

# Hogwarts Education

KENNETH DOBSON

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry was considerably more impressive than we imagined when we first read about the school with the quirky name in the opening chapters of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 1997. In fact, nothing we read prepared us for the magnificence and complex architecture of Gothic Hogwarts when we first caught sight of it in the movie in 2001. Modeled after British boarding schools Hogwarts exceeds them all in splendor and intriguing secrets.

## EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

From a student's very first moments, impressive education is to be expected. Students were sorted according to their personalities and potentials. That is certainly better than according to performance on standardized tests, which is what the eleven year-olds expected as they lined up to be sorted. But from then on the pedagogy at Hogwarts was increasingly disappointing. Year after year it got worse, as a matter of fact, until the best students stopped going at all – admittedly there were highly extenuating circumstances for that.

Although I and millions of others would have been delighted to have received a parchment written in green ink inviting us to board the Hogwarts Express at Kings Cross Station, platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  at 11 a.m. on September 1 with our supplies, robes and a wand, educational methods at Hogwarts had not developed much beyond those of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* which describes a British boarding school in the 1850s. Classes were regimented. All students took the same courses at the beginning, regardless of their readiness or proclivities. Everything depended on all-important examinations. Interests did not enter into the picture, and professors were not inclined to design their courses to meet individual needs. Rewards for excellence and penalties for infractions tended to be random and unpredictable. The normal form was “house points” predicated on the assumption of social pressure and without any appeals process. The harshest penalties were inevitably for failing to show proper respect for teachers. It was a system very given to injustice and not far removed from severe corporal punishment, as Argus Filch, caretaker of Hogwarts well knew, as he kept his chains well oiled in hopes the good old days would return, which they did.

Hogwarts was essentially a vocational training institute. The courses were skills-training in such witchly and wizardly undertakings as how to brew potions and how to transform objects magically. The less likely the skill was to be considered in the non-magical, Muggle-world at-large, the more highly it seemed to be valued at Hogwarts. Fortune telling and predicting the future, a very current fascination in every culture, was ridiculed at Hogwarts and nearly done away with by the headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, until he realized that inept Professor Trelawney was in grave danger if she was anywhere outside the magical fortress, and that if she was captured by evil Lord Voldemort, Harry Potter might be endangered as well. So the “greatest headmaster” in the thousand year history of Hogwarts kept “divination” on the curriculum although he felt it had no educational value, and he even added a second professor when a centaur also needed refuge. Astronomy was in the curriculum, but the purpose of studying the moons of Jupiter was never

clarified and seems to have had nothing to do with any classic benefit that star-gazing has been famous for. Botany and zoology were restricted to magical species, and even then concentrated on how to utilize them and occasionally how to avoid being victimized by them. Although the classroom instruction is viewed from the students' perspectives, which is unlikely to give a professional slant on things, few of the teachers were impressive. Good teachers who motivated students were the exception. Some actually de-motivated them, bored them, or simply were inept in teaching methods. Consequently, student achievement levels were uneven.

Education at Hogwarts was in a remote and limited-access environment. Even though the whole purpose of training was to prepare for magical jobs upon graduation, nowhere in the 7-year program were students allowed near the jobs they were being trained to undertake. Skill sessions were isolated from any context in which they might later be applied. Nowhere were the skills even integrated into an overall performance package.

In the seven-volume saga of Harry Potter versus the Dark Lord Voldemort there are only a few instances of witches and wizards being employed outside the Ministry of Magic and Hogwarts. What we can list are shop keepers in Diagon Alley and the little village of Hogsmeade and the producers of their magical products, an unspecified number working on the *Daily Prophet* and the lone publisher of the *Quibbler*. Apparently a group of sports stars also made a living at professional Quidditch, and there were drivers for the Hogwarts Express and the Knight Bus. It is doubtful that lordly Lucius Malfoy had to work and it is never specified what witches from up country did aside from coming to Diagon Alley to shop for magical ingredients they were brewing. The two oldest Weasley sons had jobs overseas. Altogether it is not a wide range of vocations.

It appears that conservation of traditional culture and crafts had a much higher priority than research and development. The Weasley twins are the major R&D exponents. They were very good at it, and in the process they actually utilized just about everything they had learned. They may have followed their father as their role model. Arthur Weasley developed an Anglia car into one that could fly, and was known to be fascinated but inept at Muggle technology. In fact, his lack of expertise at even Muggle costumes was surprising for one who was head of the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office. That raises the question of what was actually taught by Charity Burbage in Hogwarts classes on Muggles Studies.

Given that Hogwarts' programs ended at the secondary level, was there an equivalent to tertiary education in magical Great Britain? J.K. Rowling, creator of that entire realm, doesn't mention any advanced institute or university, and in one of her post-publication appearances denied that there was any other school than Hogwarts although there are two in America, she said. There are other schools in Europe, but they are the same secondary level as Hogwarts. However, there are clues scattered here and there about how life-long learning might have taken place. Hogwarts had a very great library, one too extensive to be for students alone. Hogwarts professors were supposed to make use of its esoteric resources, as well as the occasional precocious student like Hermione. It was the repository of all the old books in magical England. Dumbledore withdrew a number of rare books from the library, which Hermione then magically gathered from his office when he died. Professor Snape was an outstanding scholar, despite being otherwise detestable, as his textbook on potions annotated by "the Half-Blood Prince" testified. There were highly restricted sections of the Department of Mysteries in the Ministry of Magic where research was ongoing. Luna Lovegood's parents were tireless travelers in search of life-forms others thought were

imaginary or ludicrous. Prof. Gilderoy Lockhart also trafficked in imaginary accomplishments to embellish his image and sell more books. Dumbledore specialized in collecting, not written material (which he had from the library), but gray matter – wisps of memories stored in his own collection of vials. It was no match for the vast room-full of specially protected memories in the Ministry of Magic, but it served to educate Dumbledore and to provide material for his special lessons with Harry. So the learned and curious had resources.

In total, however, these sources of information and tradition hardly seem to account for the stupendous prowess and magical skills that Dumbledore and Voldemort developed. Dumbledore told Harry that there were a number of other Death Eaters and magical persons who had almost as much ability. How did they acquire it? Dumbledore had extraordinary intuition. His ability to synthesize facts and knowledge was awesome. He could not only add a column of figures, he could accurately guess what figures were missing. His conclusions may have sometimes been guesses, but they were generally right. Nor was he inhibited by his fears, as was Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic, nor by his prejudices as was Voldemort. However, his astounding intellectual capacity was rarely employed in behalf of students. Pedagogy at Hogwarts never thrived during Dumbledore's tenure as headmaster. In his defense it must be said he was preoccupied during much of that time investigating what had happened to Voldemort and trying to keep him from taking over the world.

Two further matters are pertinent: the adequacy of Hogwarts as an educational environment and student character development.

Hogwarts was a medieval, magical castle at the far reaches of civilization. Beyond Hogwarts and the village of Hogsmeade was a vast forbidden forest and mountains. The kindest thing to say about that environment is that accidents sometimes happened. Rather than preventing dangerous incidents, the strategy was to repair the damage. There was nothing to stop students from wandering into the forest except a beginning-of-term routine announcement against it. It may have been a literary device, but all those warnings against going places mostly drew attention to what was sure to happen. Literary necessities notwithstanding, there was a shocking number of hazards in Hogwarts. It could hardly be described as "kid-friendly". As the plot thickened, the nurse, Madame Pomfrey, found her workload increasing. As if students could not come up with troubles of their own, some of the staff were to blame. Prof. Lockhart was one of the worst in that regard, assigning duels, releasing dangerous creatures, and compounding injuries due to his incompetence throughout his year at Hogwarts. Hagrid was the best-loved staff member on campus (by some students, at least), but also the most likely to subject students to life-threatening dangers. The only organized athletics at Hogwarts was played high in the air, at often blinding speed, in sometimes hazardous weather, with a high chance of injury built right into the game. Even student examinations routinely resulted in lost limbs and bodily harm. The pinnacle of tests was the Triwizard Tournament that pitted champions from various schools against life-threatening adversaries (supposedly all under control) for the purpose of institutional aggrandizement. The rationale given for the sadistic event when Harry Potter was a student was to enhance unity between the three European magical schools, but it was a weak choice among many better options for doing that. And there is no use saying the games were "really safe" because they were not well enough supervised to keep an underage student out of them

and to prevent one of the four champions from being killed. Hogwarts was an extremely dangerous educational environment.

Perhaps we should take the traditional high ground and agree that the real purpose of educating adolescents is character development. Skill-building should certainly be tangential to that.

As J.K. Rowling tells the tale, character development clearly did take place, and we would not say that Hogwarts was irrelevant to the growth that was so apparent in nearly all the main student characters. Neville Longbottom was transformed to such an extent that even his irascible grandmother was finally impressed. Harry, Hermione and Ron all “exceeded expectations” as the grade reports would have put it. But in evaluating the education provided at Hogwarts the question is whether the pedagogy or even the conditions at the school were responsible for that character growth.

## SOCIALIZATION

Socialization is an important aspect of adolescent character development. Life in one of the four “houses” was supposed to contribute to socialization. It is hard to see evidence of that, however. Young students were treated with disdain. The social order in Hogwarts was as hierarchical, competitive, tribal and class-bound as society at large. Hogwarts apparently taught that young witches and wizards should not expect otherwise.

It is clear that Slytherin house did nothing to improve students’ character or their social perspectives. Instead, being grouped with like-minded racists, bullies and supremacists seems to have reinforced them in those attitudes. What’s more that had been going on for decades, perhaps centuries.

For purposes of discussion, let’s say there are four socialization attitudes to be acquired in adolescence if an individual is to be intellectually prepared and socially responsible and a society comprised of those individuals is to prosper.

Young people need to be or become **appreciative of diversity**. Although I would contend this includes diversity throughout the biosphere, we can begin with human diversity. In magical England there was a division between pure blood and mixed blood magical children. Children could “be magically endowed” whether they were pure blood or mixed blood. Some could even be quite gifted without any magical ancestors at all. Then there was a wide range of marginalized non-human, not-quite human, or partially human beings: centaurs, hags, giants, goblins, elves, trolls, and Veela, to name a few. This was a metaphor for racial issues in the Harry Potter series.

It was more than Hogwarts’ staff could do to inspire full acceptance for all these races, much less generate mutual respect or regard among them. But Dumbledore and his allies did try to demonstrate a lack of prejudice in practice, if not as an aspect of the formal educational program. As readers learn late in the series of books, the real program for those years was getting ready for war if it could not be avoided by single combat between Harry and Voldemort. Alliances in a war, however, are not the same as mutual respect in peace time. If civilization is to endure, students need to learn to value diversity.

The flip side of appreciation for diversity is **disdain for artificial qualifiers**. One of the caustic elements in society is the belief that one must qualify for respect and dignity. To say the least, some of the qualifications in any culture are artificial and unworthy. In magical

England (and Muggle England as well) being poor was a disadvantage, but it should not be a qualification for respect. Nor should the fact that one's parents are disabled or handicapped. It might be indicative that Hogwarts does not seem to have been handicapped-accessible.

It is a serious matter to be able to distinguish between national rights and human rights. Culture wars are being waged over that right now. The right to vote is largely regarded as a right of citizens who live in a political boundary. It is not usually arguable that non-citizens should be able to vote in elections just because they reside where they are subject to a jurisdiction's laws. This does not mean that non-citizens are voiceless with respect to requirements imposed on citizens and non-citizens alike. They presumably can speak and even protest injustice: it is a human right. That is not normally a big problem, and it was not in magical England until the Voldemort fascists took over and began wholesale disenfranchisement. Notice what a limited effect Hogwarts' narrow educational scope had on that take over. Nowhere was this major issue of civil rights and respect for human dignity addressed. The major weakness of Hogwarts' educational policy was exposed. Those who rose to oppose the tyrannical fascists were few, and they were ill equipped with the intellectual resources to make a difference. They were strategy-strapped. Magical tradition only knew of combat and war. Fortunately, some students and teachers could think anyway. They smelled the danger when it first emerged as an attempt to replace Dumbledore and his program with the woman in pink and the Ministry's interference. A student-insurrection resulted, totally unsupported by Hogwarts teachers – although not opposed by many of them, either.

**Even the disadvantaged deserve respect and dignity.**

One of J.K. Rowling's sub-plots is the lot of the house elves. It was common among the witches and wizards to regard the elves as slaves. In fact, they had been treated that way for so long that the elves regarded themselves as slaves and were uncomfortable if they were dismissed (freed), having nowhere to go. Hermione mounted a single-handed campaign to alleviate the plight of house elves and to free them from bondage. She was appalled to discover that the largest collection of enslaved house elves in all of magical England was in Hogwarts doing menial and domestic chores to keep the castle clean and the population very well fed. Hermione alone realized it did not essentially matter that the enslavement was self-perpetuating and that the Hogwarts elves could emancipate themselves whenever they wanted to. They could then choose to go or stay, to be paid or not, and to decide how they felt about their status as ex-slaves. But the Hogwarts elves did not want their circumstances to change and even the presence of happy Dobby, "a free elf", did not inspire them to consider emancipation positively. They resented Hermione, and Dobby drove Winky to drink. We are led to hope that the Battle of Hogwarts made a very big difference in all this. But nothing in either Hogwarts culture or curricula addressed this degradation in their midst and altered the elves "otherness" to the category of an "artificial" matter that ought to have no impact on how elves were accorded dignity.

In magical England Squibs were certainly disadvantaged. They were born into the magical world but failed to inherit any magical ability. Some, like "Old Miss Figg", appointed to watch over Harry as he was growing up in a hostile home, found themselves useful despite being magically impotent. Argus Filch, caretaker of Hogwarts, performed useful service after a fashion. But Squibs were hard pressed in the best of times. They eked whatever fragments of respect they could get, or they withdrew into Muggle society as did Harry's mother's sister, the "worst of Muggles", as Prof. McGonagall observed on the day

baby Harry was deposited on her doorstep. An enlightened society is supportive of those with disadvantages so that they are able to pursue happiness and be beneficial to society.

Tom Riddle's own family was disadvantaged. It would be hard to identify a more dysfunctional family of sociopaths. The irony was that they were direct descendants of one of the most noble figures of the magical world, the great Salazar Slytherin. And yet they had degenerated as far as a magical or Muggle can go, it seems.

Neville Longbottom's parents were cursed-tortured so hideously they never recovered. In their confinement in St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries they could only be classified as disadvantaged. We do not see any magical paraplegics in Harry Potter books or movies (great injuries were usually magically repaired), with the possible exception of Peter "Wormtail" Pettigrew who sacrificed his hand to resurrect Voldemort and was given a silver prosthesis that eventually killed him. Mad-eye Moody got a magical eye to replace one he lost and had a peg leg. For the most part witches and wizards had ways to compensate for disadvantages. But if respect for the disadvantaged is a valuable socialization attitude that repositions the disadvantaged as far as possible into functional society, there was no effort to educate students in Hogwarts in this regard, nor any Ministry of Magic bureau working on this.

The final, and perhaps the most important social attitude to be instilled in young people of the age of Hogwarts students, is **commitment to the general well-being**. In some contexts this might be called citizenship, but it is distinct from patriotism and civic pride. It is a deeply felt sense that everyone has a role that supersedes personal prosperity and that personal happiness is compromised as long as part of society is fundamentally unhappy and cannot prosper. What's more, it is not enough to simply respond to causes as they are presented. A healthy society is proactive in attempting to identify and prevent causes of illness and poverty of circumstance. It is never enough to teach students how to be successful unless students learn to envision their success as contributing to the success of society as a whole. Not only cases need to be managed, but the welfare of entire classes must be addressed as well. It is the job of an educational authority to make certain that not only are individuals' vocational skills being acquired but society's general welfare is being enhanced.

A witch needs to not only know how to fly, but why.

## INDIVIDUATION

Psychoanalyst Carl Jung said that a person's basic developmental task is individuation. It is the process of becoming able to distinguish one's self from one's context and from one's confusion about self. A person is not just the sum total of background and heredity.

Individuation means becoming an "in-dividual," and, in so far as "individuality" embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as "coming to selfhood" or "self-realization." [Jung, Carl in *The Portable Jung*, J. Campbell, ed., 1971. London: Penguin Books, pp. 121-2]

Somewhere in early adolescence a child realizes, "Whoa! I had better find out what this collection of blood, meat, mind and emotions is all about." That begins with knowing that, scary or not, "I am not exactly like anybody else." Jung implied that this is a topic that merits

educated consideration because common sense may not make the distinctions that are necessary.

...we do not sufficiently distinguish between individualism and individuation. Individualism means deliberately stressing and giving prominence to some supposed peculiarity rather than to collective considerations and obligations. But individuation means precisely the better and more complete fulfillment of the collective qualities of the human being, since adequate consideration of the peculiarity of the individual is more conducive to a better social performance than when the peculiarity is neglected or suppressed. The idiosyncrasy of an individual is not to be understood as any strangeness in his substance or in his components, but rather as a unique combination, or gradual differentiation, of functions and faculties which in themselves are universal. [Jung, p. 122]

Individuation, therefore, can only mean a process of psychological development that fulfils the individual qualities given; in other words, it is a process by which a man becomes the definite, unique being he in fact is. [Jung, p. 122]

### **Harry's Fierce Loyalties – His Maturity and Individuation**

One of the most profound aspects of young Harry Potter is what could be called his fierce loyalties. Although loyalty is generally thought of as a positive character trait, his loyalties nearly undid him and they generally brought trouble that had to be dealt with. What was that all about? And, more significantly, how did Harry deal with those loyalties as he matured, for that was his major struggle in growing up psychologically.

In his younger years Harry could not tolerate criticism of his parents. It was a thing likely to cause him to lose control. One evening just before his third year at Hogwarts his Aunt Marge Dursley speculated that Harry's trouble came from bad breeding. "You see that in bitches," she commented. For a while Harry endured this tirade until Marge called his father "a no-account, good-for-nothing, lazy scrounger." Moments later Aunt Marge, swollen with fury kept on swelling until she began to inflate and floated to the ceiling (or out the door and into the sky with her brother hanging on for dear life, in the movie). This inadvertent use of magic by an underage wizard could have been a very serious matter, but the Minister of Magic cleared up the mess and laughed it off.

Harry's ongoing conflict with Severus Snape was more serious. For reasons Harry and readers slowly learn, Snape hates Harry from before he has seen him, or perhaps just from the first moment he laid eyes on Harry, whom everyone remarks looks exactly like his father, except his green eyes; "he has his mother's eyes". One day not long after the Aunt Marge incident, Harry and Snape almost get to the bottom of Snape's loathing.

"How extraordinarily like your father you are, Potter," Snape said suddenly, his eyes glinting. "He, too, was exceedingly arrogant. A small amount of talent on the Quidditch pitch made him think he was a cut above the rest of us, too. Strutting around the place with his friends and admirers ... the resemblance between you is uncanny." [Azkaban, p. 308]

Snape loathes Harry because Harry so strongly resembles his father in terms of abilities, appearance and attitude. Snape's youth was spent as a rival of James Potter and often as the brunt of his exuberance, which was sometimes excessive. Snape could never forgive James for the ridicule James and his gang subjected Snape to endure simply because it was

entertaining. By the time Harry had irrefutable confirmation of his father's flaws Harry had other suspicions about Snape. Even worse, at the core of the rivalry between Snape and Harry's father was Snape's eternal love for Lily Evans who rejected him for James Potter. Whether that had anything to do with Snape's initial alignment with Voldemort is not dealt with in the story, but the fact that Voldemort targeted the Potters is the reason Snape turned against the Dark Lord and begged Dumbledore to protect Lily. Although Dumbledore could not do that, out of his love for Lily, Snape agreed to help protect Harry and bring down Voldemort by using his immense magical abilities to be a double agent inside Voldemort's Death Eaters while loyal to Dumbledore and the Order of the Phoenix, surely the most perilous intrigue he could have undertaken. Harry was an innocent party to this tangle his elders had gotten themselves into, but it had everything to do with Harry's adolescent issues. Hating Snape, first for the Professor's unfairness and then for his criticism of his father and finally for the appearance of Snape's treachery ending with the murder of Dumbledore, it was a bitter draft to swallow when Harry had to agree with Snape that his father was no saint.

Meanwhile, Harry developed a fierce loyalty for his second father, Albus Dumbledore. The loyalty was born of respect for the headmaster's prowess, and belief that Dumbledore was the one wizard feared by the Dark Lord who had killed his parents. In the Chamber of Secrets, facing the deadly Basilisk Harry denies Tom Riddle's boast that he was the greatest wizard of all time. Harry insists Dumbledore was greater than Tom, alias Voldemort, a profession that brought the phoenix to Harry's aid and salvation. Dumbledore is amazed the phoenix had responded.

"First of all, Harry, I want to thank you," said Dumbledore, eyes twinkling again.

"You must have shown me real loyalty down in the Chamber. Nothing but that could have called Fawkes to you." [Chamber, p. 356]

A little more than a year later Harry's loyalty to Dumbledore is tested when the headmaster distances himself from Harry except when absolutely necessary. Indeed, Harry feels shunned and has no clue as to why his hero is suddenly so cold. Only at the end of the year, arguably Harry's worst at Hogwarts, does Dumbledore confess he had made a mistake in not confiding in Harry that he had perceived the Dark Lord had accessed Harry's mind and it would have made things far worse if Voldemort had gained access through Harry to Dumbledore as well. The whole plan for defeating Voldemort, by then underway, could have collapsed.

At that time Harry had become aware he had a godfather, Sirius Black, whom Harry began to consider as part father and part brother, but all the nurturing family Harry had ever felt he was part of since his parents died. Again it was his fierce loyalty that caused disaster. Voldemort infiltrated Harry's mind with the notion that Black was being attacked inside the Ministry of Magic as Arthur Weasley had been half a year earlier. Against warnings and advice to be skeptical and wary, in an attempt to save Black Harry and his intrepid friends flew Thestrals to his aid, and nearly gave Voldemort the prizes he wanted, keys to victory over both Harry and Dumbledore.

Then Dumbledore died, apparently killed by Snape when Draco faltered. Dark secrets about Harry's hero began to leak out and an exposé by an infamous gossip columnist hinted that Dumbledore had a nefarious past. It was almost more than Harry could take to have all the respected figures in his life exposed and knocked off their pedestals.



The relentless downgrading of those for whom Harry had developed fierce loyalty left Harry feeling alone and bereft. As Dumbledore had said at Cedric Diggory's memorial convocation in the Great Hall, the Dark Lord had a great capacity for undermining unity, which was the only way he could be defeated. Harry's feeling of isolation was actually irrational. Thanks to the loyalty of his two friends he was always part of a team, even when he had to act alone in confronting Voldemort. His parents were always part of him, too, recalled at crucial times to provide a critical measure of help. Then there was Dumbledore's Army composed of Hogwarts students whom Harry had helped train, the Order of Phoenix which was never as weakened as it seemed, the teachers of Hogwarts, and finally a host of volunteers. Harry was never alone. He had, however, sometimes narrowed his loyalties unfairly.

Nothing in Harry's education was as critical as his maturing appreciation for others as well as his ability to differentiate himself from them. Saints and heroes need nothing from us, but what we derive from them is encouragement as we undertake our missions in behalf of the marginalized and endangered who need us.

### **Distinguishing Our Reality – Hearing Our Own Voice**

In order for this complex psychological growth to take place, an adolescent needs to be taught how to pay attention to “what is” and how to discourse about it.

Young people in post-modernist cultures have a particular difficulty in regard to distinguishing their own voice from that of their group. “People of this generation are able to sympathize and understand diverse opinions, but are unable to distinguish their own voice from the voice of others,” is how Ozzie Crocco, a young colleague of mine, put it. It is not that they do not believe they are individuals with free will – they tend to believe that adamantly – but they cannot naturally hear the difference between what they think and say from what their group is thinking and saying. Even if there are nuances of difference those distinctions are waved aside as inconsequential. When there are unbridgeable differences of opinion, it is evidence that they are held by people who are simply not “our group”. Moreover, the content of a communication expands to include much more than literal meaning. Harvard University educational psychologist, Dr. Robert Kegan, author of the concept “The Socialized Mind”, put it this way:

The socialized mind also strongly influences how information is received and attended to. When maintaining alignment with important others and valued “surrounds” is crucial to the coherence of one's very being, the socialized mind is highly sensitive to, and influenced by, what it picks up. And what it picks up often runs far beyond the explicit message. It may well include the results of highly invested attention to imagined subtexts that may have more impact on the receiver than the intended message. This is often astonishing and dismaying to leaders who cannot understand how subordinates could possibly have “made that sense out of this” communication, but because the receiver's signal-to-noise detector may be highly distorted, the actual information that comes through may have only a distant relationship to the sender's intention. [Kegan, R. quoted from *Immunity to Change* on [http://press.harvardbusiness.org/on/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/kegan-lahey\\_1736.jpg](http://press.harvardbusiness.org/on/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/kegan-lahey_1736.jpg). Downloaded on April 6, 2015]

The implication is that this is an epoch-wide phenomenon that applies to young people in all post-modernist cultures. Kegan goes on to recommend ways of remediation and how to

move beyond social group-think. Certainly a society's educational system needs to participate in this for the good of society and civilization.

If we are to hold Hogwarts accountable for its educational effects on the individuation process of its adolescent students let's posit four indicators of success.

**Sensitivity** to a supernatural dimension of life would be called a religious capacity, or an awareness of an area beyond the physical and human, or a perception of transcendence. This is a not-uncontroversial issue. But I will argue an adolescent is disadvantaged and handicapped who becomes an adult without a sense of awe and an aesthetic capacity. "There is something more to all this than meets the eye and ear," a sensitive kid discerns. One's appreciation of one's cognitive and rational ability and even of the collective knowledge held by all humanity needs to be seen as limited. A world that does not surprise and astonish is a world that can be treated callously and utilized ruthlessly. Even rigid naturalists can bring themselves to recognize this. So we won't quibble about terminology.

The question again is whether Hogwarts' educational program recognized and fostered this appreciation.

Consider the Defense Against the Dark Arts (DADA) courses taught by a succession of teachers who knew a lot about dark arts whether they taught well or not. Essentially, the term "Dark Arts" could not meaningfully exist in magical England and would not have been banned by the Ministry of Magic if there was no sensitivity to the transcendent implications of what was being done when "black magic" was performed. The only "Dark Arts" discussed in Harry Potter books are three curses that dehumanize victims. Since we cannot have access to the better books on the subject to verify our suspicion, I will conjecture that other dark arts would include some of the practices in super-naturalist cultic traditions, some of which survive in the modern world in the form of Voodoo and Polynesian ritual practices, and thrive in the mountains of Papua New Guinea.

What those magical practices represent is veneration of powers beyond human reckoning. It goes without saying that world religions also recognize such realities.

All Rowling has told us about Hogwarts and the magical world excludes any mention of religion. Christmas is the closest Harry comes to traditional Christianity in magical England, where, at the time portrayed by costume and inference, Christianity was a potent presence (and stiff opponent of witchcraft). A Christmas Eve service was going on in the village of Godric's Hollow when Harry and Hermione visit Harry's parents' grave – singing was going on inside a church but that's as close to religion as Harry gets.

Even the more abstract manifestations of transcendence as might appear in the cultivation of aesthetic appreciation are missing from Hogwarts. This would be a critical omission in an educational system for the simple reason that aesthetic appreciation is paired with a capacity for moral values. Without sensitivity to transcendence or its equivalent we are left with ontological, purely objective reality and its poverty of power to enhance human values and to inspire joy. None of the students show a natural inclination toward music, art or anything else that Plato included as "poetics". The magical world was not a world of cultural refinement. Even the culinary arts avoided haute cuisine, as Fleur was rather too quick to point out. Monumental sculpture and painted portraits are evident, but it is not suggested how those objects are produced or how they are valued beyond enshrining magical heritage.

In this disregard for aesthetics and the transcendental, Harry Potter's world may be reflecting the modern Muggle world. But if this is a satisfactory cultural circumstance it is the first one in history, and there will be serious consequences.

**Resourcefulness**, including mainly ability to apply intelligence and imagination is the second indicator. Is an educational institution responsible for instilling or enhancing a student's intelligence and imagination, or, like a medical facility, is it above all accountable to "do no harm"? With regard to resourcefulness, some students at Hogwarts were outstanding, including all the main characters. They were inventive, ingenious, adaptable and persistent. In fact, so were their predecessors. It is not ever said how students were selected for Hogwarts. Perhaps these resourceful students arrived as resourceful initiates. Apparently manifestation of magical ability was the only requirement. There was unevenness about the student's resourcefulness. Some had it all along. Hermione had extraordinary intelligence and managed to acquire imaginativeness even though it was against her nature. Harry was of ordinary intelligence but made up for it in other ways. Luna had an exorbitant amount of imagination. Draco was sharp and imaginative, but burdened by his heritage to an almost disastrous extent. Fred and George Weasley were bright and inventive, exceeding their little brother Ron in that regard. Ron's resourcefulness consisted in being loyal and willing to utilize all the help he could get as well as give all the help he possibly could.

That brings us to Neville, whose initial prospects were bleak. He was dangerously forgetful and clumsy to boot. Almost everything in the castle baffled him. It was outside, in the green houses, that he found his niche (and his future career, according to J.K. Rowling's postscripts). But his resourcefulness was the most astounding as it came into maturity. He was the first to stand alone face to face with the apparently victorious Voldemort, refusing to yield, ready to die bravely. He killed the terrifying snake Nagini, eliminating the last of Voldemort's hidden bits of soul (Horcruxes), depriving him of immortality. Neville was a resourceful student leader inside Hogwarts during the year the school was turned into a military academy, while his three friends had gone from view hunting horcruxes. No one would have predicted Neville had it in him to acquire heroic stature.

But the question remains, "Was Hogwarts' educational program or even its institutional environment responsible for nurturing resourcefulness?" None of the courses was designed to do it. Under Prof. Slughorn, Harry excelled at brewing potions using exceptions he found in an annotated book that had belonged to "The Half-blood Prince". But the course was designed to teach students how to brew tried and true recipes. Even in Prof. McGonagill's Transfiguration course, success came from following orders. Creative thinking was normally a liability at Hogwarts ... until extracurricular, unplanned and unexpected challenges came. When students were entirely on their own it was resourcefulness (and "pure dumb luck") that prevailed. On the whole, displays of resourcefulness were labeled "disregard for the rules" and penalized, sometimes quite severely.

**Strength** (especially strength to overcome adversity) is the third individuation process to be mastered in adolescence. In fact, it is not strength itself, but appreciation of its form for an individual, and growth in trust of one's given strengths that adolescents need to develop. There are different kinds of strength. That is an important lesson. Crabbe and Goyle (as well as Dudley) had brute strength. Nothing at Hogwarts served to refine their brutishness nor to teach them how to channel it. Hermione had a powerful intellect. Hogwarts added areas of information and points of view, but her ability to step outside the box came through circumstances beyond Hogwart's control, beginning with confronting a full-grown mountain troll in the girls' bathroom her first year. In fact, Hogwarts students were sorted into houses according to their strengths. Hogwarts recognized diverse strengths. It was apparent at the teachers' table where sat a midget and a giant, women and men (and one who was no longer

even alive, although he had apparently not realized it), famous and ignominious, brave and cowardly, but each in some way exceedingly strong.

One of the early tasks in adolescence is to recognize that one even has a valuable strength. Newly emerging from childhood, children are as doubtful of innate giftedness as Harry was when Hagrid broke down the door on the island cabin to tell him, “You’re a wizard.”

For others, their strengths have been re-labeled as essentially liabilities. Luna, in her boundless whimsicality was called “loony” and for a while readers are led to believe she was so mindless she didn’t even understand how ridiculous she was.

For still other students the growth task was to put their over-inflated strength into a balanced perspective. Cedric Diggory’s father was so excessively proud of his handsome, accomplished son that Cedric would have been seriously hampered if he had not been able to see reality and assess his limitations.

Ron Weasley’s strengths would hardly have made it onto anyone’s top-ten list, but Dumbledore recognized them and designated him a “Prefect”, to his and everyone else’s amazement.

Successful adolescence depends on learning how to apply one’s strengths to accomplish life requirements and that includes how to transform one’s weaknesses from being liabilities into assets, if possible. Prof. Snape’s unrequited love of Lily Evans was, in the final chapter, what saved the day – with a lot of help from Harry and encouragement from Dumbledore. Fred and George had a boundless sense of humor, which their mother, bless her heart, mistook for folly. Yet it was transformed into the greatest fortune the family was likely to ever see, and it encouraged the whole magical population at a time of serious deficit of humor.

Did Hogwarts intentionally do anything to nurture students’ ability to manage their strengths? Would sorting the students into houses according to native strengths count? For the most part, it seems that Hogwarts catered to the median, giving average students skills to make them average witches and wizards. On the other hand, Harry was given special tutoring when he asked for it, to better combat the dementors who affected him worse than any other student. Soon enough he got more individual tutoring, although it was oriented toward resisting Voldemort and winning the forthcoming war, which were decidedly special circumstances, rather than recognition of his natural strengths or weaknesses. Hermione was helped to take her full capacity of courses and in the process to learn what that capacity was. At least we can say the students’ individual strengths were not ignored or rendered irrelevant as they are in some educational systems.

**Identity**, synthesizing all the other individuation tasks adolescents undertake is the most important task involving self-discovery. It is not enough to know what one’s strengths and weaknesses are, where one fits into the universe, and how to survive. If a person does not also know “who I am” it is all for naught. Somebody had to have had an eye on children growing up to know whether they were candidates for Hogwarts or not and then the sorting hat was outstanding at this perception of aspects of identity. That’s a better start than most Muggle children have these days.

As it happens, Harry Potter is a case study in character development. From the beginning of volume one, we know what Harry knows about who he is, and how he finds out. This, precisely this, is how Albus Dumbledore helps Harry most. In the Harry Potter saga it is through personal mentoring that a young person discovers this critical insight. But we also

learn along with Harry that Dumbledore had a hidden agenda, noble though it was: the final defeat of Lord Voldemort. Education, as Dumbledore knew all along, and as we find out bit by bit, was not the primary agenda. Dumbledore's brother, Aberforth, guesses the headmaster had a "plan" and analyzes it cynically with Harry:

...said Harry... "he left me a job."

"Did he, now?" said Aberforth. "Nice job, I hope? Pleasant? Easy? Sort of thing you'd expect an unqualified wizard kid to be able to do without overstretching themselves?"

"I – it's not easy, no," said Harry. "But I've got to—"

"Got to"? Why 'got to'? He's dead, isn't he?" said Aberforth roughly. "Let it go, boy, before you follow him! Save yourself!

"How can you be sure, Potter, that my brother wasn't more interested in the greater good than in you?"

[Harry said] "I'm going to keep going until I succeed – or die." [DH, pp. 453, 458]

Aberforth catches all of Harry's own doubts, but Harry is far enough along in his individuation to refuse the blunt hints to forsake the "plan" even though he does not fully understand what the plan is until he views it from Severus Snape's own memory trove. That is when Harry finally knows how the next act of the plan must go. That knowledge is what integrates Harry's fragmentary understanding and intuition (or inclination).

Harry is "the chosen one", Neville is "the one who might have been" and Hermione and Ron are "essential partners". Together with Draco and Luna, we have a fair look at how Hogwarts helps or does not help students discover their identity.

As mentioned just above, an attentive mentor is key. Dumbledore is Harry's face-to-face mentor, but he also indirectly mentors Ron and Hermione. The three of them function as a team to carry out Dumbledore's plan to defeat Lord Voldemort and along the way all three of them become mature individuals. The final (seventh) volume in the series spells this out elaborately. Notice, the mentor is not so much a role model as a catalyst. The three do not become little Dumbledores to any extent. Harry might have had the headmaster's drive and courage, Hermione his intelligence and perspicacity, and Ron his naïveté and quirky sense of humor, but the three matured into distinct individuals. Harry never aspired to be like Dumbledore. The headmaster was, for the first five years at least, always too remote, inaccessible and accomplished for the teen-ager to think of him as a role model. Dumbledore was a mentor, one who watched from a distance and interceded at key moments with clues, nudges and appreciation. Those were transmitted on to Ron and Hermione.

For the most part Luna Lovegood seems to have been fully individuated from the beginning. She was precocious. What happens through the years is that Harry and others come to realize and appreciate her. She hardly changes at all. She still reads her father's publication upside down, she still exults at the idea of capturing a Crumple-Horned Snorkack, and she comes up with situation-solving suggestions at key moments. She is also the most naturally empathetic person in magical England, exceeding even Molly Weasley. The best that can be said for Hogwarts is that her years there did not spoil her.

Draco and Neville also individuate during their years at Hogwarts. For better or worse, they find out who they are. The question is whether the educational system at Hogwarts has anything to do with this, or whether any educational system can be expected to do this.

Neville's progress from pre-adolescence to maturity is dramatic. The sorting hat may have been the only one to have any clue that the pathetic 11 year-old would become a true Gryffindor, in the end showing as much courage, steadfastness and resourcefulness as any character in Hogwarts. But the hat was right that first day, and the hat was there on Neville's head again on the final day when Neville confronted Voldemort, was condemned to die wearing the hat, and retrieved the Sword of Gryffindor from the hat just in time to kill the Dark Lord's last Horcrux. There is nothing said about any mentor for Neville, with the possible exception of the herbology professor, redoubtable Prof. Sprout, and the werewolf, Prof. Lupin, who on an occasion or two attributed significance to Neville as a person and not just as a pure-blood of illustrious and lamented parents. As for Neville's role model, why, that was Harry from at least the time of the secret training sessions for Dumbledore's Army. If anything, Hogwarts (and Umbridge in particular) thwarted and hindered Neville's emergence as a true Gryffindor, although "Gryffindor character" won out when it counted.

Draco Malfoy changed. He discovered that he was not the person he had all along thought he was. I think there was no character in Hogwarts for whom individuation was more difficult than Draco. He resisted it and rebelled against it, but in the end he lived because he changed his mind about who he really was. J.K. Rowling's story takes us right up to the moment of Draco's self-realization. It had been distressing to see that even after Dumbledore and Snape saved Draco from committing murder (and thereby saved his soul, some would say), Draco still aligned himself with the forces of evil as he imagined himself destined to do. He was branded for life. Even though he was by then irrelevant to Voldemort, Draco continued to do everything to help the Dark Lord although he had no orders to do so and not even a clear idea what to do. By the end, the whole person Draco had been was history. Draco would have died in the inferno his buddy created if he had not been rescued yet again by Harry. Harry pulled him out of the fire to start life over. Throughout his years at Hogwarts Draco gets help from Severus Snape, the Slytherin head of house. He is rewarded and secretly protected, but never mentored by Snape that we know of. Draco is used by Voldemort and by his own father, but not mentored by them. His mother cared for him, and mothers are often key mentors, but Draco's mother was worthless as a mentor. In the end, the most that can be said for Draco is that he managed to distance himself from the Death Eaters enough to survive. Whether he managed to mature beyond his racist, elitist mindset is not covered.

## Conclusion

What would an educational system look like that facilitates socialization and individuation?

Two contradictory factors must be in balance for that to happen. There are three elements to an educational system: simply put, they are the individual student, parents (and their social circle), and the school. They must be *independent* but at the same time fully *cooperating* to achieve the agreed upon objectives, each providing elements the others lack.

Has anyone else wondered where Hogwarts got its operating funds? Students had to pay for their supplies and robes (as well as other clothing) but there is no mention of tuition or fees. Certainly Harry's uncle made it quite clear he wasn't paying for anything. There was no mention of taxes to support the labor-laden Ministry of Magic bureaucracy, either. Those who worked there got paid salaries, but it is a mystery where the money came from. Lucius

Malfoy was generous, it is said, but surely not able to bankroll the entire operation. Presuming that Hogwarts was heavily endowed by its 4 founders, it was financially independent.

We know from various incidents affecting Dumbledore that there was a governing board and Lucius Malfoy was on it. Furthermore, the Ministry of Magic could, and twice did, exercise authority to manage and micro-manage the policies and operations of the school. So it was not independent of meddling interference.

Parents had influence to the extent that they could withdraw their children.

Finally, the school management could decide what to teach, and whether to close. Closing seemed imminent a couple of times.

Those were the ways Hogwarts was controlled. Alumni and the magical community at large maintained an interest in the school, as witnessed by articles in the *Daily Prophet*, as well as books of history and biography that kept coming out. But neither former nor present students had any say in how the school was run.

This is important when we consider that Hogwarts students lived at the school throughout their formative adolescent years. Clearly, character formation should be a responsibility shared jointly. Neither the institution nor parents could unilaterally declare they were absolved of concern for their children's character development. Hogwarts did not try to do so. If a student misbehaved the school send an owl to parents with a message, and students could expect a "Howler" in return. In good and peaceful times parents trusted Hogwarts and were proud that their children were studying there. In dangerous times parents entrusted their children to Hogwarts because they were safer there.

Since the responsibility for socialization and facilitating individuation was a shared one, who was accountable and how? As J.K. Rowling describes it, it was up to the students to integrate their lessons (which the school provided and controlled) with their life experiences (which just happened) into constructs of value in discovering how to live. There were no classes or sessions where they were taught how to do that. There was no strategy for promoting that basic aspect of character development.

The shortcomings of this haphazard system were clear when war came to Hogwarts. Slytherin students had to be evicted along with the underage children. Even after more than six years in the same classes and environment as Potter and the rest, Pansy Parkinson of Slytherin house still could not tell the difference between right and wrong – that is, the difference between what was going to produce peace, prosperity and progress for the magical world and the Muggle world beside it, from what was going to undermine and destroy peace, maim and kill countless people, and enslave and victimize one population after another.

Only an educational system that creates opportunities for students to cross cultural frontiers and explore attitudinal assumptions critically, and then provides reflective feed-back, can claim to be working toward attitudinal modification, critical thinking development, and social improvement. Shared endeavor in crisis intervention tends to radically shorten the time needed to build bridges between adversarial groups. Having faced a crisis or fought battles in the same cause but out of sight of one another is well and good, but not as life-changing as standing and marching shoulder to shoulder, giants with centaurs, goblins and elves with wizards and ghosts. There is every reason to believe that after the Battle of Hogwarts the gulfs between social groups and the entire climate toward marginalized minorities and stratification of magical society was ameliorated, as it was in England after wartime. But

post-war England and America both show that the fundamental educational tasks were not eliminated. Each student generation presents a new set of challenges.

May 15, 2015