

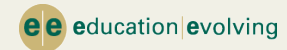
Learning Needs to Improve. OK. How?

Ted Kolderie, Education | Evolving
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Current effort is to make “traditional school” perform better. Two problems:

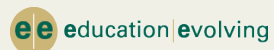
- 1) The effort to do-better with traditional school has not gone all that well.
- 2) Nobody can be certain that incremental improvement *can* succeed.



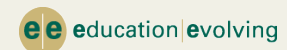
Might a truly different way of doing things work better?

Ask, “How can we get somewhere faster?”
One answer is: “better trains”. Another is: “let's fly”.

With learning, too, it makes sense to step outside the givens. **To innovate.**

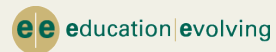


We see three dimensions
of K-12 innovation....



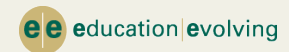
1) The organization of school.

The roles people play; the relationship of teachers and administrators; the role of students.



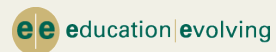
2) The approach to learning.

Breaking up the course-and-class model; personalizing learning, largely through new technology and software.



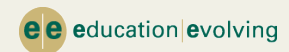
3) The definition of achievement.

What it is the students and teachers are trying to accomplish. Broadening beyond what's in the common standards.



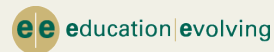
The tough question is how to bring into being a different sector with these innovative schools.

There are some obstacles...



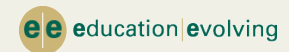
Some obstacles...

- 1) While everybody wants school to be better almost nobody wants it to be different; fear of change.
- 2) We dare not believe in creative discoveries until they have happened; fear of trying new things.



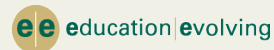
Some obstacles...

- 3) Schools are controlled by others, outside; teachers do not have autonomy to do what's best.
- 4) The national effort is to push 'improvement' into K-12, with little thought to changing system or school.



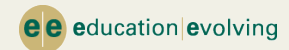
In spite of obstacles, what argues most powerfully *for* the 'innovation' strategy is the **the way most systems actually change.**

- 1) Successful systems are open to innovation; to the entry of new 'products' and new business models.
- 2) People are free to adopt these. Some do. Many at first do not. No one has to take up the innovative.



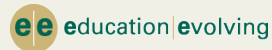
3) Over time successful new models improve. And spread. At some point a transition to the new models is completed.

This is “disruptive innovation”. It can happen with K-12, as it does with all other industries.



Current efforts at reform attempt to 'do something' about the clearly visible problems, taking as given the traditional system arrangements.

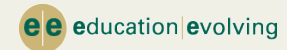
But, what fundamental “circumstances” produce the “problems” we see? . . .



Answer: The way authority and accountability are divided.

People outside control the school and want to enforce accountability on the school.

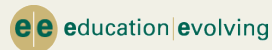
The arrangement does not work because **schools and teachers will not accept accountability for what they do not control.**



We have to build a sector of schools in which **teachers** can decide the “how” of learning for the students they have enrolled.

What if we say: *“We will give you real authority if in return you accept accountability for student success”?*

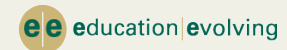
Accountability + Authority



Given authority & responsibility, teacher behavior would change.

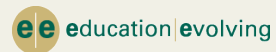
Teachers would get the professional status they have wanted. Teaching would become a better job. Teachers would be better able to meet the needs of their students.

It’s fine if not all teachers are interested!



In review, there are now three possible scenarios for K-12:

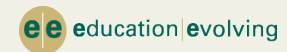
- A) Continuous improvement through command and control (the current strategy),
- B) Innovation-based Systemic Reform (the strategy discussed here)
- C) A bypass of "school" altogether.



A bypass, requires only three elements:

- (1) New ways for people to learn, outside school
- (2) Entities to assess and validate this learning
- (3) The acceptance of these 'validations' by the organizations into which students want to move next

Once these are in place, the bypass is complete and public education is obsolete.



Again, the idea is to create a sector of K-12 truly open to real innovation alongside the conventional and continuing efforts to improve traditional school:

Innovation-based Systemic Reform

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