

Reynolds, Glenn Harlan. *The New School: How the information age will save American education from itself*. New York: Encounter Books, c2014.

*Reynolds' thesis is that changed social and economic circumstances soon will create drastic shifts in the delivery of both K-12 and higher education in the U.S., probably leaving the country with a fractured public school system (perhaps serving mainly the poor, while more affluent citizens may be choosing from a smorgasbord of offerings, including electronic courses). – Karen Kay Leonard*

“Preface & Introduction” –

vii. The author notes that he considers this volume more of a conversation-starter than a conversation-ender.

“In the Beginning: from the 1<sup>st</sup> century and before to the 21<sup>st</sup>” --

p.1 Reynolds points out that, for most of human history, young people learned to do adult jobs through direct imitation of their elders or through deliberate apprenticeships.

p.3 He considers the “model” on which Horace Mann and others built U.S. schools to have been an imitation of Prussian (German) education which fit the industrial age well because it produced graduates who came loyally, followed instructions, possessed basic skills in literacy and computation, and were nearly as standardized as the output of a machine.

p.8 By the year 2000, there was wide disillusionment with such an educational model.

p.12 Nevertheless, the Morrill Act (passed in the 1860s) and later federal intervention insured that a college degree was regarded as **the ticket** to upward mobility, and the GI Bill following WWII guaranteed that college campuses would fill up with returning veterans.

“Higher Education: the bursting bubble” –

p.13 “If something cannot go on forever, it will stop.” – Herbert Stein (economist)

pp.13-14 “A recent *Money* magazine report notes, ‘After adjusting / for financial aid, the amount families pay for college has skyrocketed 439% since 1982. . . . Normal supply and demand can’t begin to explain cost increases of this magnitude.’”

- Some professions now pay lower wages than previously (e.g., veterinarian), in part because there is less demand than previously.
- Even with a college education, youth today face serious downward mobility.
- Student loans are out of control, both in absolute sizes of individual debt (often \$100K-250K) and also because they are not usually dischargeable, even in bankruptcy proceedings.

p.22 These percentage rises were reported between 1978 and 2011 by Mark Perry at the Carpe Diem economics blog:

CPI (Consumer Price Index) – all items	3.80%/year
US New Homes	4.30%/year
CPI Medical Care	5.80%/year
CPI College Tuition & Fees	7.45%/year

p.23 “Total student loan debt in America has passed the trillion-dollar mark: more than total credit-card debt and more than total auto-loan debt. Investors, meanwhile are spurning student loan-related investments in light of rising default rates, suggesting that they also view the situation as

unsustainable.”

- p.27 “State and local spending on higher education hit a 25-year low in 2011, and nothing suggests a significant upturn in years to come.” To fight the change this trend indicates, universities may
- hold PR campaigns to increase enrollment
  - work to increase diversity
  - offer “more interesting” courses (e.g., women’s studies)
  - hire more part-time (thus uninsured, non-pensioned) instructors
  - increase the number of administrators

p.39 Reynolds’ advice to college students? Don’t go into debt. If you have to borrow, make sure you will emerge with a salable skill.

p.40 “. . . the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that 7 of the 10 fastest-growing jobs in the next decade will be based on on-the-job training rather than higher education.”

p.41-42 It is time to change courses – curriculum reform must provide more rigorous course content and less fluff, as well as to improve our instructional methods.

p.43-44 “The online approach is used by the popular Khan Academy, where students view lectures at their convenience and perfect their skills via video-game-like software, and the follow-up is done in a classroom, with a teacher’s oversight. The / idea behind this “flipped classroom” approach is to take advantage of mass delivery where it works best, and to allow individualized attention where it helps most.”

p.46 Students today may not finish a degree but still leave college with a lot of debt.

p.50 Big changes are ahead, without doubt.

p.52 According to Zachary Karabell, writing in *The Atlantic*, college is going online, and that change will benefit students. “That will likely lead to some shrinkage in the number of physical institutions offering degrees, but an increase in the number of people obtaining them. It will also mean that those taking on debt – especially at elite schools – will be those most likely to be able to bear those debts, while those who need more specific and vocational education for decently paid but not high-paying jobs will not be saddled with loans out of proportion to their earning potential.”

p.53 Budget transparency at colleges is much needed.

pp.55-60 The alternative credentialing process ahead will be affected by politics and will likely be characterized by shrinkage, reconfiguration, substitution, exits, and new models.

“Education: from ‘higher’ to ‘lower’” –

p.63 Throwing money at educational problems has not solved them. Wisconsin pays the highest teacher salaries in the country, but two-thirds of its 8<sup>th</sup> graders are not proficient readers.

p.67 Since the model on which our K-12 system is based aimed to produce people who worked well within the system, neither motivation to learn nor the creation of scholars was its goal. Seth Godin notes, however, that it accomplished “elevating the lower classes [read *immigrants*] into a broad-based middle class.”

p.70-76 For these reasons, Reynolds criticizes and predicts an implosion of the system:

- the power of teacher’s unions
- the creation of a U.S. “teen culture” with few responsibilities for youth
- the addition to staffs of too many administrators
- high cost for little or no academic improvement

p.79 “. . . this technological revolution will overturn things from without.”

p.85-88      What will future scenarios for public education include? Schools that are:

- Cheaper
- Better
- More flexible
- More diverse
- More parent-friendly

“Some Quasi-Predictions” –

p.89      Education will change significantly in the coming decade. The process will leave behind a lot of wreckage. Future schools will differ from today’s in being more:

- customized
- gamified
- integrated
- inexpensive
- fragmented