

How do we prepare them for this world when we don't even know about it ourselves?

In the same way that we had no idea about the level of changes that technology would bring twenty years ago: schools and teachers still managed to adapt to the advance and absorb it into schools and their teaching methods.

The next time may not be that easy, for it is not just technology that will change. The whole way of life and dealing with life on a global scale will alter. This is not simply keeping ahead of technology, it is about keeping ahead of global trends and attitudes.

The generation starting school will have to face a different threat in the future. This threat is the competition from children in other parts of the world that have a different attitude to work, to life and to business. Children in China and Asia are attending school and then going on to night school and then attending Saturday school as well. They are learning about the world at large. There are more people in China today learning English than there is in the whole of the rest of the world combined! There is a learning revolution taking place, and it is not only with children.

Community learning and adult learning are part of this revolution because they see the necessity for educating people at all levels and ages to be able to deal with tomorrow.

What should we be teaching them?

I can remember as a youngster asking my Dad, "What am I going to need history and geography for? I am not interested in these things and they are not relevant to my future." How wrong. 'Knowing history' helps us to understand traditions and appreciate the efforts of the past which have shaped the today we live in. The next generation will have to know the history of various countries because they need to understand the cultures of those countries. Why? Because they will be dealing with them, working with them, socialising with them and living next door to them.

A global village or a global society requires a wider knowledge base from the people who are wanting to live and work in it. Teaching in the future will need to be done with an understanding that the children are going to need a broad range of skills to cope in the next generation. Teachers will have to learn new skills as well – skills like dealing with change and flexibility. A new attitude to work will be needed and a focus on results and outcomes will be the most important part of being successful in this global society. Teachers must help children to understand that what they learn is important to their future and be able to see the benefits of learning the subjects and skills on offer. Just as important will be the development of the 'global' attitude: a readiness and openness to other countries, other cultures and other languages.

Making mistakes

One of the principal areas that will have to change across the entire education system in the United Kingdom is the attitude towards making mistakes. Commerce and industry are slowly coming to terms with this concept, yet they are still very advanced compared to most schools and it gets worse as

you move up to senior schools, colleges and universities.

It requires two things to be understood and then absorbed into the culture of the school. Firstly, making mistakes is part of learning. A lot of our learning as an infant is by getting it wrong and then benefiting from the experience. Why should it be any different as we grow up? For the sake of innovation we need to encourage people to learn from their mistakes and not to be in trouble for having made them in the first place.

Taking the blame

Secondly, we need to kill the blame culture. Children cannot afford to be brought up in schools where this exists any more. Blame cultures create people who spend their time covering their tracks in case anything goes wrong. The attitude of 'if anything goes wrong I will be able to prove that it was not my fault' is antiquated and slowing down the development of children.

Society will need people who can learn from mistakes, take responsibility for their actions, not covering them up, and if anything, are prepared to make their mistakes faster so that the learning can be quicker!

However, the biggest challenge is not teaching the children or changing the culture within schools on these issues. It will be the wider community that will be the greatest challenge. If teachers complain that parents do not support their children's education, then they are really going to struggle with the fact that parents themselves are going to be needed as part of the school so that they can be educated as well!

Community schooling

Community schooling will have to be part of the overall education plan of the future. Adults are going to need to learn new languages and practise them with the children. Adult education will need to focus on the social skills needed to be employable and to take their place in the new society they will retire into.

So the schools of the future have a challenge, which will be to prepare children to deal with the new global village. A world we have to start to comprehend and a world that will impact on our lives at all ages.

COMMENT

Removing the blame culture, allowing one another to make mistakes and learning from them and placing a learning culture at the centre of our schools are key themes for education in Paul's view of the future.

The reference to community learning and the involvement of parents as learners too is a theme that will be followed up in the next issue of *PLT* with its emphasis upon the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. We will need to examine our own attitude to parents in order to really begin involving them in the school community.

We will also be encouraging school leaders to share their mistakes in *PLT* and how they have learnt from them. We start this issue with a little problem over SATs. (A spot of bother, p51)

PROFILE

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