

Changing paradigm(s)

Reading task 1

Changes in the world and thus in society, bring along changes to paradigms. Robinson (2015) states that the current system of education, the old paradigm, was designed and structured in the intellectual culture of enlightenment and in the economic circumstances of the industrial revolution. Public education was assumed as revolutionary in the midst of the 19th century and it was modeled in the interest and in the model of industrialism (standardization, lines, separate subjects, ringing bells, the assumption that age is the most common thing children have in common...). In the light of enlightenment and its intellectual model of the mind, education has been connected to didactic reasoning and to the knowledge of classics. People who do not fall into this view of mind can be easily marginalized by this system of public education (Robinson, 2015).

The new paradigm builds on the idea of organic farming and there are four principles to be fulfilled for an organic farm to flourish. These principles are health, ecology, fairness, and care. While being guided by these principles, a new-paradigm school constantly strives to do its best to ensure that good living conditions for the whole person plus for the community are in place, thus generating physically, emotionally and intellectually healthy individuals (Robinson, 2015).

Further, as Robinson (2015) claims, schools will not be able to meet the unpredictability of the future by what the schools were doing in the past as this approach marginalizes what an individual finds important about him/her. The new education paradigm moves the mindset of the society towards waking up of what is in the child, rather than towards anesthetizing it; towards supporting divergent thinking; and away from dualisms such as academic versus non-academic; and towards collaboration (Robinson, 2015). The new paradigm places the child in its centre (Robinson, 2015; Senge, 2008).

Creative schools and the paradigm of internally driven learning

If they [children] don't know, they'll have a go (Ken Robinson).

The main key to transforming education, as stated by Robinson (2015), is keeping our need to learn alive even through the school years as there is an extraordinary capacity for innovation in children. A talent in each child and creativity in education is as important as literacy. Thus, it needs to be treated with the same status. The support of divergent thinking is an essential capacity for creativity and for seeing multiple answers and multiple ways. Also, creativity goes hand in hand with not being frightened of making a mistake. As Robinson (2001) states, there cannot be originality without making an odd mistake on the way.

The old educational paradigm stigmatizes mistakes. In fact, they are the worst thing you can make. And thus, such a system educates children OUT OF their creativity capacities while making them frightened of being wrong. The new educational paradigm embraces mistakes and works with them in a creative way (Robinson, 2001).

The new educational paradigm also embraces the intelligence of human beings, in all its diversity, dynamism, and distinction. Thus, the old hierarchy of subjects where math and languages stand above all the others while dance and drama fall to the bottom is being replaced by a non-economized and non-academic bound non-hierarchical collection of equal subjects. Thus, adopting a new conception of human ecology – one in which the richness of human capacity is cherished, in which the principles on which children are educated are rethought, in which human beings are not stripped of their commodities. In the hope that human beings educated in these ways will not deprive the Earth of its commodities (Robinson, 2001).

According to Robinson (2001), there are eight core competencies to be supported in a child and four functions of a school. The four main functions of a school are:

- 1) helping students personally by building on their individual talents;
- 2) boosting economy by generating innovative workers;
- 3) understanding one's own culture and appreciating other cultures;
- 4) generating politically engaged and compassionate citizens.

The eight competencies the school cares for are curiosity, creativity, criticism, communicativeness, collaboration, compassion, composure, and citizenship (Robinson, 2001).

Further, the school appreciates the importance of the learning environment and of students learning from each other while creativity is viewed as essential for the ability to adapt to the uncertainty of the future. Nováčková (2009), a Czech psychologist who has devoted her life-long career to awakening the paradigm of internally driven learning within the public system of Czech education, similarly to Robinson (2001) and to Senge (2008) emphasizes the necessity of:

- contrasting external/controlled and internal/autonomous motivations, thus contrasting the prevailing outward driven learning paradigm to the paradigm of internally driven learning;
- supporting teaching that builds on taking seriously the basic needs of children, psychological safety at schools, respectful behaviour, clean language, and formative assessment.

References

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