

The indispensability of Home Schooling

Professor Stephen Heppell

All children differ, and their circumstances differ too. Home Schooling has a long and well documented history of providing appropriate and effective education for many children around the world whose needs or circumstances are met by a non institutional solution. Often dedicated parents, at the opportunity cost of lost incomes, put heroic efforts into home schooling and where parents need support themselves there are plenty of substantial initiatives, again well documented, providing overarching support. I set up a charity which ran one such scheme for more than a decade with over a thousand children very effectively supported annually.

However, that is not why Home Schooling matters in this third millennium of learning. A vast number of professional, well paid, significant jobs worldwide are now “from home”. Companies are downsizing and hot-desking in response but the skills of remote working, the cues and clues, the social behaviours, the nuances, the enhanced significance of “now” in a distributed world, the meshing with time zones are all complex skills that the school system, with its located synchronous students, prepares us for woefully. Home Schooled children were early into social media, indeed had substantial on-line support through email and bulletin boards well before the world wide web. Some of the dedicated parents have been prototyping home working for decades. All the children are. Education and employment need the insights of the Home Schooling community. We need to cherish and preserve Home Schooling, to interact better with it, to learn with and from it and this dialogue also helps the Home Schoolers keep abreast of the new pedagogic practices emerging as we better understand cognition and the science of learning.

Finally, in my work transforming education systems, with huge success, around the world it is increasingly apparent that the learners’ voice is a key component in moving learning forwards ambitiously enough. It is the learner’s reflective practice and the meta-cognitive gains accompanying it, that have proved so effective. Because of the nature of Home Schooling most students inevitably will normally have a significant voice in their own learning. And once again conventional education stands to gain from the incubator for some more good practices that Home Schooling provides.

If Home Schooling in the last century was helpful, in this century it is indispensable.

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