

A Model for Education in 21st Century

By

Peter C. C. Wang, Wang Foundation

December 30, 2008

In 21st Century, the world will face the following three fundamental challenges...summarized by Ron Moffatt of NAFSA

First, what hope for justice can we find in a world where half our human family, over three billion people, live on less than the equivalent of two dollars a day, and half of those live on less than one dollar a day? What does equality mean when the combined wealth of the world's 732 billionaires exceeds the combined gross domestic product of the world's 160 poorest countries? Imagine for a moment what might happen to our human bond if this ever widening gap between the rich and the poor continues on its present course. Now imagine what a more just world might look like, and what path we need to take to get there.

Second, what hope for sustainability can we find in a world where the economic race to the bottom is driven by policies that champion unlimited growth, induce hyper consumption, generate obscene waste, and accelerate environmental devastation? What does sustainability mean when the triumph of entrenched self-interests over empirical truth allows the world's most powerful politicians to advance energy policies that ensure increased global warming and unending wars while depleting resources? Imagine a world where everyone consumed as much as the average American in 2007—we would need five additional Earth-sized planets to supply the necessary resources and accommodate the wastes. Imagine for a moment what might happen to our fragile planet if global consumption continues on its present course. Now imagine what a less materialistic, more sustainable world might look like, and what path we need to take to get there!

Third, what hope for peace can we find in a world where global military spending exceeds \$1.2 trillion annually? What does peace mean when the world's 5 largest arms dealers account for more than 70% of that total? Global military spending for one day equals \$3.3 billion – or \$2.3 million dollars being spent every minute of every day. Imagine a world where just one week of global military spending could fully fund the United Nations and all its agencies for an entire year. Just one day of spending could fund the Fulbright fellowship programs around the world for 25 years. Imagine for a moment what might happen to our human family if this insatiable quest for global military power continues on its present course. Now imagine what a less bellicose, less violent world might look like and what path we need to take to get there!

Innovative and effective response to the above challenges proposed and initiated by Peter C. C. Wang of Wang Foundation

The United Nation's answer to the above challenges by embracing the Millennium Development Goals of cutting extreme poverty around the world in half by 2015...It is absolutely necessary to increase funding assistance in order to achieve the MDGs but remain far short from sufficiency. Hence It would be a difficult task to accomplish the MDGs by 2015 largely due to shortage of funds and the HIV/AIDS has sabotaged all of the improvements with destructive policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The world needs change, and we propose to change it with a new educational model that will enable us to alleviate the effects of injustice, poverty, greed, disease, wars, terrorism, violence, and a polluted earth.

We believe that a new motivator –poverty alleviation and service learning—can fundamentally reverse the destructive trends brought about by the global military-industrial complex and its associated financial and socio-political systems. Even the root of terrorism is illiteracy, poverty and political alienation.

We believe that education based on the pursuit of justice, sustainability and non-violence can bring us back from the brink of world financial crisis, global ecological disaster, depletion of natural resources, uncontrolled development of weapons of mass destruction including chemical and biological weapons which would degrade basic values of humanity.

A service learning model that encourages social responsibility and commitment to equal access to educational, financial and natural resources would moderate our culture that rewards only the strongest and “fittest.” Instead of cut-throat competition, we will promote collaboration. Instead of command, control, and conquest, we will have effective multi-lingual communication with deep cultural understanding.

Such an innovative model of education has been tested out at Tsinghua University during the past four years. A collaborative joint project by Wang Foundation and Tsinghua University that involving 218 American students from 23 American Universities and 844 Tsinghua students, known as the “poverty alleviation through service learning” program, has achieved extremely successful results. 650,000 K-12 students from over 200 poorest counties in China have benefited from this program of Tsinghua. Tsinghua wishes to expand this program to cover 592 poorest counties within three years.

This innovative model benefits not only those under served k-12 student, teacher and people from the poorest counties in China but for those American and Chinese students who participated in this summer service learning program have benefited much more in building their character of leadership as future global citizens.

We are ready to expand this service learning model in preparing future leaders for the 21st Century. This model can be expanded to the rest of the world to mitigate the effects of poverty from the grassroots. We see this as the beginning of a new era of global collaborative education, one that

promises a bright future for humanity. Hence, we may well be on our way to face the three fundamental challenges in the 21st Century with this new model for education.

<http://www.wangfoundation.net> E-mail: Petercwang@aol.com

<http://www.plu.edu/wangcenter/about-center/founders.html>