

Contrasting Paradigms for Education... Portrayed as Cultural “Trees”

- Karl F. Wheatley, Ph.D., 1/7/16

<p>Inferior outcomes for learners, teachers, taxpayers, society.</p> <p>Specific teaching methods, curricula, assessments, etc.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Commercial high-stakes standardized tests drive instruction and are primary means of assessing learning/teaching.</p> <p>Primarily single-subject instruction. Overwhelmingly teacher-directed lessons and units aimed at narrow & predetermined academic objectives.</p> <p>Emphasis on reactive carrot & stick methods. Little attention to inappropriate curricula as a trigger. attention to inappropriate curricula as a trigger.</p> <p>Primarily easily tested academic knowledge & skills. Emphasis on specific & “measurable” (sic) objectives tied to academic content standards and job skills.</p> <p>Top-down, autocratic, corporate-style control. Increasing privatization.</p> <p>* <u>TEST-DRIVEN, FACTORY-STYLE SCHOOLING</u></p> <p>Emphasis on short-term gains in test scores but overlooks broad effects, collateral damage, & long-term effectiveness.</p>	<p><u>Fruit & Leaves</u></p> <p>* <u>Smaller Branches</u></p> <p>#<u>Major Limb:</u> <u>Assessments</u></p> <p>#<u>Major Limbs:</u> <u>Curricular Organization and Teaching Methods</u></p> <p>#<u>Major Limb:</u> <u>Guidance Methods</u></p> <p><u>Secondary Trunk:</u> <u>Explicit Classroom Goals</u></p> <p><u>Secondary Trunk:</u> <u>Forms of Governance</u></p> <p><u>TRUNK/Identity</u></p> <p><u>Research Basis</u></p> <hr/> <p><u>ROOTS:</u> <u>Values & Principles</u></p> <p><u>Guiding Assumptions</u></p> <p><u>SOIL: Metaphors</u></p> <p><u>SEEDS !!!</u></p>	<p>Superior outcomes for learners, teachers, taxpayers, & society.</p> <p>Specific teaching methods, curricula, assessments, etc.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>More whole-child teacher-planned assessments. Anecdotal notes, portfolios, checklists, work samples, performance assessments.</p> <p>Lots of integrated & transdisciplinary curricula. Child-initiated & jointly-planned & teacher-initiated activities. Play, project-based learning, FVR, IS, apprenticeships.</p> <p>Focus on engaging curricula, relationships, reasoning, & caring classrooms to develop empathy, internalization of values and students’ ability to <i>self-regulate</i>.</p> <p>Healthy whole-child development & learning. Basic needs healthy emotions and motivations, plus deep academic learning. Emphasizes broader whole-child goals & what matters most.</p> <p>Substantial democratic decision-making. Shared control. Educating the citizenry is best done by the public sector.</p> <p>* <u>BIG-PICTURE EDUCATION</u></p> <p>Focus on broad & long-term effectiveness for goals we value most (whole child goals, deep learning, democracy, sustainability).</p> <hr/> <p>Caring for people and the planet: Developing individuals <i>and</i> citizens <i>and</i> workers/leaders. intrinsic goals: Self & others, caring, cooperation, shared control, and broad & long-term effectiveness for most valued goals; + democracy, + sustainability.</p> <p>Learners are wired to learn, but require guidance and a balance of child-initiated & teacher-guided/planned activities. The only truly high-quality education is whole child education.</p> <p>Organic & Cultural metaphors (Garden, family, apprenticeship)</p> <p>Public schools were sent on wrong mission but perform well. The rigged \$\$\$ system is the main cause of our biggest problems. *Public sector often outperforms private sector (e.g., education). The best way to improve K-12 is to imitate good preschools.</p>
--	--	---

De-Bunking Pivotal Educational Myths & Re-Framing the Debates (KFW)

“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”

- popular paraphrase of Albert Einstein

The CEO states these Myths

1) “The mediocre average scores of U.S. students on international tests prove our public schools are failing us and have put our nation at risk [sic].”

2) “Like everything else in life, the best way to improve education is to run it more like a business [sic].”

The Wise Teacher Concisely De-Bunks the Myths and Re-Frames the Debates

- ** **Misleading test scores don’t and can’t tell us how well education is working.**
- ** **Most of what matters in education and life simply isn’t on *low-level standardized tests*.**
 - * **Average scores on international tests don’t predict national outcomes for highly-developed nations such as the U.S..** Lower average test scores predicted greater national success 40 years after the First Int’l Math Study.
 - * For those who trust test scores much more than I do, **when you control for the much higher rates of child poverty and inequality in the U.S., our kids do fine on those tests** (even #1 or #3 in the world).
- ** **Our failing economy is the primary cause of America’s lukewarm average test scores.** (~80% of the variance in test scores is due to out-of-school factors, primarily family SES. Our rigged, “trickle-down” economy directly creates higher levels of poverty and inequality, which in turn promote poorer development and learning, much higher levels of social dysfunction, and a much weaker America than we could be enjoying.
- * **The real truth is that our failing economy hurts children and families, and has weakened America.**
- ** **Our remarkably effective public schools have performed well in the face many tough challenges.**

- *** **Most things in life DON’T work like business, and are corrupted by too much market thinking.**
- ** **Most of America’s biggest problems resulted from far too much market ideology and corporate influence.**
 - * **Education is a unique profession, profoundly different from for-profit businesses or manufacturing.**
 - * **Business is simply the wrong paradigm for education.** Businesses ultimately focus on how much they can get for themselves: In stark contrast, educators focus on how much we can give away to others.
- ** **In many ways, quality education works in ways that are the opposite of the values and logic of markets and manufacturing.** Thus, applying market-based thinking to education reliably corrupts the process and produces inferior results. Treating education as a business directly leads to neglecting the most important goals for education, reduces citizens’ control of education, creates greater inequality in outcomes (thus increasing social dysfunctions), and generally undermines our freedoms, equal opportunities, and the general welfare for all Americans.
- * When our Founding Fathers set out to secure our safety, freedoms, equal opportunities, and the general welfare, they didn’t create a corporation or hedge fund, they created a public-sector institution—our government. **They understood that a healthy public sector is the foundation for the success of individuals, families, businesses, and America.** Notice that as the public sector grew stronger in the 20th century, the working and middle class families did much better: But as the unions and public sector and unions were attacked, weakened, and/or dismantled, most families have lost ground and are struggling.
- * **Public education is a public good that serves many public goals and is best provided by the public sector.**
- *** **PUBLIC EDUCATION APPEARS TO BE BROADLY SUPERIOR to privatized education for educating the masses in a way that is consistent with our highest moral and national values and the broad goals we value for children and society.**
- *** **MARKET-BASED POLICIES REPEATEDLY FAIL** because they conflict with how nature works and with the needs of society.
- * **The best way to improve American education at every grade is to run it like a good preschool** (focus on whole child development, emphasize caring, sharing, and cooperation; practice democratic decision-making, learn from whole real-world experiences, daily choices about your learning, take initiative, read great books, use words, numbers & the arts to express your ideas; eat healthy foods, get exercise, and care for other living things).

De-Bunking Pivotal Educational Myths & Re-Framing the Debates, p. 2

3) “Education should focus on marketable jobs skills that better prepare students for global competitiveness and also help grow our economy [sic].”

* **Quality PK-12 education always aims to develop healthy, well-rounded individuals AND wise and active citizens AND skilled and ethical workers.** Narrowing education’s focus hurts people and America.

* **Education must prepare students to fix our rigged economy that is failing people and the planet.**

* Given the shared global challenges facing civilization (inequality, water shortages, climate disruption), **one of highest priorities for education is developing students’ capacity for global cooperativeness.**

4) “Education should focus on measurable objectives [sic] as measured [sic] by objective standardized tests [sic].”

*** **There is no such thing as real “measurement” in education. There is also no such thing as testing that is “objective.”** All education assessments are inherently subjective, and they would be worthless if they weren’t.

* **Emphasizing easily-quantified objectives reliably narrows and dumbs-down education while causing lots of collateral damage** (poorer student motivation, weaker curricula, worse behavior, faster forgetting).

* Teacher assessments are generally better than even low-stakes standardized tests, and save taxpayers money.

*** **High-stakes standardized testing is the central operational obstacle to quality education in America today.**

* **Education should focus on the broad range of goals we value most for children and for a better world.**

*** **Assessment & Research must study big-picture effectiveness (broad & long-term outcomes, systems thinking).**

5) “Tight control & standardization work wonders in factories and business, so education needs more tight control & standardization.”

*** **Kids are not cars, and great development and learning do not work like manufacturing.** In fact, the way great development and learning work is roughly the opposite of the logic of markets and manufacturing.

*** **Coercive control and standardization kill quality education:** They stifle healthy motivation, initiative, creativity, and critical thinking, and they narrow and dumb down education. **Freedom is central to human development and deep learning,** so learners and teachers need much more freedom and far more individualized and real-world learning experiences. **We don’t want standardized kids with standardized minds.**

* **Quality education runs on healthy motivations** such as intrinsic motivation, well-internalized values and goals, a growth mindset, autonomous motivations, self-regulation, and flow experiences. **Standardization, tight control, and primitive carrot-and-stick incentive schemes are the enemy of all these healthy motivations.**

6) “To improve education, we need to hold teacher, administrators and students more accountable for student achievement [sic].”

** **Educational accountability is a clever trap**—a Trojan Horse term that allows corporate policymakers to take greater control of education while selling more commercial standardized tests and test-aligned textbooks.

* In everyday life, “accountability” has many positive meanings, but **in education, the main meaning of accountability is primitive carrot-and-stick motivation married to primitive high-stakes standardized tests.**

* “Accountability” really means ignoring many of the goals we value most for children and the world, making education worse, and wasting taxpayer money. **High-stakes testing has failed everywhere it has been tried.**

*** **Improving education requires big-picture education** and everyone taking mutual responsibility for the fate of American children. By far the most powerful way to improve our children’s educational and life outcomes is to directly improve economic equality in the U.S. (e.g., progressive taxation, invest in kids & society).

7) “Competition improves everything, so we need charters, choice and competition to improve education [sic].”

*** **Real competition undermines healthy motivations, deep learning, and makes the functioning of groups deteriorate.**

** **Charters are siphon schools that amplify inequalities** as market forces always do. They weaken communities.

* **The profit motive corrupts education in many ways,** so public dollars should never be spent on for-profit charters —which in addition to weak performance have also been plagued by financial scandals.

*** **For educating the masses in ways consistent with core moral & American values, real public education works better.**

(Critical Note: All charter research is at wrong level of analysis: The key policy question is re: the *net* effects on whole districts or states of allowing charters.)