

PLEA FOR WONDERMENT IN PARENTING AND EDUCATION

[Translation of Zeronaut / Mo* magazine article for Medium blogpost](#)

In my opinion we're overlooking a fundamental issue in the whole debate on the role and content of our educational system. This is my plea for wonderment. You can call it my New Year's resolutions as a father to my kids for 2017 and beyond.



STEM, STEAM AND OTHER ACRONYMS.

With a mixture of fascination, puzzlement and the occasional muttered curses I've been following the debates on the sense and non-sense of our classical education system for some years now. The things that are going well, the responsibilities teachers have or don't have, and the unstoppable stream of solutions with names like STEM, STEAM, flipped classrooms,

Don't get me wrong, I have no problem in for example teaching kids how to code, even in elementary schools, but the fundamental question "Why?" remains.

What is the purpose of a school? Is it to prepare people for the labor market in which they'll have to work some day? Preferably. Are these people also the ones who will continue to push and shape that labor market? Also preferably. And should these folks also keep an eye on the role of the economy in our society? If possible, yes. And what about our big hairy problems like growing inequality, climate change, material scarcity? Do we still have the luxury to treat these things as elective courses?

To the question whether or not our current educational system is preparing our kids perfectly to find their place in the 21st century you will not hear me saying yes. But I think the debate should be about something more fundamental than a renewed version of the curriculum.

CREATIVITY.

And in my opinion creativity is an essential thing in this debate. If you want people to look at and act with technology that is not even existent today in new ways, we will at some point have to start appraising creativity as the most important driver of innovation. Innovation is the number one remedy against the acidification of our society. No creativity, no progress.

Now what is it that makes someone curious? What is the fuel that is driving curiosity?

There has already been written a lot about creativity in schools, I don't think I have to at yet another piece on that discussion. For those who are interested I would suggest to start with the "Design thinking for educators"-toolkit by IDEO. I would like to dig in even a little bit further.

Elizabeth Gilbert, you might know her as the writer of among other books Eat, Pray, Love, defines creativity perfectly as:

"Creativity is about choosing curiosity over fear."

There's so much truth in that. Creativity is not a skill, it's a choice. It's about approaching new things and change with curiosity and inquisitiveness. In my opinion curiosity is often the differentiating factor between interesting and uninteresting people. People that are certain about their viewpoints and who have discussions to win rather than to learn, are rarely long term fascinating.

Now what is it that makes someone curious? What is the fuel that is driving curiosity? Is it a passion for a subject? To some extent certainly. But I believe it's about something even more elemental. About wonderment.

WONDERMENT.

And now I get to the essence of this plea. To something that in my opinion is one of the most crucial qualities a human being can possess. Wonderment.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines wonderment as follows: "1. A cause of or occasion for wonder; 2. Astonishment, surprise; 3. Curiosity about something."

There's an unspoken agreement among parents that it's the kids raising their parents, not the other way around. The reason for that? Wonderment.

Wonderment is about looking at the world and continuously discovering new things in it. Questioning how stuff works, who made it, what you could do with them,...

There's an unspoken agreement among parents that it's the kids raising their parents, not the other way around. The reason for that? Wonderment. Kids don't have to force themselves consciously to question everything. It's all new to them.

We often mistake our kid's curiosity for creativity. But creativity is the choice to act upon curiosity. Wonderment is the mindset with which you capture the world.

I believe the most fundamental goal of quality education is translating wonderment to insight. But that objective requires that our kids are allowed to and remain in wonder.