

Abstract:

How Should Humanity Steer the Future?

Answer: By developing the best capital (value for the future). And what creates the best capital? Answer: An educated populace.

We need to rethink how we steer the future to get the best educated populace. I think we can have a public safety net and have a comprehensive public education system fueling a private enterprise sector with lower tax rates than we have now. The basic precepts presented apply to most countries, but the USA is used as the example.

What is happening:

Ronald Reagan when he was governor of California faced a simple choice, lower property taxes for the elderly or not be reelected.¹ So, he lowered property taxes for elder state residents (so they could stay in their homes), and he made up the shortfall by raising tuition for the formerly zero tuition California university system. He was not the only governor to do this. The victims of this action, the university students, protested by using civil disobedience, and attempted to shut down the university system. This type of protest is second rate, compared to voting the rascals out of office. Unfortunately many of the students were too young to vote. And the students that could vote were no match for the senior citizen monolithic voting block wanting to stay tax free in their homes. As the population of the US continues to age, this shifting of priorities away from education is accelerating.

Education has turned into a business² that is required to generate money and be part of the free enterprise system when in actuality it is the foundation of the free market system.³ If this is not recognized and remedied the free market system will be compromised and the US will become less competitive.

There is a fine distinction here, the methods of teaching, and the technologies involved are and should be market driven via free choice. It is the constant commitment and monetary support of education that needs to be removed from the “invisible hand” of the free market. This is because an educated populace is the base out from which a free market can operate. This thesis is that the best educated populace will create the best and most productive free market.

Education methods evolve and are subject to individual choice, and there needs to be a variety of methods and schools to choose from. There will be winners and losers in this competition. However, the funding for education should be constant, and considered the substratum of economic activity.

What is wrong with the state giving tax relief to elder citizens?

I believe that free public education has a higher priority than property tax relief for the elderly and even social security. This is because education generates the

innovation (physical and social) that creates an abundant future for everyone.⁴ Whereas low taxes for the elderly (and social security) generates a more comfortable end of life for the elderly. The higher priority is education (in my humble opinion). And of course if a governor could afford it they would like to 1. maintain a quality free education system and 2. provide social security, all while getting reelected.

So, here is how to get it all.

1. Pay selected citizens to go to school. These citizens are:
 - a. Those receiving social security payments

Restructure social security so that the system is geared to education. Checks can be cashed if and only if the recipient is enrolled in a school. The recipient need not sign up for classes, but must be enrolled in a school to get a check. If they do sign up for classes the classes are free.
 - b. Those on welfare

Citizens in need of welfare would also get checks that can be cashed if and only if the recipient is enrolled in a school. The recipient need not sign up for classes, but must be enrolled in a school to get their check cashed. If they do sign up for classes the classes are free.
 - c. Those on unemployment

Citizens in need of unemployment assistance would also get checks that can be cashed if and only if the recipient is enrolled in a school. The recipient need not sign up for classes, but must be enrolled in a school to get their check cashed. If they do sign up for classes the classes are free.
2. Eventually expand the education system so that all citizens get paid to go to school.

Pay citizens to go to school.

Is this socialism pure and simple? It sure sounds like it, however there is something special about funding education that makes this proposal more than a pure government give away.⁵

But, but, but.... I can hear the objection, I want choice for myself and my child and a quality school. Answer: keep reading :)

Eliminate social security and unemployment insurance and welfare.

I can hear my audience changing their mind about my socialist bent, and now are calling me a Tea Party conservative. Sorry to disappoint anyone, but social security and unemployment and welfare are not needed if you get paid to go to school. The system would be set up so that you can enroll in school and get paid for it.

Will citizens take unfair advantage of this government largess, if all they had to do was keep enrolled in school to get money?

I contend that not many people want to make the minimum wage, and they would much rather work for a “socially acceptable wage” in private industry or government. Also, many people want to exercise their abilities and not just be continuously in school.

But, But, But.... I can hear my readers say: the public school system is inferior, are you proposing that we make the foundation of the free enterprise system “public education”?

The current indictment against public anything

The word public as a preface for a community wide service has turned into a dirty word. We just have to consider public transportation, public restrooms, public health, etc. This is not that unexpected. We strongly prefer using our personal car to public transportation, unless we are going to the Superbowl football game. We strongly prefer using our own toilet to a public toilet, unless we have been waiting in line for the black friday sale and need a toilet right away. And we may prefer to have our personal doctor to the emergency room intern (who has been on duty for the last 24hrs.), unless it is an emergency.

Could public schools avoid the stigma of public?

My alma matter City College of New York met the standard when I attended, no tuition and ranked 47th world wide in production of Nobel Laureates. The California university system before Ronald Reagan also delivered an excellent education for no tuition.

I maintain that schools that are public can be excellent, particularly when funding for schools is a priority. And if schools are linked up to sociality security as I have outlined, supporting them will become a top priority for anyone in public office. However, we do not need to limit ourselves, to past examples of good public education. The future of public education can be better than that.

The Future of a Quality Public Education

I can give several examples of how public education can evolve and remove the stigma of “Public”:

a. The One to One training classes at the Apple Store:

I became a fan of Apple’s One to One training about ten years ago. For \$99 (discounted if you bought an Apple computer) you got an hour session with a trainer for 50 weeks. That’s \$2 and hour, for time with a very competent techie or creative. There may be some schools that can cost less, I do not know of any.

Since the Apple store was crowded the one to one sessions were held in the Nordstrom cafe close by. At first I was mostly interested in learning the new computer and applications, but soon I was going to help with writers block on some essays (yes, FQXi .org essays) and help with setting up my website. On occasion I went to a session with nothing particular in mind and asked “what’s new”. And I got an excellent tutorial on current computer technology.

I have come across some criticism of the one to one training mostly from “know it alls” who claim “hey, if I have a question, I get the answer online”. This misses the point completely. But if you have a website and want it to look good and get more hits, one to one is the place to go. The trainers also know chemistry, physics, math, art, history etc.. I am sure there are grade schoolers using the sessions to get help with their homework.

If getting a public education were like going to One to One sessions, 1. the cost would decrease 2. the quality would go up and 3. the students would be active and engaged.

b. **Leah Trouwborst’s essay:** An Educated Guess: What's About To Change At Colleges Across America Before 2050⁶

“Why technology? The goal is to link a student’s existing passion, his latent willingness to make an effort—with his ability to explore new knowledge. Early innovators have used “media convergence,” the merging of communications technology and media content, to great success. Take the case of Heather Lawver. At age 14, Heather founded The Daily Prophet, an online fan-fiction site for writers who loved Harry Potter. As that category describes a lot of people, the site quickly became popular. Heather set up an elegant interactive forum which allowed her global staff of contributors to co-edit and co-publish fictional “news.” Kids became their own best educators. And in their spare time, too. The Daily Prophet was even mentioned in the New York Times. This is the goal. Media convergence will become the strategy, coaxing students out of boredom while tapping into the global network of similarly interested students.

c. **The Gaming example:**

Higher Education Is a Massively Multiplayer Game, Jane McGonagal ⁷

“In the best-designed games, our human experience is perfectly optimized: we have important work to do, we’re surrounded by potential collaborators, and we learn quickly and in a low-risk environment. When we’re playing a good online game, we get constant useful feedback, we turbocharge the neurochemistry that makes challenge fun, and we feel an insatiable curiosity about the world around us. None of this is by accident. Game developers have spent three decades figuring out how to make us happier and more collaborative, how to make learning more fun and social, and

how to satisfy our hunger for meaning and success. All of these game-world insights can be applied directly to reinvent higher education as we know it.”

d. **The Stanford University example:**

Education's digital future at Stanford

Education's digital future has not yet been determined. We are building it now. That task raises very large questions. How do people learn best digitally? What does educational equity mean in a digital world? Who will profit in a greatly expanded market for digital educational products, and who will make the rules for this marketplace? How will quality standards for digital learning be determined and enforced?⁸

Can We Afford This?

This essay is a very rough sketch of the concept of a foundational inclusive education. An actual implementation would require a lot of attention to a lot of details. I think it can be done, if enough people understand that education really is the underpinning of the free enterprise system.

The savings from eliminating social security, unemployment, and welfare will go a long way to paying for this vision of education. I believe the remaining costs can be recovered via efficiencies gained in the marketplace by having an educated populace.

First we need to see this as a worthwhile and realistic goal, then we need to steer toward it.

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