

International Conference On Thinking

2013

Expanding Global Thinking

Strand: Personal Futures

Non Peer Reviewed Paper: 30 minutes

We are all changing our minds

We are moving from a society dominated by the printed word, into the electronic age, where complexity, speed of the communication and exchange of ideas and globalization are the order of the day. This is causing us to change the ways in which we think from predominantly linear modes to more networked, organic thinking. The emerging generation thinks differently from its predecessors and it is imperative that we understand this shift if we are to understand this generation and the institutions within the world they are creating

The development of the printing press made the written language increasingly available to people and its influence on thinking was pervasive. The printed language is linear, sequential, focused and has permanence. This influence on thinking can be seen reflected in the development of philosophy, the visual arts, literature, theatre, film and music. It encouraged individualism, specialization and the notion of the expert. It underpinned the development of the assembly line and the industrial revolution. It underlies the organization of and practices within many of our educational systems.

The speed, complexity and multidimensionality of electronic media are changing the ways in which we think. They collapse both time and space. We are immersed in a continuous flow of ever changing information. Pattern recognition is becoming more important than simple data collection and classification. We are experiencing rapid social and cultural change because we are being changed in fundamental ways by these new media.

The world-wide the scale and speed of economic and financial transactions outstripped our capacity to 'follow' what was going on and predict what would happen next - leading to the Global Financial Crisis. Digital reading, Wikipedia, Facebook and Twitter and the Arab Spring are all manifestations of this change in the ways in which we think. We see it reflected in literature, film, theatre and the visual arts. The rise of 'New Age' thinking with its search for mystery, apparent rejection of logic as the only acceptable way of examining the world, acceptance of intuition, and focus on connectedness and group responsibility is both a return to some of the ways of thinking that characterized preliterate societies and a sign of new ways of interacting with reality. An understanding of the tensions between our concepts of individuality and social cohesion and capacity must include an understanding of these profound shifts.