

PREPARED?

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When modern education was structured, children were working in mines, timber logging and being dragged into the industrial revolution as factory workers.

The curriculum was based on churning out people with basic literacy and sometimes numeracy skills so that they would be prepared for the work that lay ahead of them. By creating a group of 'pre-workers' with a defined set of skills, little thought was given to the needs of the individual, but instead the needs of the employer. Until that time, education was based on the family and then, in later years, by an apprenticeship to a master.

A child learns to speak a language in their first year, adequately by the second year and fluently by their third year, from a starting point of zero. Basic literacy is always a product of primary socialization (the home) and shows that the principle of osmosis is highly effective. But we then take the child away from the Osmotic System to the Rote system when we take them into school.

Their prior knowledge and values are discounted and the new set is supplanted, laboriously. Books and pencils come out, and everyone is tested to a single grade in a competitive process to ascertain their 'pecking order' so that they can enter university or the workplace with a set of grades that only prove how 'similar to' or 'different from' their peers, they are. Their true value has never been sought, just their position on an abstract ladder of achievements.

We have now ceased to live in the Industrial Revolution and yet we are training our children to be factory fodder still.

The Industrial Revolution has moved – many say to China, along with our jobs, yet we are training our children to be prepared to go into the factories that no longer exist. Typically, those teenagers that do not study well in the competitive system, or are better equipped at manual skills than abstract ones, quit school and enter an apprenticeship/traineeship. Any employer will tell you that the first year of an apprenticeship is about getting rid of the schoolboy attitudes and re-teaching the apprentice to be a 'social employee'. Notably, the skill set that is learned during the apprenticeship is based on the skill set of the employer, that is, back to Osmosis as the teacher, and steadily away from the competitive 'book learning'.

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Certainly, there are units of formal education that are undertaken and most of these are about Statutory Requirements. A Welder's Ticket, a Workplace safety ticket, a Responsible Service of Alcohol ticket etc... that are in addition to the actual skill set required to perform the task. These are skills required to comply with Government Regulation or Insurance Acceptance that reflect more current legislation than their employers were taught. But it is true to say, that many highly skilled workers never pick up a book after they finish their apprenticeship. The finest guitarists, practice, the greatest cabinet makers, make cabinets and these are people that solve new problems each day from their experience, and teach their apprentices better ways for future generations.

Perhaps in this day, where the lucky country has to give way to the smart country, where the factories are crumbling into disrepair, where underemployment is rife, even though we are more educated than ever, perhaps now there is a reason to re-evaluate the value of Osmotic Vs Rote learning all over again. Both the Steiner/Waldorf and Montessori School systems look at these values quite critically, but still from that early standpoint that says, at the end of the day, 90% of the students will work in a factory. The Steiner school was originated to service the needs of the Waldorf-Astoria Cigarette Co in Stuttgart Germany in 1907. The Montessori system started in 1911 and had a more altruistic beginning, hoping to follow the natural stages of development that children progress through.

Unfortunately, state based educationists are protecting their jobs against massive government bombardment. Each teacher is expected to be an administrator, a counselor and remain politically correct at lower and lower effective wages. So the teachers are not being valued for what they do either. Has our current education system outlived its useful life?

Can we assist the youth of tomorrow more, by changing the manner that they are educated, evaluated and exposed to the community. Have we thought of the changing workplace, the current work from home concepts and that facts are so readily available, and reference material so pervasive that we can find a new starting point to achieve more realistic outcomes for future generations???