

## **WE NEED TO LOOK BACK TO MOVE FORWARD**

Several years ago a large and influential teacher group suggested that their upcoming annual conference should be promoted as 'Back to Basics', but after much debate they decided on 'Forward to Fundamentals.' It seems in society today that the fundamentals of 'education' and of 'learning' are out of balance.

Government departments, media, and hence the community, seems to be confused about what 'education' is and what 'learning' is. These two words are not synonyms and are certainly not interchangeable.

There is no doubt that both education and learning can have a substantial influence on the mind and character of an individual – but these words refer to different things.

Education is something that an individual gets from an outside source. On the other hand, learning is central to the brain's basic search for information that begins even before birth.

Education is something that one gets from a particular group, school or university, and involves other arbitrary, set standards. Learning evolves at the personal level, for which there are no set standards, because an individual learns within or from his or her own personal environment.

Education is something that one gets at some point in their life. Learning is an ongoing process, with an individual constantly learning, from his or her birth through to his or her death.

Education is structured and organised by others. Learning is related to an individual's perceptions and circumstances.

Although some beliefs in the past have become outdated by later discoveries, others still hold true.

The Greek philosopher Plato - a student of Socrates and later the teacher of Aristotle - set the foundation for Western thinking, including religion, philosophy, politics, and more.

Plato's theories and philosophies currently shape the educational systems of most - if not all - countries throughout the world.

For Plato, education was more than just memorizing facts while sitting in a classroom from youth to maturity. He did not see any differences between what men and women were capable of, and believed that their roles in a perfect society required both sexes to be educated.

Plato wrote that 'knowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind' and also that 'the most important part of education is proper training in the nursery.'

Plato's teacher – Socrates - believed that 'sometimes you put walls up not to keep people out, but to see who cares enough to break them down' and also that 'I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think'

Plato's pupil - Aristotle - said that 'all persons ought to endeavour to follow what is right, and not what is established' that 'educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.'

These philosophers, over several generations, told us that the purpose of education was 'the creation of a sound mind in a sound body.'

By giving increased consideration to the thoughts of these ancient Greek philosophers - Plato, Socrates and Aristotle – we could refocus our educational systems to encourage the exploration of wide-ranging, self-chosen 'life-long learning' opportunities

We can do this when we understand that education is a formal process that one gets at some point in their life, and that learning is a dynamic, informal and ongoing process.

It may be difficult to convince those who have firmly positioned themselves in the education environment that learning will - as it always has done - continue to occur regardless of their input. This does not mean that we should not try.

To again quote Aristotle 'It is not enough to win a war; it is more important to organize the peace.'

## **WHO SAID?**

"The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers."

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