Learning to be: integrating higher-order skills in curriculum

Kerry J Kennedy

Presentation made at the UNESCO ERI Net Regional Seminar on Public-Private Partnerships in Higher Education & TVET and Youth Employment, Bangkok, 30-31 July 2012
Learning to be

Building capacity for holistic and integrated living

in an uncertain and ever changing world
How can the curriculum do this?
It can’t be last century’s curriculum

- Rigid disciplinary boundaries
- Widespread use of grammar school model
- Abstract & theoretical
-Disconnected from the real world
- Elitist
- Education for certainty
How to create a curriculum for our times?

Thinking in new ways for new times!

http://www.poconorecord.com/apps/pbcsv.dll/article?AID=/20100701/NEWS02/7010324
New conceptions of the curriculum

- **Original meaning**: ‘a course,’ from the Latin *currere* meaning ‘to run’. Thus the curriculum has traditionally been viewed as ‘the course to be run’.

- For the winners of the curriculum race, there have been significant prizes; for the losers, significant disadvantages.

- A new conception of curriculum needs to move beyond ‘winners and losers’; it needs to be about the long term rather than the short term; and it needs to be available for all, not just some.

- The new focus, therefore, should be on students and the kind of learning that will equip them for the future – an uncertain and unpredictable future: *learning that will last a lifetime*. 
A new conception of curriculum

- What kind of graduates are needed for a complex and unpredictable world?
  - Personal qualities?
  - Professional knowledge and skills?
  - Citizenship knowledge and skills?
  - General understandings?
There have been different approaches

- 21\textsuperscript{st} century skills are important – even essential – but are they enough?

21\textsuperscript{st} century skills? What else?
Student learning attainments: What all students can know & do

- Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Creativity
- Communication Skills
- Social Interaction Skills
- Global Perspective
- Ethical Decision Making

“We prepare our students to become competent professionals who can integrate theory and practice, and who are intellectually active, socially caring and globally aware.”

This focus is important – but it may not be not enough.
A learning framework for the 21st century

- We want to produce graduates identifiable through their:
  - **Character** and moral responsibility
  - **Competence** and professional excellence
  - **Cultivation of wisdom** & intellectual engagement
  - **Civic-mindedness** and social responsibility

Skills need to be socially & culturally contextualized
LEARNING IN CONTEXT FOR SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Problem solving</th>
<th>Critical thinking</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Ethical decision making</th>
<th>Communication skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivation of wisdom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic-mindedness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION

• “We need to listen, once again, to the ideas of Dewey and Tagore, favoring an education that cultivates the critical capacities, that fosters a complex understanding of the world and its peoples, and that educates and refines the capacity for sympathy – in short, an education that cultivates human beings and their humanity, rather than producing generations of useful machines.”

• Martha Nussbaum