

Business and Public Education

Written by Dr. Louis Wildman

Thursday, 11 February 2010 21:41 - Last Updated Thursday, 11 February 2010 21:53

Historically, business and public education haven't got along. The capitalist rules of business justify inequality; public education promotes political equality.

Business interests have tried to apply the market model to public education. Though voucher initiatives have been defeated, public charter schools have been introduced as a compromise.

Fortunately, citizens have recognized that inclusive public education is essential.

No other institution brings rich and poor, White and Black, religious and non-religious, right-wing and left-wing, together.

Since we are only as free as the alternatives we know, most of us have recognized that choice should follow education, not precede it.

One good outcome of the many business scandals and the current recession is that they have caused business to step back from trying to apply the "anything goes" capitalist model to all forms of human endeavor, and re-define business in terms of value creation. This will bring business and public education closer together, as both our democracy and our economy require "value creation."

Despite the size of business scandals like Enron and AIG, and insider traders like Dennis

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Levine, Ivan Boesky, and Michael Millken who have brought such misery to the lives of so many, all of this still represents a comparatively small part of the business sector. The vast majority in business

do not

believe that business is just about greed and economic self-interest.

Companies should help each other produce goods and services of real value.

Thus, business capitalism is being re-conceived as a system of social cooperation, ethical competition, and value creation.

The point is that both education and business are primarily about value creation. Education and business primarily involve people working together to create value that no one of us could create on our own.

Education is about helping students understand democratic forms of government, develop aesthetic tastes, derive mathematical models, understand different social perspectives and social justice.

Legitimate business is about creating goods and services that serve human needs.

Reasonable business profits are essential to fund both education and business.

The contemporary business hero helps society meet social needs and improves the environment.

The current financial recession has created an opportunity for business to ingrain ethics into its activities so as to make business, and the world that business affects, better. Educators should be pleased that now business and education can share the same goal of value creation.