Future Kids

In 2005, Paul Graham founded YC Incubator. In his article "Hiring is Obsolete," he mentioned:

Nowadays, the three internet giants are Yahoo, Google, and Microsoft, with their founders having an average age of 24. It is evident that graduate students can successfully start companies. If graduate students can do it, why can't undergraduate students?

Over the past decade, we have witnessed many changes. Now we have to ask, why can some college students do it, while some high school students cannot? Such societal changes are slow but ongoing. The internet has opened up possibilities, providing diverse knowledge and bringing together like-minded people. Some high school students start their ventures, and by the time they graduate from college, they may have achieved considerable success. One day, upon graduating from college, they might hear about their peers of the same age, who started their own companies from scratch and are going public at the age of 22. They might be surprised.

This trend is also observed in various fields. Thiel Fellowship recipients, young people aged 24 or 25, include those who have achieved nuclear fusion, those who have made progress in ocean garbage clean-up, co-founders of the OYO hotel chain, co-founders of Luminar (a laser radar company) listed on the stock market, and the creator of blockchain, V God.

Age is never an issue. The key to achieving these accomplishments is a passion for the subject itself.

In today's education, we should encourage children to develop their interests, help them find the best resources and teachers on the internet, and enable them to make like-minded friends, fostering a love for learning. A child who loves learning will have a bright future.

During my middle school years, I saw blogs on self-growth and was inspired by the achievements of some competition gold medalists on the internet. Similarly, some elementary school students today are encouraged on the internet. Many are addicted to games, but some wonder how to create games and learn about it through online resources.

Young teachers in schools are becoming more skilled as a whole. Teachers, subjects, and classmates are not easily chosen. Though the overall situation is improving, students may have a bad school experience due to constantly scolding teachers, disliking certain subjects, or having unruly classmates, leading to a dislike of learning.

Schools could offer a grade-skipping option. During final exams, in addition to the exams for their current grade, students should also be allowed to take exams for higher grades, encouraging them to skip grades if they meet certain conditions. When such an option exists, especially if some students successfully take it, it will motivate more students to do the same. Many children could potentially complete their current six years of elementary school in three years, finish middle school and high school in three years each.

This may give rise to many extracurricular tutoring institutions to help students achieve this. This would be a good thing and might reveal the deficiencies of exam-oriented education.

Gradually, some students may complete middle and high school in six years, some in seven years, and others in nine years. The performance of students will become more remarkable. Some may even finish in four years. That's at the age of ten. It may sound exaggerated, but between ages three and ten, there are seven years, during which a child who loves reading and learning can gain a vast amount of knowledge through the internet. The key is that the knowledge required for exams is not extensive. At the same time, just like in the market, many people earn in two years what others make in ten years.

Years later, people will realize that the current education system is outdated. Elementary and middle school last twelve years. Students don't have to stay on the conventional path, advancing year by year.

This will lead to overall progress. An ambitious 14 or 15-year-old teenager, watching peers of the same age like Wang Junkai, will envy them, asking why they don't have to study in class. At the same time, rather than letting a few people enjoy preferential treatment in competitions, individual parents should help their children coordinate grade-skipping and other treatments, and instead, all students should have equal opportunities. Then, one day, we can say to the children, "You are free. If you work hard and achieve good grades, you can skip grades."

In society, a minority of people create a lot of wealth. However, this kind of wealth creation through value creation is something we should encourage. A 10-year-old who completes middle and elementary school, starts a 3D game venture, learns a lot on the internet, takes his company public at the age of 20, and becomes a billionaire deserves praise. They no longer need to envy people like Wang Junkai.

State-owned enterprises, governments, schools, research institutes, and other institutions value academic qualifications, and most large companies also consider degrees. When applying for overseas study, a degree is crucial. Therefore, dropping out of high school or college to start a business or work on their projects might limit their future choices. However, with a grade-skipping mechanism, these issues will no longer be a problem.

Children can know early on that the competition is fierce. Look, my classmate completed elementary school in two years, while I'm still struggling. But for ambitious children, this is a good thing. They don't have to wait until their high school exam results are out, finding themselves among tens of thousands of students in the province, which can be disheartening. They realize that there are so many people, and ranking first in elementary or middle school doesn't mean much. They realize there are always others who are better.

This mechanism is also more in line with real society. In society, the competition for making money is not among peers but among all adults. Letting children know early on that they will have to compete with older people for the same job in the future, that their company will have to compete with companies run by older generations, is a good thing. Competition leads to progress, and for some children, it gives them the chance

to learn from those who are better than them.

Dedicated parents provide their children with a wide range of skills, work hard to earn money to buy houses in better school districts for better education, and have teachers graduated from elite universities teach their children. Children in third and fourth-tier cities may not be so lucky. However, with grade-skipping and the internet, diligent children from third and fourth-tier cities who complete elementary school in three years and enter the best local middle schools might be able to compete with children from wealthy families.

In China, we could perhaps establish a scholarship similar to the Thiel Fellowship, encouraging those under twenty to pursue their wild dreams. In China, it seems that figures like Lei Jun, Lu Qi, Ma Huateng, Zhang Yiming, Wang Xing, and Zhu Xiaohu, influential entrepreneurs and investors, need to take the initiative. What American children can do, Chinese children can do too. I believe children who can actively apply for such a scholarship on the internet will have a bright future. Five years later, once some of them achieve outstanding results, it will be inspiring. China might have individuals in their twenties who can create nuclear fusion on their own. Just as the bold Elon Musk inspired many entrepreneurs, China's young Musks will also inspire many young people.

The future has already arrived; it's just unevenly distributed. Young people might surprise us.

Technological progress benefits everyone. We probably don't need to feel anxious because of the capabilities of young people. Entrepreneurial failure is usually not due to competition but rather because the entrepreneur failed to create value for the target users. Unemployment is usually not because others are superior but because one has not acquired the skills demanded by society.

When a 16-year-old creates nuclear fusion, works as an independent developer, undertakes open-source projects, builds small rockets, becomes a popular science blogger, or writes research papers, what will society witness?

As more and more 10-year-olds show interest in programming, optics, autonomous driving, mechanics, electronics, materials, etc., find resources on the internet, follow numerous bloggers, and make friends with those who share the same interests, what will society witness?

Knowledge seems abundant today, but its essence has not increased much. And often, knowledge needs to be actively learned and thought about before it can enter one's mind. With the internet, the next generation can learn from the best of the previous generation, from past scientists, and find like-minded people on social networks to accompany them in the long term.

Just as adults have repeatedly accomplished what adults of ten or a hundred years ago found challenging, I believe that future children will also be able to achieve what children of the past could not. Children, believe in yourselves; you can do it.

Further Reading:

1. Hiring is Obsolete. https://paulgraham.com/hiring.html

2. Paul Graham: Those Like Airbnb Founders

3. Researchers and Founders. https://blog.samaltman.com/researchers-and-founders

4. Billionaires Build. http://www.paulgraham.com/ace.html

5. Doubts About Intelligence https://www.yinwang.org/blog-cn/2020/03/23/wisdom-of-intelligence

6. The Wisdom of Learning https://www.yinwang.org/blog-cn/2019/07/12/learning-philosophy

7. WeChat Internet Civilian Entrepreneurship