



Closing the Education Gap

A Social Justice Problem

I recently attended an international course at Harvard, Boston about “**closing the gap: excellence with equity**”.

The educational gaps between white Americans, African Americans and Hispanic Americans are huge.

The gaps between boys and girls are enduring and wide.

And data on groups like Native Americans are missing or they are invisible.

Of course the gaps in educational achievement lead to disparity of work opportunities, wages and life enrichment.

I suspect that material poverty and poverty of the mind are behind most of the violence and terror inflicted on the populations.

It made me think what could be done to reduce/close the gap in educational opportunities. Would more intervention between 0-5 years of age help to close the gap? Would paying families a social wage be an investment rather than a benefit?

Would raising the minimum wage to a percentage of the national average wage rate be an economic decision rather than a political decision? Would educating boys separately be a major intervention in closing the gap?

Too many questions!

So what five solutions would I suggest to closing the educational gap?

1. Guarantee a job or study for all school leavers until age 22. This may be against the market and would be hard to organise – but would the social costs pay a return?
2. Between 0 – 3 years of age – there should be a requirement for one parent to attend a parenting course in early education – with a higher tax rate imposed on those who do not attend (!).
3. Raise the minimum wage for those over 25 to become 75% of the national wage. This would mean more money in the economy and a reduction in profit (or tax) for the super-rich.
4. Convene a national summit on boys educational achievement and come up with strategies to address the problem. At least recognise there is a problem.
5. Create a ministry of employment to scrutinise all policies and legislation to ensure there is a concentration of minds in creating employment on a national scale.

Closing the gap with excellence means that everyone should aspire to what is beautiful and excellent and of high standard. It also means bringing all people to the same aspiration.

After all, lifting the roof without lifting the floor boards only creates a leaky draughty building.

Worth thinking about.

K F Fouhy
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Edmund Rice Network Conference 2015



The Edmund Rice Network conference was recently held in Oamaru on the theme *A Way into the Future*. Edmund Rice Justice Aotearoa New Zealand was well represented at the conference which provided a great opportunity to network and reconnect. Br Joe Lauren spoke of the *Anatomy of Leadership* and Phil Glendenning from the Edmund Rice Centre Sydney spoke of Advocacy the Edmund Rice Way and current social justice issues. The conference was a great reflection of the network's growth, depth and diversity.

“None of us can think we are exempt from concerns
for the poor and for social justice”
- *Pope Francis*