



## **INFORMATION AGE EDUCATION**

I think people automatically think computers when they hear the acronym IT. Of course IT stands for Information technology which encompasses any technology that is used to store, transmit, display and access any form of information be they images, words, etc. Hence a phone is just as much "IT" as a computer. The point to all this is that because of all the advances in IT in the last couple of decades we are now well ensconced in the Information Age and the Industrial Age is but a distant memory, In fact one could argue the origins of the Information Age go back about 500 years when Guttenberg invented the printing press allowing information to published and distributed on a wide scale allowing the masses to be educated.

The problem lies in the way we are educating our young people today, and for the matter, older generations as well, who are constantly being retrained by going back to educational institutions or via general workplace training. Our schools in their methodology were designed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when we were firmly in the Industrial Age. Very little has changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, except the tools we have at our disposal to teach. The general goal of our school system is to prepare students for a specific job, which they are supposed to hold for 40+ years, at which point they will be ale to retire. The first issue is that in a bygone era it was the responsibility of the organisation you worked for all those years and the government to look after you in retirement. Now of course it is the responsibility of the individual. The second issue is that words like downsizing, redundancies and lay-offs were not in the vocabulary of society in generations past. Also people go through a lot more career changes both within industries and to other industries than in the past. The final major issue is that our life expectancy has increased and thus our post-working life based on traditional retirement ages is a lot longer. So even people who do follow some sort of traditional plan of working 40+ years at an average decent salary and retiring at 65 will probably still run out money. Basically both the content of what we are teaching our youth and methodology we are using in terms of what we value as important are severely out dated. In fact a leading global economist recently remarked that he thinks Adult Education will be the single biggest industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

What should we be doing? Well as Einstein famously said "Intelligence is not the ability to store information, but to know where to find it" and it is our schools who place huge importance on memorising facts and exam results that are not heeding this brilliant advice. We should be teaching our kids how to find answers to their questions they may have in the future. We should be giving them the answers to the questions they ask of us not forcing them to memorise texts. We should be encouraging them to make mistakes and learn from them and not punishing them. We should be teaching them important tasks they will all experience like filing a tax return, financing and budgeting their life, legal structures to protect themselves, how to start and run a business as regardless of future profession this could be a strong possibility, etc. The ultimate goal being that a person who has left school is both actually thoroughly prepared and aware of the challenges ahead, knowing where they can turn for assistance when required and is not afraid of failing. Then just as importantly they feel positive about themselves and their chances of success in the future and not bad because their score wasn't high enough.

For anything to change it will require the whole community to demand it and strong innovative leadership from people in power. We don't want a society in the future with large unemployment leading to depression, suicide problems and poverty.

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