



VALUES AND ETHICS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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RECENTERING AMERICAN EDUCATION ON THE STUDENT: PERSONALIZATION OF LEARNING

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*It must be realized that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more uncertain of success, or more dangerous to manage than the establishment of a new order of [things]; for he who introduces [change] makes enemies of all those who derived advantage from the old order and finds but lukewarm defenders among those who stand to gain from the new one (Machiavelli, *The Prince* [1514] 1961, p.27).*

All forms of learning and change start with some form of dissatisfaction or frustration generated by data that disconfirm our expectations or hopes (Schein, 1993). What typically prevents us from embracing change, causing us to react defensively, is the feeling that if we allow ourselves to enter a learning or change process, if we admit to ourselves and others that something is wrong or imperfect, we will lose our effectiveness, our self-esteem and maybe even our identity. So in education, advocating a transformational system change in learning rather than a structural change at the classroom or school level arouses anxiety, and feelings of insecurity. Transformational reform in the educational system requires strong advocating voices intent on systematic reform buttressed by a moral purpose. Without doubt the environment has changed. Education delivery must respond. It is therefore incumbent on teacher educators to ensure that all graduating students have sufficient content knowledge, experience with underlying concepts, and the pedagogical and technological skills to gain the perspective needed to allow them to embrace such a change with the supporting foundation of personalized instruction to meet diverse learning needs.

At the heart of teaching and learning is the student. Every parent wants his or her own child to be recognized and treated as an individual (Zuboff & Maxim, 2004). Personalizing the learning experience is a required necessity not a sought after requirement. This paper is aimed at readers who are committed to new ways of designing supportive learning environments that individually

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adapt to how students want to learn, from the more comprehensive perspective. Our premise is supported by the need for society to acknowledge the diversity of the population and to shift the paradigm from school reform restricted by concrete structures to learning reform restricted only by the limiting internal structures of our policy makers. "It challenges the notion that the key unit of organization is the school or the classroom. Henceforth the key unit of organization is the student" (Caldwell, 2006, p.7).

Hargreaves (1994) declared that "schools are still modeled on a curious mix of factory, the asylum, and the prison (p.43)... and that many hitherto taken for granted assumptions about schools must now be questioned" (p.3). Storey and Beeman, (2006a) highlight the current dichotomy in schools today as they endeavor to deliver their 21st century curricula in classrooms which still tend to represent and promote the values and beliefs of the majority culture. Furthermore, the very constructs of school—timetables, policies, assessment methods, discipline, and physical design-- are often quite foreign to students' experiences. While these problems appear to be entrenched norms due to being culturally and contextually based, they are not intractable.

We begin by describing the traditional model of education delivery to help build the case for personalized learning. This is followed by a presentation of the influencing factors underlying the urgency for systemic reform in the delivery of education in America recognizing the influence of global forces which have transformed the way people work and live. We argue that "today's education system faces irrelevance unless we bridge the gap between how students live and how they learn" (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006). That personalized learning which includes the use of information and communications technology, individualized assessment for diagnosis, the planning of learning experiences for each student, and the provision of children's services to support the work of teachers as they endeavor to meet the needs of each learner (Caldwell, 2006), is the sought after transformational bridge, and we identify the major barriers from which conflict is likely to emanate. Finally, we offer a summary and conclusion.

Traditional model of education delivery

For more than a century, our school design has remained constant, treating American youth as a homogeneous group rather than individual citizens with varying learning needs:

When America's schools were created it was never intended that all students would learn at high levels. Educators, civic leaders, parents and nonparents alike assumed that a relatively few students would learn a good deal, some students would learn a bit, and others would learn enough to know how to respond to authority in order to carry out tasks assigned to unskilled workers in a factory system of production (Schlechty, 2005, p.xi.).

The core business of schools was to foster compliance and attendance. Today, societal expectations are radically different but the school model remains unchanged. "Educators, civic leaders, parents and nonparents expect that all students will learn at high levels and that what they learn will be related to matters once reserved for the elite... a high quality academic education" (Schlechty, 2005, p.xi.). While societal expectations of schools have been refocused, learning and teaching remains a "prisoner of time," as stated by the late 20th Century report from the National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994. The report recommended that time be used in new, different, and better ways. Over a decade later little has altered; similar recommendations are being made with limited evidence of progress. As Warren Simmons, Executive Director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2007) argues, "We do not have the education system in this country to produce the results we are after." Our current approach to educational reform continues to reinforce the traditional educational machine of *command and control* utilizing 19th century technology to force the new century into its cookie-cutter mold (Cookson, 2006). Most reforms are introduced to make the traditional system work better.

In some school districts, school days have been lengthened, schools are open all year round, partnerships have been developed with local companies or universities, and online courses have become more prevalent, but the basic model of education delivery remains constant. Isolated examples of new initiatives do not necessarily contribute to education reform, they merely change teaching and learning in a school or school district. "For education reform to be perceived as authentic and legitimate, it must be a systematic approach to practice implemented in all schools," (Simmons, 2007) rather than our current haphazard, ineffective approach.

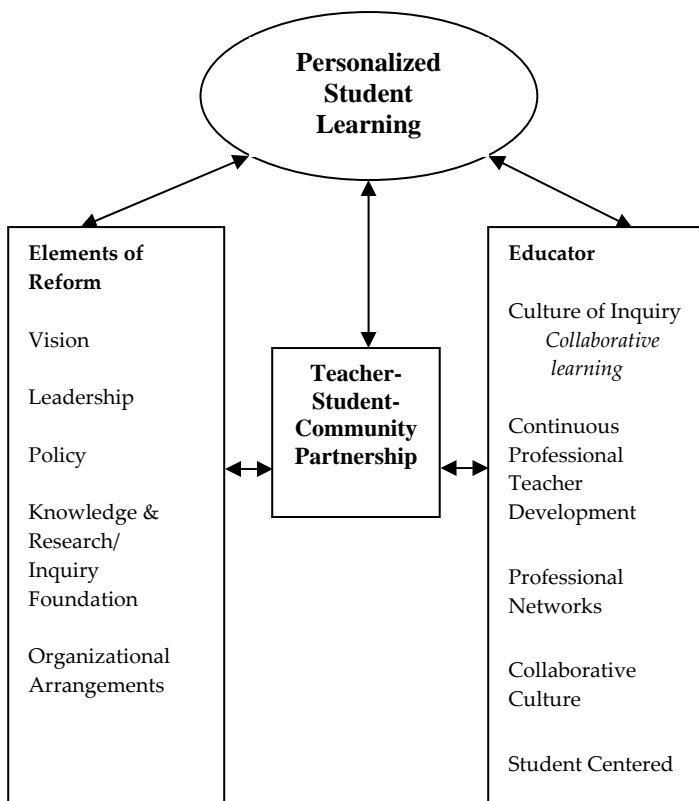
What do we mean by personalized learning?

Personalization is a simple concept. It is about putting citizens at the heart of public service and enabling them to have a say in the design and improvement of the organizations that serve them. In education this can be understood as personalized learning (Figure 1). The drive is to tailor education to fit individual needs, interests and aptitudes so as to fulfill every student's potential. While this is not a new idea, endeavoring to make the practice universally available is new. There is a need for the voice of the parent, teacher and the student to be heard. Personalized learning presents the opportunity for the learner to be at the heart of the decision making process.

The introduction of personalization learning requires the education system to embrace a new order of change. Personalization is undoubtedly a challenging concept but it has the potential to completely reshape and redefine how learning and teaching is designed and made available for students. According to Street, 2006 it requires a belief that the provision of learning should be designed to meet the individual needs of all students in our schools not just some. Therefore a more

individual student centered approach is needed in the way learning, teaching and other school systems and processes are organized, necessitating a different curriculum and pedagogy which offers students more choice and ownership of their learning, underpinned by new digital tools.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Systemic Reform Centered on Personalized Student Learning



Through personalization, “education systems should be reversed so that it is the system that conforms to the learner, rather than the learner to the system” (Green, Facer, Rudd, Dillon, and Humphreys, 2006). Such a system redesign would endeavor to address the reality of the post modern age rather than reflecting the structures required by the factories and farms of yesteryear-- the traditional notion of 180 school days, specific student to teacher ratios, classroom design, funding formulas, salary structures and job responsibilities.

Maximizing effectiveness and providing personalized instructional programs in a classroom of diverse learners requires that “teachers must go far beyond dispensing information, giving a test, and giving a grade. They must know their subject areas deeply, and they must understand how students think, as well as what students know, in order to create experiences that produce learning” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996, p.8).

A personalized learning offer depends on really knowing the

strengths and weaknesses of our students. This is achieved through assessment for learning and the use of evidence and dialogue to identify every student’s learning need. The data is already available to us as the five year old *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act requires schools and districts to break down achievement data by racial, demographic, and socioeconomic subgroups in every grade, and show progress for each group. Currently, an incredible amount of time and energy is expended collecting data from multiple sources to meet governmental reporting requirements. It would only be a short step toward learning personalization if teachers had the requisite data analysis skills to diagnostically review and assess the quality of student work and the quality of instruction. Clear feedback for and from students could clarify what they need to improve and how to do so, thereby creating a clear link between student learning and instructional delivery.

Learning’s from the UK

The case for personalization of learning has been made in the UK in the *Five-Year Strategy for Children and Learners*, Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2004a). The central characteristic of the envisaged new system will be personalization so that the system fits the individual rather than the individual having to fit the system. This is not a vague liberal notion of letting people have what they want “it recognizes individual needs and circumstances; the most effective teaching at schools which builds a detailed picture of what each child already knows and how they learn, to help them go further (Charles Clarke, former Secretary of State for Education and Skills, DfES 2004, p.4).

Every head teacher in the country received a booklet, *Learning about Personalization* (June, 2004) produced by DfES with the think tank Demos and the National College for School Leadership. Head teachers also received an additional booklet called *Personalized Learning* from the same sources which has a cover picture of a thread going through a needle, illustrating that personalized learning requires a bespoke, tailor-made education.

Personalized learning means high quality teaching that is responsive to the different ways students achieve their best. To policy makers in the UK this requires a system that responds to individual students by creating an education path that takes account of their needs, interests and aspirations” (Department for Education and Skills, 2004b). In a *National conversation about personalized learning* (p.7) the UK government outlines the principles that can help guide day-to-day practices:

- *for children and young people, it means clear learning pathways through the education system and the motivation to become independent, e-literate, fulfilled, lifelong learners;*
- *for schools, it means a professional ethos that accepts*

and assumes every child comes to the classroom with a different knowledge base and skill set, as well as varying aptitudes and aspirations; and that, as a result, there is a determination for every young person's needs to be assessed and their talents developed through diverse teaching strategies;

- *for school governors, it means promoting high standards of educational achievement and well-being for every student, ensuring that all aspects of organizing and running the school work together to get the best for all students;*
- *for the Department for Education and Skills and local authorities, it means a responsibility to create the conditions in which teachers and schools have the flexibility and capability to personalize the learning experience of all their students; combined with a system of intelligent accountability so that central intervention is in inverse proportion to success;*
- *and for the system as a whole, it means the shared goals of high quality and high equity.*

The rationale of these principles is clear-- to raise standards by focusing teaching and learning on the aptitudes and interests of students and by removing any barriers to learning. It requires a range of whole class, group, and individual teaching, learning and other communication technology strategies to transmit knowledge, instill key learning skills and to accommodate different styles and pace of learning. Some schools have developed partnerships with their local community college or nearby university to encourage their students at the high school level to engage in college level learning either at a college campus or at their high schools. In addition, the increasing availability of virtual learning communities, where students access, develop, and listen to podcasts to learn lessons on their own time and take virtual field trips (Young, 2006) has liberated students from restrictions of the four walls of the classroom.

The concept of 'anytime anywhere learning' has been adopted to enable students to study free from the oppression of the school timetable. This repertoire of pedagogical options that support distributed learning communities has also expanded to include telementoring, shared synthetic environments, and small-group inquiry giving both classroom and distance education instructors a growing menu of media from which to choose. To ensure a more authentic learning experience, students need to be exposed to such a hybrid model which enables them to take some classes on site and some in virtual classes. As Young, 2006 points out, students need a variety of learning experiences to prepare them for the future, some in-class, some project-based, some online, some in the community.

What are the compelling factors influencing the need for systemic change?

Global Competition. There is an increasing public awareness of the disconnect between America's education system and the needs of today's society. Changes in the nature of work today threaten to leave behind all those unable to demonstrate 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and complex communication skills. "Students we are preparing today will be working, collaborating, and competing with students from other countries in the global supply chain and workforce" (Zhao, 2007). Undoubtedly, the nature and delivery of the curriculum will change to meet these challenges, but so must the mindset of policy makers. Strategic, superficial changes may meet the needs of the voters but it will not be sufficient to meet the needs of today's students if they are to be successful life long learners in the global economy. Learners should have an active and motivating learning experience that enables them to engage with information sources (real and virtual) that are available globally in order to make supported and informed life choices.

Failure to prepare students. Students are voting with their feet by dropping out of schools. Schools and districts do not always know why students leave school; however when students do cite their reasons for dropping out of school, they report various factors. The Oregon Department of Education tracked a cohort of students from 1991-1995. At the end of the four-year period, 24.5% of the students had dropped out before graduating. The most frequent reason given by students for deciding to leave school was "irrelevant coursework." Other reasons were: peer pressure, teaching that didn't match student learning styles, and lack of personal attention (UCLA, Dropout Prevention, 2007) Teachers are not deliberately ignoring students at risk, but for many there are other pressures that predominate, mainly the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act. Institutional contexts, testing and assessment have become a barrier to student personalization rather than a driving force.

Today's student has different expectations and learning styles than previous generations. Emerging digital media such as videogames and smart cell phones are shaping motivations, attributes, and social patterns into types of learning styles quite different from those based on sensory, personality or intelligence factors. "Neomillennial learners" seek distributed learning situations that interweave face-to-face interactions with communication and shared experiences across distance and time. When confronted with a sterile classroom or didactic teaching it should come as no surprise to find poorly motivated, lethargic students. These same students may have left their computer for the classroom where they have designed and produced their own web sites, written daily creative and imaginative blogs, read postings and interacted with friends from around the world, and read global breaking news posted by primary sources. It has been suggested that

“by the age of twenty-one the average person will have spent 15,000 hours in formal education, 20,000 hours in front of the television, and 50,000 hours in front of a computer screen” (Futures Seminar Series, 2005). Millennials or digital native learners, “are already creating personalized learning environments for themselves outside school using digital resources” (Green et al., 2006, p.3). They are utilizing current and personal digital technologies to shape their own learning.

Millennial technology. The influence of digital technology on student learning styles tends to contrast various generations who grew up with different technologies (Howe & Strauss, 2000); For most readers of this paper i.e. Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), television will have been the dominant medium in shaping how we learn, play, create, work, consume, and participate in communities. In contrast, computers and the Internet are the crucial technological force determining the characteristics of Millennials (born after 1982), and commonly known as “digital natives.” Those born between those two generations tend to be influenced by both types of media.

Using a generational lens helps explain why some educators are so reluctant to change the schooling model. Policy makers today tend to have a learning style shaped by television, described as passive observers, assimilating a single version of “truth” (e.g., the evening newscast), while Internet-shaped learners are portrayed as active seekers of information, judging among competing opinions (for example, synthesizing inconsistent information from various websites). Television-generation learners are represented as more subservient to hierarchical authority than Internet-generation learners, who in contrast are seen as more independent, intellectually open, innovative, curious, and self-reliant.

While there are weaknesses in this theory of learning style trends, and no doubt there will be as many exceptions as there are examples, it has the strength of enabling us to reflect on whether education reform is introduced to meet the needs of the learner or the deliverer. Every school has available to them the tools to communicate with students on their own individual space, in their own preferred style. To remain relevant, educators must recognize that safe role boundaries have disappeared.

Creating a personalized learning landscape

Learning personalization poses systemic challenges as it requires both the learner and the teacher to become comfortable with digital technologies. While personalized learning is more than utilizing technology, it does tend to be at the core. In order to create a personalized learning environment in which learners “can create a coherent experience of learning in diverse locations, collaborate with experts in areas of personal interest, track and review their own learning across different sites and stages in educating, have access to resources in forms and media relevant to their

language skills, abilities and personal preferences” (Green et al., 2006, p.5). Lack of knowledge and understanding of multi-media and digital resources at the classroom level is evidenced by many teachers who find the philosophy of personalization threatening. They resist because they do not want to appear and feel incompetent: they feel they lack the skills and confidence to implement the approach.

Through consistent professional development, technology resource provision and instructor support, teachers will begin to realize that personalization of learning enables them to utilize their skills as educators. Teacher creation of video presentations, programming and DVDs promotes professional collaboration rather than isolation. Teaching and learning becomes exciting and stimulating while at the same time facilitating access to additional diagnostic analysis and learning solutions.

Rewriting the script

A powerful metaphor used by Leadbeater (2005) is that of the *script*. In a discussion paper published by DEMOS, an independent think tank and research institute of the UK, on personalization through participation, Leadbeater argues that public service scripts need to be rewritten.

All services are delivered according to a script, which directs the parts played by the actors involved. The script for eating a meal in a restaurant is: reserve table, arrive at restaurant and be shown to table, examine menu, place order with waiter, food delivered to table, eat, ask for bill, pay, leave. Service innovation comes from rewriting scripts like this so the action unfolds in a different way (Leadbeater, 2005, p.35).

He contends that a script for schooling has not changed for decades. He believes that personalized learning would provide students with a greater repertoire of possible scripts for how their education could unfold. At the core there would still be a common script-- the basic curriculum-- but that script could branch out in many different ways to have many different endings. Leadbeater rebukes the suggestion that personalized learning applies market thinking to education, turning children and parents into consumers of education. Rather the aim is to promote personal development through self-realization, self-enhancement and self-development. The child/learner should be seen as active, responsible and self-motivated, a co-author of the script which determines how education is delivered (Leadbeater, 2005). Leadbeater agrees with Hargreaves that students today are steeped in a radically different technology culture from previous generations and this has fundamentally affected their outlook and dispositions.

How would the script reveal itself? Crossley (2003)

describes how personalized learning looks in a public high school in the UK. This is a school that was opened in 2000 on the site of a previously failing school with low student aspiration and achievement. Changes were made to the physical design of the school to enhance the entrepreneurial use of space and facilities.

The aim is to create a situation where the timetabled lesson is one of a number of ways where a particular course can be completed. We also sought to break the paradigm of the class of 30 led by one teacher being the normal day-in day-out mode of learning. Plans included fostering individual and small group tutorials, distance/online learning, videoconference or e-mail links to teachers and other 'guides on the side'. Technology is the servant enabling this transformation to occur (Crossley, 2003).

Challenging complacent competency

We would agree with the authors of the recent report, *Tough Choices or Tough Times* (2006), from the National Center on Education and Economy, that there is a need to think "out of the box," to focus on creativity and innovation in order to overhaul the American public education system and that, "the problem is not with the educator it is the system in which they work" (p.9). We would argue that the report's authors still have the traditional method of education delivery in mind. They look to other countries for alleged excellent practice (and in some incidences these practices had already been rejected by the home country) rather than being truly innovative. To use the authors' own words, they are still "tinkering around the edges," modifying and reforming the current method of education delivery. The center continues to be institutional and program organizational need rather than student learning needs.

Coinciding with the endeavors of National Center on Education and Economy to jump start a dialogue on school reform and student personalized learning in the report entitled "The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action" from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) who convened the Commission on the Whole Child, 2006. The Commission also felt that it was time for the US to begin a "new conversation about K-12 education by asking, "What is possible now?" (p.2). Charged with recasting the definition of a successful learner from one whose achievement is measured solely by academic tests, to one who is knowledgeable, emotionally and physically healthy, civically inspired, engaged in the hearts, prepared for work and economic self-sufficiency and ready for the world beyond schooling (Report, Foreword), ASCD hoped that the report would "leave an indelible imprint on education philosophy and practice" (p.2). The rationale for convening the Commission (according to ASCD Executive Director, Gene R. Carter) was the belief by ASCD that if decisions about educational policy and practice started by asking;

what works for the child, how would resources-- time, space, and human-- be arrayed to ensure each child's success? And if students were truly at the centre of the system what could be achieved? The report "provides the impetus for educators, policymakers, parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders to change the conversation about learning and schooling from reforming its structures to transforming its conditions so that each child can develop his strengths and restore his unique capacities for intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual learning" (p.2). The Commission called for "a simple change that will have radical implications: put the child at the center of decision making" (p.19).

Therein lays the rub. While the Commission recognizes the need for putting the student at the center of the education system, "each student has access to personalized learning and to qualified, caring adults" (p.24) and it laments the fact that for too long education has maintained the status quo. It remains confined by the current boundaries to personalized student education such as established classrooms, individual teachers, and being bound by grade levels.

Both reports, while focusing on the need for systemic education change, are still deeply embedded in traditional school, teaching and learning culture. Though there is an acknowledgement that we require the learning of our "students to be adaptable, inventive and knowledgeable" (Goldberg, 2006), many teachers "have often unintentionally created a learning dependence that detracts from the learner's ability to self motivate, self manage, and self assess," (Martinez, 2001) rather than presenting students with greater opportunities to become engaged with their learning. Society today demands that we think not of students, i.e. the classroom, but of the student, i.e. individual who is valued, engaged and empowered as an enthusiastic life long learner and thereby enhancing critical thinking skills, requisite for survival outside the classroom.

Noddings (2005) looks to the history of public schools when asking the question, *what does it mean to educate the whole child?* Arguing that "the aims of education are tied to the nature and ideals of a particular society" (p.2) and that "all students deserve rich educational experiences that will enable them to become active citizens in a democratic society" (p.5). There are few educators who would disagree with her aspirations for today's students, but we would argue that education underserves current students due to current organizational restrictions.

Nurturing individual student engagement, embracing the whole child, can only be achieved by changing the education system. Thus, policy makers at states and school district levels need to be spurred into action to adjust both the structure and the content of the school. They must ensure the best allocation of time, use of space, delivery of instruction, and deployment of human resources to support 21st century learning and achievement. There needs to be a greater recognition of new technology, emerging curricula, global workforce demand for

mastery of new skills, and the increasing flexibility to deliver individual and collaborative instruction. "The introduction of electronic means of communicating information, storing information, processing information, and analyzing information has created the possibility of educating people without schooling them," (Schlechty, 2005, p.210). Building a new model for secondary education that prepares students for success will require bold leadership, innovation and creative applications of advanced media and technology for education (Soulé & Kay, 2006). Currently there are few innovative organizational changes. We may accept that tomorrow's classrooms will look different from today's and that teaching and learning will be enhanced by new technology. Yet we continue to think in terms of a school building in which we gather everyone of a similar age together to teach and test in general, the same curriculum in the same way.

Students today want to be involved in their own learning. In this wider context, personalization represents a fundamental shift of emphasis from the 'provider' of the service being the sole decision-maker to the consumer having input in the decision-making process as to what should be delivered and how it should be delivered. Thus in education the emphasis is on student voice: the student becomes the driver. Their needs and aspirations drive the decision-making rather than the organization's needs. This, of course, adds a level of accountability on the provider that initially might feel unnerving, but has the potential to radically improve relationships.

Changes and opportunities in education

Recent advances in cognitive and brain research have significantly increased our understanding of human development and how we all learn. These advances coupled with the increasing availability of digital technology and other technology enhanced learning tools and resources, offer new and powerful ways of personalizing the high school educational experience and extending learning beyond the confines of the classroom. While the design of successful learning environments, both technically and pedagogically is still in the infancy stage, it does not mean that we should not move forward with the technology model. In personalizing learning, the crux will be to identify empirically individual learning styles. In her research on "personalized learning on the web", Martinez (2001) found that using a comprehensive set of factors i.e. focusing on the "whole person" rather than on traditional explanations of how different people learn and process information is a step towards identifying the key sources for individual learning differences. New research emphasizes the importance of emotions on successful learning. Further, it is also a step towards understanding and managing the impact solutions and environments have on different online learners (Martinez, 2001). That is to say, traditional methods of education delivery are not redundant as it is important for the learning process both to address

fundamental learning needs and to specifically promote self directed and motivated learning.

Recognizing student voice

Democratic education requires empowering children to participate in, and take responsibility for, their own learning (Normore & Blanco, 2006; Shields, 2004). This empowerment is dependent on the voice of students being heard both by educators and policy makers otherwise their impact will be parochial. Work on student voice in schools and communities is a rapidly growing research literature (Fielding, 2001). New practice and emerging research knowledge indicates the potential for the student voice movement to transform education processes. But in order to achieve this potential, Fielding believes that educators need to embrace a view of education which understands that the means of engagement cannot sensibly be separated from the nature of aspirations.

Mitra (2006) in her advocacy of student voice also envisages students working with administrators and teachers to co-create school reform "Giving students a voice in such reform conversations reminds teachers and administrators that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools (*learning*) that adults cannot fully replicate without this partnership" (Mitra, 2006, p.2). Recent evidence from her research suggests that such involvement enables students to meet their own developmental needs and strengthens student ownership of the change process. It is foreseen that an outcome of the developing synergy will be to enhance pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, teacher training, and school culture, ultimately enabling students, teachers, and administrators to co-create school reform. Involvement in the dynamic process of pedagogy enables the student to develop an enhanced understanding of the ideological underpinnings of the curriculum (Storey & Beeman, 2006a).

Conclusion

Personalized learning is not a new initiative; it is a process of dialogue between learners and teachers, schools and communities, school districts and policy makers, centering on different forms of knowledge. It has the power to reshape our education system around the learner, enabling the voice of the student to be an influential partner in shaping the curriculum, contexts and practices of their learning by eliminating the barriers of the school structure. To see this vision as a reality, educators must embrace new digital technologies to give students ownership of their learning or face the very real consequences of a redundant system meeting the needs of the few.

This paper has outlined challenges and opportunities that provide the foundation for a dialogue about personalized learning and systemic education change. It requires considerable energy on the part of those who believe in a

different approach to learning to motivate policy makers and educators to embrace such a change. But when those change agents reach a critical mass then the “tipping point” is reached and true and meaningful reform can occur. People can radically transform their behavior or beliefs in the face of the right kind of impetus (Gladwell, 2004). If we are truly committed to basing our pedagogy on knowing the hearts and minds of our students, then personalized learning becomes the powerful lever for reforming teaching and learning conditions, putting students at the core. Personalized learning has the potential to make a huge impact on both students and teachers by providing the necessary momentum for reforming educational delivery in the 21st century to ensure that students are once again at the *heart of the matter*.

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