Sabbatical

Theme: The Future of Education

Reading:

- Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Others People's Minds. Howard Gardner
- Thinking, Fast and Slow. Daniel Kahnemann
- Making Learning Whole: How Seven Principles of Teaching Can Transform Education. David Perkins
- World Class Learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students. Yong Zhao
- 5 Minds for the Future. Howard Gardner
- Mindset: How We Can Learn To Fulfill Our Potential. Carol Dweck
- Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn. John Hattie & Gregory Yates
- Making Thinking Visible: How to Foster Engagement, Uncover Understanding, and Promote Independence for all Learners. Ritchhart, Morrison, & Church
- Preparing our Youth to Engage the World. Veronica Boix Mansilla & Anthony Jackson

Summer Institute 'The Future of Education' Harvard Graduate School of Education

Themes: Mind / Brain; The Digital Revolution; Globalisation

General Sessions: (2 Hours)

- Introduction to major themes
- Future Wise – David Perkins
- Mind/ Brain – Charles Nelson / David Rose
- Digital Revolution
- Globalisation
- Summary – Looking forward

Selective courses: (2 hours each)

- Thinking Routines: Fostering Thinking Dispositions for Future of Learning Mind / Brain
- Self Design & the Future Meta-History of Practice
- What's New? The Promise and the Peril of Digital Learning
- Meaningful work for a meaningful life in the 21st century
- New media and attention management: Developmentally appropriate approaches to building self-regulation skills
- Design Thinking Charrette: An exercise in undertaking design thinking methodology in a practical context. (2 hours per day)

This involved working in a group of six (two Americans, a Canadian, a Brazilian and a Columbian) to undertake a creative design process. The concept was to develop some solutions to a real problem, but also to learn how the Design Learning process worked. The topic was to assist a large school district in Portland, Maine, which was struggling to cope with a rapid increase in Socio-economic, cultural and academic diversity.

What I learnt

General:

Educating students for their future is extremely complex. There are no easy answers or silver bullets. Asking good questions is more important than latching on to supposed answers.

One train hides another

Proceed with Caution

(Sign on a Railway crossing)
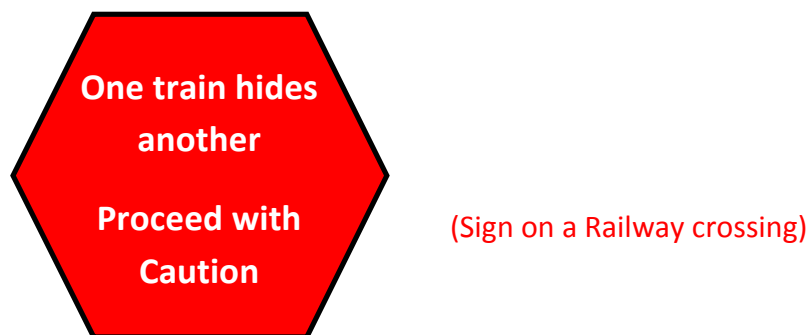
We need to be careful that as we adapt to meet the demands of an ever changing world that we are clear about what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what all the outcomes might be.

There is no clear model of 'future' education that has the 'stamp of approval'. It is not okay to be clinging to the models of last century, but equally the 'modern learning' style that makes a strong shift from "teaching to learning" and involves an individualised, co-constructed process has serious flaws. The importance of Disciplines is still as relevant as ever.

"In order to think outside the box you have to have the box to start with."

While content stuffing and rote learning should be avoided, good content must be a starting point for thinking about issues and possible action.

The more depth of content the more depth the thought.

We need to *teach* students how to learn. We need to *teach* students ways to think about things. We cannot assume that these are natural processes.
Similarly flawed is the concept that that students should be 'facilitated' to "explore their own learning at their own pace".
Young people don't know what they don't know.
We are all programmed to be intellectually lazy.

So we need deep content but that in itself is not enough – this deep content should be used to develop the skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.   (See New Zealand curriculum Key competencies.)
The concept of what is studied within each discipline needs to be renewed and expanded, e.g. physical geography could expand to include cultural geography. (To understand the issues facing the Ukraine you need to understand its cultural / ethnic make-up and its economically strategic position, not just where it is and what the major land forms are.)
We need to work across disciplines. The modern world demands a multidisciplinary approach to things. However the complexity is that you need to understand the disciplines to start with and often concepts are easier and more effectively learnt as separate entities.

Students need to be engaged, have choice, understand significance and be able to explore their passions. However, young people need to be given the opportunity to be interested in things that they didn't know they would be. A 'disciplined mind' is essential so students have to learn to do things beyond instant gratification and to persevere through hardship.

Students need to be taught to move from one source of knowledge to multiple sources. However, guidance in determining credibility is required.

We must embrace technology. However, best practice is not clear and we need to constantly review what we do (e.g. only 10% of people complete on-line courses. Digital transmission has very detrimental effects on teaching good collaboration). We need to have ongoing discussions about ethics in the digital world. We can use the powerful lessons that video games provide around student engagement, but need to understand they are designed to be addictive. We must beware of attention grabbing claims about the downsides of technology, but also be ready to question and review the effects, e.g. the idea of 'effortless perfection' that is created by the App world.

Brain research has some interesting insights and is progressing all the time. We must be aware of what it is saying and use it where possible. However, the more they learn the more complex things become so use the 'latest' information with caution, e.g. Learning Styles was all the fashion, but effect has proved to have been seriously exaggerated. Dyslexia, Autism and ADHD research is showing more complexities than any of the simplified responses being suggested.

Students benefit from having a strong cultural identity. However students need to develop a global perspective. This is challenging as these two positions can lead to a conflict. Time spent on gaining deep insights into your own culture may lead to simplified and stereotypical analysis of other cultures which is counterproductive and leads to ethnocentrism.

Information, Achievement, Expertise are the three big drivers of education policy. We have to ensure we do not let any of these three get out of perspective.

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September 2015