

Where is Education Going?

By
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Education, as we think we know it, is undergoing radical changes in format and application like we have not seen in 250 years when Scotland led the way in education reform for Europe. In addition to all the machinations going on within formalised schooling, there are changes in the para-school world that are of interest as they grow on the back of developing E-learning technologies. Two particular developments are in the areas of home schooling and community college style schooling.

While education departments might struggle with the ever changing challenges to the philosophy of education and the lack of resources at implementing much at all, children across the world are going on to the internet. In 2009, there were 55 million children in primary and high school in the United States. Seventy five percent of these children between age 3 and 17 use the internet to complete assessments. And, in addition to the many additional home schooling supplementary programmes available, there are another 1 million children doing purely home schooling with most of this from the internet. In Britain, over 25% of internet users use the internet for formalised education. The internet, by the way, doesn't care what a person looks like or indeed, if you seem as dysfunctional as Steven Hawkins. If you can operate, and even if you can't operate, a keyboard, you can learn. Schooling is going home.

At the same time, although not at the same rate, there are emerging options for child education that are more career focused than general education. This is the model of community college education where students get to choose subjects of interest and ability across a broader spectrum of subjects than are on offer in most schools. As the 21st Century continues to spin open there will be four areas of vocational education that will come to dominate schooling, especially university education, in response to growing employment and commercial growth: Business Studies (marketing, management, finance), Communication (music, performance, writing), Media (technical production in TV, radio, film, print matter) and IT (engineering, programming, communication). As new education and career options emerge, so there are new opportunities for children.

Education is riding on the back of developing internet technology and communication. The future in education and the wave of change to education opportunities taking place is running along behind developments in information delivery systems. In developing education programmes, leaders in education should be looking at the broader picture of the development of society, local and global, and the emerging opportunities in education, for all. Private education courses, E-learning, and vocational directed education are all providing broad education and learning options and changing the nature of education as we knew it.

It is not just what children are learning or how children are learning that is changing but the logic of education is changing as interactive-learning comes to the front of the stage to redefine all other characters in education as but participants in this unfolding story of broad-spectrum, accessible learning. For children with learning difficulties and special needs, the opportunities are going to continue to increase and education become less daunting and even fun.