

ROCKET SCIENCE AND LEARNING

1. Take a tube, pointed at one end and open at the other.
2. Stuff it full of propellant.
3. Light it at the open end.
4. And, the difficult bit, point it where you want it to go.

Exchange children for tubes and there you have it: government education policy.

We can argue about 2 and 4.

What kind of propellant do we want? Fast burning or slow? So hot that it destroys the container or something that retains the integrity of the container?

Who shall control the guidance system? Will there be a pilot or remote control? Who gets to decide the direction? How long will the fuel last? What happens when something goes wrong? What might we mean by 'wrong'?

We often hear the phrase 'Its not rocket science', implying that by comparison most other things are relatively simple. At base, however, rocket science is very simple. Education is not so straightforward. You can mass produce rockets and standardise their manufacture.

Incidentally, the word 'standard' is used a lot in education so it might be worth remembering what it means. Shall we standardise all learners?

The biggest difference in education is that the human rockets, big and little, broad and narrow, tall and short can speak for themselves. They can make decisions about what kind of fuel, how much at any one time, the direction of travel and when to pause on the journey; if, that is, they are allowed to. As for test firings!

Schooling is what we do to horses and if certain politicians get their way education will be preparation for taking an oath of allegiance.

Cliff Jones December 2016