**DON’T THINK OF A GIRAFFE**

**Lessons for parents on children’s education post Covid19**

**Blending Eastern and Western wisdom to ensure your children’s academic success in a post-Covid 19 world**

**CHAPTER 1: LESSONS FROM COVID 19**

**Part 1: Teachers’ Response**

The recent global pandemic and resulting school shutdown in most parts of the world demonstrated two things very clearly to the whole education community world-wide:

1. that most teachers were poorly prepared to facilitate students’ remote-learning of their subject matter
2. and that most students were poorly prepared to fully manage their own learning.

The reason being of course that remote learning hadn’t been a necessity of school life before Covid 19, more of a luxury or an interesting alternative but now it has moved to centre stage as the no 1. post-Covid19, most vital educational strategy for all schools and all students world-wide.

Luckily teachers are very versatile and adaptable people and it did not take them too long from when schools first closed to get up to speed and start working on turning their classroom lessons into fully independent learning experiences for students. In doing this they discovered:

1. that they were largely unfamiliar with the full variety of websites that teach their subject matter, and also
2. that designing engaging, good quality, remotely accessible, independent learning lessons for students to achieve the same educational objectives that would have happened in class is not an easy thing to do.

And then once they had got familiar with the on-line material and designed some good lessons using it they discovered the final hurdle:

1. that many students did not really know how to manage their own learning - remotely.

Without the formal environment of a class to support them many students felt isolated and disconnected from their schooling and found it very difficult to generate the motivation and drive necessary to put in the hours learning at home that they normally would at school. As one parent told me:

“Even in lockdown they still seem to have almost 24/7 connection with their friends

on their devices, but the idea of using that connection to work together on schoolwork

just doesn’t seem to occur to them. They don’t seem to have been taught how to form teams remotely, how to collaborate and work together in the digital environment independent of teachers.”

The real lessons we can all learn from Covid 19 are that:

1. teachers need to be very familiar with every website that teaches their material – both the free and the paid sites and schools need to invest in subscriptions for teachers in all the best sites
2. teachers need comprehensive training in how to design engaging, independent learning lessons for their students that utilise the best on-line resources available remotely
3. students need to be taught all the thinking and learning skills they need for effective self-managed learning
4. at school, students need training in and regular practice of the management of their own learning
5. becoming an effective, successful self-managed learner needs to be made into a high status achievement at school, something all children will aspire to.

Now that the pandemic is behind us and children are back at school, the biggest change in their schooling needs to be a major reorientation towards the self-management of learning as a prioritised goal. We need to shift the focus of school-based learning from teacher as ‘all knowing expert’ to teacher as ‘designer of engaging, remote-learning opportunities’ that can be completed either in a classroom setting or remotely.

At this time - May 2020, there are (approximately):

* 4.78 billion cell phone users and 3.5 smartphone users in the world
* 7.77 billion people in the world today and 9.82 billion mobile connections
* Mobile devices are used for 58% of web page views worldwide but more than 65% in Asia
* 1.5 billion websites on the www, 200 million are presently active
* 8.3 trillion text messages sent per year – not counting messages sent via mobile messaging apps.
* 65 billion messages and 100 million voice calls on WhatsApp per day
* 300 billion emails sent every day – 54% of which were spam

How long will it be before:

* everything your children could possibly learn is available to them via the internet,
* they all have internet capable devices with them at all times, and
* wherever they are they can link to the internet – for free, 24/7

For a large number of children worldwide this is today’s reality not tomorrow’s.

The big question then is how will enhanced technology impact on education, especially your children’s education in the future? How long do you think it will be before we have full Virtual and Augmented Reality operating in the educational field? How long will it be before your children, wherever they are, will be able to use haptic feedback gloves and 3D goggles, not for a game, but in order to be fully immersed in an educational experience? Imagine learning Chemistry by being able to manipulate atoms of different elements in your hands and watch as atoms split apart and reform in chemical reactions, or learn a language by full VR immersion in the culture and activities of a different culture or learn History by being there when Howard Carter opened Tutankhamun’s tomb, or Armstrong walked on the moon. Imagine being able to have a real time conversation with Lao Tsu or Socrates, Archimedes or Confucius. Imagine what that would be like.

It might be powerful enough to generate understanding and learning instantly, much quicker and at a deeper level than any classroom experience could possibly do.

At that point what do we need teachers, classrooms and schools for?

That is the redundancy point that every forward-looking educational institution and school system, is planning right now how to deal with.

If children could learn everything they needed to learn from full sensory online experiences with fully intelligent digital personalities as learning guides and mentors then at that point would we still need schools and teachers?

I think even fully interactive VR would become tedious if it was the only learning method used, six hours per day, five days per week. Children need to interact, they need to move, they need to do a thousand other things each day in addition to learning and so I think schools and teachers will definitely have a role in the future but I think the nature of that role will change – as they say *“from the sage on the stage to the guide on the side”.* From teaching to facilitating learning.

To prepare for this future I think right now not only how we teach but what we teach needs to change to enable children to cope well with their own increasingly digitised and individualised education.

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