

Elon Musk blasts obsolete education system for failing to reach kids: ‘You don’t want a teacher in front of a board’.

By Christiaan Hetzner: May 7, 2024

More than a century ago, Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote, “He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.” Well, Elon Musk is a doer with a lot of children, and he’s reached the conclusion he doesn’t want his kids to learn from some has-been or never-was simply because they landed a job in a local school thanks to a lack of competition.

Over his lifetime, teaching fundamentally remained the same experience: an adult standing in front of a chalkboard instructing kids. Why, though, should today’s tectonic technological shifts that are upending the labour force stop just short of the teaching profession? “You don’t want a teacher in front of a board,” Kids instead need compelling, interactive learning experiences that engage them with a subject matter, such as taking apart a car engine to understand how it works and, in the process, learning what wrenches and screwdrivers are used for.

“The way teaching more typically works is we’re going to teach you a course on screwdrivers and a course on wrenches,” he continued, saying the relevance of the subject matter was often not obvious to kids. As a result, their brains would filter it out as useless knowledge, not retaining what they were taught. According to Musk, the system failed them because the talents of the teaching staff tasked with imparting this knowledge to their students were sophomoric at best.

“The way education works today is much like vaudeville before there were radio, TV, and movies,” Musk explained. Introducing a bizarre Batman reference, Musk said the thespians entertaining the locals of Small Town, U.S.A., with their own low-budget rendition of the caped crusader, simply could not compete with Christopher Nolan’s Batman. “That’s how teaching works today,” he said.

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