

Political Thinking Meeting Report No 19

Chiltern U3A 'Political Thinking'

Meeting No 18 Monday 19th Mar 2018

Topic: " Education"

Question

"Education is wasted on the young? "

Summary

Education is not wasted on anybody was essence of our thinking. The discussion divided into three parts: in the first, the core or fundamental purposes of education were considered; secondly, memories were articulated of outstandingly good or poor personal experiences of education or learning; and thirdly, proposals for reform or policy development were set out.

Discussion.

Broad and generous perspectives were suggested in respect of the purposes of education. There was a rich and wide mix of visions: skills for the economy, citizenship, self-development, well-being, community development, common humanity, shared understanding.

Personal recollections of members' own education were fascinating. Several emphasised well-remembered inspirational teachers, others their enjoyment of school, as well as some unhappinesses. The limits put upon some girls' and women's ambitions still rankled. Memories of bullying, and of successes and failures academic and otherwise were fresh. Also later (mostly post-school) flowering and achievement, learning from experience and from life, especially from work and the world of business were still considered a part of education. For most the key roles played by parents and peers were important influences.

As to possibilities for change the perspectives were remarkable and very liberal. There should be less emphasis on testing, this especially at younger ages. There should be a more inclusive and diverse curriculum that would be open to a wider range of talents. There should be less focus upon a narrowly 'academic' frame of reference for success. There should be more encouragement for and understanding of risk taking and entrepreneurship. Life itself is an education; there must be a willingness to understand that one can learn as much, if not more from mistakes, errors and 'failures' as from success.

Education broadly defined is not wasted on the young, middle aged or old; it is vital for all.