Are We Educating Those Who Need Education?

Educating the "70's" (The 70% Who Don't Attend College)

利氏学社观点教育如何面向最需要教育的人？

教育象牙塔之外的70%人口

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Abstract

While the technological age proposes that synchronous communication, a myriad of digital applications, aided by artificial intelligence will equip, employ and satisfy large populations, a much greater population has been left 'un-equipped', unemployed and very unhappy. Many have tinkered with the system, provided safety nets and re-trained displaced employees. But these strategies, as good as they are, fail to tackle the essential problem: that education has failed to provide each human person with the personal insights and world perspective and basic skills to confidently navigate turbulent cultural-financial-technological eras. This paper, after briefly examining several "coping" models, sets forth an old but renewed model of education that enables the person to become self-actualized and self-reflective in an increasingly alienating age of digital devices. In fact, this paper tries to engage those very tools of alienation by employing them to teach people how to use technology to humanise themselves.

World Context

A series of world events reveals how ill-equipped for our age is the "body-politic": The choice of "…old people, non-graduates and those from lower social grades..." to leave the European Union (Clarke, Godwin, & Whitely, 2017); the election of Donald Trump; the propulsion of Marine Le Pen to within "striking reach" of the French presidency; the election of Rodrigo Duterte as president of the Philippines, the sizeable election of 94 AfD members to the German Bundestag; the quashing of the Yellow Umbrella movement in Hong Kong: these are harsh moments. They disclose something more disturbing, namely, that "…people are getting more extreme and intolerant of others' views." (Cheung, 2017).

Conversely, the "educated class," labouring for such issues as "tolerance, shared resources, an open market, welcome to the migrant," were oblivious to one major cohort, the underclass, "a generation [who] had lost out on the increases in wages that had been seen elsewhere" (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). That same significant cohort of voters signalled a fatigue with these global niceties of the wealthier educated classes.

If education is for the common good, it is alarming that so many people have not been educated to see a common value in the "other's" status. The "once alien of the Hebrew Testament" have forgotten that "… you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Lev. 21:33). Since Jesuits try to work for the "greater glory of God and mankind…," it seems for the greater good to step back from educating the college elite and now look out for the lost 70 percent, the 70 percent of the world who do not go to college.

The Deficiencies of the Prevailing Models of Education

Prep schools, colleges, and universities strive to train future leaders, yet only 30-35 percent (OECD, 2011, p.40) of any nation grants its citizens college degrees. And just as Matteo Ricci—in conversation with elite converts—did not gain access to Chinese commoners (Jacques de Boisésson, 2011), so contemporary higher education does not engage the masses. In other words, the crucial lessons of 'critical thinking' and 'big-picture thinking' are reserved to the "educated classes." We do not educate those who need to "learn how to learn."

Too often we read how human beings dismiss the migrant as "intrusive" and "an offensive burden." Consider the recent decisions of Eastern European nations regarding migrants or the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar (Santora & Bienvenu, 2018, p. 3). Too foolishly, commentators dismiss climate change as a hoax (Delingpole, 2018, p.1). Too readily, the masses applaud the revival of noxious energy practices while ignoring scientific data, in vain hopes of saving their jobs. Too easily, we relinquish control over our freedom of speech so that we can be "safely protected" by an all-seeing government. The financial security which the elite thus gained eluded the non-college citizen. We are stung by a "white" backlash against "the global world." It has been wisely said that the elite only address the plight of the lower classes when the latter threaten physical violence.

That the educated elite of so many nations see the conundrum of extreme disparity of wealth and do very little, while the under-educated and under-employed feel the dire consequences but do not understand the conundrum, tells us that we neither have leaders nor a general populace that can respond effectively to world issues. "People without any educational qualifications were far more likely to support leaving the EU…. It is this educational divide that is absolutely central to making sense of why the country voted to leave the EU…" (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). The votes for Brexit and Trump and Le Pen disclose not only the peoples' frustration and (forgivable) ignorance, but also their glaring need for education.

The Challenge of Educating for the Common Good: The Conundrum

The puzzle to be solved is this: while there are underemployed and unemployed who are

unemployable, there is also a mismatch of skills to job opportunities. A technician who is employed delivering pizzas grumbles at his squandered skill. More troublesome is the paradigmatic shift that occurs when, for example, ecological issues spell doom to fossil fuel employment. An unemployed and unhappy class is a dangerous cohort in any society, the petri dish of ISIS, gang life, and drug addiction. "Jobs are available, but there is a serious mismatch between what companies need and what workers can offer" (Investopedia, n.d.). Impending loss of employment or underemployment causes severe stress for a person with few adaptive skills.

The puzzle to be solved is this: while there are underemployed and unemployed who are unemployable, there is also a mismatch of skills to job opportunities.

Here are some typical responses to this conundrum. They tend to be short-term, focused, ad-hoc solutions to cyclical employment upheavals.

The "Jobs that are NOT coming back…. Good, white-working-class jobs… [are] gone, never to return. And automation and technology is going to make it even worse" (Bruenig, 2017, p. 31). Many no longer even seek employment. In the United States, while the official unemployment rate is 4.4 percent, 17.5 percent of men of prime working age (24-55) are…unemployed (Dyer, 2017). Some governments, such as Denmark have succeeded at prognosticating "new-jobs-trends."

> Over four percent of Danish gross domestic product is spent on job training and support—about the same percentage the U.S. spends on its military budget while allotting a mere 0.7 percent to job retraining and support. And Danes have job placement down to a quasi-science. (Hill, 2013)

New Technology Schools: these as developed in Denmark, promise their students new forms of work. Computer Programming, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, etc., these are the newest edge of industry, employment, and education. "[Robotics are] going to offload tedious, repetitive work and create new jobs…." (Mauriello, 2017, p. A3). A corollary question arises: How to employ those displaced by robots? The deficiency of these New Technology Schools is that they are a kind of "ad hoc" strategy that does not address the deeper long-range goals of a human being.

Street Smart Schools: some of the brightest young people are street gangsters, pimps, and drug pushers; they are "street smart." It is plausible that they opt out of education because its rewards are too slow in coming. We need to ask why education did not engage their whole person, why it offered them unsatisfactory employment. Some have decided to re-habilitate such people with "classes [that] become an integral part of the healing process." Homeboy Industries of Los Angeles helps street smart kids to leave the gangs, "erase" their tell-tale tattoos, educate them and provide them transitional skills in Homeboy's own "industries." (Educational Services, n.d.). Again, as admirable as these rehabilitation programs are, they strategise for a remedy. They cannot compensate for the deficiencies of early education.

Technical Schools: The "finely machined" economies of Germany, Korea, Switzerland, and Japan have empowered skilled workers with applied education and good employment. Rewarded with good wages, workers feel honoured. Is it not true that this skilled populace does not need a "higher education" but an "alternative education"? Whereas, a university humanities education proffers a superb menu of diverse and deep inquiries, many of those menu items are more than the skilled worker needs. Yet what both a higher education and an alternative education can share are the tactics for fostering strong cognitive and problem-solving skills. These "…skills can be emphasised over traditional hiring filters like college degrees" (Lohr, 2017, p

B1).. It is imperative we extrapolate from these other countries' practices some new strategies. While the "vocational schools" come closest to achieving the goals of an integrated work/life cycle, there persists one problem: the person is prepared for a significant but limited array of employments. In a sense the person does not have a window opened to an intellectual life.

Menial Labour School: labour unions were once a formidable defence for unskilled labour, fast food service, menial / repetitive jobs. To be aware that the cycle of lowest wages and cheapest materials drives industries out of countries and displaces multitudes of workers requires a replacement work strategy. Driverless trucks, robot "stock boys," printed 3-D objects, automated salad makers, etc. alert us to the fact that even these diverse tasks cannot be immune to technology. Future employment will be at the top end of technology, not at the bottom. Kinley Salmon (2018) asserts that, "In terms of general education, there are three areas where humans are likely to continue to hold an advantage over machines: idea generation, large-frame pattern recognition, and complex communication" (p.8). A major challenge is to prepare people to understand these shifts, how to exploit these three human advantages, and how to develop "replacement" work. As Salmon (2018, p.6) reports,

> In the past it may have taken 100 people to work a given production line where it may soon require only 10 to oversee an automated system…. The central challenge is to ensure that all who lost their jobs can find high productivity, high wage employment….

While each of the above is an excellent strategy, they are targeted to discrete groups. What I am proposing is a general education "for the common good." By it we must teach people how to be resourceful, fully self-actualised and productive citizens. To teach people how to anticipate changes in careers, to negotiate emotional setbacks, to process threshold information, to be eternally curious would be a career worthy of a good teacher.

Gearing up for the 70 Percent

It is impossible to define the precise year when one could no longer open the hood of an automobile, tinker with the pistons and the carburettor, and set the motor humming. The Mechanical Age is over; only a computerised service shop can fix your car. Thus, the Electronic Age seamlessly slid into the Digital Age.

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Since digital devices such as cameras, cellular phones, computers, photo-voltaic cells, atmospheric sensors, electric cars, automated toll booths and electronic "tellers" are so commonplace, we hardly avert to the fact that our "point and click" way of doing things has displaced real-person tellers, ticket agents, mechanics, and building inspectors. So, while the preeminence of the Agricultural Age, the Mechanical, and the Electronic Age has faded, millions of human lives are embedded in those obsolete modes. "Although widely credited with increasing competitiveness… [Agenda 2010 in Germany] led to a casting out of workers unable to keep pace with a fast-moving, flexible job market" (Eddy, 2017: A4). It is not just nostalgia that attached people to these modes of labour. These were real jobs. It is not so much foreign labour that has "stolen" jobs, but, as Price Waterhouse Coopers predicted, 38 percent job losses must be attributed to automation (Dyer, 2017).

The demi-gods of Silicon Valley, Haidian and Bangalore promised the new wave of

invention would employ millions, but these new employees would have to have sophisticated skills. Worse still: the conversion phase to these new jobs takes not weeks but years. For example, Salmon (2018) notes that for an unemployed Danish person below the age of 30, "… the combination

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of on the job training, education or counselling should last for six months" (p. 12). As labour is "robotized" millions of labourers experience a significant disruption. Indeed, they are not equipped to adapt to a new life. It seems that one of the crucial factors of disaffection—that helped lead to the votes for Brexit, Trump and AfD—was this employment disruption fomented by the unpreparedness of workers. For example,

> We found that support for Brexit was strongest in areas where a large percentage of the population did not have any qualifications and were ill-equipped to thrive amid a post-industrial and increasingly competitive economy. (Goodwin & Heath, 2016)

The abruptness of their job loss, coupled with a fear that unregulated migrant workers will take the remaining jobs, are two major factors that precipitated the votes for Brexit and Trump. While the educated welcomed this energizing global economy, the common people were left behind.

To consider a strategy to help people adapt to a new world appeals to us teachers who know the challenge of motivating the least interested student; that task is simultaneously intimidating and attractive. WHY we must face this challenge is now obvious. WHAT we shall teach and HOW we shall teach are the next two questions to be answered.

What and How to Teach

As an antidote to the lethargy or nostalgia that froze people in time, we need—just like a sports coach—to teach people to be agile. These are crucial lessons we have learned about "how to learn":

- CURIOSITY. "Curiosity did not kill the cat." Boredom did. To learn, one must be intrigued by a target topic, any topic.
- AFFECTIVE INTEREST: While curiosity snags our attention, to sustain one's attention an emotional affect must fuel our chase. I advise my student, "Never write a research paper about a topic that does not delight you."
- STAMINA—While curiosity whets the appetite; and appetite takes affective delight in the search, stamina gives one emotional/intellectual resilience. Stamina is gained through repeated success at a task. Stamina sustains our search.
- RESONANCE: Unless one "senses the family resemblances" of the search-discovery process, our findings will remain detached and un-integrated. Once one feels a consanguinity with the new discovery one can socialise it and internalise it. One can connect it with other known facts.

During the entire learning process, one must learn how to resist freezing up in fear, losing momentum, or avoiding the challenge of the "new." In his book, *Christ and Prometheus*, William Lynch describes this "having stolen fire and then regretting it" as "anti-Prometheanism." (Lynch, 1972). The great temptation to give up the newly discovered fire must be mightily resisted. If one places oneself in the historical continuum of discovery and refinement of an insight one will be simultaneously humbled and elated. While these critical lessons of curiosity, affective interest, stamina and resonance are inculcated in college education, those who end their education after high school are not given these keys to the lock on the best career.

Financing Such a Program

It may come as no surprise that many nations' educational budgets are skewed towards post-high school education. The OECD reports, "Annual Expenditure per Student by Educational Institutions in OECD countries for primary, secondary, tertiary education in 2013" as:

> UK: $10,669 Primary / $12,200 Secondary / $25,744 Tertiary;
> Japan: $8,748 Primary / $10,275 Secondary /$17,883 Tertiary;
> Australia: $8,289 Primary / $10,932 Secondary / $18,337 Tertiary.[1] (OECD, 2013)

While I do not propose to reserve a significant portion of the higher education budget on behalf of this alternate education, I would propose re-allocating perhaps an additional one percent of the GDP towards a broader cohort of learners. To put this number in perspective—as indicated above—Denmark already allocates a full four percent of its GDP on job training and support.

How to Deploy This Model

How to deploy this new model leads to another question: "When to deploy this model? I liberally borrow from the methodology of the Montessori Schools to address the How and the When of this new model. Salmon (2018) himself writes, "General Education should focus on building skills in these areas as well as helping equip people to work well *with* machines. Montessori education already has a record of equipping students with these skills." (p. 8). One may criticize Montessori-like paradigms (for instance the Waldorf schools), as elitist and disproportionately expensive, but it can also be argued that the initial costs of providing a very solid education far exceeds the costs incurred coping with adult job dissatisfaction and displacement. What is more, an inspection of the comparative costs of Public Education and Montessori annual costs reveals that Montessori is not disproportionately expensive.[2]

1. At the Elementary Level, let us borrow the Montessori strategies. If catalysing curiosity is the wellspring of learning, then youngsters must be accompanied (thus reinforcing the attractions that draw them) as they explore at their own interest level. While we give them assistance, we must take care NOT to interrupt their personal curiosity/exploration.
2. At the "informational" Middle School Level, let us show young people how much fun it is to ask a question and search like a detective until an answer is found. Providing abundance of materials that is substantive, affording access to computer searching, guiding them how to "screen" out specious information (here we help instil discipline which yields stamina)—these are some of the "services" we must provide.
3. At the High School level, let us facilitate the combining of knowledge with attuning the young person to social relationships. Model and teach young people how to utilise information in an exchange of ideas with their peers, how to respect disagreement, how to appreciate agreement. Demonstrate how suasion and ethical appeal are imperative and attractive phases of peer social engagement.
4. By the conclusion of these 12 years of primary and secondary education, a person should find it pleasurable and stimulating to pursue one's curiosity, assemble information and exchange informed opinions and knowledge with one's peers.

Platforms Which Can Be of Use to the General Public

I propose that we ourselves learn a lesson from what some may consider "the enemy" of education: iPod, Smart phones, Social Media Apps, the Internet. We need to adapt the tactics

1 "Tertiary" is not differentiated between college and technical education.

2 The report, "What makes a Montessori Education?" cites statistics on the average cost of Montessori programs at all levels of education. (Montessori, n.d.) The costs are not out of line with the most recent available figures for public education in the USA (Room 241 Team. 2018).

of a very successful industry. We need to adapt their strategies to teaching.

1. If a new product can introduce itself to us in 45 seconds (consider a BBC commercial interruption), then we can focus a lesson on any of the above topics in 45 seconds. Images, sound bites, actors do the teaching. In this "instant culture" use "instant" techniques.
2. Pop-Ups on the Internet are supplementary, leading us to longer demonstrations (how to bake a cake).
3. Internet Searches lead one to even lengthier articles and professional tips.
4. Television / Cinema Theatre Infomercials can target the right age cohort.

Conclusion

The goals of higher education have ever been directed to training leaders for action. But to depend on trained leaders to mould and inform 70 percent of the population is too onerous—and inefficient. What is more, there is an enormous disjunction between a quickly changing marketplace of ideas and an overwhelming 70 percent of people under-prepared to adapt. The situation demands a new strategy. While it is not our purpose to abandon the education of leaders, it is imperative to develop numerous strategies to educate the undereducated. Smartphones, WIFI, Infomercials, Pop-ups, and other digital innovations afford us quick access to these populations.

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