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Education Leadership
the post-industrial challenge

Kai-ming Cheng
University of Hong Kong
CITE conference: eLeadership Stories
November 25, 2006
Learning without “Education”? 

- Children’s games
  - Underdeveloped societies
    - Games everywhere
    - Children heritage
    - Sophisticated
  - Developed societies
    - Games only in Schools
    - No game, or teachers’ games
    - Simple and naïve
“Hole in the Wall”
Hong Kong ...
Mean Reading Literacy of 15-year-olds

Source: OECD, UNESCO (2003) Literacy skills for the world of tomorrow, Fig. 2.5, p.76
Mean Mathematical Literacy of 15-year-olds

Source: OECD, UNESCO (2003) *Literacy skills for the world of tomorrow*, Fig. 3.2, p.100
Mean scientific literacy of 15-year-olds: All

Source: OECD, UNESCO (2003) *Literacy skills for the world of tomorrow*, Fig. 3.5, p.109
Unemployment
Hong Kong: As it is!

- 19% (15-19 yr-olds) double-disengaged
- 100K (40s-50s) newly unemployed
- High-achievers not competitive in workplace
The Hong Kong case reminds us:

Are we going to do more and better of what we are doing?

Or are we to do education that is fundamentally different?
Case 1:
- Wellington School, Hong Kong, 1976

Case 2:
- Fløtestad School, Oslo, 2006
Case 1:
- Efficiency in administration
- At the expense of student learning

Case 2:
- Concentrating on learning
- Complexity in administration
Good reminder:
- Why schools?
- Why classes?
- Why classrooms?
- Why subjects?
- Why timetables?
- Why syllabuses?
- Why public examinations?
Industrial Society

- Structured society based on division of labor
- Human beings are specialized, classified and ranked
- Credentials as signals and labels for social status, organizational membership and occupational identity
- Education provides credentials based upon “knowledge”, meaning exams, hence syllabuses, subjects, classes, ...
- Students are therefore “processed”
- Education leadership is about processing
Industrial Society: the Pyramid
Society has changed ...
Mobile phones

CEO of Samsung:
“We are not producing telephones. We are producing fashion!”
Restaurants: Maxim’s

Cantonese Cuisine
Chaozhou Cuisine
Peking Cuisine
Other Chinese Cuisines
Miso, Kiko
m.a.x. concepts: mezz, EXP, café Landmark, thai basil,
can.teen, little basil, the basil,
fresh basil, rice paper,
Café Express, Deli and Wine, Curtain Up,
Concerto Bar & Cafe
Starbucks Coffee

Over 320 shops
G2000 (fashion retail)

Michael Tien:

“When it works, It’s obsolete!”

“Customers don’t know what they want!”
Hong Kong ...

Around 300,000 registered companies (June 2006)

- 99% under 100 (SME)
  - 69% of employees
- 94% under 20
  - 40% of employees
- 86% under 10
  - 33% of employees
- Free-lancers 220,000 estimated
  vis-à-vis 2,200,000 in registered companies

The United States

Business Enterprises

98% under 100
86% under 20

National Bureau of Economic Research, 2002
Post-industrial: Workplace

Project Groups/Task Forces
Small Enterprises
Free-lancers
The Civil Service (Traditional)
Example III: Investment Banks
Post-industrial: Large Organisations

- Project Groups
- Task Forces
- Production Teams
- Client Groups
- “Accounts”
- Deal Team
Task Force
Post-industrial: SMEs
Organisations

**Industrial**
- Large pyramids
- Producer-centred
- Departments
- Hierarchy
- Tight structure
- Design at the top
- Assigned procedures
- Rules & regulations

**Post-industrial**
- Small companies
- Client-centred
- Project teams
- Flat organisations
- Loose & fluid systems
- Design at front-lines
- Improvised actions
- Fit-for-purpose acts
Working Modes

**Industrial**
- Division of labour
- Individual tasks
- Specialist duties
- Administrative links
- Credential-based appointments
- Appraisal by seniors

**Post-industrial**
- Total solutions
- Team work
- Integrated expertise
- Human interactions
- On-demand, just-in-time learning
- 360° appraisal
## Individual Lives

### Industrial
- Lifelong career
- Long-term loyalty
- Occupational identity
- Work-study consistency
- Org membership
- Stable employment
- Escalating salaries
- Upward mobility
- Foreseeable retirement
- Constant networks
- Stable relations
- Security, certainty

### Post-industrial
- Multiple careers
- Multiple jobs
- Blurred identity
- Work-study mismatch
- Possible free-lancing
- Frequent off-jobs
- Precarious incomes
- Fluctuating status
- Unpredictable future
- Varying networks
- Changing partners
- Insecurity, uncertainty
Work Activities

**Industrial**
- Paper work
- Circulars
- Minutes
- Documents
- Instructions
- Written reports
- .......

**Post-industrial**
- Communications
- Brainstorming
- E-mailing
- SMS
- Blogs
- Seminars
- Debates
- Conferencing
- Negotiation
- Presentation
- Confrontation
- Lobbying
- Retreats
Expected abilities

**Industrial**
- Special skills
- Planning & implementation
- Navigating the bureaucracy
- Following the heritage

**Post-industrial**
- Communications
- Team-working
- Human relations
- Problem-solving
- Design & innovations
- Personal responsibility
- Self-management
- Ethics, values, principles
After all ...

**Industrial**
- analytic, regulated, structured, clear-cut, uniform, convergent, normative, neat, assertive and reducible to parameters

**Post-industrial**
- holistic, flexible, loose, fuzzy, plural, divergent, liberal, complex, speculative and tolerant of multiplex concepts
Lifelong attributes

- Optimism about life
- Passion about nature
- Commitment to society
- Commitment to nation
- Perseverance amidst odds
- Readiness to expand one’s capacity
- Broad base experiences
- Experience in organising
- Appreciation of arts and music
- Attitude of helping and caring
- Seriousness about the details
- Willingness to take risks
- .......
Lifelong attributes

- Eagerness to interact with people
- Love for peace
- Sense of justice
- Consciousness of equity
- Awareness of the deprived
- Comfort with other cultures
- Basic understanding of sex and family
- Understanding and facing moral dilemmas
- Rudimentary analysis and synthesis
- Belief in rationality
- Tolerance of diversity and plurality
- ......
Back to the Oslo example:

Assumptions now:

- Back to basics:
  - Human Learning
- Learning is complex:
  - Beyond “study” and exams
- Total solutions for students:
  - Beyond structures and processing
- Leadership to capture the complexity:
  - Nomad versus Plantation
Subjects?
Examinations?
Credentials?
Challenges to conventional notions

What role does education play, …

- Tasks and jobs are more specialized, but people are not. What do we do in education?
- If people are increasingly less discriminated through “education”, will credentials still be a useful signal?
- If credentials are no longer the main objectives of schooling, do we still “process” the students?
- If we no longer process students, how should schools be organised, and what kind of education leadership should be expected?
After all …

The core business of education

- is to prepare young people for a changing future;
- is not only about more specialists;
- is to liberate them and empower them to create and master their own future!
Trends ...

Education policy concerns:

- 1960-70s Systems: planning
- 1980s School: management
- Since 1990s Students: learning

It is now the capacity of learning that counts above all!
Thank you!

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