**Research Article**

# Evolving Schooling: A Model for Being Well

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## Abstract

Violence in schools is rising around the world. Causes are many - Neoliberalism contracts curricula while technology reduces our understanding to binaries. Climate change, civil unrest, wars and famine contribute to a less than happy society. These factors may currently be beyond our control. However, we can control how we school our younger generations. There is no simple or single answer and it is incumbent upon all members of society to invest in schooling. Beginning with students, this chapter discusses their needs and wants before identifying what teachers can do to improve education by increasing wellbeing. We then move to administrators in schools and school districts, before identifying how universities and education programs can help to develop a sense of wellbeing. Finally, we come full circle and address the society as an extension of our education community. At issue is the development of a society that is capable of being well.

## Introduction

First of all, with regard to the title of this chapter, the term "evolving" is used both as an adjective and as a verb. This implies a dynamism that appears to be lacking in many school systems in Canada, North America and beyond. Educators seem reluctant to embrace change, possibly because they have experienced so very much change during the past half-century. Not only has the amount of change increased, the rate of change has also increased exponentially.

Thus, the intent of this chapter is to strive to identify some ways that schooling can re-invent and re-invigorate itself. Such evolution has the potential to create and maintain much needed change within the general society, itself, given enough time. Certainly, this fits well within the concept of wellbeing, particularly since societies around the globe appear to be experiencing numerous recurring natural and man-made disasters, occasionally simultaneously.

The entry point for this chapter is the recognition that schools, in Western societies, as well as in other parts of the world are not well. As you may note, we live in societies where schooling is frequently a "broken system." Addressing this can be accomplished, with the result that a healthy school can promote a healthy society, given the time to do so. While we cannot, at present, counter all the ills of society, we may be able to improve the way we school our children in order to improve their knowledge and experience of schooling. Teachers can assist in this, as can school administrators, school boards and other systems of education, including our faculties of education. If our systems of schooling are up to accepting this challenge, the potential to refashion the society becomes attainable. Thus, in the truest sense of the term, we may be able to "heal" ourselves. Such change is unlikely to happen on its own and this chapter begins with the problem of student engagement and motivation.

### Violence in Schools

Many educational institutions throughout the world are experiencing upheavals in student "deportment." Violence is on the rise, across the nation and around the world [1]. North

American societies are no exception with regard to increasing violence in society. Causes are many - climate change, civil unrest, wars, poverty and food insecurity all contribute to a less than happy society. Some of these factors may currently be beyond our control. However, we can control how we school our younger generations.

While the intent of this chapter is not to address the ills that exist within the larger society, it may at least be able to alleviate tensions that produce and promote "unwellness" in schools. At issue are notions of power and control and, while power and control are serious and necessary functions of any society, a balance of both is sought in order to develop the best version of schooling possible. Hopefully, this will permeate student experience positively and will eventually lead to interventions within society that will result in greater wellbeing throughout. Thus, the intent for this chapter is to end at the beginning, with schooling reflecting the society that invests in it, with the only difference being a positive intervention that strives to reverse the current "race to the bottom."

There is no attempt in this chapter to cross reference American schooling against other systems except to recognize that all systems can benefit from an infusion of wellbeing, even those which appear to be pro-active in striving to develop and produce thoughtful, empowered, creative and dedicated citizens who have the capacity to work together across societies and geographical areas in order to promote a well planet.

## Wellbeing as a Goal

"Wellbeing" is basically an umbrella term that may best be defined by the recognition of its opposite, not being well. Because schooling is a feature of most societies and because schooling is viewed as being a mechanism for the socialization of young citizens, it makes sense to begin with schooling as a means to bring a semblance of wellbeing into this scholastic environment, hopefully paying it forward as our young citizens grow into the leaders of tomorrow.

Consequently, wellbeing can be defined very loosely as referring to the state of being comfortable, healthy, and/or happy. Each of these adjectives arrives with parameters. For example, some may equate comfort with leisure, although it may also refer to a relative lack of distress. To be healthy is to be relatively free of health issues that are not contributed to by errant policies that may include some people but which disqualified others. Happiness is another term that does not mean eternal bliss but a relative freedom for worrying where the next meal may come from. A society that does well and is well may be identified as a society that cares for its citizens more than a quantification of interest rates, stock market convulsions or the mill rate. However, many societies have a long way to go in order to consider themselves and their citizenry as "well." This may be especially true if we consider that any society

is made up, at least in part, by its citizens, and that society is not just an abstract term or a cypher for economic success.

Simply put, wellbeing is not about changing curricular goals so much as it is about changing attitudes to incorporate a valuing of the student experience rather than an indoctrination of the student. As Kokichi Shimizu [2] notes, we need to change our relationship with our students from a "power over…" to a "power with…" relationship in order to become "co-researchers with our students." Authentic relationships are empowering, especially as it is becoming more and more obvious that neoliberal sentiments are not helping to improve the world or to make it well, or even better than it was. The proposed solution is elegant in that it is simple to institute and effective for empowering students who will later become leaders of society.

## Neoliberalism and Technology

Neoliberalism contracts the curriculum while technology reduces our understanding into binary terms. These strong claims are supported by evidence, however.

### Neoliberal Sentiments

Neoliberalism has become an immensely interesting topic of discussion if only because neoliberalism is so prevalent in today's society that it has virtually disappeared from sight to all but the keenest of observers. Neoliberalism has been construed as the marriage between commerce and politics. As such, neoliberal thought, although barely 50 years old, has successfully transformed societies, worldwide.

Capitalism, an important component of neoliberal ideology, has been around for centuries, however. For example, Nathaniel Philbrick [3] notes that the Puritans, the second generation of pilgrims to North America, beginning in 1620, realized that individually owned gardens produced much more food than the customary communal gardens. The ownership of land became important and, resultantly, the concept of capitalism was born. According to Cooper and White [4].

Capitalism, itself a thoroughly neutral concept, lies incongruently alongside Marx and Engels's notion of the appropriate distribution of capital. In their work, Marx and Engels [5] identify the bourgeois as the factory owners. This group has the means to create goods, while the proletariat has only their labour to offer. As goods are produced and sold at a profit, the labourers earn a wage. Of course, with successful means of producing [and selling] goods, the factory owners create a surplus of "capital," which they then proceed to use in order to expand their operations. In Western societies, this was deemed acceptable, even necessary, in order for society to be wealthy, healthy and happy, particularly among the bourgeoisie.

Capitalism allowed for rapid expansion, brand name recognition and loyalty to one or more corporations. While it is impossible to gauge the effect, this had on any particular society, it has been noted that capitalism has been responsible for the growth of individualism, wherein society has restructured its loyalty base to the corporation rather than to family structures, teachings and values. Society, at large, appears to have lost its identity along with the family unit. In an almost schizophrenic convulsion, society has become at once conformist and at the same time different, like everybody else [6].

The postmodern era issued in the invention of the microchip, creating a technological revolution that has influenced human life and activity greatly. Some claim that this was not a new revolution, but merely an extension of the Industrial Revolution [7]. However, with the invention of the microchip, miniaturization became possible, allowing for such modern conveniences as cellular telephones, Internet banking and many other luxuries that have become necessary for our wellbeing. The microchip allowed for globalization. Humankind has become the beneficiary of innumerable privileges and advantages associated with globalization, one of the major effects of our postmodern era.

Globalization can be represented as a collection of processes or conditions that involve currents, individuals, and geographical locations – as well as information, misinformation, non-information and disinformation – that may result in these larger currents becoming accelerated or decelerated, depending on global conditions. Globalization progresses on a broken front, however, and tends to exaggerate human conditions on a global scale. This regularly results in the marginalization of less well-developed economies or even entire countries [8]. While postmodernity has set the backdrop for globalization, globalization has allowed the juggernaut of neoliberalism to proceed;

Neoliberalism is represented by myriad dynamic, omnipresent and almost omnipotent, yet ultimately unhealthy, combinations of commerce and politics. As corporations are created, they seem to take on a life of their own. At first, they are local and, as they prosper, corporations expand much as Marx and Engels [5] have predicted. At first local, then national, they eventually become international and then, finally, transnational. It is no surprise that these corporations may become powerful enough to topple governments that dare to invoke taxes that may be greater than companies would like. In such a case, corporations may move from country to country, exploiting available labor in the pursuit of ever-increasing profit margins. Governments often have no recourse but to accept the demands of these trans-nationals in order to benefit their own economies [9].

These changes impact everyone's wellbeing. As change in society increases, so does the rate of change. One of neoliberalism's effects on schooling has been the introduction of outcomes-based education; in short, product has become valued over process. Ultimately, this begs the question, "What is the purpose of education?"

**Technological Innovation**

While education and educating facilities were becoming "neoliberalized," technology was advancing at a previously unheard-of pace. This has exerted pressure on schools and educational facilities of any stripe to remain at the "cutting edge" of technology. However, it also impacts students, their instructors and administrators, as well. Technology, although becoming more reliable, is now developing at such a rapid pace that newer applications, along with newer hardware and software, may still need time to prove themselves. In addition, while the learning curve is never-ending, it is also asymptotic in that one never arrives at the goal of becoming current or up-to-date. Technology may also create enormous undue stress in terms of defunct, deficient or mis-behaving equipment; increasing power outages due, at least in part, to the (neoliberal) mismanagement of planetary resources; and learning new roles and rules with respect to technological expectations, both within and without the classroom. One of the greatest issues that society faces with technological innovation is the fact that we are becoming expected to keep pace with our machines and technological devices, reducing available time for rest, recreation and the enjoyment of life.

**Together, we are Stronger**

In fact, not only are citizens expected to behave like computers in that they will not become tired or bored, not go on strike or ask for raises, and will be prepared to put in extra hours as necessary, people are also being asked to think like computers. Computers seek a single answer to any question, simply because they are binary programs. In this day and age of advanced computing, where technological advancements appear everywhere, it is no coincidence that people seek simple, single answers to complex problems. With the advent of artificial intelligence, humanity may be at an evolutionary crossroads, where computers will continue to work for humankind even as humankind works for abstracted, disembodied intelligences.

Because of the individualization of the society, noted earlier, people everywhere are seeing a dearth of leadership. This is problematic at a foundational level, because people will tend to look to their peers for relevance, guidance and consent; all this in the face of a general lack of allegiance to anything other than consumer-based goods, programs and purposes. Even the notion of schooling has been reduced to a single outcome; preparation for the workforce. John Goodlad [10] identifies numerous purposes for schooling, including but not limited to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, the socialization of students, citizenship education and training, as well as the development of the ability to advocate

for oneself. Thus, there is no single, simple answer to questions about the purpose of schooling. Clearly, by reducing schooling to a single purpose is not only a disservice to current students and educators, it represents a serious miscalculation of resources as today's students become tomorrow's leaders. Leading with a deficit in terms of recognition of purpose and the recognition that one only knows what one knows represents a spiralling race to the bottom, even as humanity is reaching for the stars.

There are no simple or single answers to wellbeing in schools, either, and, by extension, wellbeing in society. However, it is incumbent upon all members of society to invest in schooling, through the notion of wellbeing. Even the term "wellbeing" is becoming conscripted by corporations and institutions to represent a cypher for greater productivity. Very few places that acknowledge "wellbeing" or provide training, exercise, or services related to wellbeing ever consider the emotional toll that the lack of wellbeing and the toll of living within this neoliberalized, technologized society exact on the members of the society.

**A Model for Schooling**

The model proposed here remedies exactly that. Beginning with the students, this chapter discusses the needs and wants of students before identifying what teachers can do to improve education and reduce violence by increasing and improving wellbeing. We then move on to administrators in schools and school districts, before identifying how universities and education programs can improve their programs to develop a greater sense of wellbeing. Finally, we come full circle and address the society as an extension of our education community. At issue is the development of a society that is capable of being well.

Simply put, the proposed model (at risk of becoming trapped within its own critique) advocates for a simple, single change in schooling, from top to bottom. Curriculum and the existing structure of schooling need not change. What must change is the attitude that appears to be endemic in all aspects of schooling. This is the issue of control, which is commonly fraught with issues of power. Simply by changing this dynamic from "power over…" to "power with…" schooling may embrace the potential to heal its own wounds while, at the same time, offer much needed healing to the society at large. Let us begin with the students.

**Students as Creative Innovators**

- Imagine this uncommon dialogue with students;

- Teacher: Why are you at school, today?

- Student: My parents made me come.

- Teacher: How did they do that?

- Student: They drove me to school.

- Teacher: You could have not gone into the school.

- Student: They watch to make sure I don't skip school.

- Teacher: You could have left by the back door….

And the conversation continues, until, at some point there is the recognition that schooling still has some place in the minds of the attending students. By now, however, the student is becoming a little bit nervous as their motives for being at school are deconstructed. In essence, there is a tacit awareness and agreement that the teacher still has something that the student wants and/or needs. When the teacher recognizes this to the students, students tend to drop the pretence that schooling is immaterial and useless. They still believe. And, they are optimistic. Perhaps today, something positive will occur. Perhaps one or more needs will be met.

But what are the needs (and wants) of students? Given the current state of the world, students need safety. They need to feel secure and welcome. This is no small task, especially given that home lives of students may also be precarious. Students also want to be valued. They want the same things that all of us want – to be valued and recognized, and to be cared for and about. It is this ethic of caring [11] that will allow students a modicum of power. If students feel that they are valued, that their voice is not only heard but listened to and acted upon [12], would they tend to become more engaged and motivated in their schoolwork? Student voice refers to the expression of values, opinions, beliefs, and perspectives of students in a school and to instructional approaches and techniques based upon student choices, interests, passions and ambitions. Listening to and acting on student preferences, interests, and perspectives helps students feel invested in their own learning and can ignite passions that will increase their persistence [13]. To act upon student voice is not necessarily to give over power to students entirely, but to at least consider the request. At its heart, student voice is all about choice.

What would a school look like if students were motivated, engaged and encouraged to be the best version of themselves? School would likely seem more noisy, messy and would likely have an intensity about it that could not be mimicked, substituted or quelled. This transformation of student voice [14] could encourage students to be their most creative, most compassionate and most energetic selves. Of course, this does not mean that teachers have become redundant; quite the opposite. Teacher input has just become more essential than ever before, albeit in a different way, shape and form.

Hopefully, what will have changed is the student attitude towards school and schooling. This will hopefully alleviate some of the issues that students bring to school with them. While attitudes may be notoriously difficult to change, teachers can and do assist with patience, kindness and understanding.

**Teachers as Partners in Learning**

Teachers are the students' prime partners in learning. As such, agreements, both tacit and voiced, may be useful for assisting in developing a "professional" working environment for both students and teachers. Four agreements [15] from ancient Toltec wisdom can be incorporated into today's fast-paced, ever-changing world. The four agreements are: be impeccable with your word, don't take anything personally, don't make assumptions, and always do your best.

Whenever teachers make a statement, issue a warning or pronounce judgment on anything, they must be impeccable with regards to their sources. Inaccuracies, hollow warnings or implausible judgments do nothing for the community of students within the teacher's purview.

Teachers need to remember to not take the issues they meet in their classrooms personally. This may be difficult to do at first, but practice and patience are their superpowers. Teachers may feel vulnerable to begin with, but this vulnerability is also a great strength. Students tend to respond more positively to teachers who they see as "real," with real lives and families. Students may even be surprised that teachers do not spend all their time at school. Everyone, at some point, makes assumptions. However, teachers must vet their assumptions constantly simply because, in a regular classroom, life is fast-paced and the moment of assumption must be ascertained to be an accurate assumption. How many times has a teacher picked the wrong culprit, only to lose face with that student and with the entire class, as well?

Always doing one's best is an agreement that almost goes without saying. Teaching is complex and, the longer we teach, the more complex we realize the process is. However, teachers are not perfect and, so, errors in judgment will occur. However, these four agreements feed into one another and, in the case of mistaken identity for an infraction, an apology from the power that be is often all that is required. Doing one's best may easily feed into being impeccable with one's words, and into the remaining agreements.

If teachers wish to encourage students to change their attitudes towards learning, teachers will also be interested in changing their own attitudes towards teaching. Shimizu [2] has noted that teachers can benefit their students' learning more by becoming co-researchers with their students. This implies that the key to improved engagement and motivation may be about valuing what each and every student brings to school. And having an agreement or agreements to live by is representative of the social contracts that each and every one of us has with the society at large.

Of course, students have life experiences. These experiences may be accessed and built upon. Even very young students do not come to school with a blank slate. And, surprisingly enough, these young students may also have very sophisticated understandings of the world but may not have the advanced vocabulary to express themselves fully.

Project-based teaching and learning may allow students to bring their creativity into the classroom. As such, it is not about what is taught but about how the lesson is learned. At the crux of the matter is the notion of control. Teachers must be able to control their classes, of course. However, more control than necessary is not useful. It tends to re-inscribe the view that there is a reason why prisons and schools look similar from the outside. This is not lost on childhood sensitivities. What really needs to happen is to have children and adolescents come to school joyfully, ready to engage with the tasks at hand and to rejoice in their new learning acquisitions.

Project-based learning can occur in any curriculum. Estimating the height of the Eiffel Tower or using a hamburger to study geometry is not impossible for math students to explore new ways of learning. Similarly, one teacher used the story of the sinking of the Titanic to have students explore news articles, create journal entries, imagine personal experiences and even to invent "rare" artifacts that may have come from the wreckage. One student supplied a stick drawing that was supposedly drawn by a child who survived the tragedy. Using these and other similar strategies may ensure that the student not only develops the requisite skills but may also ensure that the learning experience is instructive, if not empathetic.

Every teacher wants to do the very best they can for their students. Teaching is just way too hard a job, otherwise. However, some teachers may feel that students will not learn what it is that the teacher may wish to teach. This happens naturally, anyway. One cannot control what the student learns any more than the student can control what the teacher is attempting to teach. Teaching objectives are not contrapuntal to learning objectives; they are merely opposite sides of the same coin. Curriculum guides are valuable documents that help to guide the teacher with respect to teaching objectives. This does not mean, however, that teaching must be rendered dry and brittle. Teaching and learning is a two-way street and, by working together rather than at odds, teaching and learning can become much more of a synchronous experience that is satisfying and gratifying to both student and teacher.

It has been stated that one should never talk about teaching, only about learning. This is wisdom, since teaching is the process and learning is the product. To confuse the two is to valourize teaching over learning, as a simple power differential. An adept and experienced teacher will recognize the problem of power and will strive to value student contributions to the teaching and

learning process. This may be as simple as asking students how they wish to be taught or creating spaces for student input in all aspects of the curriculum, even in the planning of the curriculum. In essence, if teachers begin to treat students as the adults they wish them to become rather than treating them as the children they are leaving behind, the students will rise to the occasion. Teachers who invest in patience and are determined to assist in developing the best future citizens possible will not be disappointed.

## Administrators as Benevolent Parents

Unfortunately, the ultimate goal of education has become employability. Whenever education ignores the importance of humanization in terms of development of social skills, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, citizenship [16], and the ability to advocate for oneself, students risk dehumanization. It is true that Neoliberalism increasingly threatens learner agency because neoliberalism favours profit margins over human wellbeing and continues to exacerbate inequalities between classes [17] and societies. Within such a socio-political educational climate, a humanizing approach to teaching and learning becomes vital.

However, more and more people are struggling and are being marginalized or abandoned due to cultural values, practices and policies that alienate the most vulnerable within society. In addition, education policies and testing standards are becoming more and more globalized. Such policies and standards are frequently made by policy makers, such as OECD [1] and UNESCO, which reside outside of the very countries or regions for which they make policy [18]. This trend may put a crimp in the administrator's style, all the way from the office of the superintendent to the school that wishes to become more evolved. In truth, policy is made at every juncture of administration and, so, the power of the administrator to influence the student body may be limited by extant power structures rather than by lack of good will. However, it may be said that any policy that is not for the benefit of the student is not a good policy.

Schools and school districts are awash in policy, and policies seem to generate lives of their own. For example, some policies may be successful and become so ingrained in the fabric of the school that they seem to disappear from view, as if, "We have always done it this way" [19]. Other policies, however, may be unsuccessful at accomplishing what it was that they set out to do. These policies may either languish through neglect, be implemented so that they do no harm, or they may become problematic. A periodic review of policies at any level is recommended but rarely actually occurs.

School and district administrators may be well advised to encourage only those policies that offer a direct benefit to students and their educational needs. After all, that is what the entire school project is about. Recognizing and assessing the benefit of these policies is important, but so is attempting to envision unintended consequences of such policies. Although administrators may not be able to roundly ignore all policies, they may be able to manipulate, interpret and encourage policies that support student enterprise with respect to learning.

Schedule planning is another important area that may, with some sensitivity, be a useful strategy to support student learning. One school in British Columbia, Canada, had a large English as a Second Language (ESL) population. The administrators created a high school timetable with ESL at the centre of the planning process. The effect of this was to create a cadre of ESL students with relatively similar personal timetables so that they moved through their classes together. This allowed subject teachers to concentrate more effectively on these students' language needs while also teaching them course content. While the possibilities may be endless, each possibility begins with putting the student first. In order to reduce violence, improve learning and encourage inspired teaching, administrators can be successful by remembering that while the school system is an imposing structure, it is still about the people within the system, and the most vulnerable of these people are the students, themselves.

Discipline is another area that school administrators may find to be a problematic area. Discipline issues arise in every school setting and cannot be minimized. It may even be that the administrator in charge of discipline sees him- or herself as a jailer, of sorts. This is the wrong signal to send if one is not trying to make the students feel like inmates at a correctional facility. With disciplinary issues, two thoughts come to mind, here. The first is to ask the question, "What happened?" Hearing the student's side of the altercation may put things on an entirely different footing. Asking questions almost automatically encourages a common ground, with the object being to find out what went wrong and how it can be fixed. A second approach, employed after the first, is the notion of restorative justice. While time and space do not permit expansion of this topic, the term "Restorative Justice" expresses its intent. Injured parties may meet with the perpetrator of the injustice in order to come to terms with what happened, how and why. Again, common ground may be established where the damage can be corrected, mitigated or even ameliorated.

In essence, every good administrator who is interested in making his or her school a site of grace, spirit and industry is encouraged to bear in mind that the entire educational project centres upon the child. In this respect, the administrator may assume the role of the benevolent parent. Although this may be an obvious trope, schooling often resembles the adage about the alligators in the swamp, and the objective to drain the swamp may well be overlooked, given all of the events that may be taking place simultaneously. However, if the administrator is able to hang on to his or her humanity, while draining the swamp, there is a good chance that the student body may be able to reclaim their

own humanity, as well. To see the results of this in practice are truly awesome.

Just such awesome practices are more common that one might think. In 2012, Cooper and White [20] worked with a group of teachers to explore critical literacy in a grade Three classroom. What began as a single classroom experiment unfolded into a total school experience. The administration was on board from the beginning of the project. The result was that he administration worked with staff and with experts on a joint initiative to explore the multiple ways in which young children can become more critically literate. Through this endeavour, students, staff, administration and community members all had an opportunity to discuss, describe and experience new-found knowledge.

## Universities and Faculties of Education

Another important consideration in the development of a particular model of schooling is the role that teacher education institutes play in the education and training of teacher candidates. It is expected that teacher candidates enter these facilities with adequate content knowledge, whether they are bound for elementary education, secondary schooling or independent teaching. Given this, the role of the teacher education programs is twofold – to teach theory and to teach methods. Because theory influences one's teaching practice and one's teaching practice influences what one has absorbed theoretically, in both cases, whether it be methods courses or courses in theory. Whether methods or theory, teacher candidates are taught how to teach, as well as having candidates familiarize themselves with teaching documents, curriculum guides and requisite subject knowledge.

It is this how to teach that often becomes problematic. The presenting position is that teachers need to be fair and considerate of their students, to teach them well and to cover the course outlines. However, there is a sinister underbelly to this utopian view. Whether explicit or implicit, teacher candidates are also taught that they must be able to control their classrooms. The zeal with which this is accomplished becomes obvious when the teacher candidates are observed in their practicum settings, where their chief influences are practicing teachers. Teaching lore is passed along from older to younger teachers and represents insider knowledge in comparison to the younger teacher's incoming knowledge [21].

One of the most important learnings for the teacher candidate is the knowledge around how to control one's classroom situation. In many cases, young candidates are told not to crack a smile before Christmas. This works well, but it does little to encourage all of the things that makes schooling joyful. In fact, it reinforces the incarcerative aspects of the education project. Even in softer versions of this move to control, there is the tendency to over control. Of course, experience plays a significant role in

helping teachers, young and old, experienced and inexperienced, to hit the appropriate measure of classroom control. However, by the time the teacher figures out how much control is required, how many students have become disillusioned, discouraged and disenfranchised?

How does one find the appropriate level of control for one's classroom? There is nothing wrong with asking the students. Once the teacher has passed the "test" (and there is always a test that the teacher must pass in order for them to be accepted by the students), some of those barriers that separate the teachers from the learners may be set aside. The objective here is to lessen the distance between the teachers and learners in order to approach that "co-researcher" relationship advocated by Shimizu [22].

There are numerous other issues that faculties of education and institutes of learning could examine and redress. However, the biggest issue is the one that situates teachers as having unbridled power over students. This, alone, may be responsible for many disenchanted, unmotivated or disengaged students. While this chapter speaks for the "regular" student, students with special needs may be particularly sensitive to issues of power and control that exist in their classrooms and schools. In addition, specialized programs, such as vocational or skill-based programs may require more stringent safety regulations. In essence, a reasonable amount of control is what is required and this may be negotiated by those who are responsible for the program in conjunction with those who are the recipients of that program.

At the end of the day, Teacher education programs must advocate for a certain level of classroom control. By the same token, new and experienced teachers must be able to identify appropriate levels of control that do not alienate students. In short, teachers must examine what they have been taught in order to operationalize what they have learned for the benefit of their students.

## The Larger Society

All of the information that appears in this chapter has been said before in many different ways. At issue is why we have yet to put this information into practice. Perhaps, at its heart is the fact that we are all products of our own histories. That is to say, we have all been to school. We have all been indoctrinated by the knowledge that has been put into place by "experts," past and present. Perhaps it is time to question, once again, the wisdom of the choices that we have made and that have been made for us.

Perhaps this is the place to distinguish between education and schooling. While education refers to what we may learn, schooling refers to the place where much of our learning occurs. Thus, it can be said that not all of our education takes place in schools. If one were to expand on that thought and cast one's

vision back to Covid-era lockdowns, a great deal of "education" occurred through the Internet. In fact, some education facilities eschew the notion of a concrete and material "school" in favour of an online classroom. Other permutations, of which there are many, may include outdoor education, apprenticeship programs and other types of experiential learning opportunities, including but not limited to fieldtrips. Imagine a future society where schooling has not been excluded from the greater society. In this vision, it may be common to see young people learning alongside senior citizens. Of course, checks and balances would be required, but imagine to joyfulness of school when someone brings in home-baked cookies or an elderly person finally gets the concept being explained by a young student. Younger and older generations have much to learn from one another.

Education is central to our society and from this emanates all manner of things, from policy to governance to culture and to art. Because education is seen as one of the bastions relating to the socialization of individuals within society, it is a powerful force in the development of society, and helps to form beliefs, values, mores and attitudes. Given the influence of Neoliberal thought over the past fifty years, it is not surprising that the commodification of just about everything is seen by today's students as natural and normal. Unfortunately, such attitudes and ways of being are eventually harmful to the society itself.

In 1954, long before the invention of the microchip and the development of Neoliberalism, Herbert Marcuse [23] published his seminal work, One-dimensional Man. In this volume, he warned of dire consequences of new forms of social repression, which integrates individuals in society into existing systems of production through, at least in part, existing and contemporary modes of thought. As a result, "one-dimensional thinking" promotes conformity and obedience to all-encompassing methods of control. Certainly, today's society, and in societies around the globe, Marcuse's words ring true. We see our society in all its ragged glory – wars, famine, homelessness and insufficient health care and other ills too numerous to detail here. This is a society in decline if not in eclipse. There is so much redress to be made that the most powerful leaders on the planet quail to think of where to begin. Where is the centre of the issue?

Let us look to education as a way forward. It will take time, generations, in fact. However, with the recognition that Neoliberal sentiments have not helped us gain Utopia, perhaps it is time to try something different. Perhaps it is time to return humanity to humankind. We can do this through our systems of schooling.

Curriculum is important and this is where the effects of good teaching and strong learning become most apparent. However, it is not the curriculum that is at fault, but the teaching that accompanies it. Together, in unison, teachers, administrators and institutes of education can and should return to a more student-centred approach to teaching and learning. While there may be many claims that teaching is student-centred, it is not apparent that all students would agree. Teachers may know intuitively what it is that their students need but they are too often constrained by policies and the realities of the society that the students will inherit. Here is an opportunity to make the necessary changes in order to benefit the students, themselves and all parts of the educational project, and, eventually, the society itself.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has been a David and Goliath moment. The issues at play within the society are huge and have been recalcitrant and impervious to change. The proposed antidote pales in comparison to the magnitude of the problem. However, it may just be that the proposed resolution is elegant in that it is simple and effective. At the heart of the problem lies the fact that humanity is recoiling from some of its most pernicious challenges, both natural and manmade. In order to continue on this planet, it is becoming clear that something will have to change.

That change may be the way we school our future generations. This chapter began with the notion that school violence is on the rise. Well, violence within the society is also on the rise and these two forces may well be intertwined and interconnected, with each stoking the other. Perhaps one begets the other. So, when the society cannot seem to extricate itself from such negative influences and appears to be reproducing them in their educational systems, an intervention is required.

Perhaps that intervention may be as simple as an attitude adjustment. Such an adjustment may arise in the form of valuing our students, offering them a voice and a modicum of power to become the best possible versions of themselves. Carry this best version forward into graduation and beyond. Carry it into the workforce and the structures of governance that we claim to need. Carry it into our daily lives. Yes, the road may be long and there will be mistakes made along the way. There will be errors and recidivism and redundancy but, if educators are committed to such an ideal, they will eventually succeed. After all, what do we have to lose? And, if the biggest problem in schools really is all about violence – unremarkable, given the dysfunctions of society – it is hoped that, by offering a path of co-operation and appreciation that eventually leads to wellbeing, any cessation of violence may have benefitted from this modicum of insight.

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