**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 2: Changes in the focus of school-based education**

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Jan 2018 - Mr Jack Ma of Alibaba fame said:

“We cannot teach our kids to compete with machines.  Teachers must stop teaching knowledge. We have to teach something unique, so a machine can never catch up with us. Education is a big challenge now.  If we don’t change the way we teach, we will be in big trouble in 30 years from now.  Because the way we teach, the things we teach our kids, are the things from the past 200 years – its knowledge based. We need to be teaching our children values, believing, independent thinking, teamwork, care for others...these are the soft parts. The knowledge will not teach you that” (Ma, 2019)

Teachers, and all education systems in the East and the West need to start focusing on teaching children how to do all the things that computers can’t do.

Andreas Schleicher of the OECD in his new book *World Class* agrees:

“It is likely that future work will pair computer intelligence with humans’ social and emotional skills, attitudes and values. It will then be our capacity for innovation, our awareness and our sense of responsibility that will enable us to harness the power of artificial intelligence to shape the world for the better. That is what will enable humans to create new value, which involves processes of creating, making, bringing into being and formulating, and can generate outcomes that are innovative, fresh and original, contributing something of intrinsic positive worth. It suggests entrepreneurialism in the broadest sense – of being ready to try, without being afraid of failing (Schleicher A. , 2018).

To do this, teachers need to start by abandoning ‘transmission’ teaching and adopting principles of skills-based, experiential, inquiry learning. This teaching method involves students utilising web-capable devices, working in small groups, accessing subject-based websites, and practising effective learning and thinking skills – often called 21st C skills. To have an advantage in their future lives they need to be practicing now, at school, cognitive skills like searching, selecting, verifying, validating and corroborating information, social skills of collaboration, communication, team work and affective skills like perseverance and persistence. In this scenario, teaching becomes about making explicit all the processes of learning and guiding the students on a pathway of inquiry to achieve specific measurable content and process based outcomes. Helping students learn how to ask the right questions but never providing the answers.

What this new type of teaching is **not** about is teachers using the internet as just one more textbook.

When every student has access to all the information in the world 24/7 then the most marketable skills will be the skills of good learning. How to find the right information, process it well, extract what you need and move on having learnt something new. These are the skills of the fully self-managed learner and in order to become competent in these skills children need to be put in the position of being able to practice the management of their own learning.

The most motivating learning has always been self-managed learning (self-directed, self-regulated, autonomous, independent) and yet up to now the infrastructure of education has not allowed for learning by exploration and discovery except at the elementary level. The proliferation of internet based school subject websites and the ubiquity of data delivery devices has changed all that.

“Helping students develop effective learning strategies and metacognitive abilities, such as self-awareness, self-regulation and self-adaptation, will become increasingly important, and should be a more explicit goal in curricula and instructional practice.” (Schleicher A. , 2018)

Teachers no longer need to be the ‘font of all knowledge’ but they do need to know where to send their students to find everything they need. This means that every teacher needs to be familiar with every website that deals with their particular area of subject expertise and to know those websites well enough to design lessons around the content found there. The school must have the infrastructure in place to support one device and one high speed internet connection per 3-4 students at the very least. One internet capable device per student in the classroom is not necessary and can even serve to increase isolation and decrease collaboration, communication and recall – see Sugata Mitra (Mitra, 2010).

Then the focus of teaching can be moved to the inculcation of effective learning skills.

The best students in the world, those whose study is most effective in helping them to succeed at school and pass all their examinations, all have one characteristic in common - metacognitive awareness. In other words they treat learning as a process requiring many different techniques and strategies depending on the subject and the context. They actively seek out options for every stage of the learning process, they try out different things and they notice what works and what doesn’t. To do this they are continuously engaged with both the subject matter they are learning and the processes they are using to learn that subject matter. They view any learning failure as a failure of process rather than a failure of the individual, they find better processes and apply them, they reflect on the results and they continually improve the success of their learning efforts (Derry, 1986) (Hattie, 1996) (Kobayashi, 2004) (Yaworski, 2000).

Learning then becomes Intrinsically motivating and success is achieved through the exercise, on available information, of a controlled set of skills and processes. These skills are 21st C skills - a combination of metacognitive, cognitive and affective skills which positively influence a student’s tendency to approach, engage with, expend effort on, and persist in tasks of learning in an ongoing, self-managed manner.

“Students will need to apply their knowledge in unknown and evolving circumstances. For this, they will need a broad range of skills, including cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (e.g. critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn and self-regulation); social and emotional skills (e.g. empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration); and practical and physical skills (e.g. using new information and communication technology devices). The use of this broader range of knowledge and skills will be mediated by attitudes and values (e.g. motivation, trust, respect for diversity and virtue).

To prepare for 2030, people should be able to think creatively, develop new products and services, new jobs, new processes and methods, new ways of thinking and living, new enterprises, new sectors, new business models and new social models. Increasingly, innovation springs not from individuals thinking and working alone, but through cooperation and collaboration with others to draw on existing knowledge to create new knowledge. The constructs that underpin the competency include adaptability, creativity, curiosity and open-mindedness. (OECD, 2018)

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