

# Is Education Important? In the Macro

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## Introduction

This book is a collection of essays about what the advantages are in education. People give many reasons for education in general. Basically, they say things in general get better with education.

School has its purpose or purposes but some schools tend to advertise. Some write white papers. I call this advertising. Now, white noise is vibrations (that become sounds when they hit a receptor such as an ear) of all frequencies. Not just all a human can hear. The same can be said for white light. It is light of all frequencies (or wavelengths), not just all that a human can see.

But apparently a white paper is not a paper telling all about a subject. It does try to tell all positive about a subject, though. It is used in marketing a product or service. It does not show anything negative and usually there are negative things about the product or service in question. This is why I call it a marketing tool. It puts a positive spin on the product or service but not a realistic look at the subject in question. So be wary of white papers. The US government has been known to write white papers to try to sway public opinion to their way of thinking.

But some schools are a little more honest about their service or about education in general but not honest enough. They usually give reasons for touting education but most are based on economic factors, that are no longer valid.

This book has one rather long essay on a speech given by US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, back in 2013, to the Association for Career and Technical Education held in December 2013.

Educating Every Student for College and Career Success?

These are the remarks of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan at the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) CareerTech VISION 2013 Awards Banquet held December 4, 2013.

<< <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/educating-every-student-college-and-career-success>>>

The first thing that Secretary Arne Duncan says is, "How do you prepare young people for jobs that we cannot see – that don't exist?"

You can't is my answer. Why are you preparing them for jobs at all? I believe that it is the bogus report that the US Department of Education, under Secretary of Education Bell, published in April 1983, A Nation at Risk. I have shot this report full of holes in previous essays. The Sandia Report, published in 1990, was also critical of that report. They were critical of some the statistics on SAT scores and the like and they say that the connection between education of masses and the economy is overstated. I say that there little to no connection between the two, in the macro. What makes you think you must teach job skills to kids. Human beings are the most flexible creatures on the planet because we can learn more than anything else on the planet Earth. Even senior citizens can learn. For them it is more a question of desire to learn rather than lack of ability. Most people are life-long learners. They may not be students in the classroom sense but they learn some new from time to time, if not everyday. They need not be 'taught' to be life-long learners. It does happen quite naturally. I get tired of people saying they are teaching something that happens naturally. Of course this is at the expense of general knowledge.

The second thing Secretary Duncan said is, "They will need a blend of academic, technical, and employability skills – like critical thinking, collaboration and communication. They will need to be adaptable, and also to learn from failure."

It is impossible to know what the future will bring therefore it is impossible to prepare for it. You and nobody else has a crystal ball that actually can predict the future. Nobody can predict the future. These skills were probably expressed to our government by Bill Gates. These skills are most likely needed at the boardroom level. Most people will NOT need them at all in their entire lives. These higher-order thinking skills will be learned in college. For jobs that a high school diploma qualifies one, these skills will not be needed. People do eventually learn from failure. It is called trial and error and this is part of scientific inquiry. Although I have got to wonder why those in government never learn that war solves nothing and yet we have one about 20-30 years or so. Now the war on terror will be a perpetual war.

Then he goes onto to say, "And, they'll need to re-skill often, to keep up with ever-changing demands."

This sounds all well and good. But what specifically should they study? What specific jobs will they get? Who will pay for it? This attainment of new skills ought to be taught to them by their employer or at least the employer should pay their employees to go to school to learn something specific. But anything cutting edge will most likely have to be done by the employer directly.

If they go on their own and invest their own money getting knowledge there is no guarantee that a job will be out there to pay them enough to justify their investment of time and money.

To be honest I am not sure that re-tooling often is required. I say this because again, you do not know what the future will bring. You do not know how often change in anybody's lives will happen nor what form these changes take. If you do not know any of these then how can you say that re-tooling will be frequent?

The fourth thing he says is, "These new realities – both the challenges and the amazing opportunities – are among the main reasons we're all working so hard to transform education in the United States."

These new worries are not new realities. They are guesses on your part and you are wanting to make massive changes based on guesses. Why?

The fifth thing he says is, "Teaching and learning must change, in part, because the very nature of work has changed."

Secretary Duncan, you are wrong. We have never before in our country's history taught school for work. We did in the 20th Century teach so that once you stopped schooling, at whatever level it was, you went to work. Why do we teach for both college and for work now? Again, A Nation at Risk, I believe. Education was never meant for a job, nor should it now. It was never meant for college either. If you did well in high school, that is, you were a scholar, then you should go to college, otherwise you went to work. The very nature of work has not changed. We have had computers since the 1980s. We use them more now. That is it. Most jobs will require a high school diploma or less and these jobs have not changed much in the past 25 years or so.

The next thing Secretary Duncan says is, "As all of you know, President Obama's North Star goal in education is for every student to graduate from high school and obtain some form of postsecondary training or degree."

Boy this is an impossible goal. Impossible goals are unethical. They are not fair or just.

Non-attainable goals are a strain on the agents tasked to try to complete them. Most jobs out there require a high school diploma or less and really most of them truly require much less than a high school diploma. Right now we have 90% or more of the US adult population with either a high school diploma or GED. We have over 40% with some kind of a college degree. We have a glut of college graduates right now so much so that over 50% of all college graduates are not in jobs that require a college degree. So, why the big push for more? Is it so that you can say that the US leads the world in percentage of college grads? So, what if we don't. Our economy cannot handle the ones we have now. We probably have more college grads now than any other country including China.

He continues by saying, "High-quality career and technical education is absolutely critical to meeting that challenge. That's why we need the help, support, ideas and expertise of everyone in this room this evening."

No it is not. We have a glut of STEM people too. That is right. We do not have a STEM shortage. We have not had one since about 1990. So, for 25 years we have not had a STEM shortage. We have many engineers applying for each engineer job. We have many more electronics technicians applying for every electronics technician job. Fully 1/3 of all computer science graduates will never get a software job. How much more will I have to say before you will believe me?

Most importantly according to well-known economist (Paul) Krugman says we cannot educate ourselves back to a strong middle class. This is from a book by Diane Ravitch called Reign of Error. I think it was published in 2013.

So, please tell me again that all of this education reform is needed! Please tell me that any of this education reform is necessary!

Arne Duncan posits, "At a time when unemployment rates are too high, yet literally millions of high-wage, high-skill jobs still go unfilled, our collective work should have no natural enemies."

Where are these jobs? What are these jobs? Millions of high paying jobs. Again, where? We have millions of people with a college degree and a number of these have a Computer Science degree. They may not have the 3-5 years of experience everyone seems to want, but nobody truly needs.

Secretary Duncan continues, "High schools, community colleges, employers, business leaders, parents and students themselves must all work together to strengthen this pipeline to the middle class."

Again, I have already relayed what Paul Krugman said. High schools should not be worried about work or colleges. Jobs that Community Colleges get you do not pay all that much money. You may get \$14/hour or about \$29,000 a year. I just heard that about 85% of all Americans make less than \$30k a year. So the pay is on par with 85% of the country. This pay is not top notch. I most assuredly would not call these jobs high paying.

The next thing he says is, "We know high-quality CTE is a great strategy to bring learning alive for all students, across America's increasingly diverse student population. It is hands-on, it is engaging, and it is relevant."

I know that hands-on, engaging, and relevant are the new buzzwords. Well, the last two are anyway. Hands-on is not that critical but even less is engaging and relevant. These last two are not necessary or should not be necessary. I can speak from experience at an Electronics school. It had hands-on to verify what we were taught in class. But we were taught things that I almost never used in 25 years in the field. Granted it is nice to know that I could calculate both capacitive and inductive reactances and then measure voltage drops that I had calculated.

Secretary Duncan asserts, "We are still losing far too many of our young people in the education pipeline, but CTE makes a real and tangible difference in closing achievement gaps, and preventing dropouts. CTE students want to come to school, and they want to succeed."

Career and Technical Education (CTE) in high school is something like what Finland does. It has two pathways to graduate high school. One is the traditional way and the other is 40-60% classroom and the rest of the time is spent in apprenticeships. Yet they call this high school graduation which it is not. Finland has a 90+% high school graduation rate (but does not really). Apparently the CTE is doing this too and calling it graduating high school.

I wish I could remember who said this—Paul Solman's friend at Harvard (I believe) said that 1/3 of Americans will never share in the American dream or prosperity. Many of our young people will be lost. It is called IQ. This is a fact that cannot be changed. You can redefine what high school is to allow more to 'graduate' (like they do in Finland) but if I were an employer I'd want to know what a high school graduate should know. Redefining high school will just make it harder for me to know what I am getting in the high school graduate before me. I heard that we just graduated 80% from high school. This is a new all time high. This is bit too much in my mind.

Mr. Duncan propounds, "It is never easy to challenge yourself, to challenge the traditional way of doing things, but your creativity and entrepreneurial spirit are so important to helping our students prepare for tomorrow, not yesterday."

There really is not any reason at all to challenge the traditional way. It has served us fine. You have artificially hyped up a problem and then hyped up a so-called solution. Again, you cannot prepare for the unknown and that is precisely what the future is – unknown. So, you cannot prepare for tomorrow.

Arne Duncan visits some CTE schools from Community College to high schools. He does so almost every month. So what? Visiting a school is like visiting a city. It is not the same as living there. So, his visiting schools he sees a snapshot and knows not what it like to be there day to day and month after month. He might see a lot of high tech gear but how is it used? Is it used at all? Arne Duncan knows not what the environment is the students are in. He looks at one class and says the school is great. Why? This is like judging a city on one house or one neighborhood.

Mr. Duncan declares, “Many of these programs are connecting students with the high-demand science, technology, engineering and math fields – where so many of the good jobs go unfilled, due to the lack of qualified applicants.”

Oh my God! Mr. Duncan get up to date. Get out of the 1960s to 1980s. There has not been a STEM shortage since about 1990 or for the last 25 years. As I said above, the qualifications for these jobs are the fact that 3-5 years of experience are needed for most these jobs or so the companies say. 3-5 years of experience is never really needed but the companies insist on this. Now no amount of schooling will get you 3-5 seconds of experience let alone 3-5 years of experience. You need the job in order to get the experience but you need the experience in order to get the job. A Catch-22 scenario, I would say.

He states, “And, by implementing dual enrollment and early college models – which I love – a growing number of CTE schools are helping students to fast-track their college degrees.”

Christ you want to fast track college degrees when we have a glut of college graduates already. Why? You call it fast tracking. I call it short changing our kids. High School and the first couple of years of college are mostly survey courses. Let’s take American History. If you take it at a Community College and then substitute it for a high school course you have only taken one American history course. If you take one in high school and again in college you have taken two American History courses. Thing is they are not the same. You can get a PhD in American History and specialize in the US Civil War. That is how involved you can be. Survey course can be and oft times are different, with maybe a little overlap. But having only one American History course you have cheapened both the high school diploma and the Community College diploma and more importantly the kids and their knowledge of American History. Now multiply by all of the courses that they could take and substitute and you’ve really hurt the knowledge of our kids.

Also, what is the rush? Why do you rush them into Preschool, then into Middle School and then into college? These kids have a long life ahead of them, as do all kids, for the most part.

Secretary Duncan continues, "Take Wheeling High School outside of Chicago, where I visited in October."

It is ranked 817th in country according to wikipedia <<  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheeling\\_High\\_School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheeling_High_School) >>.

But I do not like the way schools are ranked. The number of AP tests taken and whether there is an IB (International Baccalaureate) program there gets a school higher ranked than others. These are meaningless statistics but the school rankings are swayed by such things. IB is not even that popular in Europe where it was born but because it is imported therefore it is considered exotic. Therefore it is a must have here?

Mr. Duncan maintains that, "A few years ago, it was a school of last resort that many in the community shunned. Today it is a school of choice, with a waiting list."

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This book is collection of essays dealing with education reform and the reasons given for such reforms and the government's interference into the education process. It argues from to time from an ethical point of view, as well as practical point of view. This similar to my other books just different subject matter. Basically all reform, that I know of, is suspect and not needed.

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