

# BORN IN A CONNECTED, COMPLEX, TURBULENT AND UNCERTAIN WORLD: GROWING UP AT THE START OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

Jan Visser  
jvisser@learndev.org

Learning Development Institute  
<http://www.learndev.org>

## ABSTRACT

Each child now born faces a world that is in a number of ways essentially different from the world previous generations were facing. It is a world whose essential problems are complex rather than linear, requiring conscious human beings to interact with such problems in a complex manner. It is also a world in which changes occur at a rate that makes it impossible to be prepared for change in any other way than by being prepared to interact intelligently and constructively with uncertainty. It is furthermore a world that is the healthy product of a history of human development that has allowed us to be diverse in such respects as the worldviews we entertain, the cultures we share, the languages we speak, and the ways in which we deal with problems. It is essential to care for and nurture such diversity, a challenge that is particularly interesting – and acute – in view of the high level of interconnectedness we now experience thanks to technologies such as the Internet and satellite communication. Finally, it is a world that, if together we don't deal with it the right way, is at a greater risk than ever to simply disappear.

The opportunities, challenges and dangers of our time require deep reflection on the question: What does it mean to be a good human being, to live responsively and responsibly, to play a constructive role in and be a harmonious part of the evolutionary history of a diverse species that has a unique opportunity to elevate its shared consciousness to the next higher level. The way we prepare the conditions for all of us to learn in that world, starting with the very young, has everything to do with the search for intelligent answers to the above question.

## PRESENTATION

A link to a PDF version of the PowerPoint slides of the above presentation can be found on the following Web page: <http://www.learndev.org/RediscoveringChildhood.html>.

## REFERENCES

The following references relate to the presentation. They are worth exploring:

1. Gopnik, A., Meltzoff, A. N. & Kuhl, P. K. (1999). *The scientist in the crib: Minds, brains, and how children learn*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc. (This is a well written, relatively short book of great scientific value and human insight.)
2. Read more about the four levels of human adaptive behavior in what I wrote in *Reflections on Learning and Learners* at <http://www.learndev.org/ibstpi-AECT2005.html#anchor182940>.
3. Levin, S. (1999). *Fragile Dominion: Complexity and the Commons*. Reading, MA: Helix Books. (I mention this reference as the vision of human learning and the development of cognition which you find in my work is grounded in ecological and evolutionary notions. Simon Levin's book provides excellent insight into these matters.)
4. Visser (2001). Integrity, completeness and comprehensiveness of the learning environment: Meeting the basic learning needs of all throughout life. In D. N.

Aspin, J. D. Chapman, M. J. Hatton and Y. Sawano (Eds), *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning* (pp. 447-472). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers. (An unedited version of this Handbook chapter – almost identical to what was published – can be found at <http://www.learndev.org/dl/LLLIntHbChapter.PDF>.)

Not referenced in the presentation, but equally recommended for further reading are:

5. Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.) (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Report of the Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. (Also available online at <http://darwin.nap.edu/books/0309070368/html/R1.html>.)
6. Edgar Morin: *Seven complex lessons in education for the future* [UNESCO] - <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001177/117740eo.pdf>. The original of this document was in French and is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001177/117740fo.pdf>. An Arabic translation can be found at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001177/117740ab.pdf>.
7. Visser, J., & Visser, Y. L. (2000, October). *On the difficulty of changing our perceptions about such things as learning*. Paper presented at the International Conference of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, Denver, CO, October 25-28, 2000. This paper is available online at <http://www.learndev.org/dl/DenverVisserVisser.PDF>.

#### LEARNING DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

More about the work of the Learning Development Institute can be found at <http://www.learndev.org>.

**Note:** A lecture – thus also a keynote lecture – is as such an insufficient means to generate deep learning. I hope we will further develop our learning through the interaction that follows during the symposium and the conference and, if you are interested, online – by email or otherwise. Some may for instance be interested in participating in the forthcoming online discussion on *To school, or not to school: is that the question?* This discussion is hosted by the Higher Education Learning Professionals (HELP) network on Collaboration Across Borders ([www.cabweb.net](http://www.cabweb.net)) from 14 to 27 April 2006. I am the facilitator for the discussion. If you are interested, find out more by clicking on the relevant link on the homepage of [www.learndev.org](http://www.learndev.org).