



Thoughts on Relational Learning

'Education is not the filling of a bucket but the starting of a fire.'

William Butler Yates

Overview

Life in the 21st Century is increasingly defined by rapid, pervasive change paralleled with increasing interconnectedness. New worlds are being created while old worlds are being left behind. The relevance of the traditional school's function & its effectiveness is diminishing. In a global society, educators no longer have a monopoly on the transfer of information. We know that within 20 years our schools cannot resemble schools of today & still retain relevance. Schools have no choice but to change. Change is therefore demanded in our understanding of what it means to be a teacher & a student; in our understanding of learning & what it might become and in our thinking about what education is needed in this changed environment. Change is required in how we define ourselves in a global context; how we interact with each other; how we treat each other in class, in school, in our communities.

We need to consider 'recontextualising' the relationships within which learning occurs.

This means thinking about the ecology of learning. (ecology = interrelationships of organisms & their environments) It means thinking about the context of T&L. (Teaching & Learning) It is not only a matter of what is taught & how it is taught, but the relationships within which learning occurs. Teachers perhaps need to see themselves & students differently in order to generate different outcomes. As educators well know, just one positive relationship can keep a child in school & make the difference. Education & all its participants/stakeholders perhaps need to become multidimensional – take a 360 view.

'As we examine current efforts at educational reform, we are left with the impression of educators frantically rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic...efforts short fall as they do not address engagement of learner to self, to peer learners, to facilitator, to content, to community. They misunderstand the true nature of learning and fail to acknowledge how radically the world is changing.'

George Otero

Each generation carries a new & different knowing. Each generation carries forward cultural, traditional & religious knowledge yet lives within its own context. Today's generation is the most consciously global – born with TV, MTV, the internet, a 24 hour information economy, cross-border mobility....Children born in 2015 can expect to live 125 years...in the face of immense & unknowable challenge & change, perhaps we need to re-examine schooling & what we offer young people. In our current 'industrial economy model of education' have we overlooked the self-reflective, the human connection, the personal experience, the linking of learning to relationships?

'There is an essential unity in all our lives...If one gains spiritually, the whole world gains, and if one falls, the whole world falls to that extent.'

Mahatma Gandhi

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