



World Class Learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students

Yong Zhao

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Prepare your students for the globalized world!

To succeed in the global economy, students need to function as entrepreneurs: resourceful, flexible and creative. Researcher and Professor Yong Zhao unlocks the secrets to cultivating independent thinkers who are willing and able to create jobs and contribute positively to the globalized society. This book shows how teachers, administrators and even parents can:

Understand the entrepreneurial spirit and harness it Foster student autonomy and leadership Champion inventive learners with necessary resources Develop global partners and resources

World Class Learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students Details

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From Reader Review World Class Learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students for online ebook

Jen says

Really 3.5 stars. Zhao, as many others have also done, makes a strong case against standardized testing. However, he makes the same mistakes many others make when talking about fixing the educational system: before we can fix the educational system, we need to come to an agreement as to what the purpose of the educational system is. There will also never be one solution that will work for every student. Zhao's one-size-fits-all solution is entrepreneurial skills, which sound to me like the 21st Century skills others are promoting with a different label. There are good ideas in this book, but . . .

Elaine van der Geld says

Beyond the fact that this book contains numerous dubious claims, it does not represent a real paradigm shift that will help schools and students improve. By pitting entrepreneurship against the model of "factory line" schools the book still takes the implicit position that schools are places in which we prepare students to be workers and producers in the market. It is not until the final essay, which elevates this book from a one star to a two, that anybody discusses ethics, empathy, or citizenry. Given the challenges of climate change, war, terrorism, and refugee crises we need students who are prepared citizens. Who are critical readers. Who can stand up for what's right in the world. World class learners are not ones who've been trained for a volatile job market. My best advice: skip this book and read anything else.

Jeremy Johnston says

Zhao raises a number of excellent points about the world our children are facing (and will face). He provides interesting and relevant data about the changing workforce and demographics of our increasingly "flat" world. Like most books on education, however, he also presents a "silver bullet" solution to education's problems--which, in my experience, is rarely the case. He calls for "product-oriented-learning" which is modeled after initiatives implemented by High Tech High. Essentially, students should work on tasks that have an immediate real-world application. Essays or projects created for teachers to evaluate is a waste of a student's time and effort. I have often lamented the fact that student writing (no matter how bad) always has an audience: the teacher. In the real world, only good writing is read... (even good writing, if too long, is rarely read...). I believe there needs to be more writing tasks with authentic applications. So I appreciate Zhao's push for "authentic learning applications" as opposed to assessment designed for the synthetic school environment. But "training ground" and "practice" activities have a place. I also believe that not every benefit from an academic environment can be related to producing a marketable "product." As a teacher of the humanities, I believe that reading literature enables students to become more human and encourages them to behave more humanely. Business ethics, for example, should not be marketed as a product; it should be inculcated into the fabric of our students' hearts and minds. Granted, the ethics of business could be best taught while working on a business project.

My main concern is that he calls for a radical paradigm shift without providing substantial evidence or convincing data to support his ideas. Some of the data he does include is cryptic and misleading (e.g.,

marginally significant or even insignificant negative correlations between PISA scores and GEM rating). The data he presents, if examined closely, is not consistent from chart to chart (e.g., different countries are compared at different times rather than tracing "Ireland" or "Canada" in all of his charts). Even more disturbing is his deliberate exclusion of evidence that contradicts his thesis. The most glaring is incomplete data about PISA scores and GEM entrepreneurial rating--for example, Canadian students score very high on PISA (13th in the world) AND Canada scores very high on GEM's entrepreneurial rating. His thesis that PISA success (which evaluates traditional learning) is a negative indicator of entrepreneurial drive. What about Canada? Where he ultimately goes wrong is his narrow comparison between China and the USA on an educational plain; in fact, the two superpowers differ on an ideological plain: Western Civilization (Greco-Roman) innovation and individualism vs Eastern Civilization Confucianism and conformity. Perhaps studying "history" for the sake of illumination instead of product-based pragmatism is just as important after all...

Kevin Pugh says

When it comes to education, we want to be China. China has remarkable test scores. But did you know that China wants to be us? China wants Jobs - Steve Jobs. America produces a remarkable number of innovators, entrepreneurs, and great thinkers. China thinks the US education system might have something to do with this. Yong Zhao agrees and in his book he highlights what the US system is doing well (by accident) and what we need to do to truly create an education that fosters creativity and entrepreneurship. He also cautions of the dangers of chasing test scores and trying to be like China.

A general take-way from the book is this: The kind of education that is successful at fostering high standardized test scores is not necessarily the kind of education that is successful at fostering creativity, critical thinking, and self-directed action.

Chris says

This is an excellent read. It supports a genuine challenge to the historical paradigm that drives much of what we see in education today. What is refreshing is the discussion of a blueprint for a new and possibly more effective paradigm to support success in the 21C. I will be taking from the many valuable sources for further research.

Mr. Holt says

Every teacher, parent, school leader, and anyone else affiliated with schools around the world needs to read "World Class Learners" by Yong Zhao. In this eye-opening reference manual for how schools should be operated, the author asserts the idea that school systems around the globe, and not just in America, are broken and in need of some big repairs. He blames this failure on national curricula and standardized testing. Students are being prepared to work in factories doing the same thing everyone else is being prepared to do. There is a lack of creativity. He proposes creating "free" schools that promote student autonomy, creativity, critical thinking, and the entrepreneurial mindset. He references several schools around the world that are already doing this with much success. While the book is loaded with statistics and case studies to prove his point, the heart of the book is important for all of us working in schools. Change needs to happen soon

because the world is running out of jobs and resources. I recommend this book to any school person in need of a wake-up call.

Chrissi says

I liked Yong Zhao's book better than the Tony Wagner "Creating Innovators" for the simple fact that I felt I learned some more about education as a whole - and what we can do to make it better. I don't believe in standardized learning. I believe kids should explore, learn boundaries but also learn to push them, and they should get their hands dirty. They should learn empathy, compassion, and - fun. Learning can be fun, but we've turned it into a fill-in-the-blank monstrosity that kills creativity and individual spirit. These things are what the world really needs in order to have the problems of today sorted out by the thinkers of tomorrow.

Karen says

This book made me think of Jean Anyon and the hidden curriculum of schools <3
<http://www1.udel.edu/educ/whitson/897...>

Nidhi says

Author spoke at Wellington

Lorne Brandt says

I chose to read this book because of my current transition from U.S. public school art teacher to a Chinese private school art/IT position. My respect for Zhao is incredibly high and I appreciate all that he is doing to provide context for the Western's desire to compete with Eastern's test scores. That being said, I found this book somewhat vague compared to the research-driven books in the same genre. Instead of providing novel ideas based on new research, he really just synthesizes some of the known new approaches. Daniel Pink, Summerhill School, and LA's High Tech High are used to convince the reader that the Western's "failing" education system is accidentally producing the innovation that China so desires.

Jason Lilly says

Full of staggering statistics, Zhao's approach to education is both controversial and brilliant. Unlike many other books with a similar approach, though, Zhao offers practical and powerful solutions. I was both disturbed and inspired by this book. Every teacher should read it and see why the trend of creating "good employees" or "good college students" needs to end. The education system should instead seek to empower students to be creators, innovators, pioneers, entrepreneurs.

I want to personally thank Yong Zhao for writing a book that says what needs to be said in a way that is

approachable and not condescending to teachers. If you work in education, whether you are an administrator, counselor, or teacher, please read this important book.

Matt says

Terrific resource. Dr. Zhao makes a strong connection between standardizes tests and lack of creativity. His distinction between problem-based learning and project-oriented learning helped give me a clearer understanding of what PBL is and should be.

Pete Welter says

Yong Zhao is one of the educational thinkers whose views resonate with me the most. In this, his latest book, he looks the entrepreneur as the model for what it will take make one's way in the 21st century. He generalizes the meaning of "entrepreneur" away from a specific focus on business to - and a I love this phrase - "entrepreneurship refers to a person's ability to turn ideas into action." I've found the same to be true, that the same skills and processes used by entrepreneurs to create businesses can be used to adapt and thrive in an environment where the traditional roles and jobs are decreasingly relevant.

The core of his argument against standardized learning and testing is twofold:

- * the evidence that PISA (international standardized tests) test scores are negatively correlated to entrepreneurial ability of a country
- * that to be successful at raising standardized test scores, an educational system works exactly opposite to the forces that create great entrepreneurs.

and postulates that the reason that the US still produces the bulk of the world entrepreneurs is because - in my words - we suck at standardized education. Places like Singapore, China and Japan are much better at it than we are, but they are trying to modifying their education system to turn out more entrepreneurs. His point is that the US needs to stop trying to emulate China, and start working at actively supporting entrepreneurial values in education rather than accidentally falling into them.

I have a few nitpicks with his "educators view" of what entrepreneurship is, but overall I agree totally entirely with his view on the future of education. If you see education as something beyond standardized testing, this book is a must-read.

Danielle says

Dr. Zhao provides the evidence and context for what most progressive educators suspect: standardized tests are the opposite of meaningful learning... specifically, they kill creativity and squelch entrepreneurial spirit. A must read for educators, administrators, and most especially for policy makers.

Nicole Colter says

This book was extremely valuable to me as I am embarking on my own exploration of what we can do to cultivate children who are innovative, entrepreneurial, creative and can think for themselves. Yong Zhao discusses how the US is trying to compete with China but exposes how while China may get better scores on standardized tests, their students grow lacking entrepreneurial and innovative capacities. He highlights how we are chasing the wrong metrics and how education stifles the entrepreneurial spirit that has been a hallmark of US culture for centuries. He advocates for Product-Oriented Learning which is intriguing and so this is another book I will keep coming back to as I continue exploring this topic.
