

The Conversation

A place for sharing and discussing ideas about education



Welcome to the conversation

At *The Conversation* we believe that giving educators the space and time to talk about teaching and learning is essential.

Conversations can generate ideas, inform pedagogies and inspire reform. A conversation implies a measure of equality and that listening and sharing without limit, without judgement, without inhibition can lead to incredible things. Conversations allow us to explore ideas, to challenge and ask questions of ourselves, each other and the systems we work in. They allow us to create, analyse and evaluate ideas. They allow us to engage intellectually with the latest research and make links between theories and praxes. Conversations can lift us, excite us and challenge us. So join in the conversation!



In each issue we will pose a new question

This time we ask
"What should the curriculum be?"

Our responses

Chair of the Education Select Committee
Robert Halfon MP argues for radical change

We interview Principal
Les Hall about all things curriculum

Ian Cross discusses the hidden curriculum

How would you answer?

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QUESTION

Questions can kick start conversations. They ask us to think, respond and converse. Be curious, ask questions.



CONVERSATION

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OP-ED

There are so many curriculum models and theories and designs that it is difficult to know even where to begin when one thinks about what the curriculum should be. In this issue we are delighted to have been allowed by the Chair of the Education Select Committee, Robert Halfon MP, to reproduce his recent speech. He argues that GCSE exams should be scrapped. While this certainly made headlines, I wonder how seriously the Government is actually taking such calls for radical transformation. It is interesting to note that after the 1951 introduction of the GCE examinations (which replaced the school certificate), there were calls to overhaul the O Level system as early as 1978. It took a further 10 years until the first GCSE examination was taken. Will it take 10 years (or more) from now until we see a change to our examination system?

Thinking about examinations recently, I remembered a book I once read called "The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci" by Jonathan Spence. In 1577 Jesuit Priest Matteo Ricci set out from

Italy to bring the Christian faith and Western thought to Ming dynasty China. ([https://www.amazon.co.uk/Memory-Palace-](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Memory-Palace-Matteo-Ricci/dp/0140080988)

[Matteo-Ricci/dp/0140080988](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Memory-Palace-Matteo-Ricci/dp/0140080988)) Whilst there, he discovered the Imperial Examination System. This was a civil service examination system designed to select candidates for state bureaucracy. Though there were different levels of examination, the triennial exam could last up to six weeks with candidates expected to write down everything that they knew!

I have sometimes fantasised about students "graduating" from school at 18 with a series of oral examinations about what they know, much like a post doctoral defence.

But this of course is a discussion about assessment rather than the curriculum itself. What should the curriculum be? On page 9 you will find a brief and in-exhaustive list of some of the theorists of curriculum design and philosophy. Clearly there is an abundance of directions in which schools could choose to take their curriculum. Under the new OFSTED framework it seems as though schools must justify their curriculum choices and therefore

the purpose and intent of the curriculum needs serious thought.

The false dichotomy of choosing between a knowledge or skills based curriculum has been seen for what it is. Students in the 21st Century need both skills and knowledge. The skills we should develop in our students seem fairly clear; literacy, numeracy, oracy, IT, problem solving, critical thinking and so on. Less clear perhaps is the knowledge that we want students to have. A possible route through the discussion is to think about what knowledge we, as educators, wish to transmit to the future via the students of today. What books do we want to keep in the future canon? What scientific ideas should be common knowledge in future society? Which moments of history should shape the future by their transmission?

Teachers and curriculum designers should be curators of knowledge. Educators can (as Les Hall says in the interview on page 10) change the world. We can shape the future by shaping the curriculum and thereby shaping the citizens of the future. The knowledge that we choose to transmit to the future needs careful thought.

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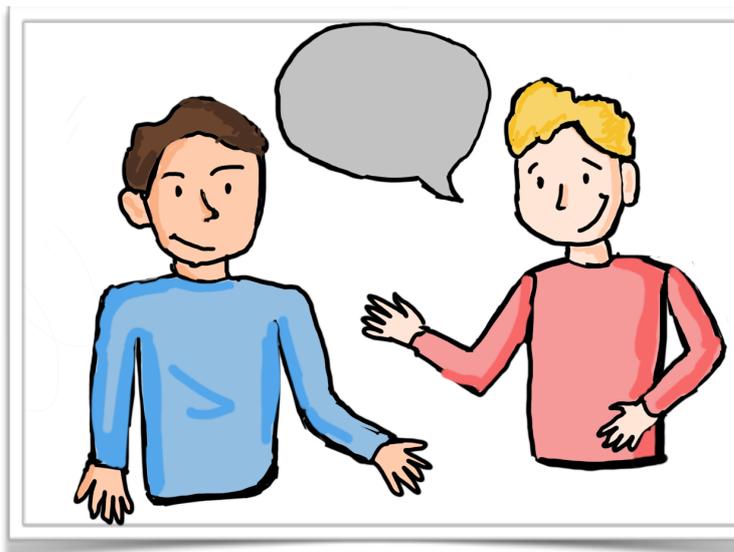
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JOIN IN THE CONVERSATION

The conversation is all about bringing people together and talking. Asking a question is a good way to begin a conversation. This semester we ask **“What should the curriculum be?”**. Clearly there are many possible ideas and views one could answer with or argue about, but that’s the point, it gets the conversation going.

We would love to hear your ideas. If you would like to submit a written response (of around 500 words) please email us at **submit@theconversation.education** or visit **www.theconversation.education**

Conversations need not happen face to face but it is sometimes just really nice to sit round a table and talk. If you would like to join in with one of our conversations in person, please let us know. Email **info@theconversation.education** or visit **www.theconversation.education** for more details.

Do you agree with the ideas discussed by our contributors? Maybe you completely disagree. Either way we want you to talk about it! Let us know your thoughts, discuss them with your colleagues, debate them with your friends. Have a conversation.

So come on, dive in and join the conversation!



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Chair of the Education Select Committee

Robert Halfon MP

Towards a Twenty-First Century Education System

Delivered at the Cabinet War Room (11 February 2019) for The Edge Foundation.
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What I want to talk about this morning is one of the biggest challenges we face as a nation – how to create an education and training system that genuinely nurtures the talent we need for the future and creates a ladder of opportunity long and strong enough for each and every young person to climb.

This argument is too often characterised as one of polar opposites – between traditionalists and progressives – between knowledge and skills.

That is a false divide. The truth is that knowledge is only useful where individuals have the skills to interpret and communicate it, and skills are only useful where young people have a core knowledge to draw on.

Acceptance of this simple fact is now crucial so that we can begin to reshape education and support schools to become truly 'knowledge engaged'. This means not focusing just on knowledge or just on skills but on the combination of those two critical factors.

To do this, first we need to redefine our view of the skills that employers consistently tell us they are looking for, like team

working and problem solving. These are not 'soft skills' that detract from the development of knowledge, but rather the essential skills to manipulate and make use of it.

Second, now that we have raised the participation age, we must abandon GCSEs and move towards a holistic and far broader based baccalaureate at age 18.

Finally, we must give teachers back their autonomy in the classroom. We must give them the opportunity to work in partnership with local employers and community organisations to bring their curriculum alive with a rich mix of

academic and
work-life
skills
which
will

create a multi-skilled workforce for the future.

1. The triple threat to our economy

Barely a day goes by without a story in the news about skills shortages in one sector or another. They are a drain on our economy and on our society – real job vacancies that cannot be filled because employers are unable to find the right skilled individuals.

Latest research by the Department for Education itself showed that there were 226,000 skills shortage vacancies across the economy in 2017, two and half times as many as the 91,000 that existed in 2011. Yet the most recent figures from ONS showed that in the first quarter of 2018, there were 322,000 young people aged 16-24 who were NEET and unemployed. Setting these two figures side by side provides the starkest illustration possible of the complete disconnect between our education system and the 21st century world of work.

The impact of skills shortages on our businesses is dramatic. The greatest concentrations of these vacancies are in some of



our key infrastructure and growth industries – construction, utilities, transport, manufacturing and communication. They disproportionately affect the smaller businesses that are the backbone of the economy in my constituency and around the country. The Open University has estimated the cost at over £6.3 billion annually and growing.

There is a social justice deficit too. While businesses suffer from these skills shortages, hundreds of thousands of young people are faced with the despair of unemployment and unfulfilled job-seeking in a market to which their skills and education are simply not suited.

It is almost impossible to speak on any subject in 2019 without a mention of the 'B' word and there is no doubt Brexit has the potential to add significantly to this challenge. The Employer Skills Survey showed that 38% of businesses facing skills shortages tried to recruit non-UK nationals to fill the roles. Of these, 90% of firms had looked to recruit from the EU. If Brexit restricts migration into the UK, we will have to redouble our efforts to improve the skills system here in order to foster home grown talent.

Looking further ahead, my Committee has recently been examining the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The number and nature of jobs are changing at an unprecedented rate. Driverless vehicles will automate road haulage and taxi operations, artificial intelligence will power medical diagnosis, big data will search hundreds of legal and insurance precedents in a heartbeat and 3D printing will be

used to construct bridges and houses. In 2015 The Bank of England found that up to 15 million UK current jobs are at risk of automation. There are particular challenges for young people – PWC has estimated that 46% of jobs done by young men are at risk of automation.

The 'March of the Robots' and its impact on our economy and society is going to be huge. To complement our committee enquiry, the Government should establish a Royal Commission, headed up by the Chief Scientist, to examine the impact of the rise of the robots, artificial intelligence and automation. They should look at the effect on jobs particularly, and advise how we should respond to this challenge.

In Finland this is already happening with a programme called 'anticipate'.

So our education system faces a triple threat, which we must step up to address.

- 1) We must fill the large and widening skills shortages in the economy;
- 2) We must foster home-grown talent, and;
- 3) We must give young people the transferable skills and resilience they need for careers in a rapidly changing world.

2. The Ask from British Businesses

One thing has remained remarkably consistent during my conversations with business leaders in my constituency over many years. When I ask them what they are looking for in their future workforce, their answer is simple – individuals who are good

communicators, excellent problem solvers, strong team players.

This certainly does not mean that knowledge is not important – it is. Every young person deserves to understand this country's rich cultural heritage, world history and the scientific principles that govern our daily lives.

But knowledge is not enough. It is essential that it is combined with the development of the key skills that employers are looking for. In the language of Ofsted's recent work in this area, we need schools to be *knowledge engaged*. The knowledge is not the end in itself – rather it is knowledge, understanding and the application of skills intertwined in the curriculum that creates rounded individuals.

The proof from employers is clear. In the Government's own Employer Perspectives Survey, less than half of employers said that academic qualifications alone were significant or critical when hiring, compared to almost two-thirds for relevant work experience. Similarly, in the CBI's annual education and skills survey, businesses made clear that the biggest drivers of young people's success are attitudes and aptitudes.

Similarly, the skills that employers are desperately looking for are not a secret. In fact, the resounding message from 87,000 businesses surveyed is that there are two key areas: first, technical and practical skills and second, inter-personal and problem-solving skills. This chimes with the latest figures from the OECD on adult skills, which place the UK 14th on literacy, 18th on numeracy and 10th on problem solving.

So the requirement from businesses is clear. What matters is not just factual recall. What matters is knowledge combined with technical skills and the timeless employability skills that are required for success in any industry.

3. The Response from Education Policy

A huge emphasis has been placed through performance measures like EBacc on knowledge in a narrow range of academic subjects.

While businesses emphasise the need for technical skills, EBacc has delivered a 57% reduction in Design and Technology GCSE entries since 2010. At the same time, the teaching of creative subjects needed to build broader communication and team-working skills have fallen by 20%.

Here it must be said that while the Gatsby Benchmarks are an excellent aspiration, the reality of their delivery leaves a huge amount to be desired. Under pressure to prioritise GCSE results, they risk becoming a box-ticking exercise in many schools. Recent evidence to the Select Committee clearly calls into question the effectiveness and value for money provided by the Careers and Enterprise Company, who are spraying money around like confetti with a wanton lack of strategic direction - they spent £200,000 on two conferences in 2017 and £900,000 on research with a lack of convincing data on hard outcomes and minimal oversight.

The crucial role of Further Education has also been largely

overlooked. The sector has been subjected to decades of 'initiativitis' leaving it without a clear direction, while funding has been salami sliced year on year making their task almost impossible. Colleges must be recognised as having a key role in giving young people access to high quality technical education. They need to be seen as anchor institutions, collaborating closely with schools and Higher Education, as they are in Northern Ireland. And they should be properly funded - an issue I raised directly



last

year's budget. I will continue to champion this too often unrecognised sector.

In the world of adult education, latest research from the Social Mobility Commission shows that 49% of adults from the lowest socio-economic group receive no training at all after leaving school, making it all the more important that we get education right at this early stage.

4. Beacons of hope

I very much welcome the recent announcements from Amanda Spielman beginning to establish a broader definition of success. As Luke Tryl, Ofsted's Director of Corporate Strategy, has said 'we

have reached the limits of what data alone can tell us'.

Education policy needs to catch up to that vision.

In the meantime though, Edge has been working with a group of schools that are already bucking the trend in combining the teaching of knowledge and skill, preparing young people for life and work in the twenty-first century.

- School 21 in Stratford sends all of its Year 10 pupils out for half a day a week to work alongside real businesses on live projects, applying what they have learned in school and getting real time careers guidance while developing the employability skills businesses look for.

- XP School in Doncaster, who you will hear more from in our panel discussion, move beyond the restrictions of individual subjects to a holistic education taught through expeditions that challenge pupils and teachers alike. Their simple maths equation is one I wholeheartedly endorse - qualifications plus character growth plus beautiful work equals the best version of you.

In the North East, Edge are working with the LEP and with schools in Newcastle and North Tyneside to apply some of these transformational approaches and principles, already yielding strong results. We will hear more from Claire, Principal at Excelsior Academy in Newcastle, about this work shortly.

Most importantly, we know that these approaches work because there is clear evidence from other parts of the world. I recently met colleagues from Nashville,

Tennessee, where this expansive approach to education was introduced a decade ago. They have experienced an increase of more than 25% in graduation rates, improvements in behaviour, attendance and most importantly in core subject attainment because young people can see the relevance of what they are learning. The bottom line is that this has added more than \$100m to the local economy.

5. Towards a Twenty-First Century Education System

The argument in this area between traditionalists and progressives is a false dichotomy, based on inflexibility and unwillingness to change and adapt. As I have said before, when the Opposition paint a picture in which the Government as butchers of our education system, I respond by saying that is simply wrong. We should be seen not as butchers but as Bakers. We should follow the very sensible proposals of Lord Baker, former Education Secretary and Chair of Edge, in moving beyond the extremes of this debate to a sensible middle ground where the acquisition of knowledge can co-exist and thrive with the development of essential skills.

First, we must rewrite the way in which we see those skills. We should stop referring to them as 'soft skills' developed at the expense of knowledge. Rather they are the essential skills that

employers are looking for and which will enable young people to interpret, manipulate and communicate their knowledge.

“There is a need for every young person to be able to access through their schooling a working knowledge of our – indeed their - cultural capital, our history and our literature.”

What skills do I mean? Well Edge's *Joint Dialogue* research answers that question by bringing together data from leading surveys and focus groups with employers: problem solving, communication, self-management, teamwork, creativity, numeracy and digital skills, together with confidence and resilience.

Again I repeat that I fully support the need for every young person to be able to access through their schooling a working knowledge of our – indeed their - cultural capital, our history and our literature.

But it is also essential that we develop our next generation of engineers, entrepreneurs and designers. All young people should have access to the technical and creative subjects that will give them the skills that employers are looking for. We must move from knowledge-rich to knowledge-engaged. It is not enough for young people to emerge from school with a brain full of rote learned facts and figures. They need a core of knowledge but, just as importantly, the skills to interpret, adapt and communicate that knowledge in a variety of different situations.

This is perfectly possible, as Edge's own work in the North East is already showing. Young people in schools are gaining a knowledge of robotics by working with students at Newcastle University to use Micro:bits to solve real life problems in their school. At the same time, they are practicing team working and communication skills and getting exposure to possible future careers.

Students at Excelsior Academy have gained a real understanding of the history of the Jarrow March, a protest against unemployment and poverty in the 1930s, by recreating it and working with a local food bank to understand how these issues are impacting their community even today. They are developing knowledge about their community and history, whilst simultaneously learning how to apply it and how to become caring future citizens.

Through these kinds of highly engaging projects, teachers are able to work in partnership with local businesses and community organisations to truly bring the curriculum to life.

Second, we must remember that since 2015 all young people have been required to participate in some form of education and training up to 18. Yet GCSEs are still widely viewed as the same high stakes tests that they were when many young people finished their education at this age.

We must take the opportunity to fundamentally reimagine this phase of education, turning the high-stakes GCSEs that drive so much perverse behaviour in the system into a simple data-led 'progress check' at 16.

You may worry that this could negatively impact students who move institutions at 16, but some have questioned whether GCSEs in subjects like maths are a perfect indicator of real numeracy, and institutions like Colleges are already skilled in assessing needs on arrival to tailor their provision.

In their place, what we need is a true baccalaureate at 18. Just as the International Baccalaureate does in more than 149 countries, this should recognise academic and technical skills together with the young person's personal development. This would act as a genuine and trusted signal to employers and universities of a young person's rounded skills and abilities.

Schools would then be measured on two things - completion of the baccalaureate at 18 and the destinations of their pupils in the years after leaving, with apprenticeships explicitly counted as a gold standard destination.

Third, too many teachers are currently leaving the profession - analysis published at the end of

last year showed that of 35,000 newly qualified teachers who had started teaching in London since 2010, more than 11,000 had already left.

The solution to this doesn't lie in more costly advertising for new recruits. The solution lies in building on the Secretary of State's recent retention strategy to return the profession to one that is attractive as a long-term career. Local teacher training colleges could give them a head start to that career, but then teachers should have more autonomy in their classrooms and more high quality CPD throughout their careers, connecting learning to real life.

Edge has piloted teacher externships, giving the opportunity for teachers to spend time in local businesses, understanding their workplace so that they can inject real life examples into their curriculum and provide relevant real world careers advice to their pupils. The evaluation of the pilot showed that 80% of teachers and 84% of students felt that the approach had given them a real insight into the world of work. This programme will expand in the north east during 2019.

Conclusion

These changes not only have the potential to transform the way in

which young people learn and engage while in school. They also have the ability to equip young people to progress on to the full range of routes including T-Levels and Degree Apprenticeships.

This is not about an either - or. The acquisition of core knowledge is important. But dry rote learning for exams is not the way forward and GCSEs have had their day. Young people need the opportunity to develop that knowledge *and* the skills that they need for future employment through a broad and relevant curriculum that links explicitly to the real world and is assessed holistically.

I will leave you with a quote from Churchill himself, speaking at Harrow School in 1940, which is just as true today as we consider social justice in education: 'When the war is won ... it must be one of our aims to work to establish a state of society where the advantage and privileges which hitherto have been enjoyed only by the few should be more widely shared by the many and the youth of the nation as a whole.'

Seventy nine years on we have still not established that state of society. Unless we do so, more and more generations will lose out needlessly making society and the nation poorer in every way.

Robert Halfon is a British Conservative Party politician and former Conservative Party worker. He was first elected as the Member of Parliament (MP) for Harlow in 2010, being re-elected in 2015, and 2017. Between May 2015 and July 2016 Halfon served as Minister without Portfolio (attending Cabinet) and Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party. From July 2016 to June 2017 he was Minister of State at the Department for Education. Since July 2017 Halfon has been the Chair of the Education Committee.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Halfon

Curriculum Theorists

The Conversation is about the promotion of talk between education colleagues. We aim to spark conversations with this magazine. Clearly there is limited space here to do justice to the immense field of curriculum theory and the people who argue for each curriculum model but we do hope that this brief foray will prompt you to find out more and talk to your colleagues about your own ideas about what the curriculum should be.



The curriculum can be said to comprise 3 components, the intention, the substance and the implementation. Each component must be considered carefully. What are the intended outcomes of your curriculum? What exactly will be taught to students who pursue the curriculum? How will the curriculum be implemented and delivered? One can also think of 3 main types of curriculum: the explicit, the hidden and the absent. The **Explicit curriculum** is the content that is to be covered, the schema, the materials, resources. The **Hidden curriculum** refers to the unintended consequences of delivering the curriculum. It is the unwritten, unofficial set of values and perspectives a student will learn. The **Absent curriculum** is what is not taught - content notable for its deliberate exclusion from the curriculum.

What follows below is a list of theorists, thinkers and authors who have something to say about the curriculum. This list is by no means exhaustive and necessarily reductive.

Key Theorists:

E Hirsch: Core knowledge curriculum

Michael Young: Powerful Knowledge

Dylan William: 4 curriculum purposes: Personal Empowerment, Cultural Transmission, Preparation for Citizenship, Preparation for Work. Formative assessment, sequencing the curriculum

Summer Turner: 4 curriculum purposes: to build character, to prepare children for the world of work, to further social justice, to teach academic subjects for their intrinsic value

Paulo Freire: questioning the traditional curriculum, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, banking versus problem solving, dialogic, creating critical thinkers

D Willingham: memory, cognitive science, sequencing, spaced practice, automaticity

Daisy Christodoulou: assessment after levels

Tim Oates: curriculum and assessment reform

Ron Berger: expectations and varied forms of assessment

Carol Dweck: Growth Mindset

Jan Meyer & Ray Lord: Threshold Concepts. A threshold concept is akin to a portal opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. They are transformative, irreversible, integrative, possibly both bounded and troublesome

Robin Alexander: dialogic teaching

Hattie & Yates: cognitive science

Brown et al: learning & memory

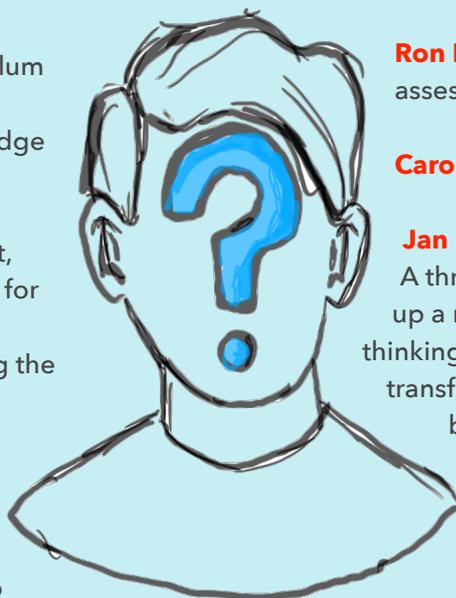
Doug Lemov: teaching techniques

Robert Marzano: academic vocabulary

Robin Alexander: dialogic teaching

Graham Nutthall: classroom observation

Gordon Stobart: expertise & deliberate practice



The Interview

In this issue we discuss all things curricular with [Les Hall](#) Principal of Mounts Bay Academy

In conversation with John Rodgers

John Rodgers (JR): What is the most important idea in education?

Les Hall (LH): Well, there are so many different ideas that have been coming to a head in the past couple of years that we have been blinded by our focus on making sure that students achieve progress in the way we understand progress, i.e. numbers. I think the sea change that has come about quite recently has removed the value of the number in learning, which is really interesting.

JR: What has brought about this change?

LH: It is a multitude of different things; the way education has been talked about globally – the OECD Global Competencies document has helped. The conversations around High Performance Learning and Whole Education, the Future Learning Network, it's all talking about the value of learning at a deep level and deep understanding level and a multi and inter disciplinary level as opposed to a singular judgement of a student's understanding based on a particular moment in time and a particular recall of that moment in time. We have moved on from that as a profession, or I hope we have. We are now looking at how we can enhance that learning and enhance the opportunities for that learning, whether it's the interconnectedness or the acknowledgement of the plasticity of the brain or the teaching of specific metacognitive skills, so

student recall is enhanced so that we can make schools a better and happier place to compensate for the increase in mental health issues in students.

What has happened is a knock-on effect of us concentrating on the number and concentrating on the individual and the recall of knowledge of the student in a summative way. This has caused a lot of stress in the profession and in students, because there's been such a top down accountability culture from government through OFSTED to leadership teams to the classroom to the students. There is a flowchart of pressure you could quite easily construct to demonstrate where this pressure has come from and where it has gone to. Ultimately it's had an effect on student's mental health and now we are in a position where we have to re-write and think how we can do something about that.

JR: What is the purpose of education?

LH: There are a number of different theories about what the purpose of education is. There's the theory that you are preparing students for the workforce, you are preparing students to fulfil the needs of the economy, to operate in society in the way you want them to operate. I think in today's society there is a moral imperative which goes some way to saving the world and the purpose of education is to make sure students understand the

impact they are having on the environment and the world and on each other. To develop an understanding of the relationship between each other in society and the world as a whole is imperative so that we can make the world a better place, make each other better people and we can live happily ever after.

JR: So is that why you got into teaching?

LH: I got into teaching as a result of reading 'All Our Futures' by Ken Robinson and at the same time, when I started training I was having conversations with Anthony Gormly about the purpose of creativity and art in education and the value of artists in residence because I was previously an artist in residence. I got into teaching with a creativity badge and I began to understand the inequalities that existed in society and started to develop an ethic or a value in myself that wanted to compensate for that and wanted to help that. Growing up I wasn't from a wealthy family or background and I then fell into university and did really well and fell into the profession and did really well. It is as a result of the opportunities I fell into and I think we can do a lot by providing those opportunities rather than just opening them up for students to fall into.

JR: As the Principal of an Academy – how much do you believe it's true we can change the world?

LH: I think the way that you structure the curriculum can have a major impact on the students' perception of themselves. I think the way you talk to students and the culture you have in the school can change the way that students think about themselves, talk to themselves and talk about themselves. That ability to talk themselves up in their head means they become more aspirational. So I think we are developing a movement at Mounts Bay Academy where we have more students from lower socio-economic backgrounds who are aspiring to greater things. We've got sons and daughters of firefighters who are aspiring to go to Eton, we've got single parent families who have children who have gone to Oxford and Cambridge. And we are seeing this increasing on a year on year basis. I do think that those students who are doing those things and getting those degrees and developing that knowledge, are changing their place in society and I think that's what the movement is about. It is changing the way that society is structured to make it more equal and if you can make it more equal, then more people will feel that they can change the world for the better. Which is what is happening at the moment with the children who are striking; it's a bit tragic they are striking and stopping their education to save the world. What we need to do is change education to enable them to save the world.

JR: What should the curriculum be?

It's a moveable feast at the moment. We are in the very early days of designing a curriculum which allows this levelling of the playing field. There are some things that we know about that are truths that we need to be looking at and working with. For years we've been locked into the hierarchy of subjects where English, Maths and Science are at the top of the hierarchy. Every other subject is being squeezed across the country if it isn't an EBacc subject or doesn't

fit into a particular bucket alongside other subjects which do fit into that bucket. Recently I have become aware of how the brain physically grows when you study a language and the way in which the brain grows when you're learning a musical instrument or music appreciation. If we can start to harness that and understand that plasticity of the brain is one aspect, but growing the brain is another aspect and if you can marry them together you have something that is quite powerful. The curriculum is allowing all students to develop their brains in that way and then you have a very good set of conditions to build from.

JR: I would argue that when you learn a foreign language or a musical instrument or learn to paint or develop even an appreciation of art, it deepens your experience as a human being, whatever it does to your brain. Surely there is an argument outside of neuroscience for including these subjects in the curriculum?

LH: Of course, and society has grown and developed because of an understanding of the arts and science. I was thinking this morning about an argument around the fact that science was responsible for all the bad things as well as all the good things in the world; plastics, pollution, developments in nuclear energy. All these things that are damaging to the world, but at the same time science is developing solutions to those things. Somewhere along the way there is an ethical values-driven religious approach which we haven't really got to grips with in education recently. We need to do some thinking about that.

JR: One thing schools could do is think a little bit more about the society we want to create in the future and design the curriculum for what we want the country to be like.

LH: Do we not want everybody to uphold decent British values? Isn't that what we do?

JR: Are they clearly defined?

LH: They are very clearly defined.

JR: Go on then.

LH: I'm being extremely facetious.

JR: I think we need a conversation in education about what knowledge is chosen to be transmitted to future generations.

LH: There is a certain perspective we've always chosen to transmit to the students which is the curriculum. The syllabus and curriculum is a particular western view of history. Take specifically the history of art, if you were taught this in the 1980s there were very few examples of women artists in the world before the 1960s, when actually there were loads. But the perspective of a male dominated exams system and a male dominated hierarchy has planted the knowledge we want to keep hold of, to perpetuate the inequalities that are already inherent in society.

JR: We need to have a serious conversation about which knowledge should be in the canon. For example the literary canon was until recently entirely composed of dead white males. Where are the black voices, the women, people from the commonwealth?

LH: It's the same with the sciences, with artists, with historians. We also have a habit of shielding society from the atrocities which happened, whatever country you are in. With the growth of the internet it is harder to shield people from this. In a way that knowledge has become much more democratic and accessible.

The curriculum should provide students with opportunities to develop their connoisseurship of knowledge and their ability to

identify which knowledge is truth and which is not truth.

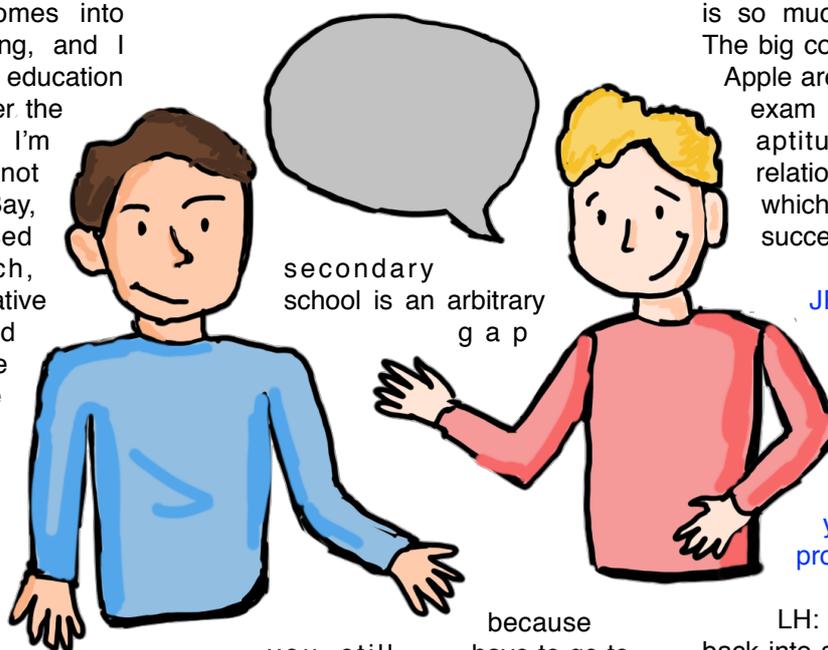
JR: The democratisation of knowledge on the internet is vast but clearly not all of it is truth. What we must teach kids is the ability to think critically and examine information they read to determine whether it is truth or fake news. What other skills do you think students need?

LH: One of the major skills, that goes without saying, is creativity and flexibility, which comes into developing critical thinking, and I think we've been guilty in education of squeezing that out over the past number of years. I'm saying that generally, not necessarily at Mounts Bay, because we've increased our creative approach, we've increased the creative subjects, we've increased our creativity in the sciences and across the board, particularly in mathematics. But in a lot of schools they have squeezed the creative curriculum and they've squeezed creativity out of the profession which has become dangerous. That is one of the reasons we have a series of disenfranchised teachers. Because they haven't been allowed to develop their own creativity, they've been told what to do and been inspected on that as opposed to being valued as professionals who've had a lot of training to do the job that they do.

JR: Robert Halfon MP suggests we should do away with the exams at 16 and create something completely different. What is your take on that?

LH: We have these arbitrary points in time where we make judgements about children's lives. In the strange place we are in at the moment it means there is an increase in judgements being made in the Early Years, prior to the students joining

KS1 that affects the rest of their lives. Those judgements being made at age 4 and 5 are dictating the flight paths we expect students to go on for the rest of their lives. Now we all know that students develop at different stages, rates and in different months let alone year groups. There's an argument to say we ditch all examinations because they are just a judgement in time. But actually society needs some sort of measure for some areas of life. The gap between primary school and



because you still have to go to school. And now the gap between 16 and 18 is also arbitrary as you still have to go to school. The only judgement that can be made from a GCSE is whether or not you are able to go on to do A levels. That is not always a correct judgement because of the multiple things which impact on a student's performance during the exam period. I completely understand the argument to remove GCSEs and remove the KS2 SATs. But I don't think society is ready for that yet and I don't think universities are ready for that.

JR: You need a robust way of measuring preparedness for certain courses at universities. You have to be able to show you are ready. But that needn't be having to take 8-10 GCSEs at 16. It always struck me

as reductive going from that many courses to just 3 or 4 A levels. I would like the curriculum to stay as broad as possible for as long as possible. What is your take on that?

LH: The other thing to think about is if the curriculum is broad enough to prepare you for life, then knowledge is only one aspect of that. If you choose not to go to university, because at the end of the day all the exams are really doing is preparing you to go to university, then when you go into the world of work there is so much information out there. The big companies like Google and Apple are not even looking at your exam results; they are doing aptitude tests, skills tests, relationship tests, and things which will make you operate successfully in that area.

JR: They might become the exams of the future.

LH: They may well be.

JR: What advice would you give to younger staff entering the profession now?

LH: The autonomy is moving back into schools with the ability for us as a profession to be creative about preparing students in our locality for the next phase in their life which is really refreshing and exciting. That is something that makes teaching a much better prospect. It makes teachers feel a lot more comfortable in their own skins really. We've spent a lot of time developing the skills in our armoury of being a teacher only to then be told over the past few years a lot of those skills aren't necessary, they are not useful because this is what you have to teach and this is how you have to teach it. In a way it is removing the reins from the teaching profession so they can flourish, so they can be better teachers and that will make the teaching profession a happier place to operate in. The best job in the world.

Ian Cross

Deputy Director of Creative Arts and Technology: Mounts Bay Academy

What should the hidden curriculum be?

1. What is 'the curriculum'?

In the film 'The Happiest Days of Your Life' (1950) a hapless headmaster tries to distract a tour of visiting governors by gesticulating towards a wall chart:

'The school curriculum- I want to go over it with you gentlemen...'

before being interrupted

'We don't want to know about the curriculum, what we want to get is a general picture about how the school is running!'

Partly the joke comes from the etymology of the word 'curriculum', which is derived from the Latin meaning 'racing chariot', which in turn comes from the verb 'currere' meaning 'to run'. In a sense the curricula is the vehicle by which a school is run, or at least the purpose of running it at all! It is the 'what?' of education. Since students (and teachers) cannot possibly learn everything, the curriculum is a Barthesian 'myth' - a simplification of the world reduced to discernible datum. As such it is highly politicised and the answer to the question ('what should be the curriculum?') is a political one. But primarily the joke comes from the farce the teachers have embroiled the students in to cover up the true chaotic nature of events at the school from their overseers. Alongside the overt curricula is the

hidden curriculum which refers to the 'unintended, and often unacknowledged, learning that occurs during a programme of study. This includes the absorption of attitudes, values and perspectives that are experienced during the daily routine and the

“Citizens should not lead the life of mechanics or tradesmen, for such a life is ignoble and inimical to virtue”

interplay of social relationships in the learning environment. (Heacademy.ac.uk, 2019) In this case: fraud.

Overt curricula and hidden curricula both have their own epistemology. The prominence of abstract thought in the philosophy of Socrates and Plato* against the temporal and semantic vagueness of observation led to the historical pseudo-dichotomy of the 'academic' and 'vocational' which belligerently persists to the present day. As did Aristotle with his views on the curriculum, as reported by Bertrand Russell (2008):

"Citizens should not lead the life of mechanics or tradesmen, for such a life is ignoble and inimical to virtue"... Education, of course, is only for children

who are going to be citizens; slaves may be taught useful arts, such as cooking, but these are no part of education... Children should learn what is useful to them, but not vulgarising; for instance, they should not be

taught any skill that deforms the body, or that would enable them to earn money. They should practise athletics in moderation, but not to the point

*of acquiring professional skill... Children should learn drawing, in order to appreciate the beauty of the human form; and they should be taught to appreciate such painting and sculpture as expresses moral ideas. They may learn to sing and to play musical instruments enough to be able to enjoy music critically, but not enough to be skilled performers; for no freeman would play or sing unless drunk. They must of course learn to read and write, in spite of the usefulness of these arts. But the purpose of education is virtue," not usefulness.***

The purpose of learning history is, according to Yuval Noah Harari, "to understand that our present situation is neither natural nor

inevitable, and that we consequently have many more possibilities before us than we imagine." (Harari, 2015) Therefore any debate about the curriculum needs to identify its past, its suppositions, its politics and its values. Should these be determined by the state? By the school? Or by individual teachers?

2. What should the hidden curriculum be?

If we start from the Aristotelian point of view that education is to make 'citizens' then we need to ask what characteristics do we want to indoctrinate our children with? Many of these characteristics are antagonistic - if we want compliance then we risk independence and creativity, if we want independence and creativity then we risk compliance. If we want to teach grit and determination then we risk failure, if we want guaranteed success then we risk denying opportunities for students to struggle. If we teach our students to be focussed on acquiring material wealth above all, then we cannot be surprised when they show spiritual poverty.

I would suggest there is always a natural discrepancy between our stated values and our actual values. Morality is very rarely a matter of what one will and won't do and far more frequently decided by what one perceives they can and can't do. Our future citizens need to be both well rounded, kind and considerate individuals and simultaneously pay for our future pensions and healthcare. Over the years a plethora of initiatives have

sought to identify the values for our hidden curricula, from Personal Learning Thinking skills (PLTs) to the Advanced Cognitive Performance characteristics (ACPs) and Values Attitudes and Attributes (VAAs). Having clearly stated values means that practice can be closer aligned to our ideals.

Students are fast to identify hypocrisy and they will not value what their teachers merely pay lip service to. They are quick to identify the true values of the hidden curriculum. If some in Year 8 think that Year 8 doesn't really matter much it is because, although we state that every year counts equally, the hidden curriculum says otherwise: inevitably Year 11 is most important with the focus on GCSE results, masterclasses, revision skills evenings, intervention evenings, holiday coursework catch up and the like. The neuroscience potentially infers the opposite - that if the more you know the more you are able to know, then the earlier the years the more critical the acquisition of knowledge. Similarly, values and attitudes may be habituated as early as possible which would pay dividends hence. However, it is one thing to critique and another thing to change deeply entrenched traditions. Nevertheless, the closer our true values align with our stated values then the better they will be acquired by our future citizens.

* "Mathematics is, I believe, the chief source of the belief in eternal and exact truth, as well as in a super-sensible intelligible world. Geometry deals with exact circles,

but no sensible object is exactly circular; however carefully we may use our compasses, there will be some imperfections and irregularities. This suggests the view that all exact reasoning applies to ideal as opposed to sensible objects; it is natural to go further, and to argue that thought is nobler than sense, and the objects of thought more real than those of sense-perception." (Russell, 2008)

** Many histories, such as that of cricket for example, would quickly reveal the persistence of Aristotle's views, evident through the idea of the 'Gentleman amateur'. However, as the pendulum of thesis and antithesis swings through time, the historical hierarchy of subjects and engorgement of the universities has potentially led to an antithetical suspicion of the benefits of knowledge for knowledge sake. The implications of this are potentially found in the view that the curriculum should be designed solely for utility, or more specifically, for capital, as money has become the measuring rod of usefulness.

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Simon Elliot

Director of Digital Technologies: Mounts Bay Academy

Specialists vs Generalists

Curriculum. n. "a course, especially a fixed course of study at a college, university, or school,"

The curricula that we present in schools, from a child's first steps in Early Years, to the point where they make significant life choices in their mid-teens, and then on to formal examination courses, should allow a child to gain a broad and balanced knowledge necessary for having as many choices as possible open to them.

Whilst there are many arguments as to when formal education should begin (from the Finnish model of seven years of age, to our earlier system), the aim of the overall curriculum for children up to the end of Year 9 should be to give children the key knowledge and skills across as broad a range of subjects and experiences as to offer them a chance to find their

skills, as well as empowering them with a rounded understanding of the world around them.

In the socialist education system in Soviet Hungary, all children learned together in infant, junior and middle schools until 14 years of age. At this point, they would either follow an academic route (Gimnázium then university) or a vocational route from 14-18 with study and apprenticeships through well-respected colleges (such as the national college of viniculture) with both routes valued equally.

The curricula in the earlier stages of life were obviously broad, not obsessed with examinations and key to developing rounded children. The later stages were purely focused on providing the skills for a chosen career.

I believe this model is one that we should aim for in the UK. Children are still developing emotionally and physically in Year 9 and so it is appropriate to expect them to do examination subjects when they have not yet developed the mental maturity that they will have at sixteen? Equally, some degree of specialism at 14, with vocational routes for those who do not want to study academic routes, is also important.

I would also therefore argue that we need specialists in the examination stages and generalists before, with a more integrated curriculum.

We also need to, perhaps with numeracy and literacy qualifications, allow students to move from academic subjects and pick vocational curricula that will better serve their career choices.



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Amy Green

Director of Real Curriculum: Mounts Bay Academy

Slow is the new fast

Should we be developing a healthier curriculum design? Just this week, Robert Halfon (ex Tory Minister) stated that GCSEs and A Levels are 'pointless' and therefore we should be getting

rid of an 'excessively narrow academic pathway.'

Instead, he said, we should be

offering students a broader alternative, more like the International Baccalaureate. The response to this was met with some agreement, with ASCL Secretary Geoff Barton saying that we do indeed need a different approach to determine routes towards and within post-16 education. Lord Baker, who introduced GCSEs in the 1980's, has also been quoted stating that the days of GCSEs are numbered.

It seems we are frequently hearing established and experienced educationalists arguing we should change our approach to education. We're told it needs to be a radical change; and one might suggest, more radical than changing letters to numbers. At the moment, with the increased 'rigour' in the 1-9 system, a common worry for teachers is how they are going to cover the content in the short space of time they have. This could mean that our students are following a curriculum that is 'fast and shallow', as opposed to 'slow

and deep.' Can we really call the ability to remember, rigour? Or mastery? Where's the creativity?

In November 2018, in Tim Harford's TED talk 'A powerful way to

unleash your creativity', Harford addresses the theory that our most successful academic thinkers are engaged with

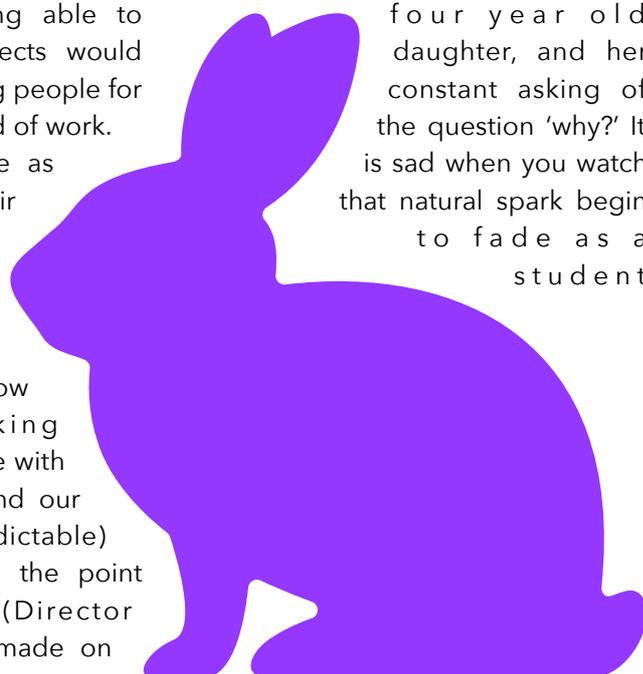
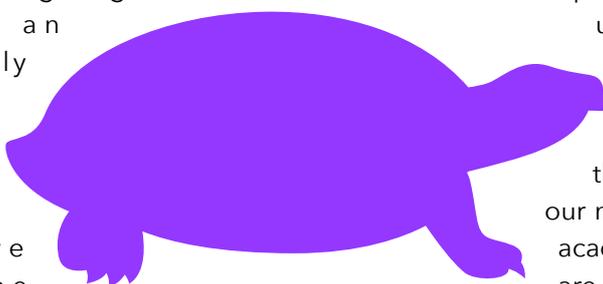
'slow motion multi tasking'. This is the ability to manage and jump between many diverse projects simultaneously; mixing ideas, disciplines, and content together in creative and ever-changing contexts. He places significant emphasis on the word 'slow', ending his talk by saying, 'practise the art of slow motion multi tasking. Not because you're in a hurry, but because you are in no hurry at all.' Being able to manage multiple projects would arguably prepare young people for the realities of the world of work.

How many careers are as linear and narrow in their structure as a GCSE examination paper? We need slow motion multi tasking in learning to create slow motion multi tasking people, so we can cope with the shifts in careers and our future (highly unpredictable) economy. This is also the point Caroline Fairbairn (Director General for the CBI) made on

Politics Live this week. This supports the idea that the 'best' and most creative learning must then happen when it is 'slow and deep', and it also raises some important questions. Is this what our current curriculum looks like? If so, where and how? How can a 'fast and shallow' curriculum offer an opportunity to nurture the innate curiosity in us, that we would hope is present when we learn?

Back in 2013, Ramsey Musallam (also in a TED talk) said that his 3 'rules' to spark learning were: curiosity comes first, embrace the mess, and finally, practice reflection. He said that the heart of a curriculum should be students; and their questions. He said, 'student questions are the seeds of learning, not a scripted curriculum full of 'tit bits' of random information.'

He gives an example of that curiosity in his four year old daughter, and her constant asking of the question 'why?' It is sad when you watch that natural spark begin to fade as a student



becomes jaded with exam pressure and a focus on testing. Let's be honest, when a student is at the end of Year six, or Year eleven, is that when we see them at their happiest? At their most curious? At their best as a learner? No. And yet they are being led by adults, by a system, that is advocating that the results of these tests should shape their future. Is this really the message about learning, and what it means to learn, that we want to teach our next generation?

So, let's imagine an assessment system that doesn't end with what is essentially recall-driven GCSEs. How could, and would, our curriculum need to change? As exciting and radical as this question may be, this doesn't look likely to be one we will be answering just yet. The DfE defended Halfon's attack of the

GCSEs by describing them as 'gold standard exams'. For now then, as teachers, curriculum designers, leaders, what radical change can we still make happen? I believe that what we can do, is imagine a curriculum that is shaped from a different starting point. A curriculum model that starts with the questions, 'how can I keep my learners curious?' Or 'how can I make my students ask questions?' As opposed to, 'how will my students pass this test?' and, 'how can I fit this content in?'

If we all share this vision, and have this at the heart of how we structure our curriculum, that is a way forward. At a time when mental health issues are rife in young people, why aren't we giving our students the head space to multi-task, to reflect, to question? We should be teaching

at a slow and measured pace, making it relevant, and fun; without putting pressure on students because of our own fears and preoccupations about league tables and Ofsted (although they are now looking for these changes anyway). As Paul Dix said (2017), we are the adults, and when we change, everything changes. We need to model the qualities we want to see in our students. I believe it is possible to prepare our students for life through a more relevant, healthy and balanced curriculum, and for the time being, the tests will just have to be something they do alongside their learning. Curriculum now needs to become the heart and head of our pedagogical approach, not testing and data analysis. Collectively, we need to make the first step towards radical, and in my experience, much needed change.



PODCASTS & VIDEOS

You can hear the full interview with **Les Hall** (page 10) either on our website (theconversation.education) or on YouTube.

The link for the YouTube is...

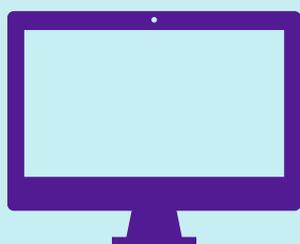
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgKFhqnPvD0>

And the website...

<https://www.theconversation.education/podcasts>

There will be more conversations uploaded soon.

If you would like to contribute to a podcast then please get in touch!!



John Rodgers

Director of Research and Development for Applied Minds Teaching School

The best Humans we can be

In "The Fourth Education Revolution: Will Artificial Intelligence liberate or infantilise humanity?" Sir Anthony Seldon says, "We have schools 180 degrees wrong. We are educating our young to become more like machines, like robots; but digital technology and AI machines will always outperform us. Instead, we need to educating our young to become more fully human."

I cannot think of a better time for such a clarion call to ring out. With the rise of populism, far right extremism, anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, parochialism and Brexit, these are troubling times in which it seems we are a long way from living lives that are fully human.

It has long been asked by philosophers, exactly how we could and should lead a good life. What does this mean? How can we find fulfilment and purpose? What does it even mean to be human?

My argument is that Philosophy is put back into the curriculum. Philosophy is the means by which we can begin to educate our students to be more fully human. Certainly it is not the only means, but I believe the study of philosophy can play an important role in achieving the

goal of building a better, more equal, just society.

There is a Stoic maxim that says "The Fates lead those who come willingly, and drag those who do not." It seems to me that the pendulum of education thought is swinging away from the Govian obsession with data and numbers and testing and league tables and traditionalism. It is now swinging towards progressive educational philosophies, radical curriculum design, autonomy for schools and a desire to build a better tomorrow. As Les Hall argues in an interview for this magazine, schools can actually change the world. They



Philosophy can help schools to do this. Not only would students be exposed to centuries of thought on questions like 'how to lead a good life and become more fully human', but they would also learn the tools of philosophy; tools like reasoning, logic, critical thinking, rhetoric (or its contemporary version, oracy) analysis and evaluation.

Would the world not be a better place if people were better versed in the ways of Skepticism? Certainly one would hope that incidents of gullibility and the wholesale swallowing of nuggets of nonsense delivered all too often by governments and politicians would decrease.

Would the world not be a better place if humans held more readily in their cognitive tool-boxes the principles of reasoning? I for one, think it would.

“The hallmark of a philosophy education is critical thinking and inductive reasoning.”

can do this by creating curricula that allow their students to see that they can achieve success, change their aspirations and take their place in a global society.

Would it be possible that the study and practice of Stoicism go some way to alleviate even a small portion of the mental health issues so prevalent in our young people? I hope that it might.

The hallmark of a philosophy education is critical thinking and inductive reasoning. Surely this should be the hallmark of the post-enlightenment Western society.

Bryan Van Norden argues in his book "Taking Back Philosophy" that philosophy can serve as an antidote to the wilful ignorance he finds in contemporary American society. In fact he has great fun mocking the intellectual Lilliputians of the Republican Party such as Marco Rubio, who left philosophers, economists and grammarians alike gaping at his remark, "welders make more money than philosophers. We need more welders and less philosophers."*

I think Van Norden is quite correct. Philosophy delivered correctly within a school's curriculum would be a salve for the idiocy of our times. But it does feel slightly wrong to frame an argument for the inclusion of content in the curriculum based on negating the problems in society as we see them today. I would much rather we see the inclusion of any subject in the curriculum as justified for more positive reasons. (See the Bill Miller interview).

Philosophy study would enrich the lives of our students. As part of a well designed curriculum philosophy would imbue students with the tools needed to

Bill Miller, American investor, fund manager, and former chairman and chief investment officer of Legg Mason Capital Management, recently had an email interview with Ethan Epstein of the Weekly Standard

TWS: How did the study of philosophy affect your career?

Bill Miller: Philosophy involves critical thinking and reasoning about highly complex issues. At its best it is rigorous and analytical. These skills are exactly what are required to think through and understand capital markets and the analysis of businesses. However good one is at this, philosophical training will make you better.

TWS: More broadly, how did the study of philosophy affect the way you live your life?

Bill Miller: Wittgenstein said something to the effect of if philosophy does not change your life then it has no point. The French existentialist Gabriel Marcel said "the problem I consider essential is the relationship between philosophical research and life." The study of philosophy has immeasurably enriched my life, made it fuller and more complete. It has exposed me to the best that has been thought about life's most important issues. It has also made me painfully aware of my ignorance and shortcomings. Had I not studied philosophy I would be a completely different, and probably worse person than I am.

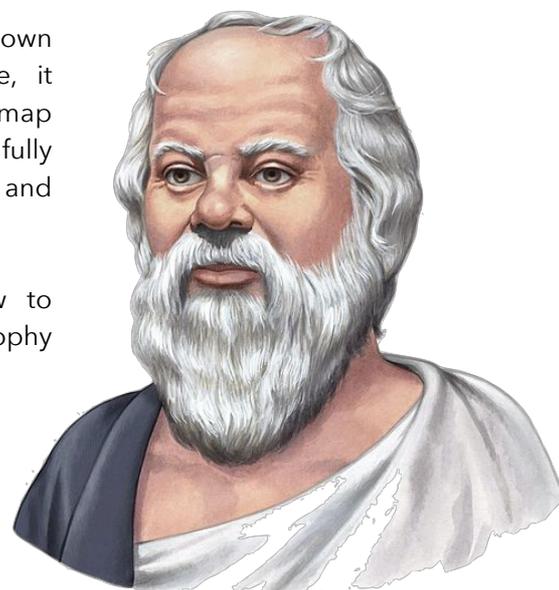
TWS: In recent years, STEM education has been championed at the expense of the humanities. Do you think this is a mistake?

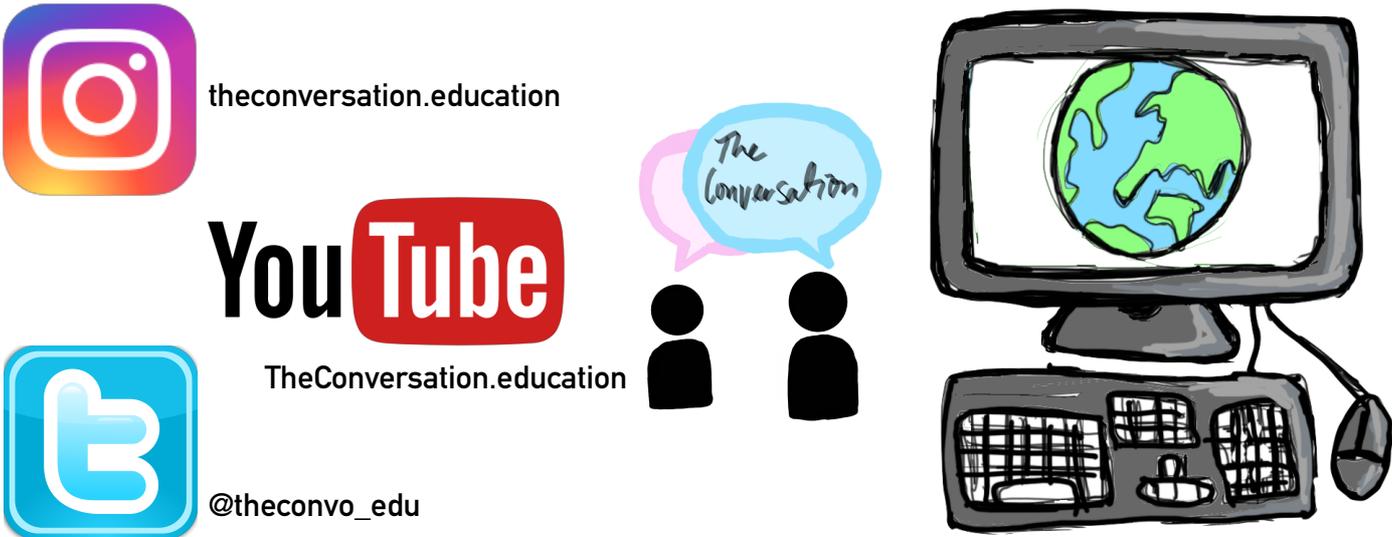
Bill Miller: STEM education is essential in today's world. STEAM would be better, where the A is for the Arts. I agree with the literary critic Stanley Fish, who when asked what the liberal arts such as philosophy are good for, answered that they are good for nothing: they are good in and of themselves and need no further justification.

<http://www.bu.edu/philo/2018/02/22/the-importance-of-studying-philosophy-according-to-legendary-investor-bill-miller/>

thoughtfully navigate the unknown waters of a post-truth future, it would lay before them a map describing routes to a more fully human, fulfilled, purposeful and good life.

*Led willingly by Fate: How to combat parochialism in philosophy
- Peter Adamson





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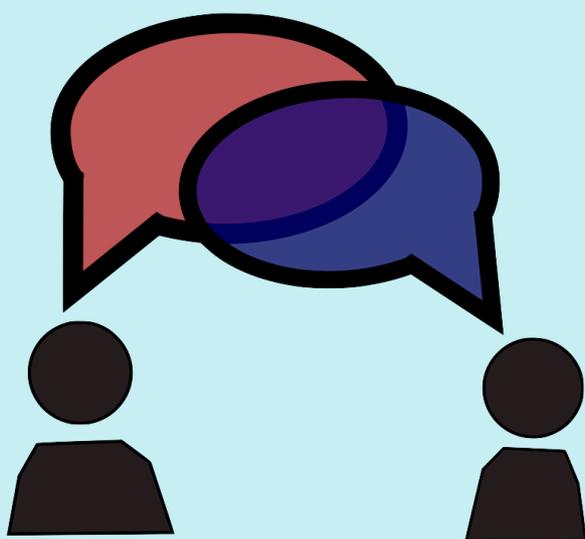
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The Conversation Manifesto



The Conversation has the following aims:

- To encourage more conversations between education professionals
- To increase incidents of serendipitous knowledge exchange
- To provide stimuli for conversations through the magazine
- To provide content that challenges, inspires and provokes
- To be a vehicle to carry content created by education professionals
- To provide a forum for conversation through the website & social media

The aim of this magazine is to stimulate conversation. Whether you agree or not with the ideas of our contributors please discuss them with colleagues. Be challenged, be inspired, **have a conversation**.