

The Empowered Classroom.... And a Blueprint for the Second Superpower

by John W. Hibbs¹

The devil is always in the details. And the view depends on where you stand.

The first explains the problem I have with Dr. Jame's Moore's *The Second Superpower Rears is Beautiful Head*². As I have written to Dr. Moore, *Beautiful Head*³ is a great theory. In fact, I sense it has the makings of becoming the *Common Sense*⁴ of the 21st Century.

The thesis of this splendid piece is beautifully captured in its opening paragraphs:

“A new form of international player, constituted by the will of the people” in a global social movement. The beautiful but deeply agitated face of this second superpower is the worldwide peace campaign, but the body of the movement is made up of millions of people concerned with a broad agenda that includes social development, environmentalism, health, and human rights.”

Intellectually, Dr. Moore offers a powerful framework for the workings of a better planet. From him, that's no surprise. He's a Senior Fellow at Harvard⁵, author of the best seller *The Death of Competition*.⁶ He's also the founder of *GeoPartners*⁷, board member to some of the most illustrious companies in America and, most impressive of all, a Fellow of the World Economic Forum⁸. Shorthand, that's Davos, a hide out reserved exclusively for the planet's elite.

Dr. Moore has climbed all the mountains. And his view should be exquisite. But, at least in this article, it's not.

The view he provides leaves out the role of education, particularly distance education. That's like painting a picture of San Francisco and not including bridge or harbor, cable car or TransAmerica. It's still a very pretty picture; but a lot is lost without the basics.

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<http://www.bfranklin.edu/johnhibbs>

²<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/people/jmoore/secondsuperpower.html>

³To reduce confusion about the *idea* of a Second Superpower and the article by Dr. Moore, I shall henceforth refer to the article as “Beautiful Head”.

⁴<http://www.bartleby.com/133/>

⁵<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/people/moore.html>

⁶http://www.harpercollins.com/catalog/book_xml.asp?isbn=0887308503

⁷<http://www.geopartners.com/>

⁸<http://www.weforum.org/>

Rightly, Dr. Moore makes clear that the underpinnings of the Second Superpower require societies which have as their foundations pluralism, rule of law and human rights. That's a drum most of us have been beating for a long, long time. What's not mentioned is that such societies depend on (and grow out of) classrooms where those fundamentals are deeply embedded. Also not mentioned is that eight children in ten sit in classrooms where pluralism, rule of law and human rights are very shallowly rooted. Or completely non-existent.

My question is this: How will the Second Superpower work without children "brainwashed" with foundation premises that are completely foreign to them? How will societies, or even the Second Superpower, function without people of a kind that come out of classrooms absent these essentials?

Dr. Moore talks a lot about technology. But all the technology in the world won't mean squat if we don't have classrooms embedded with the fundamentals of pluralism, rule of law and human rights.

mmmm.....That's a good word -- *embedded*. It's been in the news a lot lately, compliments of the First Superpower.

I propose we adopt "embedded" into the lexicon of education. Not only can we use it to identify which classrooms can play a leadership role in the Second Superpower, we can have a solid measuring instrument to determine how much progress the planet is making toward increasing "embedded" classrooms -- and decreasing the numbers of those that are not.

Here's my proposition -- Those classrooms that take the teaching of pluralism, rule of law and human rights as seriously as they do teaching math, science, history and literature will earn the proud title of "Embedded Classroom". Those that do not will be called Non-Embedded Classrooms.

Or, Pentagon style, "E.C". and "NEC".

Now --

Since NEC's constitute eight out ten classrooms worldwide, there's a **lot** of work to do. That's the bad news. The good news is the tools are at hand and the structure required to convert classrooms from NEC to E.C. are not impossibly hard to put in place. This is consistent with the thrust of Beautiful Mind and should be, I say, the prime work of the Second Superpower.

However, I'm getting (slightly) ahead of myself. My answer to the 'devil in the details' will come in just a bit. First, please allow a few more words about Beautiful Mind.

As Dr. Moore makes clear, most of the nations of the world haven't done a very good job alleviating poverty, literacy, and bloodthirsty rule. That 's no great surprise given that about five out of six people - nearly five billion in total - have never spent time in an E.C. classroom. How many is five billion? Well that's

just about every human being who sleeps west of Shanghai and east Syria plus most of those north of Capetown and south of Cairo.

That's a lot of territory, which means there's a whole lot of work for the Second Superpower. That is *if* it adopts as one of its objectives a planet filled with Empowered Classrooms — and empty of NECs. And if the Second Superpower doesn't have these kind of *basic* objectives, and a blueprint for achievement, what good is it? Why bother with Second Superpower if all it is just one more Ivory Tower theorem?

Here's why. And Dr. Moore knows this a whole lot better than I.

There is an inextricable linkage between the tools which make for a Second Superpower, the people who manage those tools, the leadership of the Second Superpower, the requisites for successful societies, and the need for converting NEC's to E.Cs.

Or, as Tom Paine would say - it's all just common sense.

Moving along.

Dr. Moore recognizes the depth and the nature of the problem; and he doesn't pretend that the solutions will come directly from the nation state. Like me, he thinks the model of the future will look more like Linux and Napster than McDonald's and the Pentagon. We are also of the belief that the Linux/Napster model is the one most likely to cause extraordinary wealth creation; that small cells of knowledge enterprises, powered by graduates of E.C. classrooms, are the solution for the most serious problems on the planet. That too is part of the linkage, beautifully clear if you are attracted to the idea of Beautiful Mind.

This brings me – almost – to the devil and the details. But first a wee bit more about education.

I say a “wee bit” because those likely to read this commentary already belong to the education choir. It's a big choir and everybody in it agrees we need to both enlarge the numbers and do a better job stimulating students into being independent life long learners. It's the knowledge economy Stupid.

A forward thinking choir

The most forward thinking part of that choir makes *learning*, not degrees or certificates, as the key objective; that *learning* should be relevant to job opportunities while accepting and advancing the humanities, that **access to learning** is made so affordable – and the need for **learning** so universally compelling – that those who don't have affordable access will take up arms against those standing in the way. And the most forward of the forward are those deep into distance education arena. If you are looking for low hanging

fruit of a kind that will lead the Second Superpower, get to know those in the distance center of the d/e ring.

Sure, there you will find as many blueprints for “solutions” as there are voices in our choir. Doesn’t matter. The Second Super and the Empowered Classroom will look something like e-Bay, and Napster, Little League, and MIT. What you will find is chaos - more or less structured disorganization of a kind that smart guys like Stephen Downes and James Moore and Fred Saba and Maggie McVay and Karen Eini and Sir John Daniel and Terry Redding and Neil Hynd already know a whole lot about.

Therefore, I won’t dwell longer about “education” (which I would rather call learning). Except for this one very important reminder:

About Distance Learning

-As certain as the sunrise-

The education revolution is already well underway and it’s going to get bigger and more powerful. There are millions of courses provided long distance from thousands of accredited universities using affordable technology that’s only going to get better, cheaper and more ubiquitous. This is *the* killer application of the Internet. Affordable providers with good solutions will be generously rewarded. All of this will have a bigger impact than Guttenburg.

In the workplace the leaders of the Second Superpower already know this. Intuitively, so does just about everyone who has ever looked at a web site. And that’s already about a billion people. In ten years that number is will treble, which means half the planet will, almost naturally, figure out the reach of the Net, the power of the Second Superpower. and crucial need for universal access to Empowered Classrooms. Accelerating this timetable is possible through modest efforts by people like James Moore, Wes Boyd and Joan Blade.

Here’s some more good news. All of this spells well for those who don’t wish a return to 4th Century barbarism, or 19th Century imperialism or 20th century fascism. Money spent converting NEC classrooms into Empowered classrooms is a good investment to protect against such return. What’s crystal clear is this: The path out of poverty, misery and tyranny runs directly through the EC. The path to more September 11’s runs through NEC classrooms.

If we don’t write into the constitution of the Second Superpower the need to have universal, affordable access to Empowered Classrooms, we might as well not bother at all. The flip side of that coin is if there is to be a Second Superpower, it’s Constitution can’t leave affordable access to learning unprotected.

Now that you know where I stand you also know my view. And past time to do battle with the devil. That's a devilish task, to be sure; and better done with pencil and eraser than with pen and ink.

Hibbs' Devil in the Details

1. The Leadership Neither the Second Superpower nor a powerful drive to convert classrooms from NEC to E.C. will go anywhere unless backed by someone of the stature of Dr. Moore. We need Jim to put muscle behind his theory and we need him to recruit the likes of Wes Boyd and Joan Slade, founders of MoveOn.org. Those three extraordinary individuals have a Rolodex filled with people who can help push this boulder up the mountain.

Jim, Wes and Joan -- where are you when we need you most?

2. Passion and Brand Identity: There are lots of reasons Nike sells a ton of high priced tennis shoes. But the biggest one of all is the ubiquity of the Nike swish.

My bet is that everyone reading this paper has no doubt that access to learning is more important than high priced tennis shoes. But I will also bet that only a few truly believe "we" can create an "image" (insignia? badge? logo?) that can become as well known as the Nike swish.

Hogwash.

Once you understand the logic of the Second Superpower, and once you think more about the circulation of the Ban the Bomb "logo" (?), or Linux or Napster, or e-Bay, or the open source project at M.I.T. or Project Gutenberg, or dozens of other "wildfire undertakings" you will see that very wide circulation of our own "badge" (insignia?) is indeed possible.

If we do it right, as Wes and Joan did with MoveOn, our "swish" will take hold faster than even the most optimistic among us can now imagine. This is the 21st Century and the bottom line is one billion people are now connected. It's not spam to circulate a badge that represents increasing access to Empowered ~~Classrooms~~ ~~work for a while in the future, but of the Second Superpower~~. Like it or not, we live in a nano second world where brand identity counts like crazy. It's the reason for the Golden Arches, the five Olympic rings, the two RR's that symbolize Rolls Royce. It's what makes Levis different than jeans and Rolex more than just a watch.

"We" must be as good at merchandising ourselves as those in the corporate world. The beauty of all this -- as Dr. Moore will tell you as well -- a lot of this can be done Napster style. A lot more can be done by sharing our umbrella with others. But I shall get to that in a moment. The point is that we must create our a symbol; then light up in a way others can join in the fun. Read on.

3. The Learning Orchestra: I will get to the power of memberships in a moment, but if I had one membership group that the Second Superpower might claim as

it's own it would be one I call "The Learning Orchestra". In this regard, MoveOn has the right idea.⁹ And so too does Michael Franti¹⁰. The exact particulars of what those two are doing now won't fit into the broader vision and universal appeal of The Learning Orchestra. But making music and musicians an important element in the branding campaign, and tapping into their creativity and ubiquity just makes a great deal of common sense. Therefore, a reasonable chunk of Second Superpower resources could be spent on launching the Learning Orchestra. Besides, if the White House can have the Marine Band, can't "we" have our own orchestra?

4. Membership Groups: Papa Bush had it right when he made popular the idea of "a thousand points of light". There are tens of thousands of membership groups that are already doing work of a kind consistent with the theories of Beautiful Mind, the idea of the Second Superpower and the goals of increasing access to learning.

Every single membership group listed in Google¹¹ is within affordable electronic reach. So too are the great bulk of **their** members. The synergy of a successful "umbrella offer" to these groups is incalculable.

The big question is: How do we get them to put their hands on our umbrella? Here is my response, starting with my analysis.

I submit we must come up with a "universal" solution which

- helps to increase their net receipts;
- helps to increase the awareness of what they do;
- helps promote their own agenda
- causes the least disruption to what their regular activities.

Here's a thumbnail of how we can meet those needs.

The Power of the Candle:

There is something about a candle that is just plain wonderful. It's why candle light dinners are so romantic, and why candles can add so much warmth near the bath. They comfort those who mourn and they help those who pray. They add intimacy to the bedroom and quiet to the den.

The first webmaster of Global Learn Day¹² is now the CEO to Webshots. He can't tell you why they do it, but over seven million people have visited this

⁹<http://www.moveon.org/musiciansunited/>

¹⁰<http://216.197.101.32/index.htm> "I believe that music is one of the healing arts and it is for this reason that I continue to pour my heart into the work that I do. Throughout my travels and musical experiences, my own spirituality has deepened. And I have been affected by all who have touched me along the way. "

¹¹ Using Google, and the search word "association", 231 web pages appear.

¹²<http://www.bfranklin.edu/gld>

page.¹³ Do your self a favor and check out the Gratefullness web site¹⁴; see for yourself the lure of lighting a candle.

I say that our “logo” should be a candle, open sourced of course. What we represent is “light up” the internal fires of each individual. That’s what glues the Second Superpower and goes to the heart of the Empowered Classroom.

To promote Global Learn Day, we will use a mechanism called CandlePower. After we get our web site built, our candle vendors perfected, and the routines of fundraising in order, we will be offering this “template” others for their own light up campaign.

Now, having read Second Superpower, and already a big fan of MoveOn, I am tantalized by an approach which would include those heavyweights. For those who wish to find out more about CandlePower, please download this PDF.

5. Contests and Schools: As I have outlined in both CandlePower and in my Ten Point Plan *Mobilizing for a Long War*¹⁵, the primary recruiting efforts for volunteers can come from (first) schools in the English speaking world, and (second) E.C. schools worldwide. The quickest way to find hard working teachers is through contests that draw upon the skills of their students. Web site building is one of the most popular, especially ones that encourage the use “flash”, or other ‘leading edge” technology.

Along with The Learning Orchestra, this arena deserves special resource allocation .The goal: Ten thousand entrants to a Light Up contest where the winner is determined by who made their school the brightest.

6. ESL & The Education Corps: Following the model – and the footsteps – of the Peace Corps, we should seek seed money to advance motivated college graduates for a one year stint **working** abroad. While abroad they can earn their keep helping to teach English; however their **real** job is to help build E.C. classrooms and the Second Superpower.

The benefits of this program are three fold.

- Of benefit to the institution where assigned while abroad
- Of benefit to themselves as a “transcendent” experience
- Of benefit to employers who seek employees with such experience

¹³http://www.webshots.com/sp/peace_candle/ {Note: This site was built by the first webmaster of Global Learn Day. Check out the number of visitors!}

¹⁴<http://www.bfranklin.edu/candlepower/CandlePower.pdf>

¹⁵<http://www.bfranklin.edu/johnhibbs/TenPoints.pdf>

{I also touch on this in the Ten Point Plan, Mobilizing for a Long War. But more can be found out by a visits to a section our site called Champions¹⁶ And, related to that, a section devoted to the benefits of Cybervans.¹⁷}

I hope this is enough detail to sate the devil; or, more important to get others to get out their drafting pencils. There is a lot of work to do.

Let me close where I started -- by extolling the wisdom found in Beautiful Mind. In the final paragraph Dr. Moore writes:

“And finally, we must work on ourselves and our community. We will dialogue with our neighbors, knowing that the collective wisdom of the Second Superpower is grounded in the individual wisdom within each of us. We must remind ourselves that daily we make personal choices about the world we create for ourselves and our descendants. We do not have to create a world where differences are resolved by war. It is not our destiny to live in a world of destruction, tedium, and tragedy. We will create a world of peace.”

Nice words, Jim. Very nice.

It's people like Dr. Moore who can make the Second Superpower a reality. They are the same type who can help improve access to learning and increase the number of E.C. classrooms. When all is said and done, they are the only ones that really count.

¹⁶<http://www.bfranklin.edu/champions>

¹⁷<http://www.bfranklin.edu/friend>