

1

Adjusting the Paradigm of Learning *Kids don't need teachers; they need mentors*

Introduction

Since the creation of what we now call education and the school system, society and the world has changed. Education was originally started by religious groups wanting to increase people's faith in God. This led to communities wanting to use education to train better citizens and soldiers. Then the industrial revolution changed education to ensure that it could develop better workers. At that time, most jobs consisted of manual labor or some type of technical skill repeated over and over. The industry needed people who could follow directions; very few jobs required leadership skills or creativity. With the development of the computer, internet, and advanced technology, all of this changed. Most manual labor and technical positions are being eliminated. Recently, Amazon started automating analytics-based jobs in their company and replacing them with computer technologyⁱ. Moving into the future, most available positions will require leadership, innovation, and ingenuity.

Thus, to prepare kids for the future, education will have to change, but not just in schools. All education, both formal and informal must change. Every adult responsible for children must change with the times. The current paradigm of education does not teach children relevant professional skills, and it doesn't develop the right characteristics in children to become successful. Our education is not geared toward creating leaders, it is geared toward molding a person who will need to be told what to do, how to do it, and when to do it their whole life. It teaches them to be reactive, to wait until someone tells them what to do.

Starting at age seven (in some cases even earlier), a child will go to a place that tells them what to learn, how to learn it, and when to learn it. The structure of the school day dictates the majority of their day and what they will need to do. Then they go home and their family often dictates what they do outside of education. Thus, most of the child's interaction with adults will be someone telling the child what they "should" be doing. This usually continues until the child is around sixteen–eighteen. In many cases, the child will then go to college for another four years. That gives them some freedom but still follows the same educational format. You can probably guess the result of a child being told what to do for twenty-two years. They continue to wait for instructions, needing to be told what to do their entire life.

We need to transition from *creating* dependent adults to enabling independent adults. I have seen many children fail because they don't know how to live their own lives. They have been told what to do so often, they no longer can make their own decisions.

College and the industry show this with their reported statistics:

1. One-third of college students change majorsⁱⁱ
2. 49 percent of students are in jobs unrelated to their majorⁱⁱⁱ
3. 87 percent of recent grads are unsatisfied with their job^{iv}
4. 40 percent of students drop out of college^v
5. 89 percent of employers think recent grads do not have the right skillsets to succeed in their company^{vi}

If this is a shock to you, then brace yourself because it is going to get much worse. The fact that education trains students to become reactive followers is only the beginning.

To really understand the gravity of the situation, you need to sit back and ask, “What should children get out of education and their childhood? Why is it important for children to receive an education?” You will probably come to the following two conclusions:

1. It should help the children learn to live a life that makes them happy.
2. It should help the children identify and learn how to be good citizens and add value to society.

If you have the best interest of children at heart and think logically, you will have the same conclusions. All parents want their children to grow up and get good jobs (one that earns good money), be a good person (be a person others like to be around and can fit into society), and be happy (enjoy what they are doing and their life). That is what life is about. Everyone needs to learn how to get along with others, enjoy what they are doing, and find a way to earn a living by adding value.

Unfortunately, this is not the purpose of education. Today, the sole purpose of the school system is to ensure all children attain a certain technical level of understanding, so they are prepared to go to college. To make matters worse, since education has such a big influence on society, it is changing the way parents define success for their children. Most parents believe their main goal should be to make sure their kids do well in school—happiness comes later.

The issue is that technical education and finishing college don't determine happiness or your ability to add value to society. This has been proven with many research studies^{vii}. In other words, education today is making life about learning technical information, taking tests, and going to college when it should be about learning how to add value to society, being happy, and becoming successful.

In fact, I have met many people who have become very successful without going to college. I have a very good friend who is a computer programmer. He taught himself how to write code, and now he has his own business and makes more money than most people I know who went to college. If you look at the richest people in the world today, you also find that many of them didn't graduate from college (Bill Gates, Christy Walton, Ingvar Kamprad, Liliane Bettencourt, Michael Dell, etc.). Not that college and test-taking is a “bad” thing, it is just not the purpose of life. Of course, many people who went to college have become

successful. But when students shape their life around scoring well on a test, it ends up being detrimental to them when they no longer live in a school environment.

The impact of focusing on teaching children technical information and requiring them to meet certain standards shows how detrimental the current education system is to mental health as well:

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for US citizens ages ten to thirty-four.^{viii}
- In 2017 suicides among teen girls hit a forty-year high.^{ix}
- Between 2010 and 2015, teen depression increased by 33 percent.^x
- In the same period, teen suicide increased by 31 percent.¹⁰
- About one-third of US college students had difficulty functioning in the last twelve months because of depression and half felt “overwhelming anxiety.”^{xi}
- 70 percent of teens say that anxiety and depression are a “major problem.”^{xii}
- Daily anxiety can often lead to more serious cases of depression or other mental health disorders.^{xiii}

Amazingly, the demand on students to learn such a high technical level of understanding causes all the issues. Life has become more complex. The amount of information a child must learn today compared to a hundred years ago is mind-boggling. This is the issue with what I call the top-down approach: when we inundate children with as many technical details as we can, hoping that we will teach them enough to understand the world and know what they want to do after they graduate. However, teaching an inexperienced child a lot of information at once stresses them out and confuses them. Imagine a small plastic bag; it can only fit so much in it before it starts to break. This is much like the human brain. It can only fit so much information in it before it breaks down. However, if the bag breaks, you then get a bigger bag to carry what you need, whereas the brain doesn't get any bigger or more advanced. It is the same human brain, yet we are still trying to put way more information in it, and you can see the stress it is taking now. I also need to be clear that the amount of information a person needs to know to be successful is well within the limits of what a brain can take.

No matter how much we try to reshape, repackage, or even automate the learning of the information, the issues will continue to get worse. The only way to help the children is to change it.

No-Influence Mentoring

The No-Influence Mentoring model is based on ancient philosophy. The ideas and practices have been known for thousands of years. They have been understood and used by all the greatest minds in history and in every industry and aspect of life (Socrates, Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, W. Edwards Deming, Eleanor Roosevelt, James Allen, and more). Anyone required to deal with people and who has become successful in their

discipline has used some or all the practices found in this book. You might even find that you already use some of these practices in your own style of teaching, mentoring, or parenting.

For many, this model will seem new. This is only because I am exposing it at a time when the current practices are either opposed to or are very different from it. I am also bringing many successful ideas from multiple areas outside of the academic and the education environment.

My expertise did not originate in teaching and leading young students. It began in process engineering, moved to construction management, and then shifted into business and supply chain management. Yet for the last twenty years, I have been studying and testing these techniques not only in educating youth but applying them to multiple organizations and professionals all over the world. I am still involved in consulting with professional organizations and companies.

You might ask, “Why did I shift my interest into getting involved with education?” It is simple: education has more impact on society. Fixing problems in the industry without addressing the root cause is like trying to help the poor by giving them food. It helps them for a day, but it doesn’t solve the problem. They will need more food later. There is a saying: *you can’t teach an old dog new tricks*. This could not be truer. When someone has been taught all their life to live and act a certain way or to do business a certain way, it is extremely hard to get them to change. Trying to get a fifty-five-year-old professional to change their ways is like trying to potty train a five-month-old baby. It is extremely messy and takes a lot of effort, and in the end, they still will not be potty trained. Education has the potential to help children learn the right way when they are young and ensure they know how to get their own food.

Amazingly, the issues the industry is facing with their employees are the same issues that parents and teachers are facing with students and children.

This model is as much for parents as it is for teachers because education starts in the home or family. The only reason education can continue to operate the way it does is because parents accept/promote it. In order for teachers and schools to make the required change, parents must also understand that grades, test scores, and getting into the top universities is not the purpose of life. Yes, these things might help children, but they are not the purpose of their life.

No-Influence mentoring will not only help teachers teach students better but will also help parents to raise and educate more stable children.

ⁱ Dave Gershon, Amazon has already begun automating its white-collar jobs, (Quartz, 2018)

ⁱⁱ National Center for Education Statistics, *Beginning College Students Who Change Their Majors Within 3 Years of Enrollment* (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

ⁱⁱⁱ Hunt, R., *51 Percent of Employed 2014 College Grads Are in Jobs That Don’t Require a Degree, Finds CareerBuilder Survey* (CareerBuilder Press Release, 2014).

^{iv} Forbes, *Millennials Will Soon Rule the World. How Will They Lead?* (Forbes 2013).

- v U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2019* (NCES, 2019, 144).
- vi Gallup, *What America Needs to Know About Higher Education Redesign*, (Higher Education, 2014)
- vii Susan Adams, *Unhappy Employees Outnumber Happy Ones By Two To One Worldwide*, (Forbes, 2013).
- viii Hedegaard, H., Curtin, S., Warner, *Suicide Mortality in the United States, 1999–2017*, (National Center for Health Statistics, 2018).
- ix Fox, M. *Suicides in Teen Girls Hit 40-Year High*, (NBC News, 2017).
- x Twenge, J. M., Joiner, T. E., Rogers, M. L., & Martin, G. N., *Increases in Depressive Symptoms, Suicide-Related Outcomes, and Suicide Rates Among U.S. Adolescents After 2010 and Links to Increased New Media Screen Time*, (Clinical Psychological Science, 2018), 6(1), 3–17.
- xi Novotney A. *Students under pressure*, (American Psychology Association, 2014), (45) (8).
- xii Graf, N., Horowitz, J., *Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem Among Their Peers*, (Pew Research Center, 2019)
- xiii McCarthy, C., *Anxiety in Teens is Rising: What's Going On?* (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019).