"WHY WE MUST EDUCATE THE WHOLE PERSON - Comment" by Anita Roddick

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"The need for imagination, a sense of truth and a feeling of responsibility - these are the three forces, which are the very nerve of education" - RUDOLF STEINER

'I am a former teacher and so much of my thinking on education has been shaped by the profound lessons I learnt during my teaching and training years. Thirty years ago, it didn't take me long to work out that education philosophy can be divided into two schools of thinking. The first states that the child knows little, and is essentially a raw material to be processed; years of structured education will make children useful to our society, and also to themselves.

To make them good workers, this thinking asks kids to listen unquestioningly to authority; asserts that education is just knowledge contained in subjects, and that the purpose of education is to prepare children for their roles in the economy. But this school of thinking leaves out: sensitivity to others, non-violent behaviour, respect, intuition, imagination and a sense of awe and wonderment.

The second school of thinking develops these things. It sees children as a unique set of potentials, and it helps them to develop the habit of freedom. It encourages them to celebrate who and what they are. This is the type of education we find in the Steiner or Waldorf schools, or the fabled Summerhill, or the schools of the Human Scale Education movement.

To say that Western systems of education are in a mess right now is to understate the problem. Even a cursory glance at our culture unmasks a growing population who are unable to master basic skills for jobs, let alone engender for themselves an enlightened existence.

In transformation education, we see imagination as more important than knowledge, and that education is about a route that encompasses the mind, body, and spirit - not a collection of computer-like facts, data, memories, and rules. Education should be concerned with the whole being.
What I subscribe to is an alternative school of thought. I see a groundswell happening: people taking charge and ownership of their education, looking for an alternative. I see a growing sense of wanting something different. An emergence of a fundamental shift in our philosophy and practice of education.'