



Education to meet Societal Needs

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Our world is full of interdependent and interconnected networks, and we need to understand the system better to avoid negative outcomes. Educational institutions of the industrial age were built to train factory workers. They were never expected to be the source of innovation.

The Industrial Age is coming to an end as we recognize its fundamental disharmony with living systems on a social and ecological level and its disconnect from wider societal needs. We cannot be free of this era without making deep changes in the primary and secondary education. As John Dewey said, education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform.

We must take both an outside looking in and an inside looking out perspective, to see the mismatch between school and reality. The functionalities of the school are individualistically competitive, teacher-centric, curriculum-centric, passive, contextless and focused only on teaching technical skills like basic literacy and numeracy. These defining features of schools are imprints of the industrial age. This is irrelevant to the life of the children and the community they live in. It is at odds with the reality and results in disengaged teachers and students. We must also take the standpoint of the society to understand the problems generated by the present system.

To what extent are we satisfied with the models of civilization that we are creating and perpetuating through our education pathways? At no time in human history are children more aware of the state of the world. They understand the turmoil going on locally and globally. With unstable models of public leadership in the age of profound disruption, kids are faced with the dilemma of going down a path of education that does not fit or equip them to succeed in the emerging society in which they live.

Educational innovators are building new models with project-based, learner-centric, contextual learning that are deeply rooted in the reality of the child's life. They are bringing the focus on the development of the person.

A lot of guidance is needed to steer the process that will come from the outside looking in perspective, when schools step up to fulfil the needs of society. Harmonizing the forces for innovation internally with the imperatives for change externally is the key.

The educational model built by the IB network of schools is global and cross-cultural. It has 6000 programs around the world, helping students learn to create the world in which they want to succeed. Primary and secondary school students understand complexity and

interconnectedness in global issues like water. IB network teaches to build Compassionate Systems—compassion for the self, others and the larger social system. It integrates social and emotional learning, being rooted in mindfulness and awareness.

Technology platforms are really important to democratize education, like the revolution brought by MOOCs of MIT. Technology is an enormous enabler for the innovation needed in education. It can be effectively used to foster learning communities like Teach for all, ULab, J-WEL that bring deep, lasting, ongoing innovation in global education

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