



IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 – THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND LEARNING
- 2 – OUR DIGITAL FUTURE

1 – THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND LEARNING

I have been writing on educational trends for over 30 years, the main thrust of which has been educational reform. The need for reform has been clear at least that long. But results have been meager.

The most recent attempt at reform has been the Common Core educational standards, which certainly sounded like a good idea (I support high standards in real subject matter!). But as Janice Shaw Crouse, author of [Children at Risk](#) and [Marriage Matters](#), writes at [The American Spectator](#):

At least a dozen states are now [delaying or rethinking](#) their implementation of the new Common Core educational standards, as opposition from parents and teachers grows. ... Common Core was forced onto the public as a naked federal government takeover. Common Core usurps state and local governments, based on the dubious idea that the local rubes can't be trusted to understand and meet the needs of their own children. Common Core was developed without state legislative involvement or authority, without involvement of curriculum or content specialists, and it was never voted on by anybody. ...

Critics say both English and Math Common Core Standards teach “empty skill sets” and claim they require only about a 7th grade level education for high school graduation. Others report that students won't learn the necessary literary and cultural foundations for authentic education or for success in college. Instead, some experts say that the goal is to produce “workers,” not “educated, thinking citizens.” The “lessons” in Common Core

peddle propaganda, even in grammar exercises and math problems. Parents are reporting disinformation, distortion, and disparagement of American capitalism, exceptionalism, and opportunity. In short, Common Core appears to be as much about indoctrination as it is about educating our youth and providing them the skills needed for both informed citizenship and productive careers.

The cost of this fundamental transformation of American education is exorbitant, \$16 billion, with numerous open-ended, unfunded mandates for things like professional development, testing, and new, high-tech instructional materials. This will, of course, be paid by state and local districts.

Already, 45 states, DC, and four US territories have built educational curricula based on Common Core. But, as reality is coming to light, some states are withdrawing, and others are refusing to participate. More and more teachers are speaking out about the unrealistic and unfinished nature of Common Core; national education commentators are weighing in on the classroom havoc around the country. Meanwhile, the federal government is aggressively pushing to add Common Core standards for science and social studies.

Sadly, the train wreck that Common Core is generating in our education system will take years to reverse.

Here is the uncomfortable reality, writes John Goodman, President and CEO of the National Center for Policy Analysis, at townhall.com:

Trend Analysis That Builds Business Decisions

1. Our system of public education is one of the most regressive features of American society.
2. There is almost nothing we could do that would have more impact in reducing inequality of educational opportunity and inequality overall than to do what Sweden has done: give every child a voucher and let them select a school of choice.
3. Yet on the left there is almost uniform resistance to this idea or any other idea that challenges the power of the teachers unions.

Terry M. Moe, Professor of Political Science at Stanford University, [concurrs and expands](#):

Since *A Nation at Risk* warned in 1983 of a “rising tide of mediocrity” in America’s schools, the nation has invested heavily in reform efforts to bring about significant improvement – generating countless changes to the laws, programs, structures, and curricula of public education, and spending untold billions of extra dollars. All this activity might seem to be the sign of a well-functioning democracy. But pull away the curtain and the picture is not nearly so pretty: the reforms of the last few decades, despite all the fanfare, have been incremental and weak in practice. The nation is constantly busy with education reforms not because it is responsibly addressing social problems, but because it never actually solves them and they never go away – leading to continuing demands for *more* reforms. This is what keeps the “education reform era” alive and kicking: not democracy, not responsibility, but failure.

The reasons for this failure can be as complex as we want to make them. But the fact is, in American education – and most areas of public policy, for that matter – there are simple fundamentals at work that go a long way toward explaining the

obstacles to major institutional change. The most important is the power of vested interests. In the American public school system, the key vested interests are the teachers unions: the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and their state and local affiliates – which represent the system’s key employees and are by far the most powerful groups in the politics of education. Major reform is threatening to their vested interests in the existing system, and they have used their formidable power to repel and weaken the efforts of reformers to bring real change. This is not the whole story of the modern reform era, needless to say. But it is at the heart of it. ...

Collective bargaining has enabled the unions to impose ineffective forms of organization on the schools, thus exacerbating the very problems the reform movement has been trying to correct. Among other things, local contract provisions tend to include: salary rules that pay teachers based on seniority and formal credits with no attention to performance; seniority rules for transfers and layoffs that allow senior teachers to lay claim to available jobs; onerous rules for evaluation and dismissal that virtually assure that all teachers will get satisfactory evaluations and no one will be dismissed for poor performance; and more. ...

Superior power doesn’t mean that the teachers unions always get the policies they want. The American system of checks and balances makes that impossible, because its multiple veto points ensure that shepherding new laws through the political process is extremely difficult. The flip side, however, is that *blocking* new laws is much easier, for opponents need succeed at just *one* veto point to win. And this is how the teachers unions have used their political power in shaping the nation’s schools: not by imposing the policies they want, but by blocking or weakening those they don’t want – and thus preventing true reform.

- Market and industry analysis
- Strategic business direction
- Growth dynamics

- Trend identification and analysis
- Keynotes and presentations
- Proprietary research and reports

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Throughout, they have relied on their alliance with the Democratic Party to do that. The teachers unions have been the raw power behind the politics of blocking. The Democrats have done the blocking, [particularly of] the modern era's two great education reform movements, for school accountability and for school choice.

THE FUTURE

As long as the teachers unions remain powerful, America's schools cannot be organized in the best interests of children. At the local level, the unions use their power in collective bargaining to impose special interest work rules that make no sense from the standpoint of effective schooling. In the policymaking process, they use their power to block or weaken reformist attempts to correct for the system's pathologies and produce top-flight performance.

Is there any hope that the problem of union power can somehow be overcome? Under normal

conditions, the answer would be no. Yet these are *not* normal times. American education stands at a critical juncture – and due to an unusual confluence of events, the stars are lining up in a unique configuration that augurs well for major change.

Two separate dynamics are at work. The first is arising endogenously *within* the education system and its politics. Reformers are gaining political strength, and the teachers unions are on the defensive like never before.

The second dynamic is the worldwide revolution in information technology – an exogenous development, originating entirely *outside* the education system – that is among the most profoundly influential forces ever to sweep the planet. With its rooting in information and knowledge, it cannot help but transform the way students learn, teachers teach, and schools are organized. It is the future of American education – indeed, of world education.

2 – OUR DIGITAL FUTURE

The world is moving rapidly towards ubiquitous connectivity that will further change how and where people associate, gather and share information, and consume media. A canvassing of 2,558 experts and technology builders by the [Pew Research Center's Internet Project](#) finds striking patterns in their predictions.

In their responses, these experts foresee an ambient information environment where accessing the Internet will be effortless and most people will tap into it so easily it will flow through their lives “like electricity.” They predict mobile, wearable, and embedded computing will be tied together in the Internet of Things, allowing people and their surroundings to tap into artificial intelligence-enhanced cloud-based information storage and sharing.

To a notable extent, the experts agree on the technology change that lies ahead, even as they disagree about its ramifications. Most believe there will be:

- A global, immersive, invisible, ambient networked computing environment built through the continued proliferation of smart sensors, cameras, software, databases, and massive data centers in a world-spanning information fabric known as the Internet of Things.
- “Augmented reality” enhancements to the real-world input that people perceive through the use of portable/wearable/implantable technologies.
- Disruption of business models established in the 20th century (most notably impacting

Growth STRATEGIES

Consulting in:

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finance, entertainment, publishers of all sorts, and education).

- Tagging, databasing, and intelligent analytical mapping of the physical and social realms.

These experts expect existing positive and negative trends to extend and expand in the next decade, revolutionizing most human interaction, especially affecting health, education, work, politics, economics, and entertainment. Most say they believe the results of that connectivity will be primarily positive. However, when asked to describe the good and bad aspects of the future they foresee, many of the experts can also clearly identify areas of concern, some of them extremely threatening. Heightened concerns over interpersonal ethics, surveillance, terror, and crime, may lead societies to question how best to establish security and trust while retaining civil liberties.

Overall, these expert predictions can be grouped into 15 identifiable theses about our digital future:

1. Information sharing over the Internet will be so effortlessly interwoven into daily life that it will become invisible, flowing like electricity, often through machine intermediaries.
2. The spread of the Internet will enhance global connectivity that fosters more planetary relationships and less ignorance.
3. The Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, and big data will make people more aware of their world and their own behavior.
4. Augmented reality and wearable devices will be implemented to monitor and give quick feedback on daily life, especially tied to personal health.
5. Political awareness and action will be facilitated and more peaceful change and public uprisings like the Arab Spring will emerge.
6. The spread of the 'Ubernet' will diminish the meaning of borders, and new 'nations' of those with shared interests may emerge and exist beyond the capacity of current nation-states to control.
7. The Internet will become 'the Internets' as access, systems, and principles are renegotiated.
8. An Internet-enabled revolution in education will spread more opportunities, with less money spent on real estate and teachers.
9. Dangerous divides between haves and have-nots may expand, resulting in resentment and possible violence.
10. Abuses and abusers will 'evolve and scale.' Human nature isn't changing; there's laziness, bullying, stalking, stupidity, pornography, dirty tricks, crime, and those who practice them have new capacity to make life miserable for others.
11. Pressured by these changes, governments and corporations will try to assert power – and at times succeed – as they invoke security and cultural norms.
12. People will continue – sometimes grudgingly – to make tradeoffs favoring convenience and perceived immediate gains over privacy; and privacy will be something only the upscale will enjoy.
13. Humans and their current organizations may not respond quickly enough to challenges presented by complex networks.
14. Most people are not yet noticing the profound changes today's communications networks are already bringing about; these networks will be even more disruptive in the future.
15. Foresight and accurate predictions can make a difference; 'The best way to predict the future is to invent it.'