

GORDON REPORT, November 2017
from Imperial Consulting Corporation

Knowledge Shock Part IV: Parenting for the “Ah-Ha Moment”

Edna, a young Hispanic student in the High School Inc. program at Valley High School in Santa Ana, California, was filmed as she gave a presentation on a greeting card company started in her career education program. As the camera rolled, she related how her student team worked with local volunteer professionals to successfully create and sell a new line of greeting cards. Her eyes brightened as she recounted the journey from the first day of class to meeting with mentors who encouraged her to strive to her full capacity and then her success in becoming the president of the new student-run company.

Then in the course of her narrative, Edna’s voice cracked, overwhelmed by a surge of pride. As her eyes filled with tears and her fingers fluttered, she had the courage to raise her voice and tell the world, “I learned how to do things I never thought I could do!” Edna had just experienced an important “ah-ha” moment that would influence the rest of her life. She realized she had attained the important ability of “learning how to learn.” It is an ability that is essential in today’s job market. (Jack E. Oakes, *Maximum Impact Education*, Rowman & Littlefield 2015, p. 51)

Today’s Job Market Requirements

Because workplaces are changing so rapidly due to globalization and information technology, lifelong learning is essential for continued employment and career advancement. Organizations need workers who can easily adapt and learn new skills as conditions and problems change.

There is, however, a basic requirement for effective problem-solving – the ability to call upon previous learning in order to combine ideas or facts for a new solution. The July Gordon Report detailed the alarming low proficiency rates of U.S. elementary and high school students in reading and mathematics (for example, 25 percent of 12th graders proficient in math, 37 percent proficient in reading). Far too many American students have a poor educational foundation for success in higher education or the labor market. Surveys of American employers from large to small continue to report that finding employees with requisite education and skill levels is their greatest problem. Respondents to a third-quarter 2017 Duke University/CFO Magazine survey not only reported finding IT workers and managers difficult, but even indicated having problems finding rank-and-file employees with basic writing and math skills.

There seems to be a growing hostility in American culture to raising educational standards in order to provide larger numbers of students and workers with more in-depth knowledge as well as the skills needed in 21st-century workplaces. This is because we have failed to clearly provide a coherent picture of what sustains our modern standard of living. It explains much of the public’s hostility to overhauling the largely outdated 20th-century education-to-employment system. This system is similar to running a high-performance race car on low-octane fuel! It is self-defeating for students/parents and workers/businesses.

Reforming the U.S. education-to-employment system needs to begin with stronger efforts to raise individual literacy, numeracy, and personal oral and written communications skills at the elementary and high school levels. Yet most parents seem to believe that their children's school is providing them with a good education. It is the schools in the inner city or in some other district or town that are deficient. They need to think again!

Schooling and education are not greatly esteemed in American popular culture. Too often they are not seen as contributing to success in work and in life. If parents do not believe that doing well in school is important, neither will their children.

In fact, parents are the primary motivators of their children. Education is a shared responsibility between parents and the schools. A culture of learning begins in the home.

Parents are rightly worried about their children's future. They can and should play a bigger part in preparing them for it – by fostering learning in the home and supporting more school options that promote learning how to learn through focusing on the development of each student's aptitudes and interests. In a rapidly changing world, experiencing the "ah-ha" moment that inspires confidence in one's ability to keep on learning is of vital importance.

Edward E. Gordon is president and founder of Imperial Consulting Corporation (www.imperialcorp.com). His book, *Future Jobs: Solving the Employment and Skills Crisis*, winner of an Independent Publishers award, is now available in a updated 2018 paperback edition.

Imperial Consulting Corporation
220 E. Walton Place #8E
Chicago, IL 60611