

Jason Echaure

D. Clark

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Education: Do We Really Need It?

What IS the actual purpose of education? Since people are different, their expectations of education would be different. Some people say education is a way of being successful and earning a lot of money. Other people say it is a way to gain respect from peers. Whether people continue their education for material things or for self-gratification, education does not only help an individual; it helps society as a whole as well.

The purpose of education can be to better society. If American society was not educated, we would not be one of the most successful countries in the world. Education does not only provide people with knowledge, like math, science, and English, but it also can provide help with gaining the wisdom of the world around us. People face many different problems and conflicts in their lives and one of the things that help them see the problem through until the end is education. “[It] will set this [problem] straight...training for life teaches living” (DuBois 64). DuBois was writing about the struggles “freedmen” had to face during the early 1900s; however, his words are very relevant. “Freedmen” had to face living in a White society in the early 1900s and education was one way to prove to American society that they were just like everyone else.

Because of continuing a more formal education, Richard Rodriguez thinks the results of education is not good. When he was younger, Rodriguez valued his education, but as he got older, he began to realize that the cost for his success in school was losing two important things in his life: his family and his culture. It took him twenty years to realize “schooling was changing [him] and separating [him] from the life [he] enjoyed before becoming a student” (Rodriguez 2). Rodriguez believed education could tear people away from their family and culture when, in fact, education could bring people’s family closer together, depending on how they use their education.

As people gain a higher education, they should realize “the excellence of understanding [...] is definitely something more divine; it never loses its power, but becomes useful and helpful or useless and harmful, depending on how it is turned” (Plato 179, line 518e). In other words, education can bring you up or tear you down, but once people learn to harness what they have learned, they can easily better themselves and their families. With continuing an education (i.e. college), people can help their family with money, knowledge, and the “push” needed to help other members follow the path toward a higher education.

My friend Chris argues that education causes conformity because everything people learn throughout elementary school, high school, and even college is similar. Education does not make society better; it is only a way of teaching individuals to be “clones” of what is considered normal in society. Although it is easy to say education is a way of shaping clones for American society, people’s early education is a way of helping people prepare for their future.

“[E]ducation would be the art of turning [the mind] around in the easiest, most effective way—not implanting sight, which it already has, but contriving to turn [the mind] around to look where it should”(Plato 179, line 518d).

Education impacts society in many different ways. Although many people think that education can be a waste of time, people who continue with their education will realize how important it is in the future. The wisdom gained from education may not be noticed right a way, but when the time comes, it will be needed and greatly appreciated because “education [is] needful solely for the embellishment of life” (DuBois 64).

Works Cited

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