

## **Education: What Should We Teach Our Children?** (..in an increasingly technical, digital world)

*Discussion at The Park*

Wednesday 15 March 2017 7:30pm at *The Park Tavern, Macclesfield*

### **Introduction:**

- "A shortage of skilled workers is holding back economic growth in the UK.  
<http://www.cbi.org.uk/news/skills-emergency-could-starve-growth-cbi-pearson-survey/>
- "The number of children in our schools aged 16 – 18 studying Maths is the lowest level in the top 24 developed countries." (BBC iplayer Radio 4 What should we teach our Kids – Robert Peston.)  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06rjr01>

Are these two examples of today's children being taught those things we needed in our lifetime, rather than things they will need in theirs?

Is it inevitable that education will always lag behind what is needed, or is it possible to educate children so they leave school ready to fit into the world?

### **Why do we educate children?**

There is some consensus that the purpose of educating children is threefold:

- Social/cultural development
- Personal growth/skills/self improvement
- Preparation for Occupation. ([www.purposeofschool.com/philosophical](http://www.purposeofschool.com/philosophical))

Do you agree; are there other purposes; which should take precedence?

### **In a fast-changing world can we identify what children should be learning?**

- Is there a basic skill set that all UK children should learn?
- Should all children be given the opportunity to learn the same things?
- What priority should be given to learning:
  - English and other languages.
  - the 'arts'.
  - maths, physics, the sciences, technology, digital economy and internet.
  - emerging issues such as multiculturalism, globalisation and the environment.
  - 'soft skills' such as interpersonal relationships, staying flexible, mobile, problem solving, asking the right questions and coping with change.

### **Are 'teachers' still relevant? Is their role changing and to what?**

Our education system is reacting to a changing world too slowly; the problem is already here. Classroom teachers, by definition, come from a previous generation.

- 'Teacher' is no longer a subject expert. Crowd sourcing on the internet means that the answers to more and more questions are available instantly.
- First-class courseware and tutorials are available on-line.
- Should others (parents/retirees/work placements?) be more involved in educating children?

### **Are schools still relevant?**

Is 'School' still the right environment for teaching/learning? Should schools change and how?

### **Is the electronic, fast-evolving digital scenario inevitable in UK/the world?**

Is there an alternative way to future-proof our children? For example could we:

- promote UK isolation from the rest of the world by encouraging an appreciation of UK history, culture and values, Patriotism and Nationalism?
- encourage creativity, an new national USP, or new social/political/economic model ?
- give priority to teaching traditional skills, or techniques for sustainability?

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