

myschool

PLACING EACH STUDENT AT THE CENTER OF THEIR OWN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE



myschool: Forcing Paradigm Shifts in Education Delivery

By Scott Norris

Paradigms (theories or groups of ideas about how something should be done, made, or thought about) exist in all aspects of life. Eventually all paradigms get challenged or become obsolete when a better way of doing things comes along.

There are five paradigm shifts occurring in public education in which myschool intends to be a major force (an overview of myschool can be found in the September, 2013 article, *myschool: A Student Centered Educational*

Delivery System): the shift from the military model toward personal empowerment / mastery, the shift from monopoly toward market, the shift from rote learning toward cognition, the shift from bureaucratic toward entrepreneurial, and the shift from mass production toward mass productivity.

Public education has historically followed the military model. The basic philosophical assumptions behind current educational strategies clearly reflect the major premises which tend to guide the military. The "superior"- the teacher - is required

to develop objectives without direct consultation with the "soldiers" - the students. Moreover, if such objectives are carried out efficiently,

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they are assumed to lead directly to student productivity. This system of give an order and get instant response occurs in a closed system. External factors such as student suggestions for objectives and lessons, constantly changing events in the "real world," and subsequent spontaneous alteration of curriculum are not taken into consideration.

The present structure of educational facilities – especially public secondary schools – does not allow for these external factors to influence the creation of educational objectives or their implementation. Students are required to learn at the same pace – an obvious impossibility. Students are force-fed the same curriculum without regard for personal interest – an obvious insult against the human intellect and creative imagination. Students are required to attend each class for a determined amount of time – an obvious waste of man-hours which is inherently inefficient, counter-productive, and not cost effective.

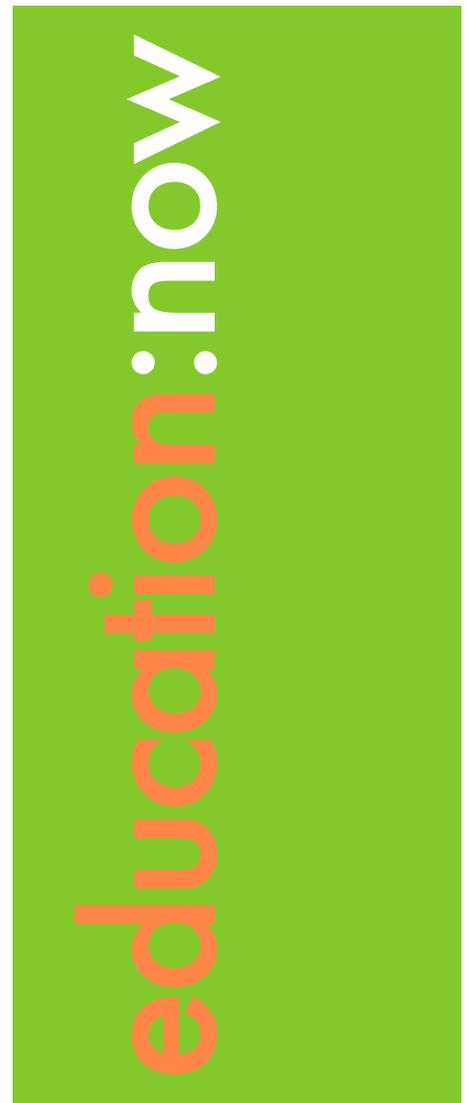
myschool will be a force in shifting this military model toward the development of personal empowerment and mastery. Developing personal mastery entails the process of allowing an arena for people to grow and learn about themselves. Developing educational objectives in a closed system, compartmentalizing the experience of school, and assuming that one pre-determined set of classes and lessons is best for every student inevitably negates the possibility for

personal mastery to develop for it removes the students from the power to create their own chosen education and reality. The goal for our students, and for the learning institution in which they find themselves, will be a vision of self-initiated productivity and individual growth.

In economics, a monopoly is defined as a persistent market situation where there is only one provider of a particular kind of product or service. Monopolies are characterized by a lack of economic competition for the good or service that they provide, a lack of viable substitute goods, as well as high barriers to entry for potential competitors on the market.

Some consider public education to be a monopoly. The monopoly is, however, slowly shifting to a market orientation. The following market characteristics will eventually emerge, or are already emerging, within the new paradigm in which myschool will play a part:

A Communication System: Markets are fundamentally a communication system – they provide information on availability, quality, quantity, variety, and price. Monopolies, however, whether private or public, control communication. As the educational monopoly is weakened by alternative delivery systems creating their own systems of communication with customers there will be powerful incentives for producers to create more efficient utilization



of resources.

Entrepreneurship: A fundamental player in any market is the entrepreneur – the person who configures the use of capital and labor in new and innovative ways. As the educational monopoly is weakened there will emerge countless opportunities for entrepreneurs to



create innovative and more efficient delivery systems and to infuse educational venture capital.

Technology: Because schools are regulated bureaucracies they are not organized in ways that lead them to the introduction of technology. As Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., former Chairman and CEO of IBM, points out in his book, *Reinventing Education - Entrepreneurship in Americas Public Schools*, "Rarely do educators think about technology because they are insulated from market forces." As the market paradigm comes of age, however, the system will become favorably disposed toward technology.

The Concept of Investment: Typically, public-sector spending is conceptualized as operating expense. In the future, such spending (both publicly and privately generated) will be perceived as investment.

Market Niches: Magnet schools, charter schools, home schooling, distance learning (via the Internet), and for-profit learning centers are emerging as viable substitutions to public education and are excellent examples of specialty production and niche positioning that emerge and are inherent in any market.

Cooperation and Collaboration: Genuine cooperation (striving together) is at the heart of a market system and will emerge in the new educational paradigm. Cooperation within and among firms – especially human-capital-intensive organizations – allows the formation and segmentation of markets in the voluntary (let me repeat, voluntary) coming together of suppliers and customers.

Accountability: Schools have historically associated accountability with academic outcomes. In the new market paradigm the concept of accountability will be expanded to include financial and operational accountability.

Ease of Market Entry: The new paradigm is beginning to emerge and there is evidence of ease of market entry for alternative educational delivery systems such as myschool (see previous Market Niches section).

Efficiency and Productivity: Any functioning market brings down costs of production and delivery of goods and services by encouraging and rewarding efficiency and productivity. Schools in the new market paradigm will be rewarded for successful optimization and productivity gains (for example,

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The third paradigm shift in education is from rote learning to cognition. Cognitive theories address how humans function and use information. Rather than focusing on teaching facts through pre-packaged lectures, demonstrations, or worksheets the emphasis is on developing higher-order thinking and problem solving skills. Schools of the future will need to educate each individual child according to his or her unique cognitive abilities and intelligences in order to stay competitive and relevant.

A beautiful quote from *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* explains the negative impact rote learning can have: " ... poetry of many kinds ... gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great, delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also lost almost any taste for pictures or music. ... My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of fact, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive. ... The loss of these

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The fourth paradigm shift that is occurring is from a bureaucratic mentality (which is characterized by the use of many complicated rules and ways of doing things) to a more entrepreneurial effort on the part of all key players in the educational system: administrators, teachers, students, parents, community members, and business and industry.

The arrangement of my school (with the implementation, for example, of flexible and relevant curriculum and flexible use of time) will allow all key players to be innovative and creative in the delivery of more a more efficient educational experience.

The preceding paradigm shifts will naturally bring about another key shift – the switch from assembly line, mass production-like systems which turn out homogeneous groups of students to systems which will develop a more natural, productive, and heterogeneous citizenship.

A primary strategic initiative in this shift to mass productivity that my school will use will be a rethinking of the traditional teacher-student relationship: allowing teachers to act as learning coaches or managers and students to be at the center of, and driving, their own educational experience.

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