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academicbantersite.wordpress.com/2017/09/18/creativity-should-we-encourage-it/

Creativity – should we encourage it?

Ken Robinson has likened the school system as a production line preparing its children as product ready to take their place in the industrial world (1). He has also highlighted in 2007 that many of the jobs our primary children are heading for have not been created yet (2). AN IBM study of 15,000 CEOs in 60 countries and 33 industries in 2010 found that creativity was highlighted as the most important leadership quality necessary to meet an increasingly complex and uncertain world (3).

On a parallel theme, as a result of comparisons with academic results in other countries including those in Hong Kong, Singapore and Alberta in Canada (4), the National Curriculum in England (5) was adapted in 2014 to ensure that children were introduced

> "to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement."

The Government also highlighted that the NC was just one element in a child's education but it should

> "provide an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum."

In Scotland (6), a similar approach has been taken with the aim to help

> "children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life in the 21st century, including skills for learning, life and work". It appears that its delivery is designed to foster interactivity and engagement across the curriculum and engender a greater self-awareness as a learner and participant in their environment.

It appears therefore that educationalists are heeding the words of academics and the business world. What so the children and the rest of society?

I remember when my son had just been born and I realised that, whilst there were many excellent texts on baby care and raising children, none of the advice fitted our circumstances exactly.

And why should they? As a newborn, he couldn't read so why would he do things by the book? I learned to rear my son by keeping an eye on what the experts suggested and responding to his behaviours in the way that felt most appropriate. It seems, in the main, to have worked, but let's just say the mother/son relationship is still a work in process ☺

So, our children, who haven't read the business and academic research on creativity and innovation, and are still being fed into and through the education system, what is important to them?

Well, it isn't in being creative.

A 12 month study for the National Citizen Service (NCS) this year showed that

> "3 per cent of teenagers believe problem solving skills and creativity are essential attributes to have on their CVs. 4 per cent, believe leadership and social skills are vital for the workplace, while 5 per cent chose self-confidence and the ability to work in a team. The study comes just weeks after the CBI published its annual education and skills report, which revealed that 40 per cent of businesses are not satisfied by the level of problem solving skills among school leavers." (7)

What do school leavers value then?

These 16 and 17-year olds believe that suitable work experience (20%), a strong work ethic (14%) and being a good communicator (12%) will help them gain a good career. They are energetic, want to get ahead and are entrepreneurial. Academic and emotional intelligences are also seen as important.

And does society agree?

Well, that depends on where you live? A recent survey in 19 countries asked the question, if you had to choose, which would people prefer schools to do - promote creativity or attend to the "academic basics"?

> "Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Canada showed a clear preference in public opinion for an education system that emphasised creativity and independent thinking. In Spain, 67% of people wanted schools to prioritise the teaching of creativity, compared with 24% who wanted schools to focus on the academic basics and discipline.
>
> But at the other end of the spectrum was the UK, where researchers found that 51% wanted schools to prioritise the basics and discipline, compared with 37% who thought schools should pay more attention to cultivating creativity.
>
> Countries such as the United States, Australia and Japan hovered somewhere in the middle, with opinion divided.
>
> In China, there was the strongest demand to have all these aspects of education, without choosing between them."(8)

Incidentally, China has initiated educational reforms that remove the rote learning approach and use more problem based learning methods. Japan too has begun to address their creativity problem in like manner (3)

In the UK therefore, it appears there is a substantial gap in the expectations of today's workforce and that of the next generation when it comes to creativity and innovation. It is somewhat ironic to note that today's workforce demand creativity in business but are less happy to encourage its development in the classroom.

And somehow, despite going through our revamped education system into a business world that craves innovation, our children are missing the creativity message completely.

Hmm…..

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