

A forum to encourage independent thinking

Special on Learning

THE THINK Club

Published Quarterly

Volume 16.2 Spring 2011 \$150 Life Membership

Jobs in Jeopardy



**Chinese vs. Western Parenting:
What's the fuss about?**



This is a story about a mother, two daughters, and two tigers.
This was supposed to be a story of how Chinese parents are better at raising kids than Western ones.
But instead, it's about a bitter clash of cultures, a tearing battle of glory and honor that was fueled by a thirteen-year-old.

AMY CHUA

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Letters

Your Winter 2011 issue on ‘Mood of the Nation’ is quite true about the state of our nation. We have definitely lost our will to be the shining city on the hill. I worry a lot about the future of our country. We have not only lost our will to be great, we have chosen mediocrity. Our educational system, cities, innovation, infrastructure are going down the hill at an uncontrollable speed. We have borrowed beyond our means. We are fighting wars all over the globe on borrowed money. We will have to pay for all that one way or the other. There is no free lunch. Yes, I do worry.

**Gregory Ryan
Flint, MI**

I enjoyed reading ‘A Tale of Two Souls’ (The Think Club, Winter 2011). It has a blend of humor, science fiction and spirituality. Great thinking!

**Seema Prasad
Ranchi, India**

‘Packing for Mars’ by Mary Roach is a great selection for ‘Think Club Book of the Year’ award. It is very heartening to know that Think Club will give future awards to lesser known and struggling writers. I may send you some recommendations in the future.

**Angie Hopper
Muncie, IN**

Sent your comments to:

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The THINK Club is published quarterly by The THINK Club Publications, a forum to encourage independent thinking among fellow human beings.

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Thinking Wildly

Minds are like parachutes. They only function when open.

If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.

I am always ready to learn, but I do not always like being taught.

Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.

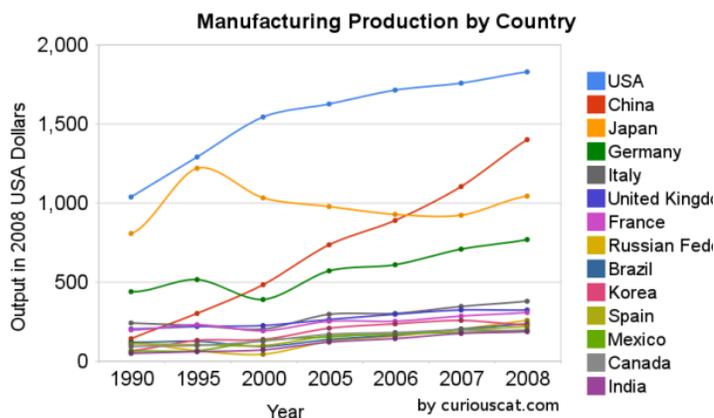
One never realizes how much and how little he knows until he starts talking.

Studying expands knowledge, knowledge is power, power corrupts, corruption is a crime, crime doesn't pay. Why study?

Jobs in Jeopardy

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

The common belief that the present unemployment in the U.S. is caused by an erosion of our manufacturing base is a myth. It is a little known fact that the present unemployment is basically caused by incredible gains in productivity aided by automation and AI (Artificial Intelligence) innovations. America, by far, is the largest manufacturer of goods in the world – 45% higher than China (including mining and utilities). Not only that, America's manufacturing output has continued to increase since 1970 creating unemployment and underemployment for millions of its citizens. We have lost seven million manufacturing jobs since 1980 alone.



That is only the tip of the iceberg. In the early February of 2010 an IBM computer named "Watson" annihilated two human challengers (Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter) during a three-day man vs. machine showdown on "Jeopardy." Now that we've taught 'Watson' to understand natural language, the advancement in Artificial Intelligence is soon going to take away more jobs. Some jobs that will be eliminated soon are those of general physicians, teachers, college professors (not involved in research), insurance underwriters and many more. Virtually any job that now involves answering questions and conducting commercial transactions by telephone will soon be at risk. It is only necessary to consider how quickly ATMs displaced human bank tellers to have an idea of what could happen.

Millions of U.S. jobs have been outsourced since 2000. Those jobs are not coming back due to a comparative advantage. The only way for the U.S. to create jobs is through innovation and research and development. In the 1960s, launching the Apollo space program created millions of jobs and led to innovations like fuel cells and freeze dried food. Unfortunately, Obama and the present Congress have no plan to invest in space.

As for research and development, most of the PhDs are awarded to the foreign nationals who come to the U.S. universities for higher learning. Time was when they used to stay in America. Now, most of them are returning home for better employment opportunities and prosperity in their own country. Faster productivity growth is obviously good for the corporate world. Unfortunately, they (the corporate world) have no allegiance to America. Most of them are creating jobs including research and development in foreign countries.

Some suggest that we should encourage and educate our children to become researchers and innovators, but do we need a workforce of 340 million researchers and innovators in this country? Can our economy sustain and utilize them?"

Manufacturing Productivity Per Employee

# 1	Luxembourg:	\$89,722.30
# 2	United States:	\$74,624.70
# 3	Ireland:	\$74,266.60
# 4	Italy:	\$65,755.30
# 5	Belgium:	\$63,815.00
# 6	Norway:	\$59,443.80

Learning from the Japanese

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

I have been hearing about the greatness of the Japanese people and their exemplary national character since my childhood. I always wondered how could one stereotype and lump the character of an entire nation into a collective trait. Regardless of that, I often heard how humble, disciplined, resilient and honest the Japanese people were. I heard the stories of taxi drivers returning lost baggage to their passengers, bank tellers walking strangers to the correct bank next door and many amazing anecdotes that sounded like folklores and hearsay.

Everything about the Japanese national character sounded like a fairytale until the images started splashing across television after Japan was struck by a triple-tragedy in March of 2011, a massive tsunami, a magnitude 8.9 earthquake and nuclear emergency all at once. Like billions of people around the globe, I was witness to the most horrific and daring reality show on earth. I witnessed courage, patience, discipline, human dignity and character in action. For the first time I felt that humans were really different from animals.

I observe the grocery store workers placing products back on the shelves instead of fleeing or seeking shelter. I saw rescuers ready to sacrifice themselves to avert catastrophe at Fukushima nuclear plant. I saw people trying to save each other and maintain calm at the same time. I saw the young carrying the old on their backs to safety. I saw people patiently lining up for food and water without creating commotion. I saw them placing masks on their faces as a consideration to others.

I did not notice anyone rioting and looting. I did not see anyone panicking, pushing ahead in line or becoming hysterical -- often what we do observe when people are under duress in other parts of the world. I witnessed the victory of hope over despair, courage over fear, humility over arrogance, order over chaos, kindness over cruelty, altruism over egotism, and empathy over disdain. I have often been preached at about how humans ought to act and use their intellect. I saw those human qualities

in action when I saw the Japanese people coping with their disaster.

I have met people from Japan in business and in real life. I have always found them to be very humble and unassuming. I do not recall any of them talking to me about lessons from the Bible, the Quran or Gita. Further research revealed that the Japanese invariably lead a life based on Okolu-na (Do not get angry), Shinpai suna (Don't worry), Kansha shite (Be grateful), Goo hage me (Work hard), Hito ni shinsetsu ni (Be kind to others).

There's a common Japanese word, "gaman," that doesn't really have an English equivalent, but is something like "toughing it out." And that's what the people of Japan are doing with courage, unity and common purpose that has left me awed. I believe their determined spirit will help them through this time of great trial in their lives. That spirit is aptly captured in the phrase *fukutsu no seishin* meaning never give up.

As far as I am concerned, I will keep those images of courage, perseverance, patience, resilience, courtesy and *fukutsu no seishin* for the rest of my life. A picture is worth a thousand words. I have a message for the rest of us, "Please do not preach; act it out."

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Cultural Overdosage (Culture Shock V)

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Every time I see my friend *Satyanarayana Thundaswamy Upendranatha Purushotammappasadam Ishwarpriya Dhandamalsthita (STUPID for short)*, I feel possessed by a sense of guilt and depression. Stupid never fails to vilify me for my neglect of the ethnic culture in favor of despicable American culture.

Actually, it is not entirely my fault. During the last cultural episode, the *swamy* (spiritual master) from the old country insisted that the secret of pleasure lay in renunciation. After emptying my wallet and half of my bank account I came to the realization that my renunciation meant *swamy's* pleasure. *Swamy* also taught me 'Dog Yoga' for my inner cleansing. That required walking on four legs (arms and legs) for hours while breathing like a dog, tongue hanging out. After observing me for two years without noticing any significant inner cleansing, my wife ultimately took me to a shrink who persuaded me to give up acting like a dog.

I didn't give up that easily, however. I purchased all the videos and books produced by the gurus of the month only to find out that they too were meant to benefit the gurus rather than benefiting the readers. Of course, it worked as a good attention-getter among culturally deficient at parties.

But Stupid was not talking about any gimmicks this time. He was talking about the true culture of my old land. For the last 37 years I had deprived myself of the wisdom of *Gita*, the richness of ragas (music), the excitement of classical dances, the literary marvels of Prem Chand (the greatest Hindi novelist), the works of the *Vedic* scholars and the teachings of Kabir and Rahim (mystical preachers and poets of the sixteenth century India). It was truly time for redemption. So I decided to accompany Stupid to one of the mega cultural shows organized by true protectors of our culture. I was relieved to have a chance for reparation and, at the same time, return to my old values. Anticipation was killing me.

Finally the day arrived when I accompanied Stupid to the much anticipated cultural event. On entering the hall, I unintentionally offended everyone by speaking in the language of my old country. After all, I had been out of touch with my old culture for so long. The show was about to begin. A short person who looked like a round drum in thick glasses came on stage. His shirt buttons were about to drop on his bulging belly. His pants were too tight around his girth and crotch. He seemed very happy. We are supposed to permeate happiness in our culture. I decided to ignore his appearance and concentrate on the message instead.

He addressed the audience, "Dear friends, do not forget your ancient culture, you know. I have myself given birth to



two brilliant offspring. Actually they were born by my wife and she can testify to that, you know. Hee! Hee!! Hee!!! Haa!!!! Haa!!!!!" He started laughing at his own joke uncontrollably.

"What a sense of humor," I thought. I was really getting reconnected with my old culture, although I was at a great risk of losing the ability to speak English again.

He continued, "The girl I am going to bring upon you not only gets A+ and 4.0 grades, she has very unsuccessfully tried for every beauty contest in our great community and almost made it to

Bollywood (equivalent of Hollywood in India) where a friend of her aunt's sister-in-law is a movie producer. She has been especially trained by world famous Madhuri Dixit (a popular Indian actress). Of course, she has never met Ms. Dixit, but has practiced for hours imitating her moves on pirated videos bought from ethnic grocery stores. Ladies and gentlemen, put your hands together for our local celebrity – dashing and almost famous Bubbly!!"

I was dying to watch the Indian classical dance. The music started blurring. Bubbly started lip synching to the popular song, "Choli ke pichhe kya hai (suggestive double meaning)?" People in the crowd were clapping and whistling. Bubbly started gyrating and twisting her body parts frantically. When the music stopped, people started shouting, "Once more! Once More!!" Bubbly obliged them on the insistence of her proud parents. I was moved at the mutual respect between parents and the child. After all, that is the pillar of our old culture.

Bubbly was followed by younger girls who lip synched and daggered to the tunes of songs with risqué lyrics. Fortunately, there were no undercover cops to arrest us for sexual exploitation of underage girls. I felt like shouting, "I am not with Stupid."

Suddenly, I spotted Stupid who was totally drunk. "Are you reconnecting with our great culture yet? Our culture is great, na?" He asked.

"That is all good, Stupid, but I expected some classical based songs and dances," I replied.

"That is the problem buddy," Stupid explained, "you are far removed from the progress of our culture. You still seem to live in the seventies. This is the twenty-first century my friend. We are considered the most cultured community in America now. You got to keep pace with the time. Let me invite you to 'Puppy Loves Jhappay' show ..."

Stupid had to rush to the washroom to throw up his alcohol overdose. I too was looking for a place to relieve myself of the overdose of spurious culture.

Desperately Seeking a Math Guru

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Imagine a world without any man made orbiting satellites, televisions, cell phones, personal computers or electronic calculators. Most of us would call that a stone age, figuratively speaking. Well, like many others in my generation, I studied arithmetic, science and engineering living in that era of the so-called stone age.

My formal education started when I was four years old. I lived in a remote village near the slopes of the Himalayas in India. My uncle, who was my guardian, hired a Brahmin as my full time tutor. I used to call him Guru Ji (Ji is the expression of additional respect). Guruji used to live with us. My uncle provided him a room, meals and a salary of about thirty rupees per month (\$1 dollar was Rs 4 at the time). Our lives (Guruji's and mine) revolved around each other. I used to wake up at six every morning, bring breakfast for Guruji and sing a prayer with him.

Guruji's teaching style was rote repetition of Hindi alphabets, poems, grammar, numbers and multiplication tables. By the time I was five and a half years old, I remembered the multiplication tables up to 99 by heart. Now it was the time for fractions. By six years of age, I remembered tables in terms of fractions (numbers from 1 to 99 multiplied by $1/3^{\text{rd}}$, $2/3^{\text{rd}}$, $1^{1/4}$, $1\ 1/2$, $2\ 1/4$, $2\ 1/2$ and so on.

To complicate the matters, the Indian monetary system did not follow the decimal concept. One rupee used to have six annas and one anna consisted of four paise (plural for paisa). Weights and measures were a nightmare too. It consisted of chhatak, pav, ser and mound. Four chhatak equaled one pav, four pavs were one ser and 40 sers made one mound.

Before I reached age 7, I had mastered it all through memorization. Now it was time to go grocery shopping with Guruji. This could be considered on-the-job-training. We took the monthly grocery list from my uncle and set out for the village grocery store. The list was about forty

lines long. The storekeeper weighed each item on a hand held balance and wrote down the rate on my uncle's list. Of course, Guruji did some hard bargaining for each item. In the end the list may have resembled something like this (only four of 40 items shown):

Item	Amount	Rate bargained by Guruji
Rice	10 Sers	2 Ruppes 5 annas per ser
Salt	2 chhatak	7 paise per chhatak
Sugar	1/12 pav	1 anna 3 paise per pav
Curry masala	1/2 chhatak	3 anna 1 paisa per chhatak

The storekeeper calculated the amount payable for each item in his head and came up with the grand total in less than half a minute. Now, it was my job to verify his calculation. Of course, I was not as fast as the merchant but I finished all the calculation using mental math in about 2 minutes. Guruji was very happy. That night my uncle arranged a special feast for all of us.

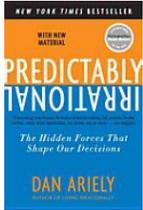
Upon entering engineering school at the age of 16, I was introduced to a wonderful instrument known as a slide rule. However, I did not trust the slide rule, so I would do the mental math to verify its accuracy. We finished engineering before the advent of personal computers and calculators.

We did well then and I am doing well now though I cannot do any mental math anymore. I double check simple additions with the help of a calculator. Yes, I worry about Alzheimer quite often. I also worry what will happen if our satellites are destroyed by our enemies or from a sudden solar flare. We would certainly go back to the so called stone-age, basically the conditions of my childhood. Will my grandchildren be able to find a Guruji to teach them the basic math skills?

Book Review

Predictably Irrational

Author: Dan Ariely Publisher: Harper Perennial (Paperback) 325 p.



I enjoyed reading this book and it was a fast page turner for me. Dan does a great job along with all the co-authors and editors to make the book accessible – yet it has academic value. The tricks and illusions our minds play on us and the lessons learned were mind boggling.

Ariely reminds us that traditional economics assumes that we are rational decision-makers. The truth is

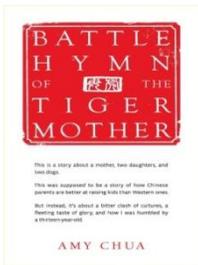
that we are far less rational than we think and that we make the same types of mistakes over and over again. Helpfully, Ariely shares research that will enable us to "develop new strategies, tools, and methods to help us make better decisions." In fact, each chapter in *Predictably Irrational* "describes a force that influences our behavior" when making decisions.

Overall, the book challenged the so-called critical thinking of economics and the widely held beliefs about the rationality of people. It did so in a logical and scientific manner. I would like to reiterate another reviewer's point concerning the lack of breadth in the experiments, little beyond university campuses. I would like to see more experiments held in different countries and of different demographics. Overall, though, it is a great read.

Battle Hymn Of The Tiger Mother

Author: Amy Chow

Publisher: The Penguin Press 2011 (227 p.)



I read Amy Chua's reflections after watching the controversy that her book has generated in the media and among parents all over America. However, contrary to popular belief, this is a memoir and not an instructional "How To" guide about raising children. People who are taking this book the wrong way (particularly those who read excerpts in

newspapers and not the book itself) are missing the big picture. Chua takes a no-holds-barred approach to telling her story. Her mother is a central figure and her discipline (right or wrong) has shaped who Chua has become. Like all of us, Chua has had to find the good in her parents, particularly the good in their intentions (even when they aren't easy to find). Those who are treating this as a parenting manual that would advocate parents raise their children the way Chua was raised, either haven't read the book, or have completely missed the point.

One also gets to go along with Chua as she raises her two daughters. They had incredibly strict rules to follow: no play

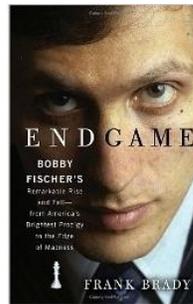
dates, no sleepovers, and two hours a day of practice with a musical instrument. Of course, her parenting was not perfect: the oldest played in Carnegie Hall at the age of 14 and the youngest took different paths. Chua rightly feels that Western parents give up too easily and there is too much emphasis now on children's happiness. There has to be a middle path between what Chua practiced and what is happening to parenting in the West.

Even though I'm strongly rooted in the "lax" Western style of parenting, I still related deeply to the struggles of raising children. The book is hilarious and shocking in places – the kind of book you can't put down. The transformation Chua moves through is powerful. Her writing style is brisk and lively and you're sure to empathize with her struggles and her dreams. The book has struck a chord with so many because it hits hard at the questions we all must answer for ourselves in life: love, achievement, self-esteem, ambition, pride She doesn't ultimately answer the question for anyone, she just tells her story in a way that's so real and so powerful that one will never forget it.

Endgame

Author: Frank Brady

Publisher: Crown Publishers



A book about a chess player isn't for everyone. But Bobby Fischer was one of the greatest who ever lived. Singlehandedly he bested the Soviet chess empire in 1972 by beating their reigning champion, Boris Spassky. The nation -- the world even -- was riveted to

the playing stage in Reykjavik, Iceland.

As great as his triumphs were on the chessboard, Fischer struggled mightily in life. He couldn't bring himself to capitalize on the many opportunities that were thrown at him after the championship and lived in poverty for years. Many think Fischer struggled with mental illness.

Frank Brady's *Endgame* covers the champion's life from beginning to end leaving the facts to speak for themselves. Chess Life magazine has described this work as a masterpiece. Indeed it is a fascinating story of a fairly bizarre life.

The question is often posed about the relationship between genius and madness. And this book provides plenty of material to ponder the point. While Fischer was no doubt gifted, he toiled countless hours studying chess. Some suggest that it was chess that kept him relatively sane for many years.

Brady reveals many details in the life of the genius, some clearing up issues that were previously reported incorrectly. Fischer had a strong relationship with his mother throughout his life. Also revealed, his hatred of the Russians seemed to stem from a trip to Moscow that he took at age 14 when his request to play the world champion Mikhail Botvinnik were not granted.

For Fischer fans this book is a must read. But it is also a sad tale of a deeply flawed man.

The World Is My School: Welcome to the Era of Personalized Learning (Reprinted from the Futurist Magazine) By Maria H. Andersen

Humans have always been learning, but how we learn has changed over time. The earliest means of education were highly personal: Oral histories passed from adults to children, informal or formal apprenticeships, and one-on-one tutoring have all been used in the early history of most cultures. It's only been in the last two centuries that we've used formalized systems of mass public education (aka industrialized education).

Certainly, personalized learning is the more effective method. In 1984, educational researcher Benjamin Bloom found that average students who were tutored one-on-one outperformed 98% of students who were learning via conventional methods (this is referred to as Bloom's two-sigma problem). However, personal learning is not cost-effective, and so we currently educate students in batches of 20, 30, or even 200 students at a time. This is likely to get worse before it gets better, with prominent philanthropists like Bill Gates declaring that "the best lectures in the world" will be online within the next five years. Certainly we can use technology to deliver those lectures to thousands, or even millions, of students at a time, but a lecture does not automatically produce learning any more than attending a class does.

Mass education is adequate, as long as students are highly motivated to learn and get ahead of their peers. In developing countries, a student who is successful in education will be able to climb the ladder of personal economic prosperity faster than those who are not successful. But in industrialized countries, where prosperity is the norm, an education does not necessarily translate into a significantly higher standard of living. In these countries, there is no longer a large economic incentive to learn, so the motivation to learn must become intrinsic. As we redesign en masse education, we must address learners' intrinsic motivations, which means that education must circle back to being personal again.

The vision of a modern education built around personalized learning is not new, but it is definitely tantalizing. Neal Stephenson's novel *The Diamond*

Age (Spectra, 1995) shares a vision of personalized learning in the future via an interactive book that possesses a conversational interface (CI) and "pseudo-intelligence," a kind of artificial intelligence (AI) that is inferior to human intelligence. It's likely that we'll see decent conversational interfaces within the next decade, and certainly applications like Google Voice are moving us much closer to this reality. AI that is capable of directing the learning needs of a human will take much longer, developing in the next 20–50 years, but we can't wait that long for the technology to catch up with education. The need for personalized learning exists in the here and now.

A diploma has become a social signal to stop learning. In today's world, where technical knowledge doubles every two years, this is absolutely the wrong thing to do. Careers shift overnight, and industries collapse rapidly. We have to learn, and learn faster than we ever have before, in order to stay ahead of the problems we are now creating.

This new learning medium needs to be an interconnected network of user-generated, or author-generated, Socratic questions with a seamless question-management interface. The architecture needs to remain open so that anyone can create questions on any content, and any developer can build applications for the computing device of his or her choice.

A system for personalized learning will not grow from inside formal education. Education is like a field that's been overplanted with only small patches of fertile soil. Too many stakeholders (parents, unions, administration, faculty, etc.) compete to promote various ideas about how to change, acting like weeds or plagues that choke off plant growth. The fresh and fertile soil of the open Web can foster the quick growth of a personalized learning system. Then, like a good fertilizer, it can be used to replenish the soil of formal education and help us to reach that "Holy Grail" of education: personalized learning for all.

A New American Exceptionalism (Reprinted from Fortune February 2011) By Geoff Colvin

What makes America great?

That debate has been more heated than usual because of the volatile election results of 2010 (and 2008), Tea Partiers, the recession, and the financial crisis. But it's heating up for another reason as well – a spreading realization that the widely held current answer to the question no longer makes sense.

The conventional case for U.S. greatness has long rested on our economic success, and understandably so. We're the world's richest nation by far, where the ordinary citizen achieves a living standard unrivaled in any other country of significant size. The problem, the source of our growing identity crisis, is the daily evidence that we're approaching the end of our time at the top. China's economy keeps growing 10% a year, while ours is limping; China, not the U.S., seizes the lead in tomorrow's industries, such as alternative energy. China rolls out a new stealth fighter jet, while we cancel military programs.

A Gallup poll last year found that just 17% of Americans agree that the U.S. "is No. 1 in the world economically." The other 83% are wrong – our GDP is still No. 1 by a mile – but only their timing is off. GDP is essentially population times productivity, so it's simple math that China will overtake us, perhaps within a decade. So when we're not the world's top economy, what will make us great?

We can learn from our experience going through the opposite identity crisis 70 years ago. In February 1941, Henry Luce published in *Life* his essay "The American Century," which Luce biographer Alan Brinkley calls "the most influential article he would ever publish." The crisis then was America's reluctance to accept that it had become, as Luce said, "the most powerful and vital nation in the world." It had to reject isolationism and lead the allies through World War II. That began our current view of what makes the U.S. exceptional.

We must move beyond self-esteem focused intensely on output. Andrew L. Yarrow, senior policy analyst at the nonpartisan Independent Sector, explains this persuasively in a fascinating new book, *Measuring America: How Economic Growth Came to Define American Greatness in the Late Twentieth Century*. "The United States after World War II," he told me, "increasingly saw itself as the world's greatest because of its measurably booming economy rather than its political ideals, its natural beauty, or its people."

A major reason for this was the Cold War. When Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev said, "We will bury you," he meant it economically. We needed to show that our system was better for the average citizen than communism, and making that case was not always a slam-dunk. So besides discussing democracy and freedom, we taught our kids that America's great achievement was producing widely dispersed wealth on an unmatched scale. When that audacious claim proved true, we didn't move on to a new concept of greatness; our ideas seemed confirmed.

"The American Century" was about becoming the world's largest economy. Now we must come to terms with not being that, yet still being great. In a December poll, 80% of Americans agreed that "the U.S. has a unique character that makes it the greatest country in the world," but a large majority of them also believed "we're at risk of losing it."

We need a powerful new concept of American greatness that doesn't rely on GDP. For most of our history we saw our unique character arising from the ideals of freedom, democracy, and openness, notions that were feeling shopworn but now gain new vitality as a pointed contrast to China. Shifting to a more economically driven concept was seductively easy. Shifting back will be harder. Whether we can do it – rather than resenting and denying our changed role in the world – will be a new test of greatness.

Amy Chua Has Exposed Some Harsh Facts

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

While I disagree with most of the practices and nuances preached by Amy Chua (she calls that the "Chinese" parenting) in her book, "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother," some fundamentals of schooling preached and practiced by her make sense.

I agree with Ms. Chua that parents should have the fortitude to override children's preferences for their (children's) own greater good. The Western parenting philosophy of letting kids be kids, develop their own hobbies and make their own decisions all the time may not be good for them. In today's western society children and teenagers demand everything that money can buy, favor, ease and comfort, but they refrain from enduring hardship or taking responsibility for their actions. Premature sex, alcohol, drug and same-sex relationships are accepted norms.

I agree with Ms. Chua that there is too much emphasis in Western society on having sleepovers, romping on prom nights, watching TV and playing computer games. While we should care for children's aptitude, parents should have some say in how to balance their children's extracurricular activities and good grades in the classroom. Most of the parents who let lose their teenagers often act out of the shame they suffered as children, and allow their children to experiment with life, stay out late, and not suffer the consequences of their actions.

Please do not misunderstand, I am against rigid practice regimes and rote repetition. Treating children with cruelty cannot help build their self-esteem. I think some of the acts mentioned by Ms. Chua such as putting a child outdoors in the middle of the winter until she submits to her parent's desire or forcing her into hours of piano exercise, right through dinner and into the night, with no breaks for water or even the bathroom, until she played a piece of music correctly are barbaric.

At the same time I disagree with the idea of not causing a child any grief so that they do not get angry at their parents. I believe that setting limits is an important part of good parenting. When a child realizes that the parents will do anything not to cause disappointment in them, he and she then will spend the rest of their life doing whatever is necessary to avoid responsibilities. If children do not learn to tolerate these small frustrations or to manage themselves, they will often be spoiled and unfit in the society and the workplace.

Amy Chua Should Use Common Sense

By Bala Prasad

Much has been written on the subject of children's discipline in decades past. There are conflicting opinions on this subject. It has become a debate of royal proportions ever since Professor Amy Chua came with her controversial book, "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother." Ms. Chua who is leading a glorious life as a professor at Yale is no foster mother to anyone, Chinese or American.

Despite all the noise, the fact remains that there are issues that simple common sense can solve without generating the controversy over the chasm between so called Chinese method and the Western method of educating children. The two most important factors in raising children remain a stable family structure and meaningful involvement of parents in their children's lives. If a child is provided safe environment to live, adequate and healthy nutrition and opportunity to be physically active, the chances of his or her succeeding and doing well in life becomes a certainty. While it is quite important to be involved in children's activities at home and at school, having dinner together as a family adds value to growth and development of a child.

As for the extracurricular activities, it is as important to go to a school basketball game as it is going to piano recitals. Of course, times have changed. Whenever children do not succeed, we start finding fault with parenting methods. Mostly parents and schools are at loggerheads in the blame game. When neither wins then the society becomes the culprit.

While Ms. Cha may have gone to extremes in disciplining her children, she makes some important statements. It is important that children should not be on the internet or playing computer games excessively. However, these activities play an important role in the education for a gifted adult life. Contrary to Ms. Chua's opinion, they should not be banned altogether.

In fairness to Ms. Chua, parents are responsible for certain decisions in long term habit forming. Parents should use their discretion to implement the actions that will build discipline, character, comprehension and concentration in children. If instilled early on, their later life will be better.

In the end, parents have to choose for their children whether they want them to be academically smart or gifted in other areas. Family tradition will play a strong role in this area. Ms. Chua cannot generalize her way of thinking for every parent. A very strict disciplinarian may raise academically smart kids but not allowing a child to go to the bathroom will inhibit them from becoming a gifted adult. I myself subscribe to the adage 'spare the rod, spoil the child' but I will not go to the extent of injuring them physically or mentally. True, society had become too lax in determining right from wrong, however, discipline like anything else should be used in moderation. As my professor used to say, "Use your common sense." The latter has become a relatively uncommon entity these days.

The Problem with Indian Governance

By Umesh Rohatgi

Any governance has three major parts one Legislative, Administrative and Judiciary. These should be able to function independently, with clean and clear accountability to public, and it can and should change or reform according to majority public opinion.

In Indian Governance this last thing is absent, the framers of the constitution thought everybody who is elected would behave honestly – unfortunately it did not happen. There was no provision provided to the public to recall the rascals once they are selected, appointed or elected. Clearly there is no communication between elected representatives and the public, even if there is one it was always and most of time used for individual benefit like transfer, job or land allotments etc. etc. Public Opinion has no legitimacy under our great constitution. Hence there can be communication between the public and all three branches e.g. Legislative, Administrative and Judiciary. But there are lots of orders and laws (none of the laws or orders are followed neither in spirit nor in words - I challenge anyone to show any single law which is enforced universally throughout India) to control and rule the public, without its direct input. It was presumed that the representative or appointee knows all and do the best for public at large. Unfortunately the opposite is happening. A majority of public, 70%, say they're not happy with the present hotchpotch of our Governance. No up down and left or right communication exists.

Let us understand the basic reason for this hotchpotch of our three branches, Legislative, Administrative and Judiciary are not independent. There is so much interference among them working that functioning independently is completely missing, as a result of this there is no accountability, which leads to corruption. And for fear of transfer and other reasons well known to all of you, favors of ministers, Administration has completely become hand in glove with each other.

While we are talking about these three, another very interesting wing of Governance is the press which only repeat what these ministers, administrators or judicials say, but care very little what the public wants. The press has basically sold out to the administration for want of advertising and favors from these anti public sources. We can clearly say that India is ruled by Gundas or antisocial elements which give rise to corruption in every sphere of the social fabric. What it comes down to is that a very large number of our elected representatives are having trouble with law. Appointed people are incompetent but can not be removed easily because IAS has become superhuman, knowing the solution to all public troubles, provided anything is left for the public after all their perks and needs along with neta or ministers safety is taken care of. All IAS were selected and trained for administration, that's fine, but why do we have District Magistrate (DM), a clear interference? Ministers were elected for legislative

duties, why have they become part of administration? Similarly, why is Administration, IAS, also is in charge of the judiciary? For that matter, it seems like they are in charge of everything under the sun, all over India even in local municipalities as well – a clear interference. Bihar Chief Minister recently passed an order that all IAS in state will only perform Administrative duties but no ADM or DM etc. a good step in the right direction. Why should the police (IPS) be under the guidance of IAS or DM when there is a locally elected mayor who is capable of handling this job easily. This is not only interference but delays action. The IAS are transferred or deputed to other cadres so they can earn more money and the public has to pay for all this nonsense. If you are found corrupt two times, you're pardoned, but the third time you are out. We are all Indians and wish our country well, so why can't we work with anyone and everyone?

Now we can conclude that separation will help our Governance. It is coming to light very slowly. See the effect of one third of the elected members of the ruling party becoming ministers, which is a full time job, With secretaries signing files, where is there time for legislative duties or reforms? Hence there is clear interference in administration. Recently some ministers have rightly said to the press that discriminatory powers of ministers should be curtailed. These legislative people should be given full time to legislation and they can ask for clean, clear and transparent Administration, as per legislation or rules. If not, then there are courts to decide who is right in applying the rules. Also we would not have the same people who make the rules also breaking them. In the same way that legislators cannot be allowed to influence the Judiciary. Nowadays, the Supreme Court is busy improving administrative and legislative lapses and clearly other public issues before court is delayed – and justice delayed is Justice denied. Why has the public had to pay in order to get information from our own Governance if we have transparent Administration, Legislation and Judiciary? One thing we can learn from Pakistan is that all of our Representatives should be graduates (we should expect that after 63 years of primary public education). People may not agree with me, but if these three are separate, then accountability will come and corruption will decline. And those who do will be brought to justice easily with existing laws. As long as we have respect and follow the laws and rules which are well defined, and if we cannot live with present laws our Legislative bodies and representative will come to our rescue.

Finally, about corruption and the public when there is no defined targets for any letter which Governance gets from the public, will be responded to in a timely fashion. Corruption is bound to happen when people have a “get ahead of my

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The Problem with Indian Governance

neighbor” mentality. The law must be modified so that anyone who accepts the favor of money to do his or her job should be guilty and thus charged. Transfers should be stopped because it is neither in the public interest nor in the employees interest. This is also the very core of corruption in a hotchpotch of Governance. It’s a very old theory that a person will become corrupt if he or she stays in one place. Governance is such a huge establishment that there is enough space for public consultative committees to be established at all local levels in order to have open and constant public input in all of our governance. The prime minister can have a few hundred key temporary posts: a "super secretary" (as he has advisors now) in order to run the administrator, instead of ministers, which are selected from legislators, to act on behalf of the president. This will eliminate the duplication of posts and he or she can have trusted people to deliver on the election promises by implementing new processes and programs. This is another very clear sign of hotchpotch. Why not adopt a three tier systems to charge for taking care of your work, if urgent, rather than paying ten times normal fees, and if early then pay three times the normal fee. At least the money collected will come into the coffers of governance, rather than into the pockets of politicians and administrators. Another corruption is coming to political representation through the back door, such as members of rajaya sabha or legislative assembly. Our present prime minister never had to gain his office through direct public election.

Child and Adult Learning Characteristics

Children	Adults
Rely on others to decide what is important to be learned.	Decide for themselves what is important to be learned.
Accept the information being presented at face value.	Need to validate the information based on their beliefs and values.
Expect what they are learning to be useful in their long-term future.	Expect what they are learning to be immediately useful.
Have little or no experience upon which to draw, are relatively "blank slates."	Have substantial experience upon which to draw. May have fixed viewpoints.
Little ability to serve as a knowledgeable resource to teacher or fellow classmates.	Significant ability to serve as a knowledgeable resource to the trainer and fellow learners.

from: <http://mysdcc.sdccd.edu>

An Intriguing Look at Active Learning

Active learning is an umbrella term that refers to several models of instruction that focus the responsibility of learning, on learners. Bonwell and Eison (1991) popularized this approach to instruction (Bonwell & Eison 1991). This "buzz word" of the 1980s became their 1990s report to the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). In this report they discuss a variety of methodologies for promoting "active learning." However according to Mayer (2004) strategies like "active learning" developed out of the work of an earlier group of theorists—those promoting discovery learning. While there is no question that learners should be engaged during learning and cognitively active, several researchers have noted that being behaviorally active during initial learning can be detrimental to schema acquisition (Mayer 2004) (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark 2006) (Sweller & Cooper, 1985; Cooper & Sweller, 1987).

It has been suggested that students who actively engage with the material are more likely to recall information (Bruner 1961), but several well-known authors have argued this claim is not well supported by the literature (Anderson, Reder & Simon 1998) (Gagné 1966) (Mayer 2004) (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark 2006). Rather than being behaviorally active during learning, Mayer (2004) suggests learners should be cognitively active.

Active learning exercises

Bonwell and Eison (1991) suggested learners work in pairs, discuss materials while role-playing, debate, engage in case study, take part in cooperative learning, or produce short written exercises, etc. The argument is when should active learning exercises be used during instruction. While it makes some sense to use these techniques as a "follow up" exercise or as application of known principles, it may not make sense to use them to introduce material. Proponents argue that these exercises may be used to create a context of material, but this context may be confusing to those with no prior knowledge. The degree of instructor guidance students need while being "active" may vary according to the task and its place in a teaching unit.

Examples of "active learning" activities include:

- ▶ A **class discussion** may be held in person or in an online environment.
- ▶ A **think-pair-share** activity is when learners take a minute to ponder the previous lesson, later to discuss it with one or more of their peers, finally to share it with the class as part of a formal discussion.
- ▶ A **short written exercise** that is often used is the "one minute paper."
- ▶ A **student debate** is an active way for students to learn because they allow students the chance to take a position and gather information to support their view and explain it to others.
- ▶ A **reaction to a video** is also an example of active learning because most students love to watch movies.
- ▶ A **class game** is also considered an energetic way to learn because it not only helps the students to review the course material before a big exam but it helps them to enjoy learning about a topic.

Too Much Too Fast, Meeting the Challenge of Early Learning

By Dr. Niru Prasad

Parents today are over-enthusiastic about giving their kids the best of everything in life, be it education, toys, clothes, and other accessories. Good parenting is the key to success in raising a well-accomplished healthy youngster. However it is important to remember that children need quality time spent with their parents, as well as, unconditional love. Parents teach and influence children more through their actions than with their words and as they grow older, they follow in the footsteps of their parents. *An apple does not fall too far from the tree.*

The facts and fundamentals of growing. During the 21st century, there has been too much emphasis on early learning and extracurricular activities for our kids which is okay, but sometimes it might be too much pressure on young children as they are growing up. There was a time when children played from morning until night, they ran, jumped, and created endless stories out of their active imaginations. Today, by the time children are three or four years old, they are already getting pressured academically to learn and participate in other organized activities.

As a matter of fact, thanks to Sesame Street (which began in 1969), the revolutionary idea that learning could be fun for children as young as nine months old became popular. Sesame Street spawned an entire industry of DVDs, toys, and computers aimed at teaching toddlers. Our parents are happy and tempted that kids with help from Sesame Street and the Learning Channel are getting smarter and ready for daycare and pre-school. Toddlers have more curiosity and like to explore, hence the educational toys as well as outdoor activities and playgrounds are more appreciated by them. There are lots of benefits of play among our toddlers, pre-schoolers, as well as kindergarten kids. Child initiated play lays a foundation for academic success. Through play, children learn to interact with others, develop language and motor skills.

During the pre-school years, i.e. three to five years, kids are being exposed to learning. The early learning program can help children develop the knowledge and literacy skills important for school. However the early head start program that started in 1999 works to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the healthy development of very young children and promote a healthy family functioning. As a result preschool is not what it used to be. There are carefully planned strategies to teach these kids numbers and alphabets. It is a documented fact that young children are capable learners and should be provided with a rich language environment and quality cognitive stimulation. Early childhood educators are feeling pressure to get their youngsters ready for kindergarten of the 21st century, which is more advanced and academic in nature, so that eventually these kids will be better prepared for standardized tests in reading and math. Now kindergarten has become more like first grade so that pre-kindergarten classes have to support a high quality program. The pre-kindergarten program establishes a positive foundation for three to five year old children towards developing languages, cognitive functions and social interaction. This should be a fun place for our kids.

Pre-school graduates going to kindergarten meet a lot of challenges with their learning and extracurricular activities such

as swimming, baseball, soccer, ballet dancing, etc. It is important to note that from the ages of five to seven years old, social and emotional developments are as important as learning. Going to school should be fun for these kids who should be allowed to advance at their own pace. By now they have developed a sense of how to work with letters, count, add, subtract, etc., and they are building vocabularies. We as parents can help them by reading story time, helping with school assignments, and by giving them quality time, affection, and getting involved with their school activities.

The new first grader. Now since their reading lessons start in kindergarten, the first graders are meeting lots of challenges with their studies. Kids as young as six are being frequently tested for English and math proficiency due to the standardization testing. Instead of story time, finger painting, tracing letters, the first graders are spending their time coding math and reading. After school there is homework, educational videos, more tutoring to motivate them more.

The graduating first grader. Thirty years ago the first grader was learning how to read. Now since the learning process has started since kindergarten, the first graders are facing more and more challenges of advanced learning at school and at home. Among affluent families, the pressure to succeed at a younger age is an inevitable by-product of an increasingly competitive world. Lately some experts have begun to question whether our current emphases on educating these kids might have gone too far too soon. Scientists have proved that children are wired to learn from birth and an enriched environment, one with plenty of books, stories, rhyming and conversations, can help kids from all different socio-economic backgrounds. The federal law of the "no child left behind" act established by President Bush in 2002 requires every principal of all schools throughout the county to make sure third graders are able to read. There have been frequent national standardization tests offered at elementary schools to enforce this law. This has thrown a lot of pressure and challenge for the first and second graders however with the help of the Baby Einstein line of videos and CDs an entire industry has sprung up to help overly anxious parents.

According to the Academy of Pediatrics, for five to seven year old kids, social and emotional development is as important as learning and going to school should be fun for them. Testing kids before the third grade only gives a snapshot of what they know, however, it is a poor predictor of how they will perform later.

In summary, since our emphasis on early learning for our kids has gone too far too soon, we need to slow down since the process of learning for kids should be a whole child approach with flexibility.



Palin 2012

By Robert Bickmeyer

The lengthy primaries to choose the Republican challenger to President Barack Obama in 2012 will begin in Iowa in February 2012. It's my bet that Sarah Palin will be among the contenders along with Mitt Romney, Mike Huckabee, Newt Gingrich and a few dark horses. It is even possible that she will have announced her candidacy by the time you read this.

Those who have a negative opinion of Palin have allowed themselves to be influenced by the leftist media. The media fears her because of "The Faith and Values of Sarah Palin" that were so elegantly conveyed in that book, faith and values that many in the media lack and oppose. These admirable traits appealed to many Americans who enthusiastically welcomed her on the national political scene. Other assets are her intelligence, logic, common sense, principles, family values, decisiveness, magnetic personality and, yes, beauty.

As chair of the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission Palin decided to run for governor. Realizing she would not be able to perform her duties during her campaign, she resigned from this high paying (\$124,400) position. Her high principles had come into play. Similarly, she resigned her lofty position as governor as her quest for the presidency would interfere with her ability to be a full time governor. Again, principles. After the 2008 presidential race a dastardly, massive smear campaign made Palin the target of dozens of lawsuits and ethics probes by her political opponents, intending to discredit and so devastate her that she would not return to public life. The variety and pettiness of these charges cannot possibly be detailed in this space. Her legal fees threatened to reach \$500,000, also forcing her to resign as governor. Unable to pay these bills on her governor's salary she wisely sought the necessary funds by writing a book and seeking speaking engagements. Not a particularly articulate speaker, Palin speaks the truth, clearly covers a subject and conveys her opinion whereas "others" who are articulate sometimes dance around an issue leaving their listeners wondering, "What did he say?"

Conversely, Barack Obama chased the presidency while chading around the country during his last two

years as senator. He received full pay for being a part-time senator, not very principled.

Lack of experience? I agree. Similarly inexperienced were Governors George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter and a multitude of other governors who were elected president.

If anyone doubts the presidential qualifications of Sarah Palin they have not seen her appearances as a contributor on the Fox News Channel where she has given excellent, intelligent interviews nor have they read her book "Going Rogue" wherein her skillful politics and high integrity are apparent. She was known for her crusade against corruption within her own party. Honesty? You betcha, rare in politics.

- Although inexperienced in national and international affairs she has run a city and our largest state. Obama has not even run a party store.
- Palin enjoyed the highest popularity rating 93 percent, of any governor.
- The Associated Press assigned 11 reporters to fact check her first book. Obama wrote two books and not one reporter was assigned to fact check them.
- She supported our war against terrorism in Iraq, even though her son, Track, was in the combat zone.
- Barbara Walters said, "Ninety percent of women who learn their baby will be born with Down syndrome terminate the pregnancy." The ten percent who chose to have the baby are very special women.
- She is feisty and will take no manure from anybody.

As they say in America's pastime, baseball, I'm coming in from left field with this – Michele Bachmann as Palin's running mate. She has every one of Sarah's qualifications. Both have demonstrated their ability to be a leader. How could any woman in the U.S. not vote for this dynamic duo?

Thoughts on Learning

By David Beagan

I used to listen to Bruce Williams' radio show, dispensing financial and life advice. I have always remembered a particularly colorful illustration: You can tell some kids, the stove is hot, do not touch it. And they say, "thank you very much" and don't touch the stove. Other kids won't listen and don't get the message until they smell burning flesh.

This illustrates that different people have different styles of learning. Some are primarily visual learners, others auditory, or tactile and even kinesthetic. An optimal learning environment stimulates and reinforces the lessons with sights, sounds, touch, and movement.

I have heard it said that what we need to do is to teach children how to learn. They need to learn how to learn. While it would be great to teach them how to learn, just how is this supposed to be accomplished? It strikes me that this is not something that a teacher can impart to their students, that really this is something the student figures out on their own as a byproduct of learning basic material. Especially for young children, there is a lot of value to rote learning. Multiplication tables, phonics, correct spelling, grammar, science facts, are all important rote learning for young minds. The teaching of facts can't be made engaging, employing sights, sounds, and other modes.

And so, while it is important to learn the basics, the next step is learning how to apply the basic facts in real world situations. I remember in math class I always enjoyed what were called story problems. But I know a lot of students hated them, I guess because they just wanted to follow a strict set of rules and crank out an answer. I have always remembered one story problem that a teacher put on a test. There was a rather lengthy description of background information and the last sentence of the problem said, "Express one quarter as a decimal fraction." That last sentence was all that was really needed. I don't think I got the right answer but I learned an important lesson. The world doesn't present all the important information in a situation tailor made for solution. There is superfluous information, misleading information, and perhaps worst of all, missing information. Resolving real world issues always requires that you deal with all of these potentialities.

One annoying thing I've heard from people in an adult education environment is, "what is my takeaway." Meaning just give me the bottom line -- tell me in a few short sentences what is learned in this class. I would think, "why do you think they have a week long class, if it could be

boiled down into a few sentences." But my feeling on this has moderated, I understand that sometimes people just want to understand what the class is about.

It took a while for me to appreciate something I heard Donald Trump say on several occasions on his TV show "The Apprentice." When a contestant would ask why, he would say, "It doesn't matter." The point being that sometimes you want to belabor the past and all the details of what happened, when really the best thing to do simply accept what happened and move on.

I have also heard, "those who can, do. Those who can't teach." Perhaps a bit harsh, true teachers are a valuable asset. When I first heard the sage wisdom, "when one teaches, two learn," I thought that it was some trite little saying that sounded good but was without much real meaning. But throughout life as I have been put in the position of teaching, the real merit of this has rung true with me. I have seen that the act of teaching and the act of preparing to teach requires you to learn what you already know in a more complete and systematic manner. Several years ago on the "Dr. Phil" TV show, he had parents who were having difficulty potty training their children. One of the techniques he used was to have the child teach a doll how to use the potty. It seemed pretty effective. Here are some tips to optimize learning.

Recent research has revealed some practical learning strategies. Learning in daily small chunks is an excellent technique. I saw a recommendation for improving chess ability. Study chess puzzles for just fifteen minutes, but do it every day. You can study for more than fifteen minutes a day, but you are wasting your time. It is the short regular practice that maximizes learning. And of course, trying to have a long cram session the night before an exam is the least effective.

A nap after study can improve retention. During the process of sleep, memories are organized and made more permanent.

After class or a study session, explain the material to someone else. Or even just typing up your notes can reinforce the material.

I heard that learning should be fun. I never cared much for that sentiment. If the learning process can be made easier and in some sense more enjoyable, then great. But to go into a learning situation with the expectation that it should be fun is a big mistake. I think a better approach is to learn to enjoy the learning process.

Mental Exercise

Can You Answer These?

By David Beagan

What Am I?

Like the driven snow in hue,
Men crave me, women too.

Without me mankind dies,
But I have taken lives.

Bridges and roads I tear away,
Many a traveler's life I've saved.

I inhabit every sea,
In lakes and streams you scarcely find me.

Bottle and Cork

A cheap wine store prices the cork, bottle and wine separately. Morgan purchases a bottle of wine with cork, and the total is \$1.80. The bottle cost 55 cents more than the cork. The wine cost 55 cents more than the bottle. How much do the wine, bottle and cork cost individually?

Professorial Courtesy

Professor Arith and Professor Metic are friends who like to engage in mentally challenging one another. They sit down at a circular table. Prof. A divides a big pile of quarters into two equal piles. He says we take turns placing quarters down, flat on the table and no overlapping. The first one who can't put a quarter down loses. No trying to squeeze any quarter into a space that moves another quarter. Professor Arith asks, would you like to go first? Is going first an advantage?

And a Third

A fish weighs 12 pounds plus one third of its weight. How much does the fish weigh?

All the Marbles

I have two boxes, one with 50 blue marbles, another with 50 green marbles. Your challenge is to pick one of the blue marbles to win a prize. I will blindfold you outside of the room then lead you to the table with the two boxes. So your choice of a box and then your choice of a marble in the chosen box, is random. To give yourself the best chance of winning, you get to arrange the marbles any way you want as long as all 100 marbles are in one of the two boxes. What is the most favorable arrangement?

Common Pairs

Fill in the same letter in each position in the upper word and lower word to get two words commonly associated with one another. For example:

_ _ i _ d
_ _ u _

Is answered as:

t r i e d
t r u e

Each pair is preceded by a hint.

This should get you singing in a different key.

_ a j _ _
_ i n _ _

Don't let this one shipwreck you.

f l o _ _ _ _
j e _ _ _ _

You don't need a particle accelerator to get this one.

_ r _ _ _ _
_ h _ _ _ _

With the right lenses you should see the answer.

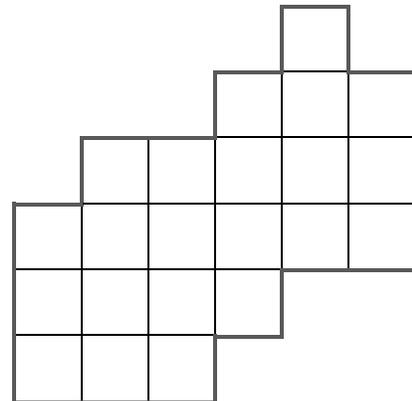
_ _ _ v e x
_ _ _ c a v e

A caveman could answer this one.

_ _ e _ _ _ t _ _ _
_ _ a _ _ _ m _ _ _

Cut It

Can you cut this figure composed of 22 squares into two identical pieces?



Answers on Page 14

A History of Education

By Bala Prasad

The history of education is a history of teaching and learning. We have always desired to pass on social and cultural values, tradition, religion and skills since the beginning of human existence. In pre-historic society, education was achieved through observation and imitation. With the development of writing it became possible to pass on the knowledge in forms of stories, poetry and philosophy on a tangible basis.

Educational institutions started evolving as the knowledge base kept expanding. However, formal schooling was only available to a small group of people. Universal education is a recent development. Some parts of the world still do not have the concept of formal schooling. Formal education requires resources, investment and a teaching staff.

Writing systems were developed around 3500 BC in Egypt. The first alphabet was developed around 2000 BC also in Egypt. The Phoenician writing system and the Chinese alphabets were developed around 1100 BC and 1400 BC respectively. Scripts were developed later. The earliest example is the Maya script around 300 BC. Wax covered boards, tree barks, parchment and vellum were used as surfaces for writing.

Education advanced in ancient India (1500 BC to 600 BC) during the Vedic period which produced Hindu texts and scriptures. Since only a privileged few got the opportunity to learn, the caste system evolved during that period in India based on knowledge based and labor based occupations. The Vedic schools were known as *Gurukuls* meaning families of the gurus. The scholarly gurus established their own schools for the children of the privileged at their house or in a monastery to pass the knowledge to the chosen disciples.

The Chinese school system started during the Zhou Dynasty around 1400 BC. However,

it was Confucius (551 – 469 BC) whose teachings became the mainstay of Chinese learning for the next 2000 years.

The educational system took hold in the Greek and the Roman empires around 500 - 400 BC. Finally, formal education came to Europe around the sixth century (A.D.). The first modern universities were established in Italy, France and England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

There were other short lived Central and South American civilizations that had their own languages and educational systems. Those included the Aztecs and the Incas.

The first American schools in the thirteen original colonies opened in the 17th century. The oldest school in the U.S.A. was the Boston Latin School. By the 19th century New England had elite private high schools. Much later the education system reached the Southern parts of the U.S.A.

The school text books did not materialize till the 17th century. Colleges did not come around until the 17th century, the oldest being the Harvard College in 1636. Laws requiring every child to attend school were implemented in the twentieth century.

Now with the advancement of cloud computing technologies and the Internet, education is becoming an online phenomenon. Knowledge is available to the masses at their beck and call. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the availability of the resources, the sky is the limit. Now, it is up to us – in contrast to the privileged few – how far we want to go.

Sincerely,

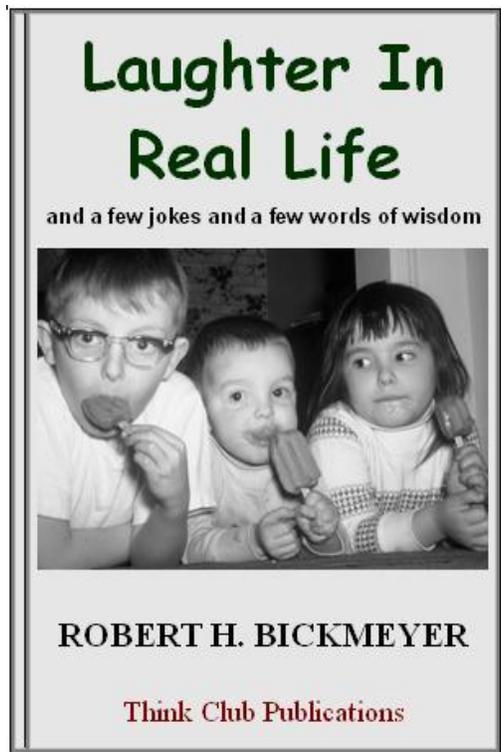
Bala Prasad

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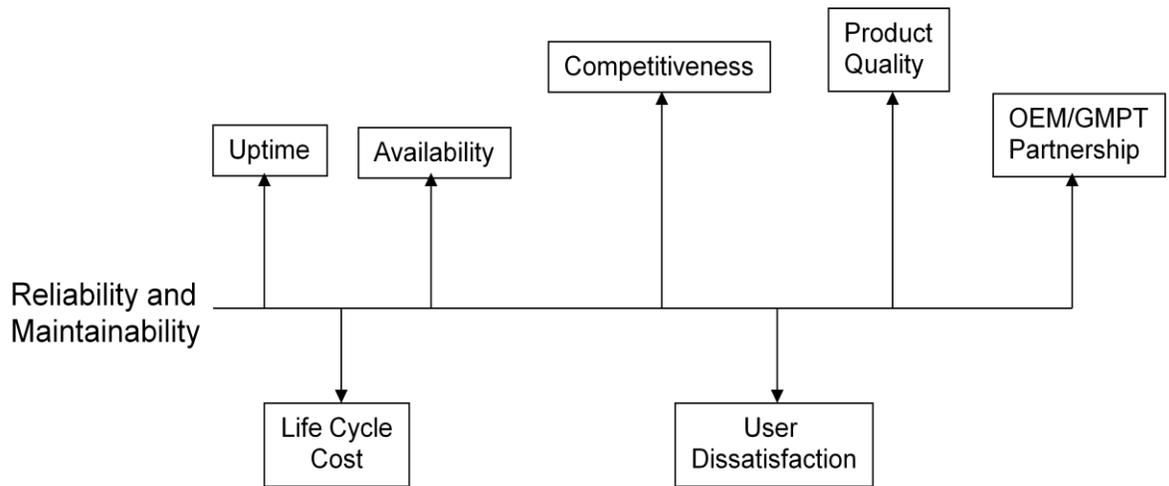
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