

Abstract for 26 May 2010

Five Minds for the Future

In the future, it will be important to develop five kinds of minds, both in school and in other educational environments:

1. The disciplined mind has mastered one or more professions, arts, crafts, or disciplines. It takes about a decade to achieve such mastery. Absent such mastery, an individual will be unable to occupy a meaningful niche in any developed society. Discipline also entails the capacity to continue one's own growth after the cessation of formal education.

2. The synthesizing mind is likely to be the most coveted in the modern era, where we are all deluged with information, much of it of dubious value. The synthesizing mind determines what is important, and what is fluff; it then takes the crucial information and organizes it in ways that are useful to the synthesizer and, optimally, to chosen audiences.

3. The creating mind thinks outside the box. We live in an era where everything that can be automated will be. Only those individuals who can regularly go beyond the conventional wisdom will be valued. While cognitive capacities are obviously valuable for creating, only those of a robust, risk-taking personality and temperament are likely to pursue a creative path.

4. The respectful mind is becoming essential in a world of diverse individuals and populations, who are in regular contact with one another, either face-to-face or in cyberspace. Going beyond mere tolerance, a respectful person seeks to understand others, to work with them, to instill a respectful environment at work and in the community.

5. The ethical mind requires an abstract attitude. The individual develops a concept of him or herself as a person, a worker, and a citizen. Ethics involves a sense of purpose and mission, an open delineation of rights and responsibilities, and a preparedness to act in light of these principles, even when such action goes against one's self interest.

While individuals may differ in their strengths and proclivities, optimally each person will develop the full complement of minds. Gardner will discuss the developmental sequence of these kinds of minds, and the ways in which they may conflict with, or complement one another.

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