**UNA Greater Lincolnshire**

**A new ‘Wealth of Nations’**

**A call to leaders of business, education and communities to engage in education and promote capability and agency in young people.**

**We are, therefore I am...therefore we are.**

Because **we** are..  
I am  
I know who I am  
I am accepted by others for who I am  
I can respect and accept others  
I can be a good neighbour  
I belong

I can change and develop  
I can choose  
I can learn and grow  
I can achieve...and

My personal achievements  
Are valued by myself and others  
And expressed in the community  
In a life well lived and in serving others through work and engagement

I can contribute for good  
I can support others  
I can be supported by others  
I can celebrate life and achievements with others  
I am alive  
I am free

Therefore **we** are.

Clive Wilson August 2005

Written whilst on an educational project in Tsilitwa, Eastern Cape SA, based on indigenous societal concepts of Ubuntu.

**A new ‘Wealth of Nations’**

People of the world are trying to come to terms with the shocks of the Sars2 Covid19 pandemic. Some individuals are challenged by what is called the ‘new normal’ way of living and urgently seek to get back as soon as possible to past ways of living and working. Others are re examining their livelihoods and are examining new ways of living and working.

For the latter it means a consideration of how to build bridges to a new and better future. This involves a consideration of our lives as consumers, producers and citizens. It requires a stock take on values and aspirations for individuals and collectively in the communities in which they live and work. This demands an examination of how the myriad of individual and collective decisions impact on the sustainability and wellbeing of people and planet. The conclusions will have implications for politicians who determine the legislative frameworks and all who on a day to day basis lead and mange every aspects of business community and education activity. The guidance and education of all and in particular those in full time education will need realignment.

This is not new to us all. The UN by RIO+20 in 2012 had begun to engage in one of the biggest ever consultations across the world to set out to produce a universally agreed document on the future we want for all of us. In the report of 2012  ‘*Realising the Future We Want for All’*, the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda laid out its main findings and recommendations for a development agenda beyond 2015. It called for an integrated policy approach to ensure inclusive economic development, social progress and environmental sustainability and a development agenda that responds to the aspirations of all people for a world free of want and fear. These became the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

So instead of taking time to re write a vision for new tomorrow again, let’s start with new thinking and action to promote the attainment of the UN2030 Sustainable development Goals. Before 2030 I’m sure we will have learned that there is always a next step!

The attainment of the UN2030 SDG’s requires effective political and social structures that create the conditions for capability and functioning of individuals. They require effective systems and processes by which organisations from international to local can be accountably managed and developed. They require all individuals to have the opportunity to gain the relevant capabilities ( knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes) to enable them to access and freely engage in the life and work they want.

There is a family/community, local, national, and international aspect to the notion of freedom. It embraces the dimension of personal accountability for the impact that each decision taken and each action made has on the wellbeing of others and the environment. My freedom is determined by the extent of my agency, and if I have agency I am accountable.

Accountability sits within social and cultural norms. Ubuntu, in African cultures, and similarly in other indigenous cultures can be paraphrased as ‘we are therefore I am’. It celebrates the importance of wider social mores in the behaviours of individuals with each other and in social groups and settings. It recognises that there is a responsibility to model behaviours that shape each successive generation. In this way adults are accountable in generating agency.

The alternate view is the dominance of individuals exercising freedoms without regard for the wellbeing of others or the environment. There is compelling evidence of impact of these behaviours over the over the last fifty years. There has been a dominance of me and mine, here and now thinking in the way that organisational goals and targets in business, community and education have been set and thereby individual goals and performance measures. In some ways we can say in truth we have met most of our targets .. but in many ways we have lost the wider plot! We may have increased our overall incomes and wealth in terms of current monetary national product, but we do not measure our ‘commonwealth’ and ‘wellbeing’. We do not choose to measure the impact of our actions on the wellbeing of future generations and our environment.

**How did we get here, what can we learn**

In the development of modern economic thinking there is regularly reference to the writing of Adam Smith. The free market economic structures and systems that he explained in ‘An enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations’ have since been celebrated and played out across the world. They give rise to individualism, specialisation and trade and generally without accountability for ‘externalities’. The loss of clean air, the exploitation of the biosphere and human rights are ‘non accountable’ in trading terms if they have no human ownership or assigned legal right. The markets and money systems give the opportunity for accumulation of wealth over time and thereby give individuals who control ‘wealth’ power over market activities.

Adam Smith was well aware of this, and it can be seen in his writings. These are so often forgotten or purposefully ignored. He advocated that taking responsibility for the enduring wellbeing of all was the true source of happiness and thereby the real ‘Wealth of Nations’.

The questioning of altruism and ‘society’ by past politicians is associated with the writings of Ayn Rand in ‘The Virtues of Selfishness’ and many others. The political and economic outplaying of this thinking over the last forty years has led to the promotion of private market solutions for as much economic activity in nation states as ‘politically’ acceptable. This thinking has spread across the world, accelerated by the influence of neoclassical economists in world organisations. It has fuelled the exponential rise in the material wealth of those that have gained and manipulated market power. However in her writings, often not quoted, she acknowledges that humans live in a social world and that in order to maximize the value of their interactions with others, they should cultivate a firm commitment to the virtues of rationality, justice, productiveness, and benevolence. She is quietly declaring what John Donne wrote in 1624, ‘no ‘person’ is an island entire of itself’.

We have to learn from the less used words of Ayn Rand and Adam Smith and apply it in our current search for a new ways of living and working. We need to shift our position in our thinking and behaviours from ‘ Me Mine Here and Now’ to ‘We Ours the World the Future’. In taking responsibility we all develop and give agency and in this way we realise the future we want for all.

**The ‘So What?’ question, declare the real outcomes**

The ‘So What?’ question was a key feature of my role when working as an adviser in education. It is as applicable in business and community. I would ask ‘Now I have seen your organisational structures systems and plans, what are the real outcomes of all your actions.

If working life activities and rewards are shaped by organisational plans and goals and targets, and the personal development of students to the age of 18 are shaped by school and college plans and comparative measurements of school performance I believe there are a lot of ‘so what’ questions to be asked.

In the business context, the global financial crisis of 2007-8 was preceded by an exponential rise in financial rewards for most in the industry. Business goals were met, bonuses were paid to staff who met their performance targets all was happy in ‘happy world’. The global crash that followed created a recession and misery for many, and the financial costs caused by poor governance and accountability have been pushed forward as debts to be paid by the next generations, along with wider societal issues.

Writing about the next generation, Noreena Hertz wrote in the Guardian 19 March 2016, ‘Generation K’ ( the millennials) : *This generation does not believe that life is a meritocracy. In fact, not one teenager surveyed agrees with the statement that “society is fair and everyone has an equal chance”. Instead, they believe that it’s the colour of their skin, their sex, their parents’ economic status and their social standing that will determine their future. Depressingly, the data bears this out.*

She goes on to state that their view of their own future is also challenging.

*And little wonder: Generation K is coming of age in the shadow of economic decline, job insecurity, increasing inequality and a lack of financial optimism. When asked whether they think their lives are likely to be more of a struggle than those of their parents’, their answer is an unambiguous yes: 79% worry about getting a job while 72% worry about debt – and not only student loans.*

I believe this is still true in 2021

In the education context. During the UK Sars2 Covid19 pandemic lockdown, business, education and community life was disrupted. Parents became centre stage in supporting and educating their own children at home. In the home setting people were faced with a form of functioning freedom. The quickly implemented pragmatic functioning arrangement offered them an opportunity to shape their own lives and the education of their children within the confines of the ‘advice from government’. However the education and life experiences of many parents had not effectively prepared them for this new setting. They found that they lacked capability and ‘agency’ in the schooling of their children. What a poor state of affairs for this ‘well educated’ adult population.

So what was the real outcome of the compulsory education of the parental generation?  
The ‘national curriculum’, with subjects and assessments is something that most parents find daunting. The ‘artificial’ pressure points for students at 16 and 18 of GCSE and A level were a major issue for education ministers as the ‘gold standards’ for credentialism ( subject grades) in progression to further study and work were being questioned.

Perhaps our previous generation(s) had been suckered into learning what others think they should learn rather than what they need for agency in their lives. It certainly seems on evidence that alternate social media in its own way stepped in to support parents with access to technology and provide ‘opportunities’ for learning new things, and old things in new ways’.

The capacity for resilience in distressing times and the ability to ask the right questions to assist understanding and to use and question information available via technology are vital for capability and agency.

**So what is needed now for education and guidance of all in learning and living?**

The world is shifting. The impact of Sars2 Covid 19 Pandemic is causing a rethink about new priorities and ways of living and working. This starts with education. The UN2030 Sustainable Development Goals provide a ‘way in’ for a refocusing of new thinking about education and livelihood.

We live in an internationally interdependent world, and through communication technology we all see the real outcomes and impact of our daily life and spending habits on a fragile earth and humanity. The dramatic fall in CO2 in the atmosphere during the ‘world lockdowns’ is a clear example.

I believe there needs to be an ‘International Curriculum’ for the C21 for all ages not just ‘National Curricula’ for those of schooling age. It needs to enable every young individual to effectively progress into adult life and work in this internationally interdependent world, and all adults to be stakeholders in the processes of continual learning. It needs to give a future and a hope for all as they progress to engage and thrive in diverse, market influenced and democratic societies. In addition it needs to prepare students for managing challenges and changes and empower them to take charge of their lives through engagement in ' serving others' to generate wellbeing. It should focus on capability and agency.

Learners should be engaged in a 'culturally intentional decisional education'. Where they are given the opportunity to question, explore and address possible solutions to the real issues facing them and the wider community: UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Where values, beliefs and cultural identity are identified as positive forces and appropriated into decision making for the benefit of all. Where a learner’s development is measured in their capacity to accept that their livelihood and survival - 'ME.MINE.HERE and NOW' is best met when they have capacity to understand their place and behave with reference to 'WE, OURS, The WORLD, The FUTURE', and that my (and my families) future is dependent on the future of others.

Can we retreat in education from the credentialism of ‘grades in subjects’ as the measure of performance for educational experience and emphasise capability and agency.

Those in charge of education at all levels and those in leadership of business and community should have accountability for this progression in young people, and thereby International Development for Wellbeing of People and Planet.

 As Aristotle 'commented' - do not locate the leadership of education of the children of free men in the hands of men who use slaves as workers!

**Appendix below**

The attached appendix is an individual aide memoir/ assessment tool for ‘Capability’. It was developed for use with 16 to 18 yr olds in a pilot International Development Outreach Programme run by Cambridge University staff from Madingley Hall. It is loosely linked to older familiar frameworks in Careers Education and Guidance. Self and social awareness, opportunity awareness, information gathering and processing, decision making and transitions. It’s also closely linked with personal and social development frameworks.

**Freedom and agency as 'functioning individuals' : A Capability Inventory.**

As a result of support and guidance through educational processes... 'An individual is empowered to become self, socially and environmentally aware, conversant with all opportunities available to them to lead a fulfilled life, and skilled to make decisions, progress and manage transitions on their journey to free and accountable adulthood'. From me mine here now to we ours the world the future. Below an ‘aide memoir’ to enable personal reflection on individual capabilities, based on concepts in Amartya Sen’s writing in ‘Development as Freedom’.

Starting with an 'own' initial assessment of 'where I am now', scoring 1-10 for each area, will enable a personal development action plan to be established in conversation with a mentor.  
Or initially it can be used to talk through with another person you know well to gain confidence in evaluating and making a personal judgement. Please remember that this assessment changes over time as a result of life experience and is contextual to the settings in which you live and work!

**1 = Not confident................................................................................................10 = Fully confident**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Self Aware - Knowing Self Independence and Interdependence** | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know and understand my culture and its importance to me in my life and living | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know my values and attitudes and their importance to me in my life and living | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know how forces locally and in the world make impact, socially, politically and economically | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know that my level of knowledge is sufficient to fully engage in adult life and work | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know that my knowledge and skills are relevant and sufficient to fully engage in a wider world | | | | | | | | | |
| **Socially and Environmentally aware - Justice for me and others** | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know and understand the sustainable development issues in my locality | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know and understand the sustainable development issues in my region | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know and understand the sustainable development issues in my continent | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know and understand the sustainable development issues in my world | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know and understand how my attitudes and behaviours impact on others and the environment | | | | | | | | | |

**1 = Not confident................................................................................................10 = Fully confident**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Freedom – Functioning in a local and international community** | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know, understand and can access my local and wider opportunities for work and life | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know, understand and can access my opportunities for democratic engagement | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know, understand and can access my opportunities for play and engaging culturally with others | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I know, understand an can access my opportunities for rest, relaxation and creativity | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Decision making skills for Life, Work and Leadership** | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| My literacy and language skills are fit for effective decision making and leadership roles | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| My numeracy skills are fit for decision making and leadership roles | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| My legal understanding is fit for decision making and leadership roles | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| My understanding of economics and business is sufficient for decision making and leadership roles | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| My political understanding is sufficient for decision making and leadership roles | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| My understanding of technology is sufficient for decision making and leadership roles | | | | | | | | | |
| **Progression and managing transitions in Life and Work** | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I can manage transition to an adult role in an internationally connected world | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I can manage and maintain effective relationships with others individually and groups | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I have the ability to be resilient in times of adversity in life and work | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| I can freely engage with others in celebrating progress and achievement in life and work | | | | | | | | | |

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