The Need for an Education Revolution

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Frustration with teachers who do not teach, curricula that do not fit your needs, busy work instead of constructive homework, too much memorization/ understanding, too little memorization/ understanding, performing and achieving too low, team work that does not teach team work… It is obvious that something is not quite working with the present state of education.

Many years ago, private schools filled the gap for those who wanted more quality and exclusivity. As universal literacy became less and less of a problem, parents started to demand more individualization of education. From this need, homeschooling grew from grassroots to a large educational movement that graduates excelling students into universities. Despite the obvious success of the majority of homeschoolers, this is not a universal solution. Many families cannot afford the loss of one wage-earner. Support groups do not totally fill the gap for the immense resources of a public school system.

The next evolution product was the rise of the virtual charter schools. Parents who did not feel confident enough to homeschool full-time, or who simply cannot afford the time, now have a crutch. But those parents who have specific goals or needs in mind or are excellent teachers themselves still are not satisfied by the many constraints of a school setup and teachers looking over their shoulders.

There exists a huge gap, especially here in Arizona, in answering the demand for excellence and gifted education. Most gifted programs in schools do not really do so adequately. Students are often identified through tests that are based on existing scholastic expectations, and not innate abilities or creative thought processes. A child could discuss a political issue with adults with maturity yet write an essay with atrocious handwriting and forget half his grammar. Another could solve intricate math problems through untaught out-of-the-box methods, yet forget to mark the units or end up placing the decimal point in the wrong place. Are these children given enough attention? Are their abilities nurtured? Are their deficient basic skills built up?

The US is in a unique and privileged position, educationally speaking. A very large portion of its population speaks another language in the home, and passes onto their children a rich and varied culture. Yet schools promote a unified cookie-cutter image of the American child. Young students – and their parents – often feel the pressure to merge into the mainstream and discard their own cultural trappings, including their language. Why is it that in this fast globalizing world, heritage speakers own a distinctly favorable advantage that is not being fully utilized?