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Educating The Art of Life: Resilience and Creativity in Contemporary Education

by David L. Brierley

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SUMMARY

Every era has its challenges and it is the task of our educational system to prepare young people to resolve these issues in their appointed future roles in society. This involves not only that the next generations are able to cope with but, in addition, are excited by future prospects both as individuals and as citizens. A greater awareness of a long-term resilient and creative education as a prime factor in our very survival is growing in all sections of private and public life.

In our fast changing society it is easy to detect a growing pessimism and despondency among the average man or woman in the street, many of whom speak pityingly of the future they believe their children will have instead of seeing unique human beings who, as never before, have all the possibilities to participate in higher education and to create a beautiful world. Prosperity only returns when pessimism and fear are replaced by optimism and enthusiasm and people are filled with audacious ideas rather than apathy and a sense of helplessness.

There is little need to outline in detail the highly publicised problems of motivation in education: the numbers of adolescent drop-outs, the high level of NEETS (young people not in employment, education or training) at any one time. Austerity measures now being enforced throughout Europe mean that we can no longer guarantee funding to alleviate these growing problems.

The following article, based on a lecture at the European Parliament, starts to address the question of forming a new paradigm for education, where issues such as intrinsic motivation, creativity, the development of thought and the cultivation of emotions, are taken into consideration.

An over emphasis on a therapeutic educational dimension for which funding has escalated dramatically in the last two decades, should not overshadow the modern need for methods to build basic human faculties in every pupil according to their age, within the bounds of the subjects that we deem to be relevant in schools.

A revision of why we teach, what we teach and how we teach in order to meet the needs of children as they grow physically and mentally coupled with the requirements of a progressive society is necessary for our common European future.

Since the advent of the Renaissance, humanity has taken pride in its achievements, particularly the understanding and mastery of nature. Defences have been constructed against imminent natural catastrophes ensuring greater security, water resources have been harnessed and utilized, intensive cultivation of food has led to less famine. The development from a mobile to a motorized world and now to a motile world (we can instantaneously be moved from place to place and from time to time from the comfort of an armchair) has meant that geographical barriers have been annihilated within most of Europe. The progress made in a relatively short space of time is far beyond our wildest hopes and dreams. Conditions that enable mankind to secure the material needs necessary for a productive existence are in the main in place throughout the European Union. Yet, paradoxically, we are more and more bewildered. We strive and work hard but at the same time have started to question the purpose of our efforts. Our power over matter grows by the day but at the same time an increasing number of people feel powerless in their own personal lives. As we create even more advanced ways of mastering nature there is a growing feeling that we have lost the vision needed to fully understand human nature. For instance, there is a greater awareness of an unreleased and wasted potential in many people. "It's a waste of time" has become an expression frequently used amongst young people. "Wasted lives" is a concept instigated by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman that describes an older person who inevitably will look back on his or her life and judge it to have been a 'good life' or not. It will be deemed to be a 'good life' if the person in question feels in some way, however small, that his or her unique personality has been projected into the world. Since the turn of the millennium the concept of 'well-being' has come to the fore in society and is increasingly being seen as a health and quality of life issue.

Our lives are the most precious resource and how to spend them is the most pertinent question we face today.

These trends raise fundamental questions of human existence: what we are, how ought we to live and how our enormous energies can be released and used productively both for the good of the individual and for society as a whole. Our lives are the most precious resource and how to spend them is the most pertinent question we face today. Our answers depend on what we value and where we find fulfilment. How should I spend my life? What do I most care about and why? What is my life for? In a contemporary life fundamental questions of this kind cannot be avoided. They are deeply personal questions but, at the same time, are the concern of society as a whole. A thriving society depends on the sum of a feeling of well-being amongst its subjects.

Education begins from the moment we have a conception and a will to shape the people we are to become and the society of the future we hope to develop.

In order to project ourselves into the future, to fulfil our ambitions as individuals, peoples and nations we need to be progressive. That means we have to accept change and realise that a status that results in 'holding on' leads only to a status quo. Progress then becomes

untenable. An exciting aspect of our time is that conscious choices need to be made to project our values, dreams and ambitions into the future. Many will argue that a new self-consciousness and preservation of human values is essential for our collective survival. The realization that changes need to be made in the principles of education is increasingly present on two levels: at a political level and at a mainstream level amongst teachers, parents and employers.

The purpose of our existence is to develop the nascent element of humanity in us as much as possible. The finer senses have to be developed, our sense of reason cultivated, in order to develop a unique personality to its fullest. In questioning the purpose of life more and more people are openly seeing a connection with the fulfilment of individualized potential as a basis for a thriving society.

These issues serve as a bedrock for a progressive society.

More and more young people are querying the validity of the accumulated knowledge they are taught as a basis for future engagement in society. Vital questions concerning our understanding of creativity, innovation and renewal are deeply connected to other issues such as life-long learning, self-esteem, well-being, health and resilience.

Issues of Our Time

The world is changing faster than ever before in our history. Any school curriculum is meant to provide a platform for active engagement well into the future. In our highly technological age we cannot even predict what the world will look like when this year's entrants leave school in 2029, let alone in 2078 when they will retire. This unpredictability is problematic for our educational system. More and more young people are querying the validity of the accumulated knowledge they are taught as a basis for future engagement in society. Vital questions concerning our understanding of creativity, innovation and renewal are deeply connected to other issues such as life-long learning, self-esteem, well-being, health and resilience. The question of qualification seen against competence needs to be addressed i.e. how accumulated knowledge and skills can be transformed into personalized innovative, critical thinking.

'Our educational systems have an important role to play in solving the seemingly intractable global issues facing us on many levels. Our modern ecological philosophy of the plant and animal world is but a century old. Ensuing environmental concerns are still high on the agenda and solutions continue to be hard to find. A consensus in such matters can only be based on common values.

I suggest that the time is now ripe for an ecology based upon the human condition in the twenty-first century, as a continuum of the development of that which has taken place

through the ages. Already in the 1920s, when psychology was in its infancy, H. G. Wells edited nine books in three volumes which he considered calling 'The Culture of Human Ecology'. He was discouraged from using this title as it meant little at the time, so he was advised to call it 'The Science of Life'.ⁱⁱ Today we are able to understand better his, and his co-writers Julian Huxley's and G. P. Wells' ideas for a society based on the soundness and health of its citizens. He was concerned with the relation between the development of an inner life of the human being and its relation to progress in the outer world. At the time Wells, as a researcher of the future, envisaged an epidemic of psychic afflictions and a consequent malaise due to an erosion of human values. He envisaged a situation whereby, in the not too distant future, an ordinary citizen, well-orientated as to the goings-on in the world due to extensive coverage by the media, could clearly see that the state of a nation was not as it should be. However, that same person would be unable to make any changes. There would be two reasons for this. Firstly, given the scale of the issues, he or she could not see a possible solution for the better. Secondly, the person in question would not have the attributes and human capacities necessary to make the changes. For me, this is a stunning statement and is crucial for the theme of this paper. Wells believed that appropriate action needed to be taken. This involved a revision of education at all levels and a renewal of out-of-date views on the nature of work and motivation inherited from the bygone days of the Industrial Revolution, when other conditions and challenges applied.

Therefore I feel it is appropriate to ask a pertinent question. During the last two centuries in which our engineers and chemists have contrived to achieve that which was inconceivable to our grandfathers, have there been similar increases in cultivating and exercising the power of thought in our schools and universities in order to provide our scholars with the tools needed to provide society with the necessary creative innovations we sorely need in the future? This is perhaps what Wells was referring to when he used the word 'soundness'. It is interesting that he talks of health – a healthy individual and a healthy society – in the same breath.

On average one thousand hours a year are spent in the classroom, representing one-sixth of a life, (not including kindergarten and higher education). It is a huge investment, both in time and money. What is more, it is compulsory by law.

In times when public funding cannot be taken for granted, when stronger austerity measures are being put in place by many European governments and levels of unemployment amongst 16 – 24 year olds are rising, more emphasis is being placed on human values in education. By way of example, in the table below I have quoted the rates for those looking for work who are under 25 years of age in different European countries in 2007 and 2009. ("Looking for work" includes those who are in temporary employment or doing a job until they get the kind of job for which they are qualified plus those who are unemployed and looking for work.)

No EU member state is an exception to this trend.ⁱⁱⁱ In the education sector confusion has arisen due to a dilemma that has come about. On the one hand there is increasing pressure on short-term results in order to justify continued expenditure in the education sector, and on the other, a growing realization that life course perspectives are increasingly important. We have arrived at a point where there is a great deal of uncertainty amongst teachers and in society in general as to how schools can educate for life.

Rate of those under 25 who are looking for work	2007	2009
Italy	21.0%	26.5%
Sweden	19.5%	25.8%
Hungary	19.6%	28.3%
Ireland	9.2%	27.8%
Spain	19.1%	39.6%
Slovakia	19.9%	31.8%
Greece	21.8%	27.5%
France	18.6%	23.3%
Belgium	17.8%	23.2%
Finland	16.4%	23.1%
Czech Republic	9.5%	20.3%
U.K	13.8%	19.6%
Germany	10.9%	10.3%
The Netherlands	5.4%	9.1%
Austria	7.8%	9.5%

A Promising Future?

In this context any form of resentment or disgruntlement can ignite confrontation between individuals and the system. A recent survey directed by the Fondation pour l'innovation politique (2011) traced lifestyles, opinions and prospects amongst 32,700 young people in 25 countries. It shows that 47% of Europeans between the ages of 15 and 29 are willing to fight for social justice and unfulfilled promises. The level of discontent is high amongst young people in all strata of society.^{iv} In some countries there are many young people, as in Egypt, in others there are too few, as in most Western European countries. In countries where the younger generation outnumber the older generation the young are showing themselves willing to protest for stable prospects in the long term, employment in a chosen line of work and secure conditions for raising a family.

There can be no doubt that we live in a world of 'entzauberung', of disenchantment, where we seek the idea of a unified self that is beyond the grasp of a scientific-technological society. In Germany, protesters, generally from the middle-classes, have created a new word "Wutbürger" ("angry citizen"). This disillusionment is not necessarily voiced directly but often peaceful

demonstrations addressing other issues have been used to express this growing unrest. A democracy will always have to endeavour to assimilate two aspects of life which, in Ancient Greece, were represented by the 'ecclesia' and the 'oikos'. The 'oikos' represented private, individual interests and 'ecclesia' for common interests and public affairs. 'Ecclesia' literally means 'to summon together' and in the infancy of our European democracy the merging of these two aspects of life found its place on the agora. This two-way translation between the language and needs of individual, familial interests and that of public, common concern is vital in a thriving society or indeed institution. The success of a democracy will always depend on this translation of needs. If the 'oikos' does not function this will be seen in a protest vote of non-committal coupled with street protests as we have seen in many countries in the last decade. A sound democracy will depend on how these two sides of society are integrated into the methods and values of our schools.

A School Culture of Learning

A school is an institution responsible for the transmission of culture. Its curriculum enables pupils to acquire intellectual codes and practical skills. In this way a curriculum profits from the contributions of our forefathers. This part of the work in schools is based on accumulated knowledge and practical skills based on the past. However, there is another part of the content of a syllabus. It prompts pupils to contribute to the future of the culture by providing opportunities for the individual to construe his or her own interpretations of what has been bestowed by the past. This process involves exercising the formulation of new ideas. The former provides instructional objectives in the curriculum specifying skills and items of knowledge. The latter are expressive objectives. They differ considerably from instructional objectives in that the skills or knowledge to be attained are not specified. An expressive objective describes an educational encounter and defines a task in which the pupils are engaged. Here lies an invitation to explore. They are evocative rather than prescriptive. Here no homogeneity of response is demanded from the pupils. On the contrary, a diversity of response is encouraged. In an expressive context of this kind the teacher hopes to provide a situation whereby meanings and opinions become personalized as a basis for the cultivation of thinking and formation of ideas. Pupils are required to produce something, theoretically or artistically/practically. The results are as diverse as the individuals who produce them. Herein lies a problem. Evaluation can never be based on common standards as in an instructional framework. The work involved is designed with one aim in mind – to reveal uniqueness, significance and a creative mode of thought. It is my firm belief that working in this way promotes a meeting of 'oikos' and 'ecclesia' in the classroom, which, after all, is a microcosm of society.

Taking this duality into account we need to ask what the young generation mean by "unfulfilled promises." On the surface one would immediately think of political manifestos and governmental policies that have not materialized. However, being as I am in daily contact with young adults in several European countries, I believe the source of this discontentment and frustration lies at a deeper level. It is a question of the authenticity

of the individual, of empowerment and relates to H.G. Wells' and Erich Fromm's theories of disempowerment. In many students these questions are a conscious reality. Others are less aware of this unease and join violent gang demonstrations in order to satisfy the need for emotional discharge. In order to address these issues we need to engage in a brief symptomatic analysis of our time.

'The Education of Henry Adams' (1838-1918) is much more than an autobiography. The background for the book was the struggle of Henry Adams, as an old man, to come to terms with a modern life that was very different from that of his youth. It represents a critique of educational theory and practice. On its completion, the author printed private copies and distributed them to his friends and sympathizers. After his death the book was published and in 1919 it won the Pulitzer Prize. It was deemed to be one of the most important books in the first quarter of the last century. After a decade it was forgotten. The book is a meditation on the social, technological, political and intellectual needs that had arisen in Adams' lifetime and which were to gather strength in the twenty-first century. Adams concluded that the traditional educational system had alienated him from the modern world. This meant he had never come to terms with the rapid changes he had experienced. But, more importantly, the basic aim for contemporary education, self-education, had not been addressed. He became bewildered, but life went on, propelled by what he called "dynamo." In using the term 'dynamo' (from the Greek meaning 'power') Adams refers to an external impulse separate from the inner life of the human being that drives us on without interruption. Adams was by no means against technical advancement, quite the opposite. He embraced technological progress as such and was one of the first private persons to purchase a motor-car in 1902 in his home town of Boston.

The Old and the New

How has European society changed since the time of Henry Adams and if so, what does this mean for education?

To illustrate this point we can take a man from the street anno 1900 and place him in the year 1950. He would witness the biggest changes in the shortest time in our history. He would be awestruck and baffled by a world filled with technological marvels. No longer would he see horse-drawn carriages with young boys scuttling to remove horse droppings from the streets, but the roads would be jammed with motorised cars, lorries and buses. Skyscrapers would cover the skyline, aeroplanes would cross the skies. People would be carried across oceans and continents in a matter of days rather than weeks and months. He would find himself in a home full of domestic gadgets and electrical appliances such as radios, televisions, telephones and other wonders of communication. The local market and corner shop would have been replaced by the supermarket with its unbelievable array of brands of goods.

If we now moved a person from 1950 to 2000 he would have little difficulty in orientating himself. The car, plane, and train would probably be more streamlined, travel faster but would not be entirely new to him. The computer would have the same keyboard as his old typewriter. But he would soon realise that there had been vast but subtler changes. Looking away from technology he would see that changes in social values affected the structure of our lives in the way we live and work. No longer would he find the same principles of the division of labour and a hierarchical management system, nor would he work from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Women would be employed outside the home. In the vast conurbations of Europe that have continued to expand in the period in question people no longer married young, had children early and progressed in the same job throughout life.

Another important change in this period concerns how we see our work, whether it be in schools or employment. The question of motivation is a quintessential element of our theme. Work involves changing the world.

Another important change in this period concerns how we see our work, whether it be in schools or employment. The question of motivation is a quintessential element of our theme. Work involves changing the world. Since the advent of modernity the way we have seen work has been mirrored in two value systems – the Protestant and the Bohemian work ethics. The first is founded on the idea of hard work as an essential duty. Our mission on earth is to serve others. This is done by making ourselves productive so that we feel we are worthy human beings. The German sociologist Max Weber considered this type of work ethic to be at the very centre of capitalism.^v The Bohemian ethic, on the other hand, is more hedonistic. Its value is to be found in pleasure and happiness. It is based on experiencing and appreciating what life has to offer. It has its own form of aesthetic discipline giving a more individualistic rather than conformist view of work and life in general.

The famous American sociologist Richard Sennett has claimed we are approaching the "end of work." He believes a combination of advanced technology and globalization is bringing an end to meaningful work for most people which ultimately will lead to the corrosion of character and breakdown of society.^{vi}

The decline in work ethic in Europe in comparison with the United States and the Far East corresponds with a decline in religious values. According to a recent survey it also is proportional to the decline of moral standards in schools.^{vii}

Two centuries ago when society equated the good citizen with the working man a particular kind of worker came to mind – a man tilling the soil or an independent craftsman. As industrial capitalism progressed the worker had less and less control over his or her work. This stood in contrast to the independent artist or craftsman who took a pride in the uniqueness of his product based on skill and personal experience.

Common to all drop-outs from school, (as high as 1 in 3 on average in Europe and steadily increasing), is the inability to combine the rational side of the task in hand with an accompanying emotional experience. When these two sides of our being come together a person will always seek new experiences. The pupil will then be enveloped in a learning

process. A disturbing alternative is that a young person will resort to seeking 'the ultimate experience' aided by the use of drugs and alcohol.

It is a well-known fact that an increasing number of young people choose their work not only because of financial inducement. They want to "put themselves into it" something employers see as a desirable competence. This is an exciting development.

My upbringing was in a working class family. My father started work as an apprentice printer at fourteen. He retired at 62 having worked from eight to five, in the same small company all his life. Servility was a leading motive and requirement in his work. It was based on a strict, regulated school where unquestioning obedience was central. He was a loyal worker who respected his superiors. His undisputed diligence made him a good worker. There was a distinct demarcation between work and leisure. For him work was a dour necessity. That work should be something more never crossed his mind. He never had the opportunity to be innovative. Times have changed – people today change jobs at an increasingly high rate. Few have a job for life. It is a well-known fact that an increasing number of young people choose their work not only because of financial inducement. They want to "put themselves into it" something employers see as a desirable competence. This is an exciting development.

As a synopsis the old and new values in society can be summarized as follows:

the old paradigm:	the new paradigm:
intelligence	passion
diligence	creativity
servility	initiative
initiative	servility
creativity	diligence
passion	intelligence
the old paradigm:	the new paradigm:

In past studies of the factors involved in an innovative and creative life emphasis has been placed on the backgrounds and capabilities of eminent personalities. When tackling the complicated question of creativity and how it should manifest itself in schools, the focus is no longer confined to an illustriousness that sets people aside from the more ordinary rhythms of daily life. This old view is not compatible with the present day view that creativity is found everywhere, in everyone, as an inherent urge. Everyday creativity is not concerned with major breakthroughs by individuals once in a while but contributes to giving a life greater purpose and meaning. What I choose to call 'everyday creativity' for everyone has replaced what I choose to call 'eminent creativity' for a few.

One may ask: Why should we care about creativity? Creativity has two roles to play in society. Firstly there is the 'improvement factor'. Society should always be evolving. That implies change, and change implies creativity. How often do we hear that we need to solve our country's pressing problems or that we need workers who can think differently?

Secondly there is the 'expression factor'. This is the significance we place on the activity of the individual. A fundamental question for education today is how these two aspects of creativity can complement and interact with one another.

When my children were growing up we had a wonderful postman who in all weathers remained upbeat due to the fact that he saw more in his work than merely delivering letters. He saw himself as instrumental in a higher mission – that of connecting people to each other in a technological and faceless society. He saw himself as a social curator who at the same time each day met the elderly who lived alone with a smile and waved to the children he had become acquainted with on his rounds. He saw himself not as a postman but as a community builder. There was no question of boredom, repetitiveness, getting wet and cold or being attacked by dogs being viewed as demeaning to his role. Our friendly postman enjoys his work because it is, for him personally, meaningful. He is no longer merely a facilitator but is able to pass on values that he sees as essential in society.

European society with its enormous diversity and manifold cultural impulses is the one most likely to be able to unleash the individual human creativity capable of solving the problems the twenty-first century world faces.

How are these trends reflected in our present-day educational system? Compared with 1950, children of today spend much more time in the classroom. For the great majority of children competition is substantially fiercer than previously. Governments have operated out of the belief that education is crucial for economic growth. As a result, in the developed world, the number of years of compulsory schooling doubled between 1913 and 1983. A substantial increase in secondary and higher education has taken place since 1950. It has doubled in most Western European countries. The increase was greatest in the 1980s. In the Netherlands, by way of example, the number of 21 year olds in higher education rose from 12% to 32% between 1975 and 1986. Today, in Western Europe, on average 50% of 19 year olds are engaged in higher education. In the U.K. 1979 figures showed that 1 in 8 studied in higher education; today the figure is 1 in 3. Paradoxically in the same period

literacy and basic mathematical ability in the same age group has shown a dramatic downward trend. To my mind this is not due to an absence of intellectual ability but rather to emotional stability. This makes it obvious that it is necessary to bring about a revision of motives and methods in schools and universities. The success of European society and its dominance in the world as an economic force has been based on competitiveness, consumption, science and a work ethic. However, this package has been challenged by China and India with cheaper products, a greater domestic consumption and a work ethic comparable to Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, in my view, European society with its enormous diversity and manifold cultural impulses is the one most likely to be able to unleash the individual human creativity capable of solving the problems the twenty-first century world faces. A condition is that we are able to revise our educational priorities in line with our visions of a better future. In order to work along these lines education needs to be based on two mindsets:

- **A sense of meaningfulness.** This means that a pupil needs to feel (the younger pupils) and know (the older pupils) why and what they are engaged in and how it will contribute to their personal progress and society in general. If the teacher cannot answer these questions they surely are not able to teach the topic in an enthusiastic and convincing way. The question is: why do some people experience their work, even mundane work, with passion and commitment. It is due to the fact that they themselves find meaning over and above the task in hand. Research has shown that such people have an easier time dealing with complex issues and challenging situations in life. Citizens in the future will be compelled to embark on a search for meaning as an act of will. This is not based on prestige, money or influence but on more intangible rewards.
- **A sense of authenticity.** In his famous work 'Sein und Zeit' (1927) Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) talks about 'reality' and 'non-reality' or what we could call 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity'. The authentic is the opposite of imitation or copying. The word comes from the Greek 'authentikós' which means 'original' or 'do things yourself' and as such reflects personal involvement. The word is related to 'author' (= 'he who creates'). In his 'The Ethics of Authenticity' Charles Taylor (1931-) characterizes the challenges of today. He describes how authenticity first came to light in the later years of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) were the first to engage themselves in the question of authenticity. Rousseau wrote about 'self-determined freedom'. Herder went one step further. He stated that the individual is first free when he makes a decision with regard to his own special way of being a human being. "I am able to express myself through who I am."
- **The unearthing of individual potential**
Potential comes to light first and foremost through individualized artistic expression. The pupil who is able to use creative activity as an emotional outlet will gain the freedom and flexibility needed to show his/her innermost self. A child who has developed freedom

and flexibility in different forms of expression, through the word, the image and the act, will not only be able to face new situations without difficulty but will also be able to effectuate future possibilities. The young person who feels frustrated develops inhibitions and, as a result, will feel restricted and constricted. An inhibited and restricted pupil, accustomed to imitating rather than expressing him or herself creatively, will be prepared to go along with set patterns.

A feeling that we haven't quite lived up to our potential can come to haunt even the most accomplished amongst us. The feeling that there is a gap between what we think we are capable of and what is actually happening in our lives and that with more application we can achieve more is a characteristic notion of many today. Generally we agree that we cannot see into the future. But when it comes to potential we seem to have confidence in the ability of a seer. More and more young people seem to know what their potential is and many others think they can see it in others. When it comes to observing a young footballer or cellist we recognized potential. This is hardly the case with the average pupil due to the fact that the conditions that allow potential to surface, are, in the main, not in place.

The Delors Commission responsible for the UNESCO report 'The Treasure Within' (1996) undertook to describe the core components of learning that are necessary for individuals and societies to thrive in the contemporary world. The report focuses on human development. The report states that "A broad encompassing view of learning should aim to enable each individual to discover, unearth and enrich his or her creative potential, to reveal the treasure within each of us in order to achieve specific aims that emphasize the development of the whole person."^{viii}

These three core factors, widely recognized within the realm of Positive psychology, are founded on the following core assumptions:

- Each person's inner nature is unique. This is often referred to as 'human capacity', 'daimon', 'genius' or 'self' suggesting a definite individual character and enduring traits.
- Education serves to develop this and not suppress it in any way.
- This innate capacity persists, albeit undercover and is forever pressing for actualization.
- If suitable conditions are fostered this will lead to a natural resilient and creative urge.

When faced with common, everyday disappointments and setbacks people tend to be confronted with an array of therapeutic solutions. We have come to live in an age of therapy where there is a growing acceptance of vulnerability. People today are faced with a free choice of therapeutic solutions in seemingly normal situations. The starting point is psychological self examination in an attempt to find possible defects and negative sides to one's personality and lifestyle. There is a strong tendency for therapeutic intervention to start at an earlier and earlier age. It is not uncommon that kindergarten children are sounded out for social, emotional and learning difficulties. The consequence is that children

become prematurely aware of their own failures and the circumstances of those who are dear to them. Through the media the general public have become acquainted with an increasing number of syndromes. Increasingly most people live with a sense of vulnerability rather than fortitude.

A further phenomenon is that collective, even national and global trauma has become a part of daily life for the world citizen as foreseen by H.G Wells. Pessimistic headlines on the effects of bird flu and pending catastrophes are common in the media. Psychological therapy has its place of course, but there will always be a question as to age level and which conditions are thought to be temporary. In times of economic austerity measures in most European states, cut backs are being made in remedial work of this kind.

Complementary to a therapeutic dimension is a preventive methodology that endows the child or youth with the ability to face problems and to overcome them. Such an approach has methodological consequences for the way we teach and learn based on an intrinsic motivation that appeals to the needs of the pupil in the different stages of his or her development. In the lower classes these will mainly be common needs. In adolescence in addition to common needs there will also be individual needs that surface in the formation of a unique personality. A platform for resilient and creative methods is an acknowledgement that all human beings have three basic needs, inherent in everyone, that together bring about a connection between an individual and the world both impressive and expressive, taking in impulses, forming them and giving them out again:

- **activity in observation.** The basic human need to be skilled in registering sense impressions
- **activity in judgement.** The individual response to values and evaluation of these impressions needs to be exercised. Three forms of judgement: cognitive, aesthetic and moral appertaining to the forces of thinking, feeling and willing need to be nurtured.
- **activity in expression.** The individual's need to communicate with fellow human beings

Teaching as an Art

In many ways we have lost the concept of the art of teaching as advocated by the famous American psychologist William James who stated that "psychology is a science, education is an art".^{ix} An art is an attempt to improve by conscious effort an already existing form of human behaviour. We seem to believe that reading, writing and mathematics are the only arts to be learned in order to become an engineer, musician or doctor. Of course, any skilled worker needs to be in possession of considerable knowledge in order to master professions of this kind. But there is the question of the good doctor, clever engineer and the friendly butcher. The question of qualification (i.e. a person has passed the necessary theoretical examinations) as against competence. Competence can be seen as comprising of five elements:

- **aptitudes.** Aptitudes are central to intrinsic development. The innate nature of aptitude stands in contrast to achievement which represents knowledge and skills that are

attained. An apt person is an able one. What is done is befitting.

- knowledge
- understanding
- attitudes
- abilities / skills

The wonderful thing is that today many children are born into a sphere of possibilities. Young people are compelled to make their choices and decisions as never before. In our day and age growing up into an educated citizen means transforming contingency into commitment.

Life Artists

In the past one knew what one was expected to be due to the fact that almost everyone was born into a specific social niche in a certain environment. This is no longer the case. The wonderful thing is that today many children are born into a sphere of possibilities. Young people are compelled to make their choices and decisions as never before. In our day and age growing up into an educated citizen means transforming contingency into commitment. Circumstances in the future cannot be predicted but a sense of hope can be upheld by committing oneself to believe in, and in some small way, be instrumental in creating a better world. Many young people are uncertain of the future. Whether it be the possibility of employment or signs of continued progress in society, a future cannot be predicted with certainty. However, they can be educated to become committed young people with hope for an exciting future. Education is there to help children to mould their potential.

Therefore, in contemporary society we are all artists – knowingly or not, willingly or not, whether we like it or not. We are life artists because we all are expected to give our lives purpose by using our own skills. I use the term 'artist' because being an artist involves having the capacity to give form and shape to what would otherwise be formless and shapeless; to impose order on what would otherwise be chaotic, haphazard and random. In the increasing absence of traditional points of reference in modern society such as religion, the family and public festivals, the vitality of the 'life artist' will become increasingly significant in moulding a future society.

Well-being

On the 25th November 2010 the British Prime Minister David Cameron announced his government's pledge to measure happiness. He outlined the Office for National Statistics' proposal to create a well-being index. The aim of the venture, as Cameron was reported to have phrased it, was "to create a society more conducive to the good life." This included two elements: to make people feel better, and to help them build a better life. Cameron, in stating that "success in a country is much more than economic growth" argued that if the plan was successful it would improve education, health and the local environment. It was also the hope that such measures would open a national debate as to how we together could build a better society. It was said that the research "will bring about a reappraisal of

what matters." The British politicians hope that in time it will lead to new thinking in government policy "not just on the bottom line, but on all things that make life worthwhile." From April 2011 the Office for National Statistics will start measuring the progress of the U.K. not just by plotting economic growth but how lives have improved, not just in the standard of living but by the quality of life.^x

These moves are not only taking place in the U.K. The Sarkozy Commission, a gathering of some of the world's leading economists, has called for a broader accounting of contentment than income. Happiness Economics was first launched by Richard Easterlin in 1974 when he posed the question as to whether or not economic growth improves our sense of a good life. Since then economists such as Richard Layard, Andrew Oswald and Carol Graham have put forward the contention that economic growth and stability is connected to a sense of well-being which, in turn brings about optimism.^{xi}

But will we be satisfied with the results of the index? Perhaps it would be appropriate to discuss rejuvenation methods in education in order to make an increase in well being more likely.

The educational challenge of our time is a schooling whereby each pupil is provided with the opportunity to discover his or her own identity and to find a place for it within the existing pattern of society. Then work no longer becomes a job but a vocation.

It is often the case that we hear from the older generation that "everything was so much easier before." To a certain extent this can be said to be true, but isn't it the case that that which was easier and that which was more difficult previously have now changed? Transparency, and the lack of it, has played a part in the difficulties many people find in connecting with the realities of the world. The so-called post-modern society is based on a tension between socialization and individuation. We are taught to integrate into a system of social laws for the common good and, at the same time, we have a need to know who we are and who we can become. This is a difficult combination. The educational challenge of our time is a schooling whereby each pupil is provided with the opportunity to discover his or her own identity and to find a place for it within the existing pattern of society. Then work no longer becomes a job but a vocation. The more complicated and fragmented society becomes the greater is the chance to live "on the edge" or on the outside of society. In this way the possibility of becoming an underachiever increases and it is this gap which a rejuvenated educational system can seek to heal.

As European citizens we should keep one thing in mind. Europe's uniqueness lies in its plurality, the future is one of diversity in unity. The manifold of languages and the mosaic of cultures within a relatively small geographical area is something that is unequalled in the world. The European Union has twenty-three official languages. The genius of Europe lies in what the English artist William Blake called "the holiness of the minute particular."

Europe's most precious treasure is that linguistic, cultural and social diversity. Hence perhaps the particular advantage of Europe in a globalized world is that we have had to learn the art of living with others. Europe's task perhaps is passing on to all the art of everyone learning from everyone and, at the same time, holding on to our distinctiveness.

Questions and Discussion

** The speaker was asked in the discussion that followed as to which reforms he would recommend as a future path in the education of the coming generation. The speaker's comments can be summarized as follows:*

One thing must be made clear. It is much easier to change educational policy than to change how schools work. Schools are very stable institutions and as such are not open to radical changes. Why is this so? We have clear images of what is done in the classroom, we know how teachers work. These images are formed early in childhood. Teaching is the only profession in which insight into what is involved begins in the tender childhood years, from the age of six or seven. As pupils young children are able to learn what a professional does in his or her work. Indeed children spend more time with teachers than they do with their parents. We cannot underestimate what this means for the teaching profession. Many young people choose to train to become teachers because of the image they have gained of the profession from their childhood years at school. These images are not consciously internalized when they are pupils but they later surface and become central to their ideas of schooling and they see the role of teaching as a possibility to bring about much needed change to society. Young students can also choose the teaching profession on the basis of negative experiences, frustrations or unfulfilled hopes from their school days. They hope to rectify these flaws but need to meet new ideas.

Therefore, in forming mindsets for the future we need to start by working on a set of human values that are needed for the formation of a healthy society and to permeate teacher education with not only a philosophy of education but also a deep exploration of the methods and practicalities of working in the classroom. In so doing we will bridge the gap between theory and practice – a well-documented problem highlighted in all European evaluations of teacher education.

A teacher requires a set of skills that have to be in place in order to maintain a level of consistency in the classroom. Nothing can be done if the class is in disarray. But in addition there is a need to have something to teach. A teacher must have a repertoire. This involves a mastery of the content of the lesson and of the methods that need to be employed in order to transform teaching into learning. This repertoire provides the teacher with a sense of security. An ambition for most teachers is to become pedagogically graceful and this is difficult, if not impossible, if you are constantly wandering in a wilderness devoid of a path. A teacher who feels he or she is in unfamiliar territory will lose, or be forced to surrender, something that is vital to him/her – a sense of security. Therefore reforms or calls for change are most often met with passive resistance from the teacher.

Few argue that it is unnecessary to have a re-think when it comes to educating the young. New norms need to be addressed. Issues such as the development of thinking, the refinement of the imagination, the cultivation of sensitivity and the fostering of intrinsic will-forces are imperative in modern-day child development. Schools will have to adopt new strategies that take human values into consideration. Norms reflect values. Schools need to be converted from institutions that base their teaching primarily on academic achievement where pupils are expected to transmit that which is already known. Educational reforms have, as yet, failed to address these issues. On the contrary, in the last decade they have enforced this philosophy. In my opinion no politician can succeed in implementing reforms if a set of human values and mindsets for the future are not aligned. The policy makers are not at fault but they must realize that human values cannot be imposed – they need careful cultivation.

It can be claimed that there is no profession where there is a greater distance between policy makers and the implementers than in teaching. There is a great deal of scepticism and distrust within the teaching profession regarding reforms. Teachers feel they are at the receiving end and have little say in the formation of the guidelines they are compelled to conform to. In addition many reforms have the aim of creating a uniform curriculum with fixed standards for pupils regardless of who they are, where they live or indeed who their teachers are. Many experienced teachers have seen reforms come and go with alarming regularity. They have seen them introduced and later discarded in favour of new ones.

** An issue that was taken up with the speaker in the general discussion and in short conversations after the session was the question of motivation. The speaker made the following comments:*

In my opinion we need to realise that teaching and learning are two different issues and should not be confused with one another. Most institutions are centres for teaching and not learning. The syllabi are prescribed, textbooks are compulsory, examinations are in place, as are standards from outside the institutions themselves. We need to look closely at the collective structures for imparting education to the learner. It is no secret that 'drop-outs' in upper schools and universities are not only those who find their studies too excruciating. Many are gifted and innovative but lose motivation due to extrinsic determined accepted responses.

There is a centralized view of what all pupils should learn and how they should learn within a specified time scale. The system gives little room for critical thought and individual modes of expression.

** A further question was to how the speaker saw the future of Europe when it came to the politics of education.*

European politicians and institutions cannot, in our time, function without strong support, vocal and implicit, from the electorate. It is disturbing that the population turnout at European elections has dropped at every election – the most recent, in June 2009, to a mere

43%. Universities can no longer lean on traditions and reputations but need the support of enthused and dedicated students. The number of students successfully completing their degrees in the allocated time is a great cause of concern. Schools cannot persist without their pupils feeling that they are being addressed as individuals whom we hope will form our common future. A sense of urgency in collectively addressing these issues is crucial.



Children artists painting at Italian street art painting festival

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