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FQUR

...growing from within...

SCHOOLING:

from the Greek 'Skole', meaning 'to put into'.

EDUCATION:

from the Latin 'Educare', meaning 'to lead out of'.

THE TRUTH ABOUT COMPETITION IN 'SCHOOLING' (FALSELY CALLED EDUCATION)

With one of the highest teenage dropout rates in the developed world, 20% of British students have absorbed the message that, when you're bound to lose, there is no point competing. Forty per cent of sixteen year olds in Britain fail to get five good GCE's and one in six struggles with literacy.

Thirty per cent of EVERY year in sixteen year olds were deemed to have been failed by the education system.

This is so counter-intuitive that we persist in believing that the way to motivate kids (and adults) is to offer them rewards. The landmark experiment that suggested otherwise was conducted forty years ago by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. Ever since their original work, different permutations of it have been tested and retested, without any significant challenge; the findings remain robust.

Yet our educational systems specifically reward convergent thinking while inhibiting divergent critical and creative thinking.

We say we want motivated, creative students – but we opt for methods and structures known to undermine both.

Standardised testing associated with external rewards – be it stars. Grades. Medals or college places – turns learning from something that should be intrinsically satisfying into a transaction: do the work, compete and get the grade.

We produce excellent exam takers when what we ought to develop a bigger prize – the love of learning.

The research shows that, while rankings may motivate the top two or three, **they demotivate everybody else.**



“The classic school environment – mirroring of course the world of work they are being prepared for?”

In the original experiment, a bunch of nursery school children were divided into three groups and given the opportunity to draw. The first group was promised a reward; if they drew, they'd win a certificate. The second group was told nothing – but was surprised by the certificate when they had finished drawing. The third group just drew and received nothing for its labours.

Two weeks later, the children were again confronted by paper and pens. Now the question was: which group would WANT to draw? The group that had initially been promised a reward was the least engaged; why should they draw when there was no certificate on offer.

Grades, stars, certificate, money, trophies; virtually every type of expected tangible reward made contingent on task performance does, in fact, undermine intrinsic motivation.

As such they teach exactly the wrong lesson for life – for me to win, you must lose.

Whether by design or accident, the consequence of standardised testing is to facilitate comparison, stock rivalries and enforce convergence and homogeneity. IT may help policy makers benchmark, but it mitigates against the development of imagination, creativity and collaboration: all those gifts and talents avidly sought and so highly prized in adults.

Critical to developing creativity anywhere is a climate of safety: the sense that intellectual exploration isn't dangerous and won't incur penalties, together with the confident appreciation that mistakes aren't catastrophes; they are how we learn.

In school Deci and Ryan write glumly, 'intrinsic motivation becomes weaker with each advancing grade.' **The cost of rewarding the top 1% is the steady de-motivation of the remaining 99%!**

In a school newspaper survey, 80% of students admitted to cheating – to seek to achieve the grades they require for the top universities.

The Institute of Global Ethics estimated that, by the time they got to college, 95% of students had cheated in one form or another.

The whole idea behind liberal education used to be about building moral integrity and character. **That's now all gone.** It's a tremendous shift that has happened, that emphasis on results. It's just swept everything else away.

They didn't just want to learn: they wanted their success assured by the relative failure of others.

"Teach Less, Learn More" is trying to put more white space into schools timetables, to enhance art and music and develop more curiosity and a love of play.

Teachers in Finland command enormous respect; the job is one of the most admired and popular in the country; in opinion polls, being a teacher is more highly rated than being a doctor, architect or lawyer.

In the course of their training, the very first quality looked for in a trainee is empathy: the warmth and understanding of their pupils determines whether they stay the course.

They call, 'standardisation' the enemy of creativity, but of course without standardised exams, the schools themselves cannot be ranked....and all headmasters teach.

Students get report cards but each school designs their own, so they are not comparable across schools.

During their time in high school, every student gets two hours a week of



A mature environment to grow good confident learners as team players.

We say we want our schools to prepare children for the real world but we won't let them use computers or spellcheckers and we won't monitor their work as we go along.

PISA showed that student achievement in Germany was more correlated with family socio-economic status than any other OECD country.

The top performing school systems are the ones that do a better job of educating EVERYBODY, not the ones that just try to choose or find the few.

Today, Finnish students do not take any standardised tests until they are eighteen and, while they get written assessments, they don't get grades. That means teachers can't compare, or rank, students. Neither can the students themselves – or their parents. Finnish schools are not inspected. Without league tables or streaming, none of the data or tools a competitive person – parents or child – might need to compare schools or children is available.

'Our TV is as full of competitive games as England – maybe more. But when it comes to education and our culture, there is no room for trying to see education as competition. Finnish parents define learning as developing the individual: sharing, helping, doing things together and being part of the community rather than trying to do better than your neighbour. So that's why we have no school rankings.'

career guidance from a counsellor who will help them think through what their options are and where they want to go next.

"The best will get there but we do not want to lose anyone."

Although education after the age of sixteen is not compulsory, fully 93% of Finns complete education sufficient to gain then entry into higher education and more than 50% continue into some form of adult education.

Finland like Korea does so well because its schools educate everyone; they don't accept that for there to be winners, there must be losers.

We know now that money alone won't buy great education; money explains only about 20% of the outcome. We know that early streaming isn't associated anywhere with better overall performance, that the most successful systems aim at, and succeed in, raising achievement for everyone, not for just the few.

In a world that increasingly prizes intellectual over physical property, Finland is remarkably productive for such a tiny country. In 2005, had the fourth most scientific publications per capita of the OECD countries, ahead of the USA, UK and Germany, and was above average in the numbers of patents per capita.

The way to prepare pupils for a more competitive economy – is to have less competition in their schools.

**If you wish to explore leadership or the four quotients in your organisation – email or call.
e – Les@qfour.org.uk m – +44 (0)7770 903266**