something resembling their own image. Indeed, what remains constant is that every account with a modernizing mission **has** to have an 'other', something for modernity to measure itself against.

The existence of such "others" in itself may seem quite normal in today's world where social groups constantly invoke national, ethnic, and cultural signifiers of identity. However, what sets these identifications apart from the strands that characterize the hegemony of Western modernity is that the latter retains control over the *nature* of these categories. This is most apparent in the ways that many post-colonial notions of identity as articulated through nationalism, and notions of cultural autonomy that continue to use static, 'modernist' notions of identity to legitimize themselves. Nationalist ideologies, as these are articulated today, do not allow for dissension or much disagreement on the underlying principles that shape them; nor do they leave room for negotiation. Scholars like Partha Chatterjee and Ashis Nandy have repeatedly demonstrated that the reasons for the breakdown of contemporary Indian social and political structures have to be sought in the schizophrenic efforts of postcolonial politicians to derive their constructions of identity from the West, and more disturbingly, in their attempts to 'catch-up' with Western nations.

WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US?

Following the lead taken by some postcolonial critics, the next step requires us to identify the ways in which the legacy of colonial rule continues to shape life, and then to move beyond them. One way around this is by outlining, in very specific terms, how some of the categories that were employed by the early nationalists to challenge colonial authority may in fact have succeeded in doing very little to change postcolonial society for the better. A strident dichotomizing--that contrasts colonial control with national control, cultural imperialism with cultural resistance, and so on—was characteristic of these pronouncements. Early postcolonial critics clearly adopted this rhetoric to demonstrate the hegemony of Western imperialism. These 'us-versus-them' discourses of nativism, such as *indigenismo* in Latin America, and *Africanite* in Africa are however no longer as persuasive as they once were. This is because, in their postcolonial manifestations, they still tend to reproduce the underlying logic and power structures of the colonial project. They also fail to move beyond essentialism and end-up creating postcolonial nations that continue to resemble colonial society in disturbing ways. When looked at from this perspective, it comes as no surprise that characteristics of colonial society such as dysfunctional or self-serving bureaucracies, gross inequality, and educational institutions that are based on the 'factory-model', continue to exist in the postcolonial world. This does not mean that we de-legitimize *all* the changes that have taken place in postcolonial societies. What this does mean, however, is that we look for a deeper malaise that stems from our colonial legacy.

We have to make a genuine effort to decolonize knowledge, and this requires the identification of analytical tools that move beyond confrontational dichotomies (nationalism/nativism) or essentialist binaries (East/West). These tools also have to resist the pressure to legitimize the fragmentation and proliferation of particularisms (*Hindutva*, being a very unfortunate manifestation). What is important here is not that we reject *all* claims that are considered 'modernist', but that we retain a critical perspective that makes it possible for us to distinguish between the hegemonic and emancipatory potential of the diverse strands of modernity. Our tools need to be inclusive, so that they are able to address the epistemological, political, and economic concerns of hitherto disenfranchised groups. In the end, these approaches have to treat Western ideologies as historically embedded, not as the 'operating system' of global politics. Resurrecting those voices and forms of knowledge that have been silenced because of the totalizing claims of Western ways of knowing is likely to be a very difficult task in the context of a jingoistic, market driven 'globalization', but it is a critically important one. This is because the recognition of these voices is intrinsically intertwined with our ability to address issues of social and economic justice.

The creation of new learning societies, that are not weighed down by hegemonic forms of knowledge—most of which acquired their contemporary forms during the period of colonial rule—is imperative. This means, for instance, challenging the assumption that markets and mass production, the foundational tropes of India's 'development regime' since Independence, can generate real growth. Taken further, this implies the replacement of the logic that all problems can be solved using a technocratic 'fix', and the recognition that the adoption of technology is profoundly connected with the (ab)uses of power. Perhaps most important of all, this means undermining our obsession with the rhetoric of 'national interest' that focuses entirely on issues of power at the expense of questions of ethics and morality. Creating new learning societies requires a serious reassessment of all strands of modern 'development' from a perspective that accomodates the critical voices, agendas, and agency of disenfranchised groups and their dis-empowered forms of knowledge.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vivek Bhandari <vbhandari@hampshire.edu> is assistant professor of History and South Asian Studies at Hampshire College in Amherst, USA. He completed his Ph.D. in history at the University of Pennsylvania on the relationship between print culture, the public sphere, and social change in 19th century northern India. Vivek's areas of interest include social theory, historical sociology, postcolonial criticism, and more generally, the relationship between modern forms of knowledge and the construction of identity. He has taught courses on a range of subjects including social and political theory, the history of nationalism, and Gandhi's critique of modernity.

1 Structuralism was an interdisciplinary movement of the 1960s and 1970s which has left its most durable mark in the fields of linguistics, anthropology, sociology and literary theory. What unites structuralists is the principle that cultural norms, belief systems, social structures and discourses of every kind can be understood in terms of immanent structures. In other words, structuralists believe that all facets of human

life are governed by certain foundational principles that help us to unearth the most basic configuration of the human mind.

The term postmodernism is used to refer to those positions that critique the foundational principles of the Enlightenment, and in this way question modernist claims about knowledge and truth. In this sense, some postmodernists and poststructuralists argue that categories used to structure and explain human behavior, such as the state or culture are linguistically inscribed, and at the most fundamental level, serve the interests of dominant groups in society. Of these scholars, those writers who derive their ideas from Michel Foucault, engage in a counter-Enlightenment critique that demonstrates the relationship between power and knowledge. Such writings often involve strong critiques of the so-called 'foundational principles' delineated by structuralists. In this sense, postcolonial positions share a great deal with poststructuralist writings because they stress the inherently hegemonic quality of 'modernization', which in the context of global inequality (economic, political, and epistemological) — is viewed as a form of neo-colonialism.

Meaning, Purpose, and Connection: Spirituality in a Learning Society

Vachel Miller

Modern schooling has abandoned spirituality. Relegating matters of the spirit to other social spheres, modern schooling promotes allegiance to the State, basic analytical skills, individualized achievement, and exclusively rational approaches to knowledge. Driven to prepare students for state examinations, schools have become ensnared in the 'measurement trap', i.e., the belief that real learning is only learning that can be measured (Levinger, 1996). Yet new perspectives on learning suggest that, as wise women and men have long advised, that which escapes the trap of measurement may be the most real.

Spirituality can be a powerful teacher about learning. This essay will briefly outline some possible points of convergence between spirituality and learning, identify the ways in which such understanding of learning goes against the grain of typical schooling practices, and then discuss the implications of this intersection for the development of a learning society.

Spirituality has many definitions. For some, spirituality is a search for meaning, a desire to understand our lives in relation to Ultimate Being. It is, in the words of Catholic theologian David Steindl-Rast (1991), "an insight through which our restless search finds rest." For others, spirituality is a quest for self-transcendence, an encounter with mystery, or a feeling of universal interconnection. Spirituality can also be seen as attention to the divine presence in each other and in all aspects of daily life. In this discussion, the many connotations of spirituality will be compressed into three words: meaning, purpose, and connection. These will serve as a framework for organizing a dialogue around emerging notions of learning.

Meaning. Learning involves a search for meaning, the active interpretation of our experience. The human brain eagerly searches for meaning-rich patterns (Caine & Caine, 1997) and builds new understanding of the world in relationship to existing understandings. We search for the value of new knowledge in relation to our core concerns and sense of identity. This is the process of knowledge construction. Yet schooling tends to work against the personal and collective construction of meaning. Traditionally, schooling has relied on extrinsic motivation—the threat of punishment or the promise of material reward—to induce the brain to store bits of personally or culturally meaningless information. Preoccupation with data acquisition crowds out deeper processing of meaning-making. In this way, schooling frustrates the fundamental human need to make sense of our experiences.

Purpose. Living systems desire to extend outward from a core identity and grow in complexity. Living systems desire not only to be, but to change—to become (Wheately & Kellner-Rogers, 1996). As living systems, we humans learn what matters for our growth. We learn what enables us to become more of ourselves than we have been before. Because purpose is the wellspring of our motivation for action, deep learning must touch upon the learner's sense of purpose in the world (Caine & Caine, 1997). Ultimately, the energy for learning comes from the desire to realize our dreams. On a

practical level, the energy for learning can be instrumental, stemming from the desire to do something in the world that matters to us (Shank & Cleave, 1995). We learn to ride bicycles in order to travel across the city quickly; we learn to use e-mail in order to communicate with friends. We experiment in the world until we fail, and then we attempt new ways of reaching our goals. Along the way, purpose shapes what we pay attention to and what we work toward. We resist learning which serves no purpose in our lives. Activities which serve others' purposes rather than our own will not motivate the energy and engagement needed for deep learning.

Modern schooling tends to ignore the learning needs of individuals in favor of pre-defined State purposes. Such pre-defined State goals for education (which often remain as legacies of colonial interests) leave learners no space to define and pursue their own goals. Thus, schooling often feels irrelevant and tedious to students and can sour their desire for learning.

Connection. The mystical traditions within each religion describe the nature of reality as deeply interwoven and interconnected: divine energy is manifest in the multiple forms of life. In recent years, some physicists and biologists have arrived at similar insights. Rather than treating the world as Newton and his followers have done—as a mechanical clock, a machine to be analyzed and manipulated—they describe the world as a system of system, a web of webs, a dynamic reality of endless relationships (Capra & Steindl-Rast, 1991). The common ground being established between mystics and progressive scientists reminds us that learning, too, is about human connection. In a webbed world, we need to pay much greater attention to what is happening between people, rather than focusing exclusively on what is happening within isolated individuals. We learn in relationship with other people and through our relationships with the world (Palmer, 1983).

Indeed, learning is fundamentally social and community-intensive. The Institute for Research on Learning argues that we learn what enables us to participate in a community and contribute to its welfare. We learn in communities of practice. A community of practice is a group that engages in shared activity. Such communities could include the shop of a rug-weaver, a street of shoe-makers, or an office of computer programmers. The connections within a community enable ideas and insights to flow freely among its members. We participate in the activity of the community, gain access to its shared knowledge, observe models of mastery, and build relationships which inspire further learning.

In communities, connection is the key to learning and change. If we believe that a system already contains a rich base of knowledge and the desire for growth, then we can support its growth by connecting it to more of itself (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998). At the level of a school, for example, we might increase connection by structuring opportunities for children to work cooperatively on projects or, even better, work cooperatively with members of the community on projects which welcome them into local communities of practice. Overall, educators need to give greater value to relationship as a basis for learning and appreciate that students' capacity to build community is fundamental to the formation of a learning society.

The connection between spirituality and learning is important for the development of a learning society. A learning society will be concerned with "relationships, creative acts, a search for meaning that eclipses the economic" (Levinger, 1996). In a learning society, we realize that spiritual concerns are learning concerns. We cannot sustain a society in which our deepest human aspirations—our desires for meaning, purpose, and connection—are viewed as separate from the processes of learning. Alternatively, we cannot sustain a society in which learning is viewed as the purely consumerist accumulation of data.

Sterile, manipulative modes of education have left generations frustrated and hungry for a better way. Many of us seek greater integration and transformation in our work as educators and advocates of social change. Yet, in a pluralistic society, it is untenable to seek grounding for the spiritual development of public institutions and public life within a particular religious tradition. Instead, we can approach the re-spiriting of our work as a matter of learning. In light of the new understandings of human learning sketched out above, we now have opportunities to articulate dynamics of spiritual development in individuals, organizations, and society with dynamics of learning. This articulation of spirituality and learning can open new space for creative exchange between religious leaders, educators, and everyone concerned with alternative social development.

Religious scholar Robert Thurman (1996) notes that classical Indian civilization was deeply contemplative and developed a great spectrum of inner arts. As we consider ways to build a learning society, we might ask, what are the relationships between the inner arts of spirituality and the liberal arts of education? How can we engage in critical conversations about the quality of our religious experience and the wisdom which religious traditions offer for the renewal of educational practice? As the American educator Parker Palmer (1983) asks, "How can places where we learn to know become places where we learn to love?"

Along these lines, we might ask how religious traditions sculpt environments for learning. All religious traditions have deep pedagogical insights. Through prayer, chant, and ritual, religious practices enable participants to focus their attention, increase their self-awareness, and attune their consciousness to the interconnections among all people and all life. Ideally, religious rituals train us to realize meaning, purpose, and connection in daily experience. Rituals give people access to collective spiritual resources and provide guidance as we discern a path for ourselves through life—the ultimate path of learning we each walk (Cajete, 1994).

Of course, rituals can also become hollow habits, mere markers of compliance to behavioral prescription. When tradition becomes stale and no longer speaks to our lives, individuals and institutions must ask themselves: does participation in ritual open moments of vulnerability, of transformation? Does ritual open us to be known by that which is beyond us? Does ritual continue to bring us into intimate contact with otherness? By bringing us into contact with otherness, ritual can enable us to 'unlearn' normative modes of knowing and being. As the Jewish teacher Abraham Joschua

Heschel has said, “prayer is nothing if it is not subversive” (quoted in Kaiser, 1998). If ritual does not stand in some degree of tension with dominant ways of thinking and being, then it becomes time for its renewal.

People who maintain formal social institutions, whether educational or religious, often become more occupied with the perpetuation of their institutions than with reaching toward life’s greater goals. Critical spiritual inquiry—questions not of piety or orthodoxy but of meaning and purpose—can help people inside institutions examine the forces of domination in their lives in such a way that personal transformation might accompany institutional transformation.

Within the professional educational community, we need to reconsider the meaning of accountability. Currently, accountability is typically equated with the objective measurement of indicators of individual achievement, i.e., how well students are acquiring basic skills and knowledge. How might we rethink educational accountability in larger terms: as accountability for meaning, as accountability for collective learning, as accountability for participation in community life, as accountability for the cultivation of connection to, wonder about, and care for the human and physical worlds? As suggested by Beryl Levinger (1996), we need to be as serious about social cohesion, compassion, and creativity as we are about macro-level economic indicators. We need to appreciate learning as a web of transformative relationships rather than as a means of gaining control over others. Educators need to take seriously the variety of roles that human beings play throughout their life span, rather than focusing only on the student’s potential functionality within the modern economic sector.

Accordingly, opportunities are needed for innovation and experimentation—grounded in local needs and traditions—with hybrid models that intentionally bring spiritual insights to bear on educational practice and organizational forms. At this point in history, it is evident that learning is essential for contribution to community throughout our lives. Schooling which stifles meaning, purpose, and connection—in the name of rationalism and efficiency—diminishes human capacities and social growth in the long term.
Just as we attend to meaning, purpose, and connection in individual learning, we need a vocabulary for dialogue about the spiritual development of our institutions and our societies. As communities, how do we expand our collective capacities? Ongoing, cross-boundary dialogue is needed about the dimensions of our collective lives that we care to develop and the ways in which we can recognize such growth. Such dialogue can help revitalize educational discourse by advocating for the centrality of meaning, purpose, and connection in education and alleviating the hidden fear among many educators that ‘spirit talk’ will be branded as unprofessional, exclusivist, oppressive, or naiively romantic.

Fundamentally, a spiritual perspective on learning must problematize both a secular worldview and a fundamentalist worldview. The secular, objectivist perspective on reality—a vision of the world as dispirited matter available for human exploitation—separates human beings from nature, from community, and, ultimately, from participation in the subtle forces of creation. At the opposite end of the continuum, fundamentalism holds tightly to a specific religious orthodoxy, offering a single lens with which to view

the world. That lens is usually defined by traditional texts and religious leaders (typically men) who claim privileged access to sacred truths. While fundamentalist perspectives can open powerful windows on the spiritual nature of the world, they are limited by their concern for self-preservation, and limited in their capacity to transform themselves in support of human liberation.

In a contentious religious and cultural environment, it is difficult to talk about spirituality without falling into partisan debate about particular traditions or touching nerves raw with memories of oppression and violence. A great challenge of our time, then, involves lifting deep issues of the spirit to the surface and the center of public conversation while protecting them from appropriation by parochial interests or dismissal by cynical modernists. We must get beyond the simple polarization of secularism/fundamentalism, of atheism/orthodoxy. Such dichotomies leave no room for those of us who aspire to spirited learning, multi-faith community life, and a common future rich with connection, meaning, and purpose. Our challenge, as suggested by Diana Eck (1993), is to create a social learning environment in which different traditions can offer unique perspectives on shared concerns without monopolizing the conversation in their own terms. To create this environment, we must acknowledge the wounds of the past and listen heartfully to our shared aspirations for the future. We must have the courage to share our deepest truths while transcending ourselves and our institutional affiliations (Levinger, 1996). Otherwise, we may find it all too convenient to fall back into familiar securities and all too easy, as Krishnamurti (1953) notes, to discourage the critical inquiry of others for fear of what changes they may ask of us.

REFERENCES

Caine R. N. & Caine, G., Education on the Edge of Possibility. Alexandria, VI: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997. Cajete, G., Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education. Durango: Kivaki, 1994.

Capra, F. & Steindl-Rast, D., Belonging to the Universe: Explorations on the Frontiers of Science and Spirituality. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

Eck, D., Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Institute for Research on Learning., (n.d.) Learning Principles. Available at: http://www.irl.org

Kaiser, J., "Roundtable on Feminist Spirituality," Tikkun, 13(5), 1998.

Krishnamurti, J., Education and the Significance of Life. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1953.

Levinger, B., "Why are we Afraid of Spirituality in Political Debates?" Paper presented at the 21st Century Learning Initiative Wingspread Conference, Racine, Wisconsin, USA, 1996.

Palmer, P., To Know as We Are Known: Education as Spiritual Journey. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983.

Schank, R. C. & Cleave, J. B., "Natural Learning, Natural Teaching: Changing Human Memory," in H. Morowitz and J. Singer (Eds), The Mind, the Brain, and CAS. Santa Fe Institute Studies in the Sciences of Complexity. New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995.

Thurman, R. A., "Meditation and Education: Buddhist India, Tibet and Modern America." A paper for The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. Williamsburg, MA, 1996.

Wheatley, M. and Kellner-Rogers, M., A Simpler Way. San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler, 1996.

Wheatley, M. & Kellner-Rogers, M., "Bringing Life to Organizational Change." Journal of Strategic Performance Management, 1998.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vachel Miller <vmiller@educ.umass.edu> is a doctoral student at the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. He studies organizational change, learning, spirituality, and qualitative inquiry. He grew up in the American midwest and has taught English at Pamir Public School in Booni, NWFP, Pakistan. He hopes to contribute to new approaches to learning wherever life may lead him.

Re-connecting the Brain to Living and Learning[1]

Terry Ryan and John Abbott

So fast and so fundamental are the changes occurring within present society that each year brings a greater discontinuity with the past, and nowhere is this more the case than in education. Taken together these changes amount to an absolute disconnect between what was good practice for schools, and what we now know from research we should be doing. Disorienting change is not a new phenomenon: in 1927 Mercedes Benz produced 1700 cars, and management was so excited that they employed consultants to tell them what their growth potential over the next 50 years could be. Eventually the report came back: "By 1977 so fast will be the technological change that Mercedes could expect to produce 40,000 cars a year." The Directors threw out the report and sacked the consultants. "This is totally irresponsible," they reasoned. "There is no way schools could train 40,000 chauffeurs a year!" The point here is that technological, economic, scientific and social change at the beginning of the 21st century is moving at such a rapid speed, that what seemed reasonable in the very recent past no longer does today. This is a cautionary tale, for what may seem reasonable today can very well look as foolish to future generations, as the 1927 comments of the Mercedes Benz directors looks to us today.

THE DISCONNECTS

As people in various lands rethink education for the new century, at least four disconnects have to be considered. They are all interconnected in their implications.
(See table on opposite page).

Industrial Age Assumptions ———versus——— Today's Realities	
The Economy	
In the Industrial Age most work was organized hierarchically. Only relatively few people at the top needed to be creative, imaginative and enterprising. Most workers had to be good only at performing highly precise, structured and repetitious tasks necessitating a high degree of discipline but little personal initiative. Understanding of the total business process was unnecessary and discouraged.	Today's successful businesses tend to be highly decentralized and rely on continuous innovation at all levels. Almost all workers have now to be able to think for themselves, take personal responsibility, identify new opportunities and training needs, and understand the relationship of their business to that of others. Workers must be able to adapt rapidly without waiting for external direction.
Learning	
Learning was assumed to be largely an individual activity and a consequence of formal instruction. Differences in individual levels of intelligence were regarded as hereditary and immutable. Superior intellects were	Learning is a collaborative problem-solving activity that involves far more than instruction alone. It occurs through progressive construction of individual knowledge, not simply through information transfer.

relatively few. Learning tasks were strictly gradated, because it was assumed that only a few youngsters as they got older were capable of "real, meaningful learning." This tiny minority itself had to be "tutored by professionals." Real learning occurred only in schools, so children were removed from the "negative influences" of the community.	Intelligence is at least partially learnable. Learning is multi-tasked and involves the use of multiple forms of intelligences. Adolescents thrive when they are given the skills in primary education that enable them progressively to take responsibility for their own learning. Individual learning is driven by the need "to make sense," and by the strength of intrinsic motivation.
The Brain	
Because so little was known at a technical level about the structure and operation of the brain, philosophers assumed that it was "an empty vessel waiting to be filled." The early experiences of very young children were seen to be of little significance; learning began at school. In the late 1960's the metaphor shifted to that of a linear computer waiting to be programmed, and so external inputs not motivation were seen to drive learning. Emotions were extraneous to formal education.	Brain research now describes "predispositions" inherited from our evolutionary past, which are best described as a collection of "successful adaptation skills." Critical to the brain's healthy development are prenatal health, a challenging, stimulating and reassuring environment in the first four or five years of life followed by plenty of opportunity to develop practical involvement in the growth years, and personal responsibility during adolescence.
Learning Technologies	
Valid learning was dependent on close association with an expert who utilized 'chalk and talk' to convey information. Learning depended upon verbal assimilation and memorization, checked by tests, all at a specific time, in a specific place, and in a stepped relationship to other learning.	New information communication technologies expand enormously opportunities for individual and group learning. They offer multi-sensory, reflective, and collaborative learning environments unconstrained by time, place and formal structures. These encourage exploration and discovery thus supporting students in the construction of new understandings.

When these four disconnects are considered as interrelated pieces it becomes apparent that a successful learning community in the 21st century will see learning as going well beyond that which takes place just in the school. The reason for this becomes even clearer when one looks at the learning needs of young people from a constructivist perspective. The premise of constructivism is that the brain of each child structures his or her own knowledge of the world into a unique pattern, connecting each new fact, experience, or

understanding in a subjective way that binds the child's thinking into rational and meaningful relationships to the wider world. Constructivist learning is the dynamic interaction between the environment and the individual brain. Learning is open-ended, as is the neural structure of the brain. This is an important fact because in most countries students spend less than 20 percent of their waking hours in a classroom (see "Teaching Time"). Because of the constructivist nature of the brain the learning of children does not stop at the schoolhouse door, and in fact may rarely even begin there.

Lauren Resnick, one of America's foremost educational researchers, noted more than a decade ago in a speech to her colleagues in the international research community that, "the process of schooling seems to encourage the idea that the 'game of school' is to learn symbolic rules of various kinds, that there is not supposed to be much continuity between what one knows outside school and what one learns in school. There is growing evidence; then, that not only may schooling not contribute in a direct and obvious way to performance outside school, but also that knowledge acquired outside school is not always used to support in-school learning. Schooling is coming to look increasingly isolated from the rest of what we do" (Resnick, 1987). If we continue to operate under Industrial Age assumptions about learning, children will increasingly see that what they do in school has little relevance to the opportunities and problems they encounter in the real world.

This evidence dictates that learning arrangements move well beyond what occurs just in a classroom — it requires a whole new understanding of a learning community — and that involves everyone, not just teachers. The education system of the future will need to actively respect and permeate learning opportunities throughout the entire culture. This form of open dynamic learning will in fact not be seen as a system, but rather as a way of life. Learning will be something that we all recognize, encourage and actively support through community participation and the power of the connected world of information communication technology.

It is not that the age of the school is dead, but rather we are entering an age where what needs to be learnt and unlearnt is shifting faster than the slow moving institution of schools alone can cope with. Schools are only part of the equation for those interested in trying to determine how to best prepare young people for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century. Thus, for those who pin their hopes on issues of school effectiveness and the mantras of high standards, improving test scores, and accountability we argue that you're missing many of the central issues that must inform learning policy. Or more simply put, education reform is only a subcomponent of the more significant issue of how we go about creating a learning society.

A SWEEPING SHIFT IN ORIENTATION?

An awareness is growing in many places that a one-size-fits-all education system does not work very well, and that this fact might somehow be related to the disconnect between the way education systems operate, the natural workings of the brain, and the economic needs of democratic societies in the Information Age. It is for this reason that various groups around the world are beginning to "call for a sweeping shift in orientation,

from institution, schools and programs to learners and learning." (The OECD, 1998). However, despite the calls for such a shift the problem, as with many good policy ideas, is that focusing on learning and learners rather than schools, institutions and teachers collides head on with the three **I's**.

First, there is **Ignorance**, or more accurately, lack of awareness and confusion. At a very basic level the general public, policy people, and politicians do not know very much about brain science, the science of learning, the history of education, or even innovative educational practice. The problem of this lack of awareness is compounded by the speed at which new findings about the brain and learning are emerging from the world's laboratories, universities and research centers. With the ever-growing number of PhDs from universities, and the ever increasing power of new technologies, the rate of occurrence of new and stunning facts about the brain and learning are almost impossible for even the most avid reader to keep up with. Added to this difficulty is that scientists employ language, techniques, and ways of thinking that are powerful and effective in their field, but that are hard to articulate for non-specialists. This means most people, including policymakers, who read about new findings in science get their information through the filters of the mass media. We are showered almost daily with articles in newspapers and magazines about scientific discoveries relevant to the workings of the mind and human learning. Even more frustrating than trying to keep pace with all the new understandings is the fact that it often seems to thoughtful lay people that what they think they know as true can quickly become passé.

Second, there is **Interests**. Those people in positions of influence over current systems of education see their role as managing the current system, not challenging it. This means it is in their interest to defend the system from those who advocate changes that would seek to disperse power away from institutions and their control towards learners and community groups. It is in the interest of those in positions of authority to manage rather than lead for the simple fact there is far less risk and exposure to controversy by not rocking the boat. Managers work within the rules of the system and to the needs of the system. They tell subordinates what to do in order to make the system, as it is currently structured, more efficient. Besides, why challenge a system that has been good to you personally?

Finally, there is **Ideology**. The political Left has traditionally argued that education is about helping young people function as independent thinkers committed to universal values and rights, while the Right has traditionally argued that education is about inducting young people into the values of the state and industrial workplace. Subsequently, discussion around education has been stuck between competing political ideologies that argue learning is either flexible, experiential and progressive, or strictly formal, disciplined and logical. The former has been deemed to belong to the Political Left, while the Right has owned the latter. Despite the political difficulties, from the perspective of successful learning, what seems clear from all the evidence accumulated is that both sides of the ideological divide have had it partly right and partly wrong. Without a greater sense of the relationship between the two traditional ideological extremes then policymakers and educationalists will simply oscillate from one to the other, always

claiming they are trying to equip their young people to face the challenge of change, without really changing.

RE-INTEGRATING THE GENERATIONS AROUND LEARNING

The evidence presented here calls for an organized middle way. To repeat - constructivism is not only an open-ended form of learning; it is essentially about reality, connectivity, and the search for purpose. It is about all those things that motivate a young person to excel and take responsibility for his own learning and future. A constructivist form of learning matches the brain's natural learning patterns. We argue further that if we can develop learning arrangements that honor the principles of constructivism then young people will thrive in an open and rapidly changing technological, social and economic environment. Constructivist learning dictates that learning arrangements move beyond what occurs in a classroom; it requires a whole new understanding of a learning community - and the involvement of everyone, not just teachers. The arguments raised here can provide the starting point for those seeking effective long-term educational change and those committed to the revitalization of communities by re-integrating the generations.

Akilu Habte, former Chancellor of the University of Addis Abada in Ethiopia, captured the significance of re-integrating the generations around the learning of young people when he asked a conference of policymakers in 1995, "Have you ever stopped to think what the over-emphasis on western education has done to my country, and countries like it?" Habte noted the unintended consequences of a singular focus on schooling when he said, "You came to Africa and told us that our traditional way of learning (apprenticeship) was 'out-of-date.' You said that our way of formulating knowledge was inappropriate. You emphasized the dominance of narrowly defined intellectual skills. We listened too carefully to your advice. So we told parents that they needed to care for their children only when they were very young, but that 'proper' learning would now be organized by professionals in schools. The old men were saddened as no one wanted to learn their wisdom, and the old women mourned for the grandchildren would never come and talk to them. We emphasized higher education, and our students did well. So well that they were over-qualified and there were no longer challenging jobs for them in Ethiopia. They started to leave for lucrative careers in America, in Europe, and in Australia. Many of them left our country for good, denying it the leadership it desperately needed. Society became increasingly unstable. We had, as it were, too many people trained to be clerks but few who were wise enough to be leaders."

REFERENCES:

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, Education Policy Analysis. Paris: OECD, 1998.

Resnick, Lauren B., "The 1987 Presidential Address: Learning In School and Out." Educational Researcher, December 1987.

"Teaching Time", Education at a Glance. OECD: Indicators 1998. Paris: OECD, 1998.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Terry Ryan <info@21learn.org> is senior researcher of the 21st Century Learning Initiative <www.21learn.org>. He has worked as a teacher in Poland and with educational NGOs in countries throughout East Central Europe. Since 1995, Ryan has worked closely with leading researchers, educational innovators, thinkers, business leaders and policy makers from many countries in developing documentation, public presentations and curriculum to extend the learning agenda beyond the walls of the school.

John Abbott <info@21learn.org> is President of the 21st Century Learning Initiative. He has been both a teacher and principal and introduced Britain's first fully-computerized classroom. Director of Education 2000 Trust since 1985, he has been involved in the development of techniques and environments that enable young people to have confidence in their ability to become lifelong learners. In 1997, he was invited by Mikhail Gorbachev to join the State of the World Forum.

1 Please Note: The ideas addressed in this article are developed further in Ryan and Abbott's book *The Unfinished Revolution* to be published later in the year 2000. For advanced copies please contact the 21st Century Learning Initiative at <info@21learn.org>.

Diversity in Education in an Era of Globalization

Anita Dighe

These are turbulent times. The forces of globalization have engulfed most countries in the present world. Globalization is reinforcing and perpetuating the existing unequal relationships of power and income between the First World and the rest of the world, and creating massive upheavals in communities. Globalization is also sparking a revolution in information and communication technology (ICT) which is ushering in an Information Age that promises to bring about new levels of global interconnectedness. Yet this is also creating new challenges. A widening of the gap between the 'information-rich' and the 'information-deprived' is taking place at the international, national and local levels. Also, the rapid changes that are now occurring in all countries are requiring that knowledge and skills be updated continuously.

In India, the impact of globalization is now beginning to be felt. With the economic restructuring, fast developing changes are bringing about important transformations at various levels. Signs of marginalization of vast sections of the Indian population in terms of growing disparities in income, health care facilities, and other measures of well being, are becoming increasingly visible. Overcoming this process of marginalization requires concerted efforts on many fronts: political, social, economic and educational. The formal system of education, however, is still ill-equipped to respond to the challenges of globalization.

Masses of adult men and women are still inadequately prepared to participate in the emerging global society as parents, workers and citizens. Concerted attention to their learning needs would have to be paid in order to stem the divisive and destructive forces of globalization and of economic restructuring. Likewise, rather than meekly succumbing to the onslaught of the ICTs, there would be need to create learning spaces whereby communities can understand and critically reflect on the changes taking place around them and explore and develop new approaches for bringing about positive changes in their lives and in the lives of those to come.

The 1990s could be said to have been a decade that helped develop universal awareness and collective mobilization vis-à-vis education. The goals set at Jomtien to provide Education for All (EFA) have sought to guide educational policy and practice around the world. Recognizing the importance of moving beyond a narrow concept of basic education, the World Education for All document stated, "what is needed is an 'expanded vision' that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula, and conventional delivery systems while building on the best in current practices" (Article 2). From the beginning, EFA has underscored the need for each country to adapt the principles and goals to country-specific objectives and mandates and to establish its own plans of action and its own programmes. In other words, EFA has recognized the need for flexibility and adaptability to suit local contexts and specific circumstances. This has been reiterated in subsequent EFA documents.

Experience, however, has shown that while flexibility was considered to be desirable, in reality, uniformity has still remained the practice. The Indian experience has shown that far from reaching the EFA goals, the World Bank-funded District Primary Education Project (DPEP) has become a 'blue-print' for providing basic education to children, inasmuch as the Post Literacy and Continuing Education phases of the government-funded Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs) became a uniform model for providing education to adults. Clearly, there is a disconnect between EFA statements and what has been happening on the ground.

If there is a growing realization of the desirability of flexibility and diversity and of the need to move away from a 'one size fits all' mentality in education, what vision of development is this thinking related to? According to Rogers (1999), there have been three main development discourses that have influenced the field of adult education. The first discourse is based on **deficit**, the second on **disadvantage** and the third on **diversity**. The deficit discourse suggests that societies, communities and individuals are lacking in material resources, skills, training, and/or attitudinal resources and that development can take place if the identified deficits can be met. Many literacy programmes of the 1950s and 1960s were built on such a deficit discourse. The discourse on disadvantage seeks answers to the question "Why are some people kept poor?" Rather than blaming the poor, it seeks to identify oppressive structures and the attitudes of the privileged as the cause of under-development, and advocates social action and empowerment of the participant groups for bringing about change. Freirean-based literacy programmes belong to this category.

The discourse on diversity not only sees participant groups as capable of development on their own but also sees them as being already engaged in daily processes of self and community development. Rather than outside 'experts' planning and designing programmes for meeting the needs of different groups, the diversity discourse allows for greater decision-making on the part of the participant groups. Educational programmes emerging from this discourse would thus look for increasingly diverse solutions rather than propogating universal solutions for all.

According to Torres (2000), if the ultimate aim of education is learning and learning has to meet the needs and interests of learners, diversity must become the norm, not the exception. The answer is not designing remedial and compensatory programmes for the poor, the adolescent girls, indigenous groups, street and working children, migrant population. Rather than accepting that there is one single pattern for everybody, what is required is designing diversified educational models that meet the specific needs of each group. This would then mean that learning and achievement expectations would also have to be diverse. The challenge would be to ensure that in each case, quality education which is meaningful/relevant to each learner, but does not create new forms of discrimination, is provided to all. If spaces could be created for individuals and communities to define quality education, the diversified education model would then, in some measure, be addressing the tension that exists between issues of diversity, equality and equity. This would also require relevant context-specific research, connected with meaningful and broad consultation and participation.

Education thus far has been artificially divided into categories such as ‘basic education,’ and/or ‘post literacy’ and ‘continuing education’ for adults. If we recognize that individuals and communities are constantly learning and are constructing/sharing knowledge even when there are no formal educational programmes, we would understand the importance of building a learning society grounded in the diversity discourse.

The value of the discourse of ‘diversity’ becomes evident when we see that today there is a growing realization that development strategies have to become people-centric. People have to be looked at mainly as ‘solutions’ rather than as ‘problems’ that they have tended to be so far. Local citizens’ movements and alternative institutions are emerging to meet basic economic needs, to preserve local traditions, to establish ecological chains, and to struggle for human rights and dignity. As a response to forces of globalization, more and more people are beginning to work out their own strategies for survival and development and, in the process, are connecting with people across the world.

Facing these challenges and taking advantage of emerging opportunities calls for a complete change of mind-set among policymakers, planners, administrators, academicians, researchers and people at large. Whether this will happen, remains to be seen.

REFERENCES:

Rogers, Alan, “The Implications of Increasing Diversity in Education in Developing Societies”, background paper for the Second Uppingham Seminar on Discourse and Diversity, February 24-26, 2000.

Torres, Rosa Maria, “Acknowledging Diversity and the Need for Context-Specific and Culture-Sensitive Responses”, <MSG-26666-2.html>, 1999.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anita Dighe <ignoucee@ndf.vsnl.net.in> is Director of Extension Education at the Indira Gandhi National Open University in New Delhi. She has researched and written extensively on India’s experiences with literacy and adult education. Her current interests include the use of information and communication technologies in adult learning.

Rethinking Decentralization for Nurturing Learning Societies

Shilpa Jain

WHY DO WE NEED A PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE DISCOURSE ON DECENTRALIZATION?

Along with universalizing factory-schooling, the other mantra floating around the Development circuit (by this I mean, those individuals, NGOs, consulting companies, and bi- and multi-lateral donor agencies who are very busy 'Developing' the world) is "governments should decentralize and people should participate in democratic governance." Sounds like a fairly innocuous, even laudable goal, right? After all, today we see the tremendously negative impact big centralized States have had (and continue to have) on the people of their country – incompetent political elites steam-rolling over the voices and views of millions, corruptly looting resources Left and Right, forcing 'nationalism' upon indigenous ethnically/ linguistically/culturally diverse peoples, making unsavory deals with multinational companies and donor aid agencies, unconscionably driving their people into deeper poverty, while cheerfully increasing the bulge in their own pocketbooks.

And the biggest irony of all is that the State has somehow managed to brainwash us into believing that we *need* it: to protect us from the Market (which is its own bedfellow), to regulate the Media (which it also owns and controls), to make India into a world power (which means nothing to over 99% of us), and to save us from our ugly selves (through laws, jails, representatives, etc.). In the face of all of this, political decentralization — where, as the rhetoric goes, 'the power is in the hands of the people' — should be a much welcomed, uncontestable change, at least from the perspective of the Development circuit.

Like their above-mentioned 'Good Governance' cronies, the 'Education for All' (EFA) crowd also wholeheartedly embraces decentralization and people's participation. These terms translate into greater parent/community involvement in promoting school attendance, local school management, or civil society-government "dialogue, decision-making, and innovation around the EFA goals for basic education."[1] From their perspective, "governments must put in place regular mechanisms for dialogue enabling citizens and civil society organizations to contribute to the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of basic education."[2] Again, it all sounds fairly reasonable. After all, without 'Education for All', how will we all Progress and Develop? As the argument typically goes, If local people plan and implement their own version of EFA (with government assistance, of course) then soon everyone will have received a basic education, illiteracy will be eradicated, and the world will be a better place.

Unfortunately, what is missing from both discourses is a critical and constructive analysis of what decentralization means in a deeper sense. The truth is, the Development circuit as a whole does not want to 'rock the boat' by seriously challenging or changing the underlying power structures, notions of roles, responsibilities, and relationships, or the vision of Development that suffocates our humanity today. They fall into the trap of viewing decentralized political or education structures as, at their best, vehicles for

making the delivery of State/Market goods and services more efficient, and thereby ensuring an expedient achievement of Development. They fail to see 'decentralized participation' as little more than a form of insidious manipulation, to ensure that all the world's people succumb to a uniform vision of human beings, human knowledge, human relationships, and human progress. **Thus, while it is true that learning societies must grow from local communities, this cannot happen within the current framework of decentralization.**

In this article, I will argue that a paradigm shift in the concept of decentralization and peoples' participation is necessary, if we are serious about nurturing learning societies for the 21st century. It requires that we move away from artificially-imposed, State-sponsored, 'structural democracy' (where good governance is equated with the mere existence of political parties, administration, voting, reservations, and representatives), and move instead towards more organic and dynamic ways of democratic living and being — where good 'governance' is intrinsic, growing out of learning processes that enable each of us to realize our full human and collective potential and to transform our roles, responsibilities, and relationships towards greater justice, ecological connectedness, and meaningfulness. Such a paradigm shift must occur on three parallel levels: (1) re-thinking the locus of the 'problem' and of potential solutions; (2) re-conceptualizing the 'decentralized body'; and (3) re-envisioning relationships and identities.

KEY DIMENSIONS OF AND SPACES FOR THE PARADIGM SHIFT

India offers us an exciting platform from which to engage in this paradigm shift, as it has implemented several laws (the 73rd and 74th amendments and the Provision of Panchayats Extension to Scheduled V Areas (PESA) Act) that have facilitated 'decentralization' to the village level.[3] Both *gram panchayats* (the group of elected representatives at the village level) and *gram sabhas* (literally, "village meetings," where every voting man and woman can hypothetically come together to engage in collective decision-making processes) are structurally mandated in all the states of India. Yet, for the most part, these local units have been mal- or mis-functioning. Local elites have managed to manipulate the power and resources of the *panchayat* to their advantage, while the *gram sabhas* have served as little more than 'boxing rings', where people seek to knock-out one another to get onto the list of potential beneficiaries for the latest government scheme. Ironically, with decentralization, the channels of power and privilege have become further concentrated and contested over. Men and women alike experience abuse and supress one another along narrow caste, class, and gender lines,[4] the natural environment is destroyed in the name of Development, and the overall conditions of the villages further deteriorate. By nearly all accounts (with the so-called exception of Kerala, which I will come to later), State-sponsored decentralization in India is a farce.

Unfortunately, when discussions around these experiences occur, the first (and often only) solution that comes to mind is to increase the number of procedural regulations upon the *gram sabha* and *gram panchayat* (or village education committees, as the case may be). If the discussants are feeling unusually creative, sometimes they suggest

checking such 'transgressions' with legal action, police involvement, or public hearings. Underlying all these solutions remains the mindset that people cannot manage their own affairs, that the State knows what's best for us all, and that it has a *right* to intervene on *our* behalf. Perhaps, it is Ambedkar's ghost whispering softly into our ears, "The village is a cesspool, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and communalism," that leads us to believe that the only way to Develop these villages is to fully force the State-Market's agenda of Development upon them.[5] Random stories of dowry deaths, caste prejudices, landlord and *bania* exploitation, and child marriages serve to further silence any challenge to the Development frenzy. Of course, as India *is* a democracy after all, we need not use military force to achieve this goal (though perhaps they did not tell the people in Nagaland, Jammu & Kashmir, and the Andaman Islands that). We have parliaments, schools, courts, media, industries, etc. to more subtly reinforce the idea that 'common people' in the village can do nothing, will achieve nothing, are nothing, and therefore, *they need Our Help*.

Thus, in rethinking decentralization, the first paradigm shift revolves around how we see the locus of the problem. We must come out of the mindset that the rural poor are responsible for all of India's problems and instead draw attention to this attitude of the so-called 'educated'. In calling for this shift, I am not romanticizing the village; I do not claim that problems do not exist within *panchayats* or *gram sabhas*, or that class, caste and gender abuses do not still occur in villages. However, I am arguing that the way the 'educated' have considered solving these problems is fundamentally flawed. We look to Big Brother, the State, or the System as whole, to take care of them, to 'eradicate poverty', to 'fix' those 'illiterate, backward' people, to Educate and Develop them (once and for all). We rarely think that perhaps it is this very System that is causing the problems, that perhaps if the parasitic mainstream changed its attitudes and behaviors, the marginalized would find the spaces and opportunities they need to redress these grievances on their own.

In fact, the mainstream must abandon its 'I am superior - you are inferior' mentality and begin to revalue and respect the diversity of culture and context that exists in the world. Indeed, such diversity may be our only hope for survival. We must realize that the kinds of knowledges, values, wisdoms, intelligences, and meaning-making systems required to get us out of this Development mess (to which the messes of factory-schooling, modernization, globalization, privatization, liberalization, neo-colonization, mechanization, techno-imperialism may be added) may actually only grow out of the so-called 'ignorant' villages. To paraphrase Albert Einstein, we must understand that we cannot hope to solve problems using the same thinking that produced them in the first place. In other words, using State-sponsored decentralization to 'tinker with' and 'make more efficient' a catastrophe-laden System will not reconcile the crises before us. We can draw lessons from those before us, like *Ujaama* in Tanzania, the Castro-led revolution in Cuba, or the last 50 years of Development in India and around the world, to see how such prescriptive social engineering fails. Instead, for serious transformation, we must ask critical questions about the System itself, while simultaneously seeking out and building from diverse contextualized realities.

Secondly, for nurturing learning societies for the 21st century, we must also re-conceptualize the 'decentralized body': What are the visions of these collective local/community-based decision-making bodies? Today, the *gram sabha* is an institutionalized, State-sponsored body that, at its best, audits and regulates the panchayat's or State officials' actions, or engages in 'planning' efforts. If I were to put on my skeptical hat, I would call it a microcosm of dirty state or central government politics, where voting and political parties are used to fight over narrow interests within the dominant vision of Development. Others have termed the *gram sabha* simply a survival space, where 'enemies' determine the agenda and villages/tribals struggle to carve out their own space for survival against parasitic city/Nation-State interests.[6] Such 'visions' of the *gram sabha* are reminiscent of Gandhiji's (1938) own dislike for parliaments, which he saw as prostituting themselves to power plays and incapable of producing anything of substance or meaning from their existence.

But a paradigm shift requires that we think of 'decision-making bodies' differently. For example, could the *gram sabha* be an organic body, the entirety of the village, in their various roles, relationships, and responsibilities, coming together in one space to take decisions, be they of a political, economic, or social nature? Or, even more creatively, could the '*gram sabha*' be understood as a multiplicity of self-organizing processes, attitudes, relationships, and spaces that catalyze and nurture communities of learning and unlearning? Not only would such a vision enable village people to challenge the crippling crises before them — economic exploitation, mind-numbing mass media, violence, cynicism, loss of language, land degradation — but it would also pave the way for greater justice, ecological balance, self-respect, self-reliance, and meaningful living and being. Most importantly, these varied and interrelated learning opportunities could offer people the chance to conceptually engage with the serious questions, "What is Education? Education for What? What is Development? Development for What?", instead of being forced to blindly submit to the ready-made answers/agendas of NGOs, the State-Market, or International Agencies.

The third aspect of the paradigm shift therefore emerges from the first two. If we agree that the locus of the problem is the mainstream and not the marginalized, and that the 'decentralized body' must be comprised of organic, dynamic learning processes, then it follows that we must re-envision our roles, relationships, and responsibilities as individual human beings and parts of the larger human collective. Not only must we each unlock our vast human potential, but we must also redefine what we mean to each other. Village/marginalized people must 'unlearn' the dependency syndrome that afflicts them, the deep conditioning that has forced a loss of Self and Community, as well as an 'acceptance' of oppression and domination. City/mainstream people must 'unlearn' the arrogance, greed, and materialism that allow them to thoughtlessly live out a parasitic, ruthless existence. Rabindranath Tagore (1998) articulated the need for such a transformation of relationship, to end the "fatness of cities and the physical and mental anaemia of the villages" and re-establish a "spirit of cooperation, mutual benefit, unity, and self-sacrifice" between the two. With vast scope to reflect, challenge, critique, resist, dream, reclaim, revalue, create, connect, dialogue, experiment, grow, and regenerate,

human relations would transform from 'survival of the fittest', 'might is right', or 'local governance' to more liberating, constructive, and soulful senses of living and being: *Swaraj*.

RESPONDING TO THE CRITICS

Ah, well and good, the cynics say, such unfettered idealism always provides a good laugh. To such unabashed pessimism, I have three responses. First, I recognize the great challenges to such a paradigm shift. Though physically few in number, the vested interests in this System are powerful, and they are not going to freely hold open the door to peoples' real learning and transformative participation. The System will spend much time creating illusions to make us believe that we are free, primarily relying on its traditional mechanisms of manufacturing hegemony/consent (slick advertising/social marketing campaigns, divisive identity-based politics, legislation, and factory-schools).

Many of us will likely swallow these illusions — peoples' planning in Kerala or PRA, being two noteworthy examples — and claim that we have achieved our goal of giving 'power to the people'. We will fail to see that Kerala's planning and PRA are simple subterfuges: Neither offer real spaces to deeply question our underlying assumptions about the purpose of education or the meanings of progress, success, and development. Nor do people's planning in Kerala and PRA provide scope for resisting or rejecting the dominant Model, much less creating or experimenting with one's own ways of living, being, growing, and learning. Rather, they use outside 'experts' to convince people that this is The Development they *need*, that there are no other alternatives, regardless of their diverse values, meaning-making systems, etc., and that this Conclusion (to build a school, or a road, or a dam) must be valid because 'networking' and 'collaboration' exist in the methods they are employing. But in fact, they trick us once again. By allowing the System to think for us, such illusions make us even more dependent on it. We *plan* together; we *replicate* together; but, we don't learn (and unlearn and relearn) together.

Even more of a threat will be the System's attempt to co-opt peoples' learning movements, as it has done in the past and continues to do today. The System will back movements into a corner, forcing them to play by its rules, or to be wiped out of existence. In this process of 'engagement', the System counts on the fact that, by throwing a few crumbs, some individuals will be 'perverted', will re-engage in a politics of the Other, will forgo self-reflection, and will defect from the movement. Such defectors will help to re-establish a dependency on the System, restore its hegemonic control, and reaffirm the oppressor-oppressed power dynamic. Today's panchayats — given the problems they experience from accepting State funding and the State's agenda — could be considered living examples of this phenomenon. Therefore, let the cynics not mistake such a vision for naivete. I, like others committed to such transformation, am well aware of the challenges. However, unlike the cynics, we are willing to confront them head-on and not be placated by thinly-disguised 'reform'.

Second, I respond to the cynics' Ambedkar-like rationale. They imply that because injustices of gender, caste, class, etc. exist in villages today, how can one rely on something as immaterial and spiritual (god forbid) as faith in human beings, as the root of

change? Actually, the answer to this criticism boils down to what one believes about human beings and human collectives. When given a choice, will they tend towards 'goodness'? More importantly, can they learn, unlearn, and relearn? Do human beings have the capacities for self-discipline, for changing themselves, and for caring of one another and the world around them? As I said above, I do not wish to romanticize the village. But, I do believe the answers to the above are all a resounding yes.

I also think that the cynics engage in such stigmatization of the village in order to keep our eyes off of the injustices committed by the 'urban' and the 'educated,' which proportionally have wreaked far greater havoc on humanity. After all, it is much easier to blame an upper-caste male for his abuse of women and dalits, than to question the abuses committed by the Tatas or Monsanto or the Government of India or the CIA. Unfortunately, even many of those who recognize and are trying to fight against the exploitation produced by faceless, faraway Globalization/State-ization fall into the trap of equating it with local level abuses, thus missing the nuanced understanding that is required to mitigate and transform both kinds of dehumanization.

Finally, the cynics say that such a change will be difficult and will take a long time. But when did anything worth having come quick and easy? If we agree that a System of oppression, exploitation, thought-control, and dehumanization has stubbornly taken root the world over, and it is having catastrophic effects on the vast majority of its population, is it not our responsibility to attempt to dismantle it and regenerate/create something(s) better?

A paradigm shift in the concept of decentralization will take time, no doubt. It also requires that we find spaces for these constructive learning and unlearning processes to occur at all levels, in continuous, organic, and dynamic ways, which eventually (gasp!) will weaken/eliminate the strong, interventionist State, as well as the Global Market Economy, Factory-Schooling, Massive Media, etc. In fact, the mechanisms, tools, and processes used to nurture and facilitate learning in peoples' collectives will have to very consciously work on dismantling the System from within and without, guarding against co-optation, indoctrination, and status-quo entropy, by constantly carving out spaces for learning and unlearning. So yes, of course, time, space, and processes are the keys to transformation. But to imagine that a quick-fix solution could resolve the complex crises before us would only be more naïve.

At the heart of any discussions on decentralization and participation, whether in the EFA discourse or in Good Governance circles, must be emancipatory, vibrant visions of human relationships, roles, and responsibilities. These visions not only envelop our Political and Economic Selves and Communities to contextually re-define what 'Good Governance' means, they are also crucial to understanding and evolving our Social, Spiritual, Cultural and Learning Selves and Communities. Through such processes of deep learning at all levels, with spaces for resisting, rejecting, reclaiming, and regenerating, people can take decentralization and participation to their full ends: the creation of just, meaningful, and sustainable learning societies for the 21st century.

REFERENCES:

"The Dakar Framework Draft. Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments," April 2000.

M.K. Gandhi. Hind Swaraj. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1938.

Dipankar Sinha, "Indian Democracy: Exclusion and Communication," in Economic and Political Weekly, August 7, 1999.

R. Tagore, "City and Village", in The Collected English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore. Calucutta: Sahitya Akademi, 1998.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shilpa Jain <shilpa@swaraj.org> is a learning activist for Shikshantar in Udaipur, India. Through her work at Shikshantar and previous experiences with international development organizations in Washington, DC, such as Creative Associates and the Academy for Educational Development, she has conducted research on several areas of education and development: democratic living, conflict transformation, creativity, Gram Sabhas and Panchayati Raj Institutions, the role of NGOs in civic participation, systemic reform, community participation, and equity education. Shilpa also loves learning from/with children and youth and has had extensive experience doing so around issues of self-esteem, creativity, collaboration, identity, and conflict resolution. She hopes to continue researching and activating the link between learning and social-political-economic transformation, and the role of children and youth in these learning processes. Shilpa has a B.A. magna cum laude in Political Science and Women's Studies from Harvard University.

1 "The Dakar Framework Draft. Education for All: Meetting Our Collective Commitments."

2 Ibid.

3 I put decentralization in quotes, because in many respects, the laws are fundamentally flawed. I have analyzed the 73rd amendment elsewhere (in "Redefining the Politics of Presence: The Case of Indian Women in Panchayat Raj Institutions", Shilpa Jain, Harvard University, 1998) to demonstrate in detail the problems with the law, as implemented in Rajasthan and Kerala. Others have done the same with the PESA act (see papers produced by the *Project on Panchayati Raj and Empowering Gram Sabhas*). Nonetheless, such laws are worth mentioning, not only because they are a rare occurance in the world, but also because they can potentially constitute a step in the direction of rethinking governance and development.

4 See Dipankar Sinha's "Indian Democracy: Exclusion and Communication" in Economic and Political Weekly, August 7, 1999, where he argues that the current political and economic structure actually forces the emergence of identity-based politics, as it "fails to establish a communication network wide enough to take into account and to involve people from all segments of society."

5 Reference to B.R. Ambedkar, one of the architects of the Indian Constitution,and his oft-quoted feelings about the total worthlessness of the village (as he advocated for a strong,centralized Indian State). Quoted in George Mathew and Ramesh C. Nayak, Panchayats at Work: What it Means for the Oppressed? New Delhi: Institute of Social Sciences, 1996, p.1.

6 Pradip Prabhu, of Kashtakari Sanghatna, recently shared this example of a *gram sabha*, when discussing issues around peoples' movements and strategies of struggle, conscientization, and empowerment, at the

“Building Community Capacities and Resources for Self-Governance” conference, in Delhi, February 26-28, 2000.

Education and Svaraj in a Time of Svarth[1]

Kishore Saint

There was a time not so long ago when education, as a calling and mission, provided inspiration and hope alike to teachers and parents, administrators and thinkers. Today, even as the advocacy for schooling reaches a feverish pitch in campaign headlines, there are serious doubts whether its promises can be fulfilled and claims justified. The damage wrought by the successes and failures of the educational system is becoming manifest in the deterioration of the human condition. The great hope at the beginning of the 20th century about education as the harbinger of democracy (John Dewey) and a bulwark against catastrophe (H.G. Wells) has been belied by the tragic situations of contemporary civilization and of the earth's natural endowment at the end of the century. It is important to recall the critiques of schooling that emerged alongside the campus revolts of the 1960s, pointing to its dehumanizing, domesticating and spirit-breaking character. These culminated in the call for 'deschooling society,' which has hitherto remained unheeded.

New developments in the science of human information and communication technology, funded by commercial corporate and defence establishments, have opened up fresh avenues for the control of human learning and human beings. These not only influence educational content and practice, but they extend the scope of education beyond the institution of schools. More significantly, they dramatically enhance the role of mass media as a means of shaping social, economic and political behavior. The media and schooling systems have become increasingly captive to the engines of global political economy, fueled by the impulses of unlimited and unrestrained greed.

In the Indian context, issues around the purpose, quality and scope of education have been the concerns of social, intellectual and political leadership from the time of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Lord Macaulay, if not earlier. The cultural self-awakening and the political revolt of the mid-19th century grew into the *Svaraj* movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The variants of *Svaraj* in different regions found their own cultural and educational expressions. In epochal and civilizational terms, the most radical debate (*vad-vivad*), self-recovery and commitment to liberation and transformation was posited in the book Hind Svaraj by Gandhiji. It took nearly three decades of mass political struggles and constructive work, based on the principles of truth and non-violence (in themselves powerful modes of learning), before the formal/institutional educational dimensions of Gandhian *Svaraj* could be articulated by Gandhiji himself in 1937.

In the decade before Independence, a determined effort was made by some of Gandhiji's followers to work out the curricular and systemic implications of *Nai Talim* (or New Education). Beginnings were also made to put this into practice in various settings. After Independence, some attempt was made to shape the national and state educational policy and practice along the patterns of *Nai Talim*. This proved still-born because it was carried

out half-heartedly, poorly understood, and not in accord with the mood and the aspirations of the modern educated elite, who had taken over the reins of power. The existing colonial system was maintained and expanded manifold, despite its oft-recognized flaws and incongruence vis-a-vis Indian values, visions of the freedom struggle, and the guiding principles of the Constitution. Rather than addressing and generating new education and development thrusts, emanating from the vast existing spiritual, cultural, economic and institutional capacities of the Indian people, the System deliberately devalued and marginalized these inherent capacities and took the available Western models and modes of social and scientific knowledge, technology, extension, communication and management as its preferred options. Today, at the turn of another century, the Indian system of education, like its economy and polity, finds itself increasingly at the mercy of forces of globalization and further away from the ideals of *Svaraj*.

Given this dismal scenario, how can one maintain faith and confidence in education and learning? This question is especially difficult for educators, who have prided themselves on being the vessels and vehicles of knowledge and enlightenment, the necessary means of progress, and who have devised elaborate and sophisticated systems, in collaboration with the rulers, to achieve their objectives. Be as that may, education and learning are too important to be left only to 'professional educators'. As personal and societal capabilities, learning and education have generative and systemic aspects, with primacy allotted to the generative aspect. Learning goes on organically, sensually, imaginatively, intellectually and spiritually, at conscious and unconscious levels. Education involves both learning and teaching, formally or informally, with or without aids. The purpose of education and learning is linked to the purpose of human existence which, at its best, has been defined as becoming more human or becoming divine. Since the extant systems have patently failed in fulfilling this promise, learning and education for enabling human beings to become more human/divine cannot be left to these systems, whether they be formal or non-formal.

Beyond the ivory towers and groves of academia, and the captive domains of educational planners and media Moghuls, there stands the self of each person — in face-to-face living and working relationships, in local village/neighbourhood communities with their own cultures/traditions, but linked also to the wider 'oceanic circles' of humanity, nature and divinity. This self *in loco communitas* refers to the *'sva'* (self) of *svadhyaya* (self-learning, self-knowing), *svadharma* (self's vocation/calling/genius), *svadeshi* (place of one's belonging and caring), and *svaraj* (one's sense of societal/political responsibility). Beyond these, there is the self in the all-pervasive Self, the *Atman* in the *Parmataman.* Learning functions — personal, interpersonal and collective — derive from each of these dimensions.

The essential defining and pursuing of these learning dimensions has to be undertaken by all those who still care and would like to dis-engage from their present systemic captivity and re-engage in regenerative action. It is with this perspective that learning and education through nature, work, service in society, art and culture, traditional knowledge and wisdom, spirituality, and human-scale and ecologically-sound science and

technology must be revitalized. Only then can learning and education become personally meaningful, socially valued and relevant to the challenges of our troubled epoch. This understanding is what was behind Gandhiji's pithy declaration that "My Life is My Message," and what perhaps remains the only effective counter to the rampant and proliferating Empire of the 'Medium as the Message' (and one could add, the 'Medium as the Massage') that is currently shaping human behavior.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kishore Saint <chand67@bppl.net.in> is an advisor with Ubeshwar Vikas Mandal, a local tribal people's organisation working in villages in south Rajasthan. He is also a member of the Board of Oxfam India Society. He is a geographer and educationist by training and has worked in various capacities in Kenya, the U.S.A and India. He was associated with the Friends World College, New York, during its formative phase. He has been concerned about issues of environment, governance and education. He has addressed these through experiments and writing from a Gandhian perspective.

1 *Svaraj* can be translated as 'self-rule' or 'rule over the self'; *Svarth* can be translated as 'selfishness'.