

What Do You Need to Be When You Grow Up? :

The meaning of success in today's education system

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English 2201

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June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014

“When you take the free will out of education; that turns it into schooling.” (Gatto, 2007). This quote explains the reality of what the school system has sadly become. School has become about memorizing what you are told short term, and repeating it. The bulk of how you are graded is by completing daily work. Obedience is, in fact, work force's most important quality in a worker bee. Because of the fact that people believe happiness comes from having money, everybody's definition of success can be mapped on a simple grid, with one axis being the amount of money that you have and the other being the amount of happiness in your life. (James, 2012). The education system teaches us to define success based on money instead of happiness.

### **Education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of man and in society**

Society thinks that education should equip them with ways to trample over things that stand in their way, whereas people who still see the real purpose, think that education should show them ways to come to logical and noble terms with a problem instead of simply getting it out of the way (King, 1947). “In “first” world countries, the education system has become an extension of the capitalism system.” (Baig, 2013). Most discussions about literacy statistics and the need to have so many graduates, masters, Phd’s, professionals like engineers, doctors, etc., are decided by more advanced

countries. These countries do not take under consideration that poorer countries need education to help them move forward. The only thing countries care about is “educating” people into the job positions that they need filled, not into positions that would make people happy. We are brainwashed from a young age to define success based on money and that continues all throughout our later years of education. This point is summarized in a website article written by Khalid Baig;

“Stated in a more polished form, the purpose of education is to provide for the economic prosperity of a country. Similarly on a personal level today the purpose of education is to be able to earn a respectable living.” (2013).

The real purpose of education should be for society to ensure the stability of their generation and future generations to come. We are being trained in school to fill positions society needs filled instead of being inspired to be ourselves and find our own way (Baig, 2013). We are all expected to be able to do the same things at the same level and those who cannot keep up are given a label and are viewed as a problem. We are taught that intelligence is the ability to remember and repeat instead of having an imagination and being creative. The education system teaches us that truth comes from authority, and that non-compliance is punished. People are not being educated; they are being tested on levels of obedience. Education should be a process of stimulating and waking people up at the core of their being, giving them the chance to appreciate the potential of every person around them (What does

school really teach children?, 2013). Albert Einstein said “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid”.

### **“Education system” in the United States**

The non-collegiate American school system spends more money, per student, than any other education system in the world, and yet, their students still come in below average in comparison to other students around the world. Clearly money does not help students but all they hear about is how much they need more money for funding for their system (The Annoyed Elephant, 2012). The United States prizes test scores above creative thinking and literacy. It celebrates the singular, amoral skill of making money. The No Child Left Behind program is fraud (Hedges, 2011). This program makes it so that when schools get good test results they are rewarded with money and are told that they must do even better the next year to continue to receive funding. On the other hand, schools that do poorly receive little to no money and are told to try again the next year, but what student who goes to a poorly funded school, with little resources is going to have the motivation to try again next year? Passing these bubble sheet tests are the kind of intelligence that managers and corporations value. They do not want employees who will ask questions and debate, they want drones that will get their work done quickly and efficiently, no questions about it. A public school teacher in New York City said:

“Imagine going to work every day knowing a great deal of what you are doing is fraudulent, knowing that in no way you are preparing your students for life in an ever more brutal world, knowing that if you don’t continue along your scripted test prep course and indeed get better at it you will be out of a job.” (2011).

If teachers in the United States see faults, morals being tested, with what they are doing every day, there is clearly something corrupt about their system.

### **Education done the right way: Finland**

We have all heard about how fantastic the school system is in Finland but they were not always this way. In the 1970’s, Finland’s schools were on a downwards spiral after 108 years under Russian rule. (Deva, 2011). The Finnish parliament made a historic decision to redo their schools. They believed that education was the best way out of poverty and so they decided to really leave no child behind and implement a system where every student in the country could receive a stellar education regardless of how much money their family made or where they lived (Deva, 2011). That is how education should be done across the globe. Their success caught the attention of the entire world. Their students spend less time sitting in a classroom and or doing homework, yet in 2010 they were ranked third in reading, sixth in math and second in science in the world. The United States however, were ranked in the twenties for all of those categories. Clearly Finland is doing something right. The emphasis in Finnish school is cooperation, not competition. Nina Brander, a Finnish school teach for 17 years says, “In Finland we orientate more towards learning and

working than towards marking and evaluating”. In Finland children do not start school until they are 7 years old, but they are given free daycare and preschool until then. When they are in school, children have a 15 minute break after every course, during this time they are always encouraged to play outdoors and socialize with their peers. (Deva, 2011). This system is the polar opposite from the United States and they are doing so much better in all aspects. In Finland, teachers are viewed and thought of very highly. They receive a lot of respect from other adults as well as their students. Teaching primary school is the number one desired career in Finland and the pay gap between teachers and doctors is significantly smaller than in the United States. In other words; teachers get what they have always deserved.

There are no private schools in Finland. From preschool to university it is only public education that is offered. Therefore all citizens support the public school system; no money is wasted on alternatives school systems. (Deva, 2011). If a school is struggling, the government pairs the school up with a successful school to help it out, they do not simply take away funding and resources. The real joke in all of this is that private education is valued in the United States; they believe it helps their youth, they spend triple of what Finland does every year, thinking that it will help them improve, yet Finland’s students still beat them academically on bubble sheeted evaluations every year. (Deva, 2011).

### **I would rather be poor and happy than rich and miserable**

The main thing that the education system uses to lure students into thinking that what they are doing in school is going to benefit their future is the promise that success means money. Money means you must have a good job, and a good job only comes from good grades, and of course we all know that good grades only come from good boys and girls who sit down and listen in class. A lot of people think that you are successful when you are rich, no matter if you are happy in your life or not. However real success is when you are able to tell yourself it does not matter how much money you own, because you are happy with what you have in life; you are truly successful. (James, 2012).

Education is the best way of getting the world out of its problems. Finland is a prime example of this and they should be the model on how to rebuild broken school systems. The education system teaches us to define success based on money instead of happiness; this statement holds true and it is a problem in the world today. In a book written by Nora Roberts it is said that:

“Education's supposed to be more than learning--leastways that's how we were taught. It's supposed to help build your character and help teach you how to get on in the world. If it tells you that you get booted for doing what you had to do, for standing up for yourself, then something's wrong with the system.” (1998).

We do not need to be taught how to spit back what society wants to hear from us; we need to be taught how to learn new things, accept people as they are and how to become a better person than we were yesterday.



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