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# What is ‘Authentic Education’?

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The simple response would include that an ‘authentic education’ is designed to guide students to unfold their authentic selves, which would at least include: (a) investigating the curriculum that was designed for them, (b) learning how to perform a number of feats (skillsets) equal to the average requirement to survive planetary conditions (social, fiscal, and environmental) on one’s own, and (c) receiving a clear understanding of the actual state of the planet being inherited upon reaching adulthood. And that ‘hope’ is not activism.

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“Authentic Education” to me interweaves as many IMPLICIT opportunities as possible through a curriculum to get learners to reflect on why and how their education was built for them, so that students would understand several raw actualities, that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Much of the human-built world thrives on membership and can be deceptively inauthentic.
- Humans have the capacity to achieve great civic accomplishments of selflessness, however under a capitalist debt system, they are challenged to prioritize and make risky decisions around striving for wealth and status versus following their passion.
- The natural planet (like the self) has limited resources that need to be cared for in a sustainable manner.
- If humankind intends to find balance with itself and the rest of living beings on the planet, it will need to move from a one planet paradigm to a multiplanet paradigm. Trashing the Earth and escaping to another planet or moon is still a ‘one planet paradigm’.
- To develop ecologically balanced communities and be a thriving multiplanet species, humans will have to learn to be bridge builders and not bridge burners.

My experience and research lead me to believe that at least the following curriculum approaches need to be in concert to produce authentic results in learners:

1. Implicit learning
2. Intrinsic motivation
3. Distributed cognition
4. Mentorships
5. Peer-to-peer learning
6. Mindfulness
7. Role-Playing Games (RPGs)
8. Outdoor/Adventure Education

9. Community Service/ Citizenship Building
10. Narrative Perspective

You probably noticed that academia and the other traditional disciplines are not mentioned. Not because you do not need them – in fact, you need them all. But it is the above concerted approaches that reshape the purpose of teaching and learning into a transformational authentic experience using all the traditional tools we have plenty of in education as we know it. There is no need to throw anything out, it is just about approaching what we do in a different way for a different purpose. Consider the individual results, respectively, of the 10 points above.

1. Implicit learning removes the boring world of explicit learning by moving out of the need for labor and work and moving into action.
2. Balanced co-directed learning experiences generate intrinsic motivation, frees up time for learners and teachers, and new opportunities abound.
3. With the potential for boredom in linear subject learning, a distributive cognition framework allows collaborative project learning where learners try different roles and responsibilities to understand failure and success as a collective.
4. Mentorship is both the passing on of knowledge and the guidance of self-discovery, solutionary thinking and the confidence to take initiative.
5. Reflection on what one was taught – through the experience of teaching and watching others younger and older than yourself learn – can only be experienced. No one can tell you what peer-to-peer learning is or feels like.
6. ‘Learning to use your mind’ is a complex skill that reshapes your attitude on life and helps to recover from trauma. Developing empathy, how to BE present, and tools for self-calming, focus and self-discipline is non-trivial.
7. RPGs in Schools as an all-encompassing implicit approach to exploring world building, critical thinking, perspective enhancement, narrative patterns, identity tropes, character arcs, and storytelling through creative role-play, strategic iteration, negotiation for meaning, and critical interpretation to discover metaphors for reality, assessing risk, failing, succeeding, and collaborating with each other as leaders and followers in a supportive and collaborative environment is simply: ‘Next Level’.
8. Breaking from their usual social and academic roles and getting outside the classroom into the natural environment for at least one week each year (and not right before break or yearend) gives learners the reflective experience of shifting roles among each other and having their consciousness stimulated by the sense of beauty, balance, and ferocity of nature, and surviving in the natural landscape with the limited resources of different biospheres.
9. Understanding custodianship, civic structure, cultural sensitivity, and the impact of entrepreneurship on communities, governments, interest groups, and ecosystems is priceless and imperative to developing a sense of local and global citizenship.
10. Stepping outside one’s role as the center of attention and default protagonist and into the role of script writer of all the characters in an intertwined lattice of cyclical journeys, helps learners realize the volatility of life from a single linear perspective, the precariousness of insincerity, the strength of trust, and the opportunity of forgiveness.

With all the above happening, it revolutionizes the school automatically, because the teachers must work within the design structure that shapes academia around authentic living and learners unfolding their authentic selves.