The Assumptions and Possible Futures of Standards-based Education

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ABSTRACT Standards-based education is the most important and widely implemented education reform idea of the last several decades in the USA, one supported by the full weight of the mainstream bipartisan educational establishment. Motivated by ‘global economic competitiveness’ as the ideological driver and big business as the empirical driver, it has become a settled and integral part of local, state and federal education policy. In spite of all this, little has been said about its fundamental assumptions and their implications for the future. This is especially concerning because its most notable implicit assumption is that the ever-increasing consumption of the planet’s finite natural resources by a seemingly ever-increasing population can continue indefinitely. This is a mathematical impossibility. Therefore, this difficult discussion needs to be more fully engaged and possible solutions explored, which this article strives to do.

Over the last decade, building on such initiatives as the American Diploma Project of Achieve, Inc., the full weight of the bipartisan mainstream education establishment in the USA has fallen in line behind national standards, including Presidents Bush and Obama, Secretaries of Education Paige, Spelling and Duncan, the National Governors’ Association, National Academy of Education, National Research Council, Council of Chief State School Officers, National School Board Association, many prominent academics, and the Gates and other key charitable foundations.

Even before the widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards, standards-based education was a settled and integral part of local, state and federal education policy. Now, with the Common Core State Standards having been adopted by 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and three territories, we are witnessing the increased nationalization not only of standards, but of teacher training, curriculum and assessment as well. This is a major departure from a 400-year-old US tradition of local control over education, propelled by a momentum that is sustained, pervasive and growing.

The preponderant influence of big business and the ideology of global economic competitiveness on standards-based education over the last several decades includes buried within it three major assumptions. These are: (1) the globalized economy can and will continue indefinitely; (2) wage-based participation in the globalized economy is the main socially legitimated avenue to personal happiness, fulfillment and development in most parts of the world; and (3) extrinsically motivated attainment of credentialing, provided by education, is the primary means of advancement within this globalized economy.

An extended discussion of these assumptions, hidden within the policy debate and rarely discussed, is vitally important because it can help explicate clear, distinct and important characterizations of (1) the disparity between the ideology of weakening nation states so often professed by neo-liberal ideologues and the practical reality of strong nation states that their technocrats are creating and utilizing, (2) the future and (3) the ends of education. These ideas have profound geopolitical, environmental and economic implications. At this point, it is hard to deny that standards-based education has become the most widely implemented of the numerous
education policy reform ideas that have circulated in the USA over the last several decades. In spite of all this, neither the numerous supporters nor the relatively few detractors have (in my opinion) satisfactorily answered these most salient of all implications.

Shuttling back and forth between the public and macrostructural, and the personal and microstructural, we could consider using Gabbard’s (2003, p. 66) conception of a market-driven conscience predicated on education successively conceived of as a requirement, an opportunity and then a right as an organizing principle to examine many of the ideas mentioned above. In the USA, totems of these notions of requirement, opportunity and right might, respectively, include: (1) the Supreme Court case Pierce versus Society of Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary of 1925; (2) the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (more commonly referred to as the G.I. Bill); and (3) the Supreme Court case Brown versus Board of Education of 1954. The ever increasing federal role in US education inherent in each totem enables us to see the contours of the de facto strong nation state being created by the regime of neo-liberal globalization as it has evolved over time.

The archetypical expression of the weakening of the nation state under globalization can be found in Friedman’s (2005) The World is Flat. In that volume, Friedman opined that advances in computing and telecommunications, lower-cost international travel, the proliferation of international brands and other related trends have combined to create a global culture and global market where the traditional historical, geographical and cultural divisions have become increasingly irrelevant. While similar analyses could be provided, this example sums up the ideology adequately enough.

One of the most overt ways in which neo-liberals utilize a strong state instead of a weak one is in the very imposition of neo-liberal economic policies themselves. As Klein (2007) demonstrated in The Shock Doctrine through numerous case studies, the mavens of international neo-liberal economics and politics often use their control over the levers of their nation state to impose neo-liberalism on their countries. Or, often, international multilateral organizations (such as the International Monetary Fund), controlled by a select number of strong states, dictate the terms of this imposition. In both cases, according to Klein’s notion of ‘disaster capitalism’, the consolidation of wealth and power often takes place during or shortly after disasters, with the nation state sometimes creating these disasters.

One important neo-liberal use of the strong state was in the recent reconception of anti-trust law by US government officials and jurists at the beginning of the decades-long rise of standards-based education. These individuals – notably Robert Bork (1978) – redefined the potential injury of monopoly as that of higher prices for consumers rather than concentrated ownership of the means of production. This not only led to significant outsourcing abroad, but also inaugurated a powerful re-monopolization of important sectors of the economy by US business. This re-monopolization, however, was of a peculiar sort – one with profound implications for the structure of the US economy and employment, particularly a hollowing out of the manufacturing base (Lynn, 2010, p. 15).

Manufacturing as a share of the USA’s gross domestic product has been declining steadily from its peak shortly after the Second World War, then from ‘24.3% in 1970 to 12.8% in 2010’ (Perry, 2012, para. 4). During the same period, manufacturing jobs hovered steadily at just under 20 million per year, while service jobs began at just over 20 million at the close of the Second World War, rising to nearly 120 million at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century – an increase of approximately 2.5% annually since 1947 (Strauss, 2008, p. 10).

According to recent data from the US Department of Commerce, ‘U.S. multinational corporations, the big brand-name companies that employ a fifth of all American workers’, added 4.4 million jobs in the USA during the 1990s, but also increased overseas employment by 2.7 million (Wessel, 2011). In the first decade of the twenty-first century, this trend got even worse (from the perspective of the US worker). During that time, domestic employment was cut by 2.9 million jobs, while employment abroad by these corporations increased by 2.4 million (Wessel, 2011).

Ironically, this outsourcing has been used to lambaste the US educational system again and again for not producing workers who are competitive enough in the global economy, even though economic competitiveness is not caused primarily by the schools, but rather by governmental policies and corporate decision-making. This is ‘at worst a crass effort to direct attention away from those truly responsible for doing something about competitiveness and to lay the burden instead
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on the schools’ (Cremin, 1990, p. 103). For example, when Toyota, BMW and other high-quality automotive manufacturers choose to establish operations in the USA, they often locate themselves in states with low labor costs, low educational achievement levels and weak unions, yet they are still able to manufacture competitive, world-class products. Conversely, when US corporate executives relocate US manufacturing abroad, they do not typically send these operations to countries whose educational systems routinely rank near the top of major international benchmarks, but rather to low-wage countries where employees often do not even have a high school diploma.

At this point, it is difficult to argue that the USA has not become a corporatized plutocracy. It is, arguably, a kleptocracy, and is certainly a prime example of corporate socialism that uses a strong nation state to socialize the costs and privatize the benefits. Indeed, many increasingly take this as a given – people like Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (2011), ‘democratic’ national security insider Zbigniew Brzezinski (2007), Citigroup analysts Kapur et al (2005) and National Academy member Niall Ferguson (2004). Among the most striking characteristics of this transition has been the rollback of the social contract and the concentration of wealth among the elite to levels not seen since before the Progressive Era in the USA in the early part of the twentieth century, and perhaps even as far back as the robber baron era of the late nineteenth century.

This was not achieved by the powers of moral suasion alone. More importantly, it required significant influence over the monetary, economic, foreign and educational policy-making apparatus over time. This decimation of the manufacturing base is ‘virtually assured’ to lead to a ‘decline in U.S. living standards in the future’ (Joel Popkin and Company, 2003, p. 3). So, ironically, the captains of industry engineer dramatic changes in the US economy to enhance their corporate profits (even when they are often not taxed in the USA) and then blame these changes on an ‘uncompetitive’ US educational system. As Parenti (2001) has noted, when the mouthpieces of the US government and corporations squawk ‘about “our global leadership,” “national security,” “free markets,” and “globalization,” what they mean is “all power to the transnationals”’. Or, as Wallerstein (1998, pp. 32-33) puts it: ‘the ideological celebration of so-called globalization is in reality the swan song of our historical system’.

In considering what the lasting impact of standards-based education has been, we must concede that it has helped to consolidate the corporation at the center of US life and culture, socialized job training costs and helped big business’s mania for quantification to colonize much of K-12 education. Its biggest impact, however, may have been in locking the USA into a role as ‘the model and gatekeeper’ of neo-liberal economics (Chomsky, 2001, track one). Neo-liberalism is usually characterized as the dismantling of the Keynesian accommodation between big business and big labor that was, in effect, in the core states of global capitalism since the Great Depression, and typically associated with a strong governmental presence in the economy and extensive social welfare policies. When these are severely attenuated, and when we add observations like those of Friedman (2005) above, it is not hard to believe the argument that neo-liberalism has created weaker nation states. However, I would argue that, paradoxically, it is precisely because of these developments that the power elite has been able to strengthen their grip on the levers of state power, enhance their ability to socialize costs and privatize benefits, and increase and consolidate their share of global wealth and power. In this sense, this makes a strong nation state more important than ever to the superclass to whom the vast majority of these benefits accrue.

Dator (2006) has developed a typology of four potential futures: (1) continuation; (2) collapse; (3) disciplined society; and (4) transformational society. The first – continuation – is essentially the official ideology espoused by much of the media, government, academia and other key agenda-setters. It posits that society and the economy can, should and will continue to operate indefinitely into the future just as they have in the past. The collapse scenario says ‘that continued economic growth is inherently destructive – whether from a social, cultural, environmental, or economic standpoint’ – and that ‘collapse today, unlike in the past, may be global instead of simply local’ (Dator, 2006, para. 9). The disciplined society sees a type of continuation, albeit one that focuses beyond a ‘static and passive notion of sustainability’ (para. 10). Transformational society anticipates technological and/or spiritual breakthroughs from as yet largely unknown sources, which will significantly alter the present condition of society (para. 11).

By stressing the importance of the educational system for training ‘us vocationally for our allotted positions’ (Hedges, 2012), global economic competitiveness ideology takes Dator’s
continuation typology as its bedrock assumption. This powerful assumption is not very well grounded empirically, however, because it takes for granted that an ever increasing population using an ever increasing amount of finite natural resources in the context of a rapidly degenerating planetary ecosystem can somehow continue indefinitely (Koetke, 2007, p. 94). Barring some nearly miraculous technological breakthrough, this is mathematically impossible – and yet we continue to structure society, our economy and our personal lives as though it were true.

Scientists who are critical of the continuation concept often draw attention to what they see as the earth’s sustainable human-carrying capacity. Some think that we began ‘overshooting’ when we left the Neolithic age and entered into urban sedentary civilization approximately 5000-10,000 years ago (Catton, 1982). This long historical process was rapidly accelerated by the Industrial Revolution and its utilization of hydrocarbon fuels – a use of energy far in excess of that previously available to us by our finite annual solar energy budget.

Other analysts have put forward the concept of ‘Hubbert’s peak’ or ‘peak oil’, building on the work of petroleum geologist M. King Hubbert (Deffeyes, 2008). Hubbert predicted that each major oil-production field in the world will eventually reach a point when half of the oil present will have been extracted. This is the ‘peak’ in peak oil. After that, oil will become more expensive to extract, until it finally requires more energy to extract a barrel of oil from the ground than is present within it, making it unfeasible to continue.

Others have extrapolated from this to consider the many other resources that are so vital to our ‘modern standard of living’ (so often discussed in the rhetoric of global competitiveness ideology and standards-based education). This has led other skeptics to the similar, but even more daunting, concept of ‘peak everything’ (Heinberg, 2010). ‘Peak everything’ is an important part of the collapse literature – a literature that is substantial, growing and steadily gaining in mainstream intellectual credibility with each passing year. If the ideas it puts forward are even partially correct, then the continuation typology (the absolute, non-negotiable assumption of the global competitiveness ideology underpinning standards-based education) is likely to lead to an increasingly traumatic series of interrelated and convulsive environmental, economic and geopolitical shocks that may gradually (but promptly) bring much of modern industrial civilization as we know it to a grinding halt. Indeed, we are living in ‘the bubble economy of the earth’s rape’ (Barry, 2005). Yet the vast majority do not seem to notice or care – certainly none among the bloviating punditocracy of the so-called ‘First World’.

The ends of education have been debated for millennia, and it does not appear that this question will be settled anytime in the near future. Many observers would probably say that this is a good thing. A vibrant debate on such a topic is a crucial part of constantly reimagining what constitutes a good society, a well-lived life and the proper stewardship of the earth. Answers to these types of questions must be constantly re-evaluated as we adapt to the ever-changing conditions of society.

Global competitiveness ideology assumes that participation in the globalized economy as a wage laborer is the major avenue to personal happiness, fulfillment and development, and certainly the most socially accredited one. In the USA, the ends of education are often considered in a continuum of ideas established by the Committee of Ten and Cardinal Principles reports (National Education Association, 1893, 1918). The Committee of Ten was a group of university presidents and schoolmasters headed by Harvard president Charles Eliot and convened by the National Education Association in order to make recommendations regarding the nation’s primary and secondary school systems (Rothstein et al, 2008, p. 19). During this period, immigration, urbanization and compulsory mass schooling brought many new people into the rapidly burgeoning US K-12 education system. Combined with the rise of US research universities modeled after the German example, this also started making the articulation of subject-matter preparedness between the nascent K-12 system and colleges and universities more important. In order to address these changes, the Committee of Ten recommended an academically rigorous college-preparation-type curriculum for all students. For many, this remains a valuable ideal to strive for. It can be an important means of achieving a holistic education that combines the integrated cultivation of intellect, affect and moral sensibilities.

Twenty-five years after the Committee of Ten report, the National Education Association released another brief in 1918 that took a decidedly more utilitarian and instrumental approach to education. Instead of demanding high academic standards for all, the emphasis shifted to using the
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schools to teach job skills, ‘Americanize’ new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, and codify a two-tiered system of an elite curriculum for the few and vocational training for the many. At its worst, this approach can solidify a system of tracking, sorting and selecting that reproduces many essential aspects of the pre-existing class structure. Then again, many learners thrive in these more hands-on conditions. The current popularity of project-based learning could be considered a testament to this.

Beyond academic preparation and vocational training, there are many more ends of education that should be considered. Rothstein et al (2008, p. 43) have done an admirable job of capturing this diversity. Their content analysis of leading twentieth-century education policy documents and contemporary survey findings and recommendations of policy makers led them to develop a typology of ‘eight broad goal areas for public education’ in the USA that enjoy general consensus, as well as a quantitative determination of their relative importance (Rothstein et al, 2008, p. 43; see Table I).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Relative importance (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic academic skills</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills and work ethic</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The arts and literature</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for skilled work</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional health</td>
<td>8</td>
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Table I. Eight broad goal areas for public education in the USA during the twentieth century, according to Rothstein et al (2008, p. 43).

Whatever pedagogy or goal for education one may prefer, it seems hard to deny that global competitiveness ideology presupposes that personal happiness, fulfillment and development is primarily achieved through wage labor in the globalized economy, as the three following quotes from different phases of globalization attest. The first is a quote from the seminal A Nation at Risk report at the beginning of modern globalization:

Knowledge, learning, information, and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce and are today spreading throughout the world as vigorously as miracle drugs, synthetic fertilizers, and blue jeans did earlier. If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all – old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority. Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the ‘information age’ we are entering. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, para. 6-7)

The second is from the ‘Jeffersonian Compact’, a joint statement issued by President Bush and the National Governors’ Association after the Charlottesville Education Summit, with significant input from a sitting president (Bush) and his immediate successor (Clinton), as well as the nation’s governors. This was issued in 1989, just as modern globalization was getting under way in earnest:

The President and the nation’s Governors agree that a better educated citizenry is the key to the continued growth and prosperity of the United States ... as a nation we must have an educated work force, second to none, in order to succeed in an increasingly competitive world economy.

Education has always been important, but never this important because the stakes have changed: Our competitors for opportunity are also working to educate their people. As they continue to improve, they make the future a moving target. We believe that the time has come, for the first time in U.S. history, to establish clear, national performance goals, goals that will make us internationally competitive. (Bush & National Governors’ Association, 1989)

The third is from the education section of the Obama administration’s website in its early years: ‘Our nation’s economic competitiveness and the path to the American Dream depend on providing
every child with an education that will enable them to succeed in a global economy that is predicated on knowledge and innovation’ (Obama, 2010).

While these quotes come from governmental or quasi-governmental sources, their sentiments can be easily replicated from other sectors. Critics of the model, however, have different ideas. As Gabbard (2003, p. 61) says: ‘across its history, compulsory schooling has provided the state with an increasingly vital ritual for enforcing the market as the only permissible pattern of social organization’. Lynn’s (2010, p. xvi) recent work on the evolution of US monopoly law under neo-liberalism characterizes this valorization of the ‘free market’ even further, as an ideological leitmotif created several decades ago by ‘a highly sophisticated political movement’ designed specifically to roll back the New Deal and all subsequent social welfare programs that impinged on the bottom line of corporations, and dedicated to enabling ‘the few, once again, to consolidate power entirely in their own hands’.

How did the ‘rich and powerful’ accomplish this? By conflating the ‘free market’ with a kind of ‘divinity’ in order to mask the brutal reality of their concrete and empirically discernable actions through what is arguably ‘the single most brilliant bit of linguistic legerdemain ever perpetuated in our nation’ – one which transformed ‘the scrim behind which they disguise their predations into the religion of the American people’ (Lynn, 2010, p. 141). This ‘linguistic legerdemain’ reified compulsory mass schooling as ‘a ritual’ that incorporates

- individuals into a market society, providing them with the means for cultivating their use-value in order that they might be able to find their own individual salvation in the market while
- contributing to the broader salvation that the market bestows upon the society as a whole.

(Gabbard, 2003, p. 65)

This ‘ritual’ is predicated on credentials and the supposed use-value they certify – a perquisite for salaried employment in the globalized economy (Gabbard, 2003, pp. 65-66). As education gradually transmogrified from a requirement to an opportunity to a right (Gabbard, 2003, p. 66), this fostered the creation of a ‘market-driven conscience’ that led people to judge their self-worth based on ‘the degree to which they meet [the] demands [of the market], abide by its laws, and conform to its norms by their patterns of consumption’ (Gabbard, 2003, p. 67). This arid conception of the ends of education teaches that: ‘One of the most essential lessons for learning to “thrive” within a market society is to eschew the search for meaning’ (Gabbard, 2003, p. 73).

True education (as distinct from compulsory mass schooling) might have created curious, powerful thinkers in self-possession of their own minds. As Nietzsche has written:

- our own existence now must encourage us most strongly to live according to our own laws and standards: it is an inexplicable fact that we live precisely today, and had an infinite time to develop – nevertheless, we possess only a short-lived today to show why and to what end we evolved. We have only ourselves to answer for our existence; consequently we want to be the real helmsman of this existence and not permit our existence to be a thoughtless accident.

(Nietzsche, 1876)

Some traditional images of the educated person give wide latitude for self-creation and self-possession according to Nietzsche’s conception of one’s ‘own laws and standards’. These have gone largely ‘absent without leave’ in government educational policy. For example:

- the case for what’s called ‘authentic assessment,’ open-ended essay tests and portfolios as measures of achievement, hands-on curriculums and experiential learning, the de-emphasis of test-based achievement in favor of ‘the love of learning,’ all of which many educators still embrace – is largely missing from the political arena. (Schrag, 2000)

These images of the educated person in the Western world imply an ideal that goes back to when the philosophers walked together along the *peripatos* and among the groves of ancient Athens. While modern versions of this ideal are often held up to us today as something to aspire to, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve by means of standards-based education. This is because most state standards documents are so imbued with such narrow, utilitarian and instrumental notions of the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed in each subject in each grade that the self-possessed and self-actualized person sketched in the Nietzsche quote above (and also often found in anarchist and libertarian educational theory and practice) has little room to develop.
If it could be allowed to develop, then perhaps the educational system might help cultivate people who are ready, willing and able to use autonomous critical rationality, creativity and empathetic spiritual intuition. This might also help enable us to see through the manifold hypocrisies and deleterious conventions of modern society in order to create a just and sane social world, and take seriously our sacred roles as custodians of posterity and our one and only spaceship.

Instead, in the corporation, we have let an immortal psychopath structure almost every significant aspect of economic, political and cultural life on the planet. This characterization is not meant as hyperbole in any way, but rather as an attempt at a clinical diagnosis right out of the DSM IV (the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), via Bakan’s (2004) outstanding book The Corporation and, especially, the documentary of the same name. The DSM IV lists these symptoms for a diagnosis of psychopathology:

1. Callous unconcern for the feelings of others;
2. Incapacity to maintain enduring relationships;
3. Reckless disregard for the safety of others;
4. Deceitfulness – repeated lying and conning others for profit;
5. Incapacity to experience guilt;
6. Failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behaviors. (Cited in Achbar & Abbott, 2004)

All of these fit the ‘immortal person’ of the corporation to a T. We are receptive to this assault because the profound emptiness of mainstream, secular, scientific and materialist conceptions of the universe has enabled the extraordinary psychological sophistication of consumerist ontologies to define us and our desires, infantilizing us in the process.

The ‘enduring contradiction’ of liberal democracy is between its ‘theoretical universalism’ and ‘historical viciousness’ (Singh, 2006, p. 81) – a viciousness predicated on the ongoing use of the state’s alleged ‘monopoly on legitimate violence’ (Weber, 1958) against the working and middle classes at home and broad swathes of humanity abroad, particularly in the global South. Technology, according to Max Frisch (1957, p. 178) in his novel Homo Faber, ‘is the knack of arranging the world so that we need not experience it’. What we have never experienced we are unlikely to love. What we do not love we are unlikely to defend.

This trend has been a long time coming. As many commentators have noted, the word ‘civilization’ comes from the root Latin word civitas (‘city’ or ‘town’). As participants in civilization, inhabiting socio-economic roles that rely on incredibly minute subdivisions of labor, few of us comprehend what we are doing to the planet in the normal course of our everyday lives. Unable to see beyond the social system to the natural system that makes the social system possible, we have brought our species and the planet to a moment of grave crisis.

Ironically, the most vaunted ideals of Western civilization may, in fact, be the very lies that keep us in chains. As many commentators have noted, the word ‘civilization’ comes from the root Latin word civitas (‘city’ or ‘town’). As participants in civilization, inhabiting socio-economic roles that rely on incredibly minute subdivisions of labor, few of us comprehend what we are doing to the planet in the normal course of our everyday lives. Unable to see beyond the social system to the natural system that makes the social system possible, we have brought our species and the planet to a moment of grave crisis.

This was the goal set for us by the Enlightenment (Kant, 1996). Even some interpretations of globalization today seem to promise us hope of moving beyond the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom, with the ability to choose meaningful goals based on autonomous rationality, informed leisure and notions of the perfectibility of ‘man’ and ‘society’. Yet what goals do we typically pursue in practice after we have achieved or been given a modicum of affluence? All too often, we pursue those goals that satisfy our most primordial urges, carefully triggered by an omnipresent, finely tuned and scientifically honed marketing establishment developed over the last century that is now available to the highest bidders in business, government and the military.

Instead of using ‘man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity’, we wallow in our ‘inability to use understanding without guidance from another’ (Kant, 1996). This immaturity is self-imposed when it lies not in a lack of understanding, but in a lack of resolve to use it. ‘Sapere Aude [dare to know]! Have the courage to use your own understanding! – that is the motto of enlightenment’ (Kant, 1784). Certainly, the Enlightenment was not perfect and oceans of ink have
been spilt criticizing, for example, the instrumental rationality that was such an important part of it. Nevertheless, the notion of enlightened self-interest is certainly one aspect of the era that remains valuable today. It also accords with the notion of wise human stewardship and co-participation with the earth that is so often found among the world’s indigenous peoples – as, for example, in the tradition of thinking seven generations ahead, as some Native American traditions would have it. This is not only an appropriately humble sense of the place of human beings in the broader scheme of things, but also a practical means of survival.

Education can (and should) be an extremely important part of this means of our survival. It absolutely will not be, however, as long as we continue to allow our mainstream educational establishment worldwide to be predominately led by the ideological driver of global competitiveness ideology and the empirical drivers of Fortune’s Global 500 (Cable News Network Money, 2012), instead of the interests of the people and the planet.

References


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